

In US Trade Deal Race, India Seeks Lower Tariff Than Indonesia: Report

Trump said Tuesday the US will impose a tariff rate of 19% on imports from Indonesia, down from a threatened 32%, and will be able to ship American goods to the country tariff-free.

New Delhi. (Agency)



Indian officials are hoping to secure a trade deal with US President Donald Trump at a lower tariff rate than he'd agreed with Indonesia as New Delhi races to meet an August 1 deadline. Trump said Tuesday the US will impose a tariff rate of 19% on imports from Indonesia, down from a threatened 32%, and will be able to ship American goods to the country tariff-free. The US president later told reporters that the India deal would be "along that same line" and "we're going to have access into India." On Wednesday, he again said the US was "very close" to a deal with India. India is seeking more favourable rates than Indonesia and the 20% tariff Trump has said he'll impose on Vietnam, officials in New Delhi said, asking not to be identified because the discussions are private. The US and India are working toward a deal that would

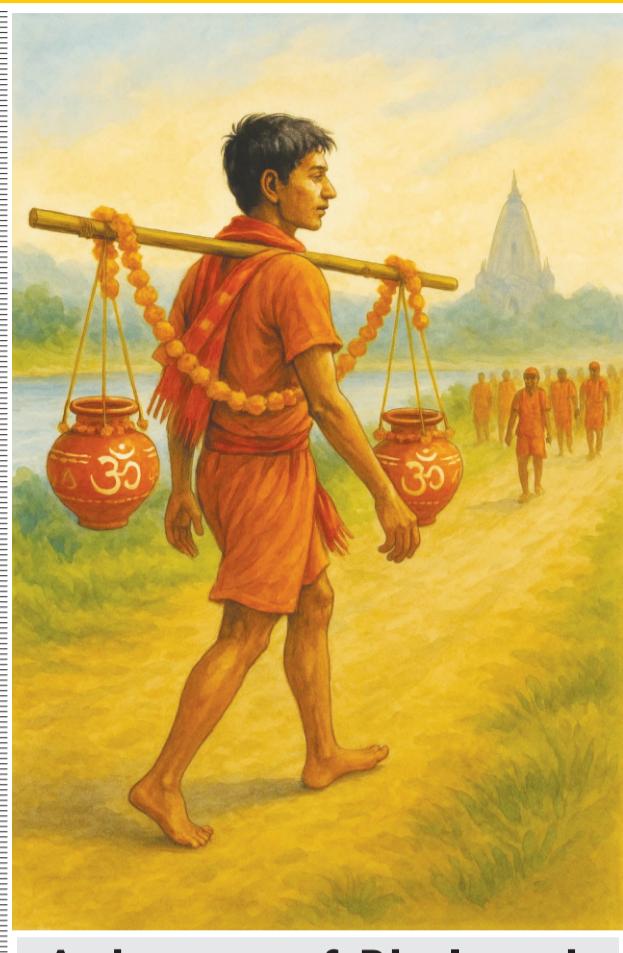
Southeast Asian nations, and negotiations so far suggest India's tariff rate would be better than those countries, one of the people said. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry didn't immediately respond to an email seeking further comment.

GLOBAL INSIGHT: Delhi's Trade Math in Talks with Trump
Soumya Kanti Ghosh, chief economist of State Bank of India, and a member of the prime minister's Economic Advisory Council, said the negotiating team

would be hoping to bring the tariff down to below 10%. "And in the bargain, the US will expect significant concessions for its goods when they decide to enter India," he said. While India is unwilling to open up the agricultural and dairy sectors, it may give concessions in non-agricultural sectors, he said.

India has already proposed to reduce tariffs

on American industrial goods to zero if the US does the same. New Delhi has also offered greater market access to some American farm products, and has also raised the possibility of buying more Boeing Co. planes. Aside from Indonesia, Trump has also announced trade deals with the UK and Vietnam, and a truce with China. Trump said Jakarta had agreed to purchase \$15 billion in US energy and \$4.5 billion worth of agricultural products along with Boeing planes. The latest development shows that tariff rates are gravitating toward 15%-20%, a range that Trump himself has indicated as his preferred level, said Brian Tan, Barclays Plc's economist in Singapore. The tariff letters sent to trading partners so far are likely a negotiating tactic to bring governments back to the table with better offers for the US, he said, "allowing the Trump administration to secure superior 'deals'."



A devotee of Bholenath carrying Kanwad

Parvesh Verma and Sirsa Inspect Ongoing Flyover and Underpass Construction

The Sikh Times

New Delhi. 17 July 2025

In a decisive move to address one of Delhi's most persistent traffic bottlenecks, major construction is underway at the intersection of Urban Extension Road-2 (UER-2) and the Delhi-Gurgaon-Jaipur Highway (Shiv Murti Chauraha). On Thursday, Public Works Department (PWD) Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh Verma and Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa conducted a joint inspection of the site to review progress and identify areas needing improvement.

This critical infrastructure project aims to resolve long-standing congestion issues in West and Outer Delhi. With lakhs of vehicles passing through the junction daily, years of delays have led to significant time loss, excessive fuel consumption, and deteriorating air quality. Speaking after the inspection, PWD Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh Verma stated that "I came here to review the shortcomings along with all the consultants. We will reassess the entire plan and work to resolve any remaining issues. The people of Delhi deserve sustainable, long-term solutions—not temporary fixes. Our goal is to ensure this project brings

genuine relief to commuters." Strategically located, the junction connects Najafgarh, Dwarika, Rohini, and the Delhi-Gurgaon-Jaipur corridor. The new flyover and underpass are expected to significantly reduce traffic congestion and ease pressure on alternative, overcrowded routes. Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa added "Our primary objective is to tackle pollution, which rises sharply due to prolonged traffic jams. Projects like this are not just about improving traffic flow—they are crucial to enhancing Delhi's air quality and overall environmental health". [continue news page 2](#)



Raj Thackeray's Men Do It Again. Rajasthan Man Assaulted Over WhatsApp Status

The video shows the shopkeeper being forced to apologise publicly while being threatened and physically attacked.

Mumbai. (Agency)

Raj Thackeray's men have done it again. A shopkeeper in Mumbai's Vikhroli was assaulted by workers of the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) over a WhatsApp status deemed offensive to the Marathi-speaking community. The video shows the shopkeeper being forced to apologise publicly while being threatened and physically attacked.

This marks the latest in a series of confrontations involving MNS workers over Marathi identity. The assault took place in the Tagore Nagar area of Vikhroli, a bustling suburb in Mumbai. The victim, a Rajasthani

shopkeeper, had posted a WhatsApp status that read: "Dekh liya Rajasthani ka power. Hum Marwari hamare saamne kisi ki nahi chalti (Witnessed the power of a Rajasthani. No one can stand before us Marwaris)."

The provocative message, which boasted of Marwari dominance over Marathi people, sparked outrage among local MNS workers. According to eyewitnesses and the viral video, a group of MNS workers confronted the shopkeeper outside his store. The video shows the man being slapped and verbally berated. The workers demanded he apologise to the Marathi community for his remarks. In the footage, the shopkeeper is seen holding his ears, and pleading, "I will not repeat such a mistake."

The MNS workers continued to threaten him, warning that any further posts against Marathi people, whether by him, his family, or his employees, would result in more severe

consequences. The video, which the MNS workers themselves recorded, edited, and circulated, includes a Marathi song in the background and a caption that reads: "This is how people will be treated if they say or write or speak anything against the Marathi people."



CM Rekha Gupta Meets Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman

The Sikh Times

New Delhi. 17 July 2025

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta met with Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman today in a courtesy meeting held at the Ministry of Finance. During the meeting, CM Rekha Gupta briefed the Union Minister about Delhi's ongoing development journey, current progress of various schemes, and future requirements. She highlighted how effective transformations are taking place in the capital with the support of the Central Government. CM also emphasized that under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the Central Government's "collaborative development policy" has given Delhi a new direction and momentum. The Chief Minister informed that the Union Finance Minister assured full and continued support from the Central Government towards the development of Delhi. "Delhi is not just the capital of the country, but also the cultural, administrative, and economic hub of India. Its planned development and good governance should serve as a model for all," the CM said. She added that the Delhi Government is consistently working in this direction so that Delhi residents receive all the facilities they

rightfully deserve as citizens of the national capital. The CM further revealed that the Union Finance Minister shared details about the Special Assistance to States/UTs for Capital Investment (SACI) scheme. Under this scheme, the Delhi



Government will receive ₹600 crore in special financial assistance by the end of this month. CM Gupta mentioned that a proposal for this allocation will soon be sent to the Ministry of Finance. She added that the funds will be used to accelerate development projects across the city, including traffic management, drainage, green energy, and waste management initiatives.

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Nitish Kumar's Move Out Of Arvind Kejriwal's Playbook Ahead Of Bihar Polls

Bihar government has decided to install solar power plants on the rooftops or in the nearby public places of domestic consumers in the next 3 years.

Patna. (Agency)

Ahead of Bihar elections, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Thursday announced that eligible domestic consumers across the state will receive up to 125 units of electricity free of cost starting August 1, a move set to benefit around 1.67 crore families. Ahead of Bihar elections, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Thursday announced that eligible domestic consumers across the state will receive up to 125 units of electricity free of cost starting August 1, a move set to benefit around 1.67 crore families. Mr Kumar said that the government has also decided to install solar power plants on the rooftops or in the nearby public places of domestic consumers in the next three years.

"We have been providing electricity to everyone at affordable rates from the very beginning. Now we have decided that from August 1, 2025, that is, from the July bill itself, all domestic consumers in the state will not have to pay any money for electricity up to 125 units. This will benefit a total of 1 crore 67 lakh families in the state," the Bihar CM said on X.

"We have also decided that in the next three years, with the consent of all these domestic consumers, solar power plants will be installed on their rooftops or at nearby public places to provide benefits," he added. Mr Kumar further stated that the state government will fully cover the cost of installing solar power systems for extremely poor families, while others will



receive suitable financial assistance under the Kurni Jyoti scheme. He stated that the state

could have up to 10,000 megawatts of solar energy available within the next three years.

"Under the Kurni Jyoti scheme, for extremely poor families, the state government will bear the entire cost of installing solar power plants, and for the rest, the government will provide appropriate support."

This means domestic consumers will no longer have to bear any cost for electricity up to 125 units, and at the same time, it is estimated that within the next three years, up to 10,000 megawatts of solar energy will be available in the state. Mr Kumar's post reads. This announcement came as a move to woo voters ahead of the state assembly elections scheduled for later this year.

Gujarat records 51.09% of the season's average rainfall: SEOOC

Highest rainfall recorded in Kutch followed by South Gujarat



Chandigarh .(Agency)

Gujarat has received 51 per cent of its average monsoon rainfall, according to data from the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOOC) Gandhinagar.

Among regions, Kutch has recorded the highest rainfall at 58.46 per cent, South Gujarat region at 55.19 per cent, Saurashtra and East Central region each at 49.26 per cent and North Gujarat

has recorded the lowest at 48.01 66 per cent, all within a month of onset of the southwest monsoon in the state. At the district level, however, Botad has recorded the highest rainfall at 80.39 per cent followed by Bhavnagar at 75.5 per cent, both in Saurashtra region. Other districts with the highest rainfall include Sabarkantha in the north with 66.17 per cent, Anand in the East Central region with

63.95 per cent, and Tapi and Surat in South Gujarat with 64 and 61.43 per cent, respectively.

So far, Gujarat has received a total 450.55 mm rainfall this season with 303 mm of rainfall in June alone and 147 mm in July. As per the SEOOC data, the highest of over 1,000 mm rainfall was recorded in 18 talukas, 501-1000 mm of rainfall in 45 talukas while 139 talukas recorded 251-500 mm of rainfall.

The data also shows the current water storage of Sardar Sarovar dam is 1,76,942 million cubic feet which is 52.96 per cent of the total storage capacity. Also, with 3,31,347 million cubic feet water in other 206 reservoirs in the state which is 59.37 per cent of the total storage capacity. (Explain?)

As per the state government records, out of the total 206 dams in the state, 40 are on high alert, 24 on alert and another 20 dams have been issued warning. In Gujarat, 26 dams are 100 per cent full, 58 dams range between 70 and 100 per cent in storage capacity, 40 dams between 50 and 70 per cent, 42 dams between 25 and 50 per cent, and 40 dams are below 25 per cent storage capacity. As per the India Meteorological Department (IMD) the state is expected to receive light thunderstorms with lightning and surface wind 30-40 kmph accompanied with light to moderate rain across the state till July 20.

To check Trafficking, exploitation: Punjab orders DNA tests on child beggars, adults with them to determine parentage

Chandigarh .(Agency)

The Punjab government Wednesday ordered to carry out DNA test on children involved in begging along with the adults accompanying them, to ascertain if they are their biological parents. "If the DNA test confirms that the adult is not related to the child, then strict legal action will be taken, including potential imprisonment," Cabinet Minister Dr Baljit Kaur said.

She said the state government is implementing a policy to conduct DNA tests on children found begging on the streets, particularly those accompanied by adults, to combat child trafficking and exploitation. This initiative is part of a broader effort to create a "beggar-free" Punjab and ensure the safety and security of children.

The Minister for Social Security, Women and Child Development said that the step is essential to safeguard innocent lives and ensure that no child is being used or trafficked under the guise of guardianship.

Earlier in the say, the state government directed the deputy commissioners (DCs) across the state to conduct DNA tests of children found begging in streets. The orders have been issued by the Directorate of Social Security (women and child welfare) under Project Jeevanjyoti-2.

District level Child Welfare Committee

under Section 27(9) may as per need, pass orders for conducting DNA test to ascertain the parentage of children and their accompanying adults in suspicious cases to child trafficking. Approval of DNA testing will be given by DCs or ADCs. Samples will be collected by labs from the government hospitals of the



district. The testing would be done by Forensic Science Laboratory free of cost. This would take around a week.

The DNA results will be documented and shared with the police. The confidentiality of the results will be maintained. Until the DNA results are received, the child will be placed in a child care institution under the supervision of the District Child Welfare Committee. Those claiming to be the parents or guardians will not be allowed to take custody of the child until their claims are verified.

Frant continue news

CM Rekha Gupta Meets Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta expressed gratitude to the Union Finance Minister for her positive outlook and cooperative approach. She stated that the people of Delhi are witnessing the direct benefits of the collaborative efforts between the Central and State Governments. The CM assured that the SASCI scheme will be implemented effectively and that every effort will be made to transform Delhi into a world-class capital city.

Senior officials from both the Finance Ministry and the Delhi Government were present during the meeting. The CM also emphasized that this meeting was not only crucial for accelerating the development of Delhi but also a prime example of cooperative federalism in action.

Parvesh Verma and Sirsa Inspect Ongoing Flyover and Underpass Construction

The ministers emphasized the importance of timely completion, engineering precision, and a citizen-centric approach in executing the project. Regular monitoring and accountability at every stage will be key to ensuring its success.

Though the challenge of traffic congestion has endured for years, the current phase represents a focused and coordinated effort to deliver lasting relief—making Delhi's roads safer, faster, and cleaner for all.

Over 1800 bridges inspected in Gujarat, 133 shut down as precautionary measure

Gandhinagar .(Agency)

The Roads and Buildings (R&B) department officials, in a week, have inspected over 1800 bridges in Gujarat during their spot visits and closed 133 of them as a precautionary measure, an official release said. The release also said that out of the 133 bridges, 20 were closed for all vehicles and 113 were closed only for heavy vehicles.

The official release quoted the information provided by senior minister and spokesperson of Gujarat government Rushikesh Patel. Patel was briefing the media about the weekly cabinet meeting of the state chaired by Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel. The cabinet meeting reviewed some important actions taken by the R&B department.

The release said: "Out of these 133 bridges, 20 have been closed for all vehicles. Whereas, 113 bridges have been closed for heavy vehicles while the movement for light vehicles' has been kept on. Non-destructive tests (NDT) have been done on those 133 bridges and the work of repair, strengthening or re-construction have been started on war footing as per requirement."

These 133 bridges also include nine bridges on Narmada canal network; five of them have been closed for all vehicles and four for heavy vehicles. The five bridges closed for all vehicles are in Morbi and Surendranagar districts.

Whereas, the four closed for heavy vehicles are in Ahmedabad and Patan districts. There are around 2110 bridges passing through the canal network in the state, as per an official release.

The Allahabad High Court noted that the trial court had convicted the appellant without properly reviewing the evidence and ordered his immediate release, ensuring that he regained possession of his home

Union Bank branch in Nagpur rejects Marathi FIR in accident claim case, MNS protests

Nagpur .(Agency)

The Nagpur police on Wednesday booked 14 Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) workers after they held a protest at the Union Bank of India's Seminary Hills branch on Wednesday over the bank allegedly refusing to accept a First Information Report (FIR) copy written in Marathi for an accident compensation claim. The protest stemmed from the case of Yogesh

Bopche, who died in a road accident on June 8. His family approached Union Bank to claim a Rs 2 lakh accidental death compensation. However, the bank allegedly turned down the claim because the FIR lodged at the Beltarodi police station was in Marathi.

Yogesh's brother, Lokesh, alleged that

the bank officials insisted that the FIR be translated into English or Hindi, notarised, and submitted as an affidavit. This demand led to weeks of delays for the family, who were left without support after the death of their sole breadwinner. On Wednesday,

MNS workers gathered outside the bank, shouted slogans, and threw black ink at the bank's board in protest. The situation escalated briefly when they confronted the branch manager. The protest concluded only after the manager issued an apology in the presence of the media and the Nagpur police.

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Chandauli to be developed as an industrial hub: CM Yogi

The Sikh Times

Chandauli, July 17: Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said Chandauli, a border and agriculture-based district, is now on the path to becoming an industrial hub. Speaking to the media after a review meeting on Thursday, he highlighted key projects, including the operational Baba Keenaram Medical College and the Varanasi Ring Road, which is emerging as a growth corridor in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision. He added, "The Medical college built in memory of Baba Keenaram has been operational since last year. Proposals from public representatives for the district's growth are being advanced quickly." Highlighting a long-standing demand, the CM mentioned the construction of an Integrated Court Complex in the district, with an investment of over Rs 200 crore. This complex will house all district-level courts under one roof, along with chambers for lawyers and residential facilities for judicial officers. The state government has already

approved the project. CM Yogi acknowledged the unique chal-

given in-principle approval to extend the expressway through



Ganga Expressway, which is in the final phase of construction between Meerut and Prayagraj. The expressway is planned to be extended from Prayagraj through Mirzapur, Bhadohi, Varanasi, Chandauli, and up to Ghazipur. This will be a major achievement for the district, as Chandauli will then be connected via two major expressways, offering significant benefits to the residents. He also said that the Central Government is rapidly developing the Greenfield Expressway between Varanasi and Kolkata, passing through Chandauli. This project will further enhance the district's connectivity and growth potential in the future.

During his interaction, CM Yogi confirmed that the installation of a statue of Baba Keenaram at the medical college has been approved. Proposals for other development projects in the district, such as an additional bridge over the Ganga River and the construction of an ele-

lenges faced by border districts like Chandauli and lauded the role of public representatives and residents in driving the district's progress. "The Purvanchal Expressway already connects Lucknow to Ghazipur, benefiting many people. The government has

Chandauli to Sonbhadra (Shaktinagar), with surveys currently underway. Once completed, this expressway will strengthen Chandauli's connectivity with Lucknow and Delhi," he added. The CM further mentioned that Chandauli will benefit from the

Three Government colleges in Haryana to be named after Martyrs and a Freedom Fighter of the Azad Hind Fauj

Chandigarh: The Haryana Government has decided to honour martyrs and a freedom fighter from the Azad Hind Fauj by naming three government colleges after them. Chief Minister, Sh. Nayan Singh Saini has given administrative approval to the naming of three colleges. Haryana Education Minister, Sh. Mahipal Dhanda said that the Government Women's College in Bawani Khera will be named after the late Thakur Sh. Shambhu Singh, a freedom fighter from the Azad Hind Fauj and the Chief Minister has also approved naming the Government College, Kharak (Bhiwani) after Martyr Gajendra Singh. Notably, on March 7, 2018, Sh. Gajendra Singh, who served as an Assistant Commandant in the 134 Battalion of the Border Security Force, was martyred while valiantly fighting Naxals near the Maspur village in the Natah Reserve Forest area of Kanker District, Chhattisgarh. In recognition of his bravery, he was awarded the Gallantry Medal on January 26, 2021. Additionally, the Haryana Government has given administrative approval to name the Government College, Sampla (Rohtak) after Martyr Rai Singh, who laid down his life while protecting the nation on the India-Pakistan Line of Control in Rajouri, Jammu, on November 20, 2016.

NFR waived-off Busy Season Charge for August 2025 to encourage Freight Movements

The Sikh Times

Maligaon, 17th July: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) in line with Ministry of Railways has issued two important policy revisions aimed towards facilitating smoother and more cost-effective freight movements, both of which will benefit the customers and stakeholders of railways within the zone and beyond. In a major relief for freight customers, it has been decided not to levy the Busy Season Charge (BSC) @15% on goods transported in covered wagons during August 2025. As per the existing dynamic pricing policy, the BSC is applicable throughout the year except for September. However, based on a review by the Competent Authority, this exemption has now been extended to August as well. This proactive measure is expected to ease logistics costs and encourage higher freight loading during the monsoon month. All other instructions related to the levy of BSC remain unchanged. In another development, the Railway Board has also revised the guidelines for free time allowed at Engine-On-Load (EOL) terminals. A separate provision has been made for BCNHL rakes, under which a free time of 8 hours has been allowed for both loading and unloading operations. For other types of covered rakes, the existing free time of 6 hours continues. This amendment is part of the Rates Master Circular on Demurrage and Wharfage Waiver and will come into effect from 17th July 2025. The extended free time for BCNHL rakes is expected to streamline terminal operations and reduce incidences of demurrage, benefitting both customers and the Railways. These policy measures reflect NFR's continued commitment towards fostering a customer-friendly and efficient freight ecosystem. By rationalizing charges and providing operational flexibility, the zone aims to support industries, boost freight movement and enhance overall ease of doing business. NFR always remains dedicated towards implementing such initiatives and invites all stakeholders to leverage these benefits for improved logistics planning and cost optimization.

Prasar Bharati Signs MoU with Handball Association of India to Promote Handball Nationwide

New Delhi: In a landmark move to promote handball across the country, Prasar Bharati has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Handball Association of India (HAI). The agreement is for a period of three years, under which Prasar Bharati will produce and broadcast all international and national Handball events organised by HAI on DD Sports, Waves OTT and other PB platforms. The MoU was formally exchanged between Shri Gaurav Dwivedi, CEO, Prasar Bharati, and Shri Anandeshwar Pandey, Executive Director, HAI, in the august presence of Chairman, Prasar Bharati Shri Navneet Kumar Sehgal and other esteemed personalities. On the signing of the agreement, Shri Navneet Kumar Sehgal, Chairman, Prasar Bharati, said, "This is just the beginning of a new era for Handball in India. We look forward to seeing Indian athletes excel globally with the support of strong media and institutional partnerships. Continuing with the vision of honourable PM, DD Sports has consistently highlighted emerging talent, grassroots tournaments, and inclusive sports, giving India's young athletes the recognition, they truly deserve." On this occasion, Shri Gaurav Dwivedi, CEO, Prasar Bharati, said, "This partnership underscores Prasar Bharati's commitment to supporting and nurturing emerging sports in India. Through our wide network and national reach, we aim to give Handball the platform and visibility it at national and international level." Speaking on behalf of the Handball Association of India, Shri Anandeshwar Pandey stated, "This MoU is a significant step toward popularizing handball at the grassroots and elite levels. The consistent coverage on DD Sports will inspire youth and boost the development of the sport across the country." Also present at the event were Shri Tejraj Singh, Secretary General, HAI; Shri Jasbir Singh Bisla, Chairman, Referee Board; and Ms. Diksha Kumari Goel, goalkeeper of the Indian Women's Handball Team. Shri Tejraj Singh, Secretary General, HAI, said, "With the collaboration of Prasar Bharati, handball will now reach millions of viewers across the nation. This initiative will help identify talent and strengthen India's position in international handball."

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by
Narendra Modi
Prime Minister

Friday, 18th July, 2025 11:00 A.M. Motihari, Bihar

In the august presence of

Arif Mohammed Khan
Governor, Bihar

Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias
Lalan Singh
Union Minister for Panchayati Raj,
Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying

Ram Nath Thakur
Union MoS of Agriculture and
Farmers Welfare

Nitish Kumar
Chief Minister, Bihar

Giriraj Singh
Union Minister of Textiles

Nityanand Rai
Union MoS of Home Affairs
Samrat Choudhary
Deputy Chief Minister, Bihar

Nitin Jairam Gadkari
Union Minister for Road Transport
& Highways

Ashwini Vaishnaw
Union Minister of Railways, Information
and Broadcasting & Electronics and
Information Technology

Satish Chandra Dubey
Union MoS for Coal and Mines
Vijay Kumar Sinha
Deputy Chief Minister, Bihar

Jitan Ram Manjhi
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Chirag Paswan
Union Minister of Food Processing
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NEWS BOX

50 dead and injured in shopping mall fire in Iraqi city of Kut

BAGHDAD . (Agency)

Around 50 people were killed and injured in a fire that swept through a shopping mall in the eastern Iraqi city of Kut, state media said Thursday.

"The number of victims has reached about 50 people, martyrs and injured, in the tragic fire at a major shopping centre," Wasit province governor Mohammed al-Miyahi told the official INA news agency. The blaze at the Hyper Mall broke out late Wednesday, but the cause has yet to be identified, said Miyahi. Ambulances were still transporting casualties as late as 4:00 am, filling beds of a hospital in Kut, about 160 kilometres (100 miles) southeast of Baghdad. An AFP correspondent said the mall had opened just five days ago. Initial reports suggested the fire started on the first floor.

The correspondent reported seeing charred bodies in hospital. Miyahi declared three days of mourning in the province and said local authorities would file a lawsuit against the building and mall owner.

Trial opens against Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg and other leaders over Facebook privacy violations

WILMINGTON, Del . (Agency)

An \$8 billion class action investors' lawsuit against Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg and company leaders — current and former — began Wednesday, with claims stemming from the 2018 privacy scandal involving the Cambridge Analytica political consulting firm.

Investors allege in their lawsuit that Meta did not fully disclose the risks that Facebook users' personal information would be misused by Cambridge Analytica, a firm that supported Donald Trump's successful Republican presidential campaign in 2016. Shareholders say Facebook officials repeatedly and continually violated a 2012 consent order with the Federal Trade Commission under which Facebook agreed to stop collecting and sharing personal data on platform users and friends without their consent.

Facebook later sold user data to commercial partners in direct violation of the consent order and removed disclosures from privacy settings that were required under consent order, the lawsuit alleges.

The fallout led to Facebook agreeing to pay a \$5.1 billion penalty to settle FTC charges. The social media giant also faced significant fines in Europe and reached a \$725 million privacy settlement with users. Now shareholders want Zuckerberg and others to reimburse Meta for the FTC fine and other legal costs, which the plaintiffs estimate total more than \$8 billion. The first trial witness, privacy expert Neil Richards, testified Monday morning for the shareholders.

"Facebook's privacy disclosures were misleading," said Richards, a professor at Washington University Law School. In later testimony, Jeffrey Zients, who served on Facebook's board from 2018 to 2020, testified that consumer privacy and user data were priorities for both management and the board. Nonetheless, he supported settling with the FTC as it investigated potential violations of the 2012 consent order, so the company could move forward.

"It was difficult because this was a lot of money, but I think it was better than the alternative," Zients said.

Asked if the board considered making its founder a party to the settlement, he said Zuckerberg was "essential" to running the company. And, Zients, who served in both the Obama and Biden administrations, said, "there was no indication that he had done anything wrong." The case is expected to run through late next week and include testimony from both Zuckerberg and former Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg.

Yemen's Houthi rebels claim missile attack on Israel's Ben Gurion airport

SANA . (Agency)

Yemen's Houthi rebels claimed a missile launched at Israel's main civilian airport, after the Israeli military said it intercepted a missile fired from the Arabian Peninsula country. The Iran-backed rebels targeted Ben Gurion International Airport near Tel Aviv with a "Zulfiqar ballistic missile" and drone, military spokesman Yehya Saree said late Wednesday. In the video statement, he also announced drone attacks on military targets and the southern Israeli port of Eilat. The Houthis have launched repeated missile and drone attacks against Israel since the Gaza war began in October 2023, sparked by Hamas's attack on Israel, claiming solidarity with Palestinians.

In response, Israel has carried out several air strikes on Yemen, including on the port city of Hodeida earlier this month. The Israeli military had said that "following the sirens that sounded a short while ago in several areas in Israel, one missile that was launched from Yemen was intercepted."



Early on Wednesday, pro-government forces in Yemen said they seized "750 tonnes of weapons" en route from Iran to the Houthis. US Central Command hailed the operation, calling it "the largest seizure of Iranian advanced conventional weapons in their history."

Tarek Saleh, who heads the Yemeni National Resistance Forces, said in a post on X that the seizure included "naval and air missile systems, an air defence system, modern radars, drones, monitoring devices, anti-tank missiles, B-10 artillery, tracking lenses, sniper rifles, ammunition, and military equipment."

With its rivalry with India and its desire to simultaneously work with Pakistan on numerous issues, China increasingly sees itself as a stakeholder in the Indus Waters Treaty, too.

World.(Agency)

With the future of a crucial water-sharing treaty between India and Pakistan up in the air, one outside party is looking on with keen interest: China. For 65 years, the Indus Waters Treaty has seen the two South Asian rivals share access and use of the Indus Basin, a vast area covered by the Indus River and its tributaries that also stretches into Afghanistan and China. For much of that history, there has been widespread praise for the agreement as a successful demonstration of cooperation between adversarial states over a key shared

resource. But experts have noted the treaty has long held the potential for conflict. Drafters failed to factor in the effects of climate change, and the Himalayan glaciers that feed the rivers are now melting at record rates, ultimately putting at risk the long-term sustainability of water supply.

Meanwhile, the ongoing conflict over Kashmir, where much of the basin is situated, puts cooperation at risk.

With treaty on ice, China steps in. That latest provocation threatening the treaty was a terrorist attack in the Indian union territory of Jammu and Kashmir on April 22, 2025. In response to that attack, which India blamed on Pakistan and precipitated a four-day confrontation, New Delhi temporarily suspended the treaty.

But even before that attack, India and Pakistan had been locked in negotiation over the future of the treaty — the status of which has been in the hands of international arbitrators since 2016.

In the latest development, on June 27, 2025, the Permanent Court of Arbitration issued a

supplementary award in favor of Pakistan, arguing that India's holding of the treaty in abeyance did not affect its jurisdiction over the case. Moreover, the treaty does not allow for either party to unilaterally suspend the treaty, the ruling suggested.



Amid the wrangling over the treaty's future, Pakistan has turned to China for diplomatic and strategic support. Such support was evident during the conflict that took place following April's terrorist attack, during which Pakistan employed Chinese-made fighter jets and other military equipment against its neighbor. Meanwhile, in an

apparent move to counter India's suspension of the treaty, China and Pakistan have ramped up construction of a major dam project that would provide water supply and electricity to parts of Pakistan. So, why is China getting involved?

In part, it reflects the strong relationship between Pakistan and China, developed over six decades. But as an expert in hydro politics, I believe Beijing's involvement raises concerns: China is not a neutral observer in the dispute. Rather, Beijing has long harbored a desire to increase its influence in the region and to counter an India long seen as a rival. Given the at-times fraught relationship between China and India — the two countries went to war in 1962 and continue to engage in

sporadic border skirmishes — there are concerns in New Delhi that Beijing may respond by disrupting the flow of rivers in its territory that feed into India.

In short, any intervention by Beijing over the Indus Waters Treaty risks stirring up regional tensions.

Justice Department fires Maurene Comey, prosecutor on Epstein case and daughter of ex-FBI director

Washington. (Agency)

The Justice Department has fired Maurene Comey, the daughter of former FBI director James Comey and a federal prosecutor in Manhattan who worked on the cases against Sean "Diddy" Combs and Jeffrey Epstein, three people familiar with the matter told The Associated Press on Wednesday. There was no specific reason given for her firing, according to one of the people. They spoke to the AP on the condition of anonymity to discuss personnel matters. Maurene Comey was a veteran lawyer in the Southern District of New York, long considered the most elite of the Justice Department's prosecution offices. Her cases included the sex trafficking prosecution of Epstein, who killed himself behind bars in 2019 as he was awaiting trial, and the recent case against Combs, which ended earlier this month with a mixed verdict.

She didn't immediately respond to messages seeking comment Wednesday. It's the latest move by the Justice Department to fire lawyers without explanation, which has raised

alarm over a disregard for civil service protections designed to prevent terminations for political reasons. The Justice Department has also fired a number of prosecutors who worked on cases that have provoked President Donald Trump's ire, including some who handled U.S. Capitol riot cases and lawyers and support staff who worked on special counsel Jack Smith's prosecutions of Trump.

Maurene Comey was long seen as a potential target given her father's fraught relationship over the last decade with the Republican president. The Justice Department recently appeared to acknowledge the existence of an investigation into James Comey, though the basis for that inquiry is unclear. Most recently, she was the lead prosecutor among six female prosecutors in the sex trafficking and racketeering case against Combs. The failure to convict the hip-hop mogul of the main charges, while gaining a conviction on prostitution-related charges that will likely result in a prison sentence of just a few years, was viewed by some fellow lawyers as a

rare defeat by prosecutors. But she was successful in numerous other prosecutions, most notably the conviction of Ghislaine Maxwell on sex trafficking charges for helping financier Epstein sexually abuse underage girls. In that case, she delivered a rebuttal argument during closings, as she did in the Combs case. Her firing comes as Attorney General Pam Bondi faces intense criticism from some members of Trump's base for the Justice Department's decision not to release any more evidence in the government's possession from Epstein's sex trafficking investigation. Some right-wing internet personalities, like Laura Loomer, who have been critical of Bondi's handling of the Epstein files had been calling for Maurene Comey's firing.

James Comey was the FBI director when Trump took office in 2017, having been appointed by then-President Barack Obama and serving before that as a senior Justice Department official in President George W. Bush's administration.

US Senate passes \$9B in spending cuts to public broadcasting, foreign aid requested by Trump

Democrats argued that the Trump administration's animus toward foreign aid programs would hurt America's standing in the world and create a vacuum for China to fill.

WASHINGTON. (Agency)

The US Senate has passed about \$9 billion in federal spending cuts requested by President Donald Trump, including deep reductions to public broadcasting and foreign aid, moving forward on one of the president's top priorities despite concerns from several Republican senators. The legislation, which now moves to the House, would have a tiny impact on the nation's rising debt but



could have major ramifications for the targeted spending, from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to US food aid programs abroad. It also could complicate efforts to pass additional spending bills this year, as Democrats and even some Republicans have argued they are ceding congressional spending powers to

Trump with little idea of how the White House Office of Management and Budget would apply the cuts. The 51-48 vote came after 2 am on Thursday after Democrats sought to remove many of the proposed rescissions during 12 hours of amendment votes. None of the Democratic amendments were adopted.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., said Republicans were using the president's rescissions request to target wasteful spending. He said it is a "small but important step for fiscal sanity that we all should be able to agree is long overdue." But Senate Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Susan Collins, R-Maine, said the bill "has a big problem — nobody really knows what program reductions are in it." Collins and Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, joined Democrats in voting against the legislation. Kentucky Sen.

Why is Israel involved? The ousting of the Assad regime created a strategic opening for Israel to expand its influence in southern Syria. Israel's involvement is driven by two primary concerns:

1. Securing its northern border

Israel views the power vacuum in Syria's south as a potential threat, particularly the risk of anti-Israeli militias establishing a foothold near its northern border. During the recent clashes, the Israeli military declared: "The Israeli Defence Forces will not allow a military threat to exist in southern Syria and will act against it."

4 killed, many injured in clashes between Bangladeshi forces and ex-PM Hasina's supporters

Pro-Hasina activists with sticks attacked police and set vehicles on fire as a 20-car student convoy arrived to mark the 2024 uprising led by the newly formed National Citizen Party.

DHAKA. (Agency)

Bangladeshi security forces on Wednesday clashed with supporters of ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, leaving at least four people dead and scores injured, a hospital official and local media said. The violence erupted in the morning and spread as a new political party formed by students who led the uprising against Hasina in August last year announced a march

toward southwestern Gopalganj district, Hasina's ancestral home, and her Awami League party's stronghold. Authorities later imposed an overnight curfew in the district. Since Hasina's ouster 11 months ago, Bangladesh has been marked by chaos and unchecked mob violence. Wednesday's attack underscores the deep divisions in the country as its interim government keeps failing to bring the deteriorating security situation under control. TV footage showed pro-Hasina activists armed with sticks attacking police and setting vehicles on fire as a convoy of about 20 vehicles carrying the leaders of the students' National Citizen Party arrived as part of commemorations of the uprising. Party leaders took shelter in the office of the local police chief. Footage showed top leaders being escorted by soldiers to an armored vehicle for safety. They later left for a neighboring district with security escorts. Arifical Intelligence uses Jibitesh Biswas, a senior official of a state-run

hospital, told reporters that the bodies of at least three people had been brought in. The country's leading English-language Daily Star reported that four people died. The interim government said Wednesday the attackers on the students would not go "unpunished" and in a statement issued on behalf of interim leader Muhammad Yunus, described the violence in Gopalganj as "utterly indefensible." Hasina's Awami League party, which authorities banned in May, issued several statements on X condemning the violence and blaming the interim government for the deaths and



injuries. "We urge the world to take note of this blatant use of security apparatus," one Awami statement said, adding that it had used mob violence against "dissenters." Student leader Nahid Islam gave the authorities a 24-hour ultimatum to arrest those responsible for the Gopalganj violence and floated the prospect of another march in the neighboring district of Faridpur on Thursday. The right-wing Jamaat-e-Islami party condemned the attacks on the student-led party and announced a nationwide protest in all districts and main cities for Thursday. A nation in turmoil critics of the interim government warn of a widening polarization that has reduced hopes for national reconciliation even as Yunus' administration pledges to bring order in the post-Hasina era. They say if the situation does not improve, a peaceful transition to democracy would be jeopardized. Nobel Peace Prize laureate Yunus took over the country three days after Hasina was toppled and fled to India, pledging to restore order.

Contractors served notices over road damages under Defect Liability Period, told to repair them at own expense

Ahmedabad . (Agency)

IN A major crackdown against defaulting contractors for road damages across the state, within 17 municipal corporations and 149 municipalities limits, the state government has issued notices and penalised several contractors. As massive public anger and backlash followed the collapse of Gambhira bridge in Vadodara on July 9, and with the corporation elections due within a year, the civic bodies have issued notices to over 25 contractors falling within the Defect Liability Period (DLP), who have been asked to repair 659 km of damaged roads across 17 municipal corporations.

Sources in the state government stated that this is the first such massive campaign against contractors over road damages.

Explanatory notices have also been issued to the engineering staffers of municipal corporations. "The repair work is closely monitored centrally, daily, and the municipal corporations and municipalities have been directed to rectify the damages at the earliest. Wherever negligence will be found, corporations will take stern action against whoever is responsible," M Thennarasan, Principal Secretary, Urban Development and Urban Housing Department, told.

Meanwhile, the government has claimed to have repaired 99 per cent of damaged roads in the state. As on Wednesday, 577 km of road stretches, which had been damaged, were repaired and 16,665 out of 16,832 potholes stood repaired across the state's municipal corporations, it said. While the Surat Municipal Corporation issued notices to nine road contractors, it penalised them to the tune of Rs 50.42 lakh for potholes and damages found on the roads during the Defect Liability Period (DLP). SMC officials claim that almost all the major roads in the city have been repaired.

Surat Municipal Commissioner Shalini Agrawal said, "Since the last five days, we have been running a drive to repair and resurface the roads in Surat city. The work is done in all nine zones in the city limits. We first issued notices to the road contractors and later penalised them to the tune of Rs 50.42 lakh. The two hot mix plants of SMC operate as per the demand of the zones. Both plants have been working 24/7 for the last few days to meet the demand for hot bitumen and other materials. Till now, over 270 roads within the city limits have been made, and over 4,000 tonnes of bitumen have been used. SMC is personally looking after the repairing and resurfacing work." Similarly, in Vadodara city, while 12 contractors have been issued notices and penalised to the tune of Rs 18 lakh, show-cause notices have been issued to nine deputy engineers of the Vadodara Municipal Corporation.

Gujarat becomes first state to launch genome sequencing project for tribals: Minister

Ahmedabad. (Agency)

Gujarat has launched a first-of-its-kind project, under which, genome sequencing of 2,000 people from various tribal communities across 17 districts in the state will be carried out to identify the "burden of hereditary diseases", including sickle cell anemia. Gujarat is the first state to launch a tribal genome project, said Tribal Development Minister Kuber Dindor,



who participated in a state-level dialogue in Gandhinagar on Tuesday. The Tribal Genome Sequencing Project, Dindor said, will prove to be a new milestone towards a prosperous and healthy future of the tribal community and act as a bridge between science and tradition. "This project will prove to be very useful for the health

'GI proprietors can file suit': HC dismisses PIL by lawyers against 'unauthorised use' of Kolhapuri chappal by Prada

Mumbai . (Agency)

The Bombay High Court Wednesday dismissed a public interest litigation (PIL) by six Pune-based lawyers seeking action against Italian luxury brand Prada for allegedly showcasing footwear resembling Kolhapuri chappal in its spring-summer 2026 menswear collection.

A division bench of Chief Justice Alok Adarsh and Justice Sandeep V Marne was hearing a PIL, which claimed that the Kolhapuri chappal was already protected as a Geographical Indication (GI) under the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act and is a "cultural symbol" of Maharashtra.

The court asked the petitioners what their "locus standi" was, and what the "public interest" was. It also asked them why the Sant Rohidas Leather Industries and Charmakar Development Corporation Ltd. (LIDCOM) of Maharashtra government, which was made a respondent, could not file the suit.

The petitioners, among other prayers, sought direction restraining Prada from

commercialising and using the "toe ring sandals", claiming that the same was originally "Kolhapuri chappal" and they cannot use the same without any authorisation availed from the registered proprietor or authorised users. The plea also sought compensation to the artisans' community for "reputational and economic damages".

The bench orally questioned petitioners, "You want an injunction in PIL? Let (the) affected parties file a suit. Why can't the proprietors of GI file it? You will have to tell us two things. What is your locus standi and public interest? Every person, whosoever is aggrieved by infringement of GI can take action in accordance with law. If you are an aggrieved person, do so. Infringement action cannot be decided in PIL. It will require evidence. It is not that the proprietor of GI cannot come to the court due to social or economic background that you (petitioners) have to espouse their cause. The proprietors can take



their own action." Advocate Ganesh Hingmire for petitioners responded that although they were not owners or proprietors of GI, they had worked for the community to protect their intellectual property rights, which were infringed due to Prada's action.

Senior advocate Ravi Kadam for PRADA Group contested the maintainability of the plea, stating that the petitioners lacked locus standi (legal standing) to file it. He argued that the two leather industries or corporations from Maharashtra and Karnataka are jointly

registered proprietors of the GI and have the right to file a suit for infringement in case the word "Kolhapuri" is used in relation to footwear.

After perusing submissions, the bench in its order noted that LIDCOM and Dr. Babu Jagjivan Ram Leather Industries Development Corporation Ltd. (LIDKAR) of Karnataka government, were registered proprietors of GI for Kolhapuri Chappals and "they can bring an action against any unauthorised user for infringement" through a suit under the GI Act, if they believe PRADA unauthorisedly used registered GI.

The HC said that such an action cannot be permitted to be agitated through PIL and that both the organisations were established to look after welfare of artisans and "posses necessary wherewithal" for bringing action against PRADA. Dismissing the PIL, the HC also said adjudication of dispute on claims of similarity between two products and infringement required leading of evidence and same cannot be under through PIL.

UP religious conversion row: Chhangur Baba's landlord asked to pay Rs 8.5 lakh as demolition cost

Lucknow.(Agency)

The Balrampur district administration in Uttar Pradesh Wednesday issued a notice directing the landlord of Jalaluddin alias Chhangur Baba, arrested for alleged illegal religious conversions, to pay Rs 8.5 lakh as compensation for the costs incurred in demolishing unauthorised constructions. The administration demolished a part of the house where Chhangur Baba had been living for the past four years, a few days ago, after discovering that it was allegedly constructed on government land.

House owner Neetu alias Nasreen, 35, was arrested along with Baba in Lucknow on July 5. The two were in seven-day police custody, which ended Wednesday.

Balrampur Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Satya Pal stated that the house owner has been given 15 days to pay the fine; failing to do so, a recovery certificate will be issued against her. He added that the compensation amount was calculated based on the expenses incurred over the three days it took to demolish the portion of the house, which stood on nearly two biswa of land.

Along with Baba and Neetu, his son Mehboob and Neetu's husband Naveen alias Jamaluddin are also under arrest in the same case. The police stated that Neetu and Naveen, originally from Mumbai, had relocated to Madhpur with their daughter, purchased land, and built a large house spanning approximately four bighas of land, where Baba later came to live with them.

As Neetu and her husband Naveen are in judicial custody and no one is available to receive the notice, the district administration pasted it on the wall of the house, which is currently at the centre of the religious conversion case.

The SDM stated that the compensation was calculated based on the expenses incurred during the three consecutive days of demolition. The SDM said that on the first day of the demolition, nine JCB machines were used, followed by eight JCBs on each of the next two days. The wages of 10 labourers involved in the demolition, along with the three-day salaries of government officials and personnel engaged in the operation, were also included in the cost.

IndiGo Delhi-Goa flight makes emergency landing in Mumbai after mid-air engine snag

One of the highlights this year for participants is that provisional patents will be filed for students' innovations

Mumbai . (Agency)

An IndiGo flight en route from New Delhi to Goa was forced to make an emergency landing in Mumbai on Wednesday night following a mid-air technical snag, the airline and airport officials confirmed.

Flight 6E 6271, an Airbus A320neo carrying

191 passengers and crew members, landed

safely at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) at 9.53 pm.

The aircraft had taken off from Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport and was

approximately 100 nautical miles north of Bhubaneswar when the crew identified a

problem with one of its engines. The pilots

issued a "PAN PAN PAN" call — an international radio distress signal used to

indicate an urgent situation that does not

pose an immediate threat to life — and

requested a diversion to Mumbai at around

9.32 pm. In accordance with standard



emergency protocols, CSMIA authorities declared a full emergency at 9.35 pm.

Firefighting units and an ambulance were

placed on standby and escorted the plane

after landing. The emergency was officially

lifted at 9.57 pm, once the aircraft had taxied

safely to the parking bay. "The aircraft safely

landed at 21:52 hours.

The complete emergency was cancelled at 21:57

hours. Passengers were safely disembarked and handled by terminal

personnel," a spokesperson for CSMIA said, adding that airport

operations were not

affected during the incident.

IndiGo confirmed the diversion in a statement

on Thursday: "A technical snag was noticed

on flight 6E 6271 during flight from Delhi to

Manohar International Airport, Goa, on 16

July 2025. Following protocol, the flight

was diverted and landed in Chhatrapati

Shivaji Maharaj International Airport, Mumbai."

Headlight fragments, CCTV footage: How cops traced vehicle that knocked down Fauja Singh

Jalandhar.(Agency)

A Canada-based man, who was allegedly driving an SUV that knocked down Fauja Singh — regarded as the oldest person and the first centenarian marathoner — leading to his death, has been arrested and sent to judicial custody, police Wednesday said.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Jalandhar Rural, Harvinder Singh, told reporters they arrested Amritpal Singh Dhillon (26) Tuesday night and seized his vehicle — a Toyota Fortuner. "We took the case as a challenge and solved it within 30 hours," SSP said, adding Dhillon was produced before a Jalandhar court, which remanded him to judicial custody for two weeks.

Dhillon was picked from his native Dasupur village in Kartarpur area of Jalandhar, the SSP said. "He had gone to Canada on a student visa but got a work permit there, which is valid till 2027. His three sisters and mother

are in Canada while he came to Punjab on June 23–24. He bought the vehicle from a Kapurthala-based person. He holds a valid driver's license," the SSP said.

Fauja Singh, 114, died Monday evening, hours after being struck by the speeding vehicle.

The incident took place while was crossing the Jalandhar-Pathankot highway to reach an eatery, named after his deceased son, at his native Beas village in Jalandhar.

SSP Virk said multiple teams were formed and CCTV camera footage from various locations was examined. "Nearly 35 vehicles were

found to have crossed the accident site around the time (3.08 pm) the incident occurred.

Eyewitnesses said that Fauja Singh was thrown nearly 6-7 feet into the air upon impact. They could not clearly identify the vehicle but suspected it could have been a Toyota Innova or Fortuner," the SSP said, adding fragments of the vehicle's broken

headlight was recovered from the scene.

"Our investigation led us to a Fortuner that matched the timeline. The fragments recovered from accident site matched the damage pattern on the SUV's headlight," the SSP added.

In a CCTV footage, the registration number of the vehicle was readable, and we tracked that," the SSP said, adding the vehicle's registration number led police to Varinder Singh, a resident of Athouli village in Kapurthala. Upon questioning, Varinder revealed that he had sold the vehicle to Dhillon. Police then located

Amritpal who, during interrogation, allegedly confessed to the hit-and-run.

Dhillon was speeding when he hit Fauja Singh. He was going towards Jalandhar, but after the accident, he returned home by driving through villages. The accused also told police

that he had got one of the tyres of the car changed on the day of the incident.

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that he had got one of the tyres of the car changed on the day of the incident.

"At that time, he was not aware of the identity of



the man he had hit. He told us that he got scared (after the accident) and that is why he did not stop his vehicle there. It was his legal and moral responsibility to stop and take the victim to a hospital. He failed to do so," SSP Virk added.

To a question, the SSP said the accused did not have any criminal case registered against

him. "It is possible that since Indian cars are left-hand drive while in Canada it is right-hand, one could not get a grip on the driving (conditions) here," he said, adding the accused was alone in the vehicle at the time of the accident.

A case has been registered against Dhillon under Sections 281 and 105 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sahita (BNS), the SSP said.

Fauja Singh's son Harvinder Singh told reporters in Jalandhar on Wednesday that Dhillon could have stopped his SUV and immediately rushed the marathoner to a hospital. "Maybe that could have saved his life.

Had he not fled, we would not have taken any action against him (the erring driver)," he said. Born in 1911 into a family of farmers, Fauja's tryst with marathons began when he was 89. Between 2000 and 2013, Fauja Singh completed nine full marathons.

Why the brand in the mirror must trust one

We live in the midst of a brand clutter. Look around. Nothing is unbranded anymore. Literally everything you and I use are branded items. Some more aggressively than others. Nevertheless, nothing remains pristine without the sacred or not-so-sacred touch—depending on what you believe—of branding. There are daily-use products and, equally, service brands that many of us recognise by the labels they sport. Every category has a hierarchy of brands that spans the category of the popular, the premium and the luxury. Every breath you take and every step you take are dictated by a brand in some way or another. This newspaper in your hand is a brand, just as the toothpaste you used to brush your teeth with this morning is one. The book you will read later is a brand—as are all the people you meet today. That brings us to the human brand—the persona brand each one of us is. If you have a name all your own, you are a brand. So am I. And there begins the journey of the human brand: a name given to distinguish one from the other. You and I are, therefore, brands in our own right, each with a distinct identity. When your parents gave you your name, the journey of your brand label began. We are wedded to our names till death. And, interestingly, beyond. Human brands are really valuable offerings in the great marketplace of brands. While every one of our cricketers is wildly aware of the potential of their personal brand, many of us are blissfully unaware of the trueblue potential of our own. I have been working in the realm of personal branding for the last two decades. These brands are really as personal as the person is, and therefore to each their own.

Some prefer to focus on their personal brands and others just let it be. While some cultivate their brand image with care, others let it happen on its own. And then there are others who want to cultivate a brand persona which is not theirs at all. What, then, is right and what is wrong? Artificial Intelligence uses Artificial Intelligence uses. Brands are built mostly with method and a bit of madness. The ones built in this manner are carefully cultivated. To an extent, personal brands built this way are insecure offerings. They ape practices and processes from the realm of inanimate product and service brands and tend to set for themselves goals that are not true to them. They are not real in many ways. They are forced articulations of what they believe is good to be. It is not really what they are. And there lies the problem. Many a persona brand from the realm of politics are socialists by day and socialites by night. Over the last two decades, of the 79 prominent politicians from across the spectrum in India, Sri Lanka, Singapore and Thailand I have worked with, only 14 have asked me to showcase them to be who they really are; 65 other souls prefer to be seen as better versions of who they really are. Some, of course, want vastly improved imageries, at times even diametrically opposed to their real selves. I have refused many. My ethos in personal branding is a simple one. If you are a wolf, look like a wolf. Don't attempt a 'wolf in sheep's clothing' image. It rarely works. Even if it works, it does only for a while. I do believe personal branding has three distinct avatars: the good, the bad and the ugly. The good is when you are using the tools of personal branding to promote your persona with a set of objectives to help people better their lives in some way. The good politician is that kind of an entity. To folks of this kind, the direction in personal branding is clear: you be you. Whatever you are, portray that with vigour. Don't add one iota of garam masala to your image. Not even a tadka or garnish. That makes you a truthful persona who will be looked up to.

Imposing Hindi risks alienation, not cohesion. The notion of linguistic dominance is fundamentally flawed — it breeds division, resentment and social fracture.

LANGUAGE binds us, divides us and often defines us. Recently, a junior colleague from a Hindi-speaking state sighed at the latest language controversy, calling it a fresh irritant, I reminded him sharply of Rahat Indori's line, "Humarey moonh mein, tumhari zubaan thodi hai" (It's not in my mouth that your language dwells). I argued that the notion of a single national language belonged to an outdated era — 1920s to 1940s. Today, insisting on linguistic uniformity feels as obsolete as driving an Ambassador in the age of Tesla. Historically, languages have profoundly shaped nations. Kemal Pasha modernised Turkish, solidifying Turkey's identity as distinct from its Ottoman past. Israel brought back Hebrew, once confined to religious rituals, into daily life, creating a sense of cultural pride and unity. Yet, these successes weren't universal. In Pakistan, when Muhammad Ali Jinnah sought to impose Urdu as the sole national language in 1948, students at Dacca University fiercely opposed it.

Their demand for equal respect for Bengali ignited the linguistic nationalism that eventually birthed Bangladesh. This vividly illustrates that linguistic imposition rarely achieves unity but instead fuels resistance. India, rich in linguistic diversity, faced even greater complexities at Independence. The framers of our Constitution selected Hindi, crafted in Devanagari script by British scholars at Fort William in Calcutta, hoping it would unify the nation. But resistance erupted soon thereafter. The strongest protests erupted in Tamil Nadu in the 1960s, and resistance echoed across several states, not just in the South. Punjab rejected Hindi, asserting its right to use Punjabi in the Gurmukhi script. After an intense agitation, Punjab achieved its separate linguistic identity in 1966. Similarly, in eastern India, Oriya speakers resisted the dominance of Bengali, securing Odisha's cultural autonomy. Assam's linguistic anxieties triggered riots against perceived Bengali encroachment, leaving scars still visible in the stereotyping of every Bengali-speaking Muslim as Bangladeshi.

These disputes underline a critical truth: language is deeply tied to identity, dignity and pride. The Supreme Court recently affirmed, "Language is culture. Language is the yardstick to measure the civilisational march of a community and its people... its earliest and primary purpose will always remain communication." Language should serve as a bridge, not a barrier. Yet, it often becomes a tool manipulated by political interests seeking dominance. Despite historical lessons, periodically, the official impulse to enforce Hindi resurfaces, especially in moments of heightened nationalism. Politicians sometimes view language as an easy shortcut to national unity, overlooking the complex realities of India's multilingual society. But India's unity thrives precisely because of its linguistic diversity, not despite it. Imposing



Hindi risks alienation, not cohesion. The notion of linguistic dominance is fundamentally flawed — it breeds division, resentment and social fracture.

Today's digital age, dominated by English, further transforms language dynamics. English has become a global linguistic bridge, essential for international commerce, science, technology and diplomacy. Regional languages, in contrast, have become islands of localised expression. In this new landscape, demanding Hindi exclusivity is impractical and irrelevant. Language flexibility, multilingual capabilities and openness are now prerequisites for global success and even domestic harmony. For instance, a Hindi-speaking businessman who masters Chinese or Russian has enormous global advantages. Can he realistically insist that everyone within India, whether in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal or Punjab, must respond solely in Hindi? Such an insistence would not only harm business interests but also create unnecessary friction. Effective communication thrives on mutual understanding, respect, and linguistic adaptability, not on forced uniformity.

Moreover, the Supreme Court's judgment in April emphasised multilingual coexistence: "Our misconceptions, perhaps even our prejudices against a language, have to be courageously and truthfully tested against reality, which is the great diversity of our nation: Our strength can never be our weakness," wrote Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia in *Varshatai vs Maharashtra*. Indeed, India's strength lies in its diversity, including linguistic

diversity. Social harmony depends on respecting this diversity, not suppressing it. Educational systems should also reflect an inclusive approach. Linguistic education should aim not merely at proficiency in a single national language but at nurturing multilingual skills, promoting linguistic respect and appreciating diverse cultural heritages. Schools must emphasise linguistic equality rather than superiority. It would foster greater national integration, cultural appreciation and mutual respect among citizens. Furthermore, languages are repositories of history and culture. They carry unique stories, traditions and perspectives. Suppressing a language or elevating one at the expense of others risks erasing these rich cultural narratives. The push for linguistic homogeneity ignores the deeply emotional and personal attachment communities have to their mother tongues. It disregards the truth that language is more than just communication — it is heritage, emotion and identity.

The solution lies not in forcing a uniform language but in fostering an environment where languages can coexist and flourish together. The challenge is to encourage linguistic harmony without dominance, promoting multilingualism as an asset, not a problem. As I firmly told my colleague, no one has the right to dictate another person's language or force their understanding. Your language does not reside in my mouth. The freedom to choose one's language is fundamental, reflecting individual and community dignity. Respecting linguistic autonomy fosters social cohesion, mutual respect and true national unity.

Food logistics key to keeping retail inflation in check

The consistently high prices of vegetables and pulses over the last few years had been pushing up food inflation to punishing levels.

Economists say their easing reflects a good monsoon, expanded kharif sowing and improved water supply

It is indeed good news for consumers that retail inflation substantially eased in June. The inflation rate based on the Consumer Price Index fell to 2.10 percent—the lowest since January 2019 and a significant drop from the 5.08 percent registered in June 2024. It also marked the eighth consecutive month the retail rate has moderated at pre-pandemic levels and stayed near the bottom of the RBI's tolerance band of 2-6 percent for the fifth month on the trot. The wholesale inflation, too, fell to a 20-month low of -0.13 percent and retail food prices contracted by 1.06 percent in June. This is significant because the lower down the economic pyramid one goes, the larger the share of food items in household budgets. In other words, higher food prices affect the poor disproportionately more.

The fall in the CPI's food basket was mainly driven by a year-on-year drop of 19 percent in vegetable prices, 11.8 percent fall in pulses and 3 percent easing of the costs of meat and spices. The consistently high prices of



vegetables and pulses over the last few years had been pushing up food inflation to punishing levels. Economists say their easing reflects a good monsoon, expanded kharif sowing and improved water supply. However, core

inflation—which excludes more volatile elements like food and fuel—edged up to 4.4 percent in June, the highest since September 2023. The trends have been nudging the central bank to throttle back its anti-inflationary measures, including reducing the key repo or short-term lending rate by one percentage point to 5.5 percent over the last 6 months. It has made borrowing easier, increased money supply and cranked up some sectors of the economy. The June data may induce a further cutback in interest rates in August. However, not all parts of the picture look rosy. The lower readings come on relatively high bases notched up a year ago. Secondly, the street prices of many items vary geographically and are higher than what these all-India figures reflect. What is important is that a better handling of essential supplies and management of food stocks have contributed to stemming runaway inflation. Given affordable food supply is essential, the government needs to keep a keen eye on this area in the months ahead and intervene as necessary.

BRICS to buttress Global South

The PM's recent five-nation tour was part of India's efforts to deepen engagement with the Global South. Through its upcoming presidency of BRICS, India hopes to shape a global order where emerging economies have a greater voice

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent five-nation diplomatic tour spanning Brazil, Ghana, Namibia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Argentina was a demonstration of India's strategic vision for the Global South. Centred around the BRICS summit in Brazil, these visits reinforced India's position as a pivotal voice among emerging economies in a rapidly-evolving multipolar world. It showcased India's intent to shape global governance by empowering the Global South, deepening regional cooperation and counterbalancing the hegemonic influences in multilateral platforms.

India's efforts to amplify the voice of the Global South have gained momentum in recent years, culminating in the inclusion of the African Union into the G20 during India's presidency in 2023. This precedent is now mirrored in BRICS, which is undergoing significant expansion. With India's proactive involvement, countries such as Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the UAE have joined the bloc, now termed BRICS+. Several more nations from West Asia, Africa and Latin America have expressed interest, viewing BRICS as a credible platform to champion their interests.

India's current standing can be better appreciated by revisiting the origins of BRICS in the early 2000s and the foundational RIC or Russia-India-China framework. At that time, the global order was markedly different. Russia was a member of the G8, China was seamlessly integrating into Western-led institutions, and India-China relations were

relatively cordial. The inclusion of Brazil and South Africa expanded the group into BRICS, bound by a shared vision for a new multipolar world. Over the past two decades, the BRICS economies have surged. In purchasing power parity terms, the bloc's collective economy now stands at \$60 trillion, surpassing the G7's \$45 trillion, driven largely by the dynamism of Asian and other Global South countries. However, BRICS is not without contradictions. Border tensions in 2013, 2017 and 2020 have significantly altered India-China relations. While the bloc continues to espouse unity, there are heavy undercurrents of mistrust and apprehension. India's actions reflect an acute awareness of these realities. During the Prime Minister's five-nation tour, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar participated in the Quad foreign ministers' meeting in the US, highlighting a strategic balancing act. It underscored a commitment to a truly multipolar world, where India engages within South-South cooperation frameworks like BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, while also working with like-minded global partners to promote security, economic collaborations, stable supply chains, and freedom of navigation in critical regions. India's influence within BRICS is instrumental in ensuring the coalition remains aligned with its broader interests. With China's strong clout in the grouping, it is imperative for India to maintain a proactive presence to prevent

any unilateral redirection of trajectory. There have been repeated attempts to include Pakistan in the grouping, raising legitimate concerns given India's security imperatives. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had declined to sign the joint communiqué at the recent SCO defence ministers' meeting in Qingdao, citing its failure to acknowledge the

positioned to contribute to their development and digitisation trajectories. Its strengths in fintech, space and satellite technologies, digital public infrastructure, and green energy are invaluable assets for driving innovation-led partnerships.

The BRICS Cross-Border Payments Initiative, along with a growing preference for domestic currency trade, is advantageous for India. While cautious about endorsing a common BRICS currency due to practical concerns, India sees clear strategic benefits in enhancing local currency transactions, particularly as the bloc moves towards including more oil-producing countries.

The Brazil summit marked several diplomatic victories for India. BRICS' unequivocal condemnation of the Pahalgam terror attack reaffirmed its alignment with India's stance. The Rio joint declaration explicitly backed the aspirations of both India and Brazil to secure permanent membership of the UN Security Council. Furthermore, BRICS' support for India's ambition to host COP33 in 2028 emphasised trust in India's capacity to have a leading role in global climate action. In an increasingly polarised global landscape, where nations are often pressured to align with one Great Power or another, India offers a compelling alternative worldview. Rejecting the binary choices reminiscent of the Cold War, India advances a vision grounded in its civilisational ethos of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', that the world is one family.



Pahalgam terror attack though it had references to incidents in Balochistan, and its omission of India's concerns related to terrorism. This episode serves as a reminder that India must remain alert to ensure multilateral forums do not evolve into platforms that undermine its core strategic and security interests. Despite these challenges, the potential for economic cooperation within BRICS remains enormous. With all member nations and the wider Global South undergoing rapid digital and technological transformation, India is uniquely

Aravalis under attack: Haryana urges SC to ban mining 5km inside Rajasthan; leaseholders under lens

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Acknowledging that illegal mining was rampant on the Haryana side of the border with Rajasthan, the state govt has urged Supreme Court to prohibit mining up to 5km inside Rajasthan to prevent further damage to Aravali ranges, reports Ipsita Pati. In an affidavit filed on Wednesday, Haryana chief secretary Anurag Rastogi accused mining leaseholders from Rajasthan of encroaching on Haryana territory, blasting Aravali hilltops near the border, and displacing boundary pillars to misrepresent mining zones.

The hearing is on in SC, which had earlier this year rebuked Rastogi for not doing enough to prevent destruction of Aravalis after miners brought down hillock in Basai Meo village along the border. Mining is banned on the Haryana side of the Aravalis under a 2009 SC order. It's allowed, however, on the Rajasthan side. Survey to demarcate buffer zone in Raj proposed by Haryana Assuring the court of full compliance with its orders, the affidavit

says: "Illegal road construction, misuse of forest land and cross-border mining activity represent not just an environmental crisis but a breakdown of regulatory coordination." The Haryana affidavit proposes a Survey of India exercise to demarcate a 5km-wide no-mining buffer zone inside Rajasthan, which will serve as a protective barrier for Haryana's vulnerable Aravali landscape. The affidavit also claimed that interstate boundary markers had been systematically displaced, allowing leaseholders to extract minerals from Haryana's protected Aravali zone. "Despite multiple requests from Haryana, Rajasthan authorities have failed to share leaseholder details or participate in joint boundary demarcation," the affidavit notes. Both Haryana and Rajasthan now have BJP govt. Investigation by the state vigilance and anti-corruption bureau (SVACB) revealed two illegal forest roads were constructed from Basai Meo



post. "...it is clear that leaseholders, crusher owners, illegal mining material transportation occurred through these illegally constructed roads as it not only reduced the distance and transportation cost but also resulted in loss to govt exchequer (royalty, toll, overload, etc). To address this issue, a Demi-Official (DO) letter No.

3925/MB dated June 9, 2025, was sent by Deputy Commissioner, Nuh to the District Collector, Deeg

(Rajasthan) for strengthening the vigil at the interstate border. Regular meetings shall be held on a regular basis (sic)," the affidavit states. SVACB filed an FIR in June 2025 against multiple officials and private persons, including the former sarpanch of Basai Meo, who remains absconding with a Rs 50,000 bounty on his arrest. Four revenue officials are among five persons who have been arrested so far.

News box

New lights, fountains & sound show: Leisure Valley Park set for revamp

Gurgaon. (Agency)

From fountain renovation and improved lighting to a new open gym and boundary wall, a slew of infrastructure upgrade projects are underway at Leisure Valley Park in Sector 29. The project, undertaken by GMDA and supported by CSR funding, will involve landscaping, beautification work, renovation of fountains, installing streetlights and equipment for a new open gym, along with rebuilding a boundary wall and toilets. With numerous residents flocking to the park everyday and following long-standing complaints about poor maintenance, GMDA has decided to give the park a facelift. Recently, GMDA has floated a tender for 250 streetlights at an estimated cost of Rs 1.4 crore. "The walking paths become pitch dark after sunset. Installing streetlights should have been a priority years ago," said Sudhir Sachdeva, a resident of Sushant Lok-1 and a frequent visitor at the park. A light and sound system will also be ready by Aug, but the theme of the show is yet to be finalised by GMDA. The show will use 3D projection mapping on a water screen, synchronised audio, laser visuals, and high-pressure fountain nozzles to create a rich narrative. The idea behind re-constructing the park's boundary wall, parts of which have deteriorated over time, is to prevent encroachments, officials said. Moreover, GMDA has floated a Rs 25 lakh tender for a second open-air gym. An automobile company is undertaking renovation and seepage repair of all seven fountains in the park under CSR.

Filth everywhere, drain covers gone: Road swims in sludge for nearly 2 weeks

Ghaziabad . (Agency)

Swimming in filth for nearly two weeks, Kala Patthar Road's condition went from bad to worse on Wednesday with fresh muck being dumped along roadsides after drains were cleaned.

The corporation's ill-timed drain cleaning, despite the IMD forecasting early arrival of monsoon well in advance, has turned the borders of almost the entire length of the road, which is the central artery of Indirapuram and one of its main links with NH9, into a sludge swamp. Uprooted drain covers and broken slabs lie along the roadside. Water from the rain has pooled alongside it, leaving people with no place to walk, and shopkeepers marooned without customers. With showers spreading the sludge all over the road and inside adjoining Makhanpur village, this has turned into a public health hazard. One side of Aditya mall is also lined with muck. "Even the pigeon feeding point is cleaner and more hygienic than the rest of the road now," said Arun Singh, who runs a juice kiosk. Pointing towards a heap of sludge, open drains, and twisted iron rods, he added, "Till 15 days ago, I used to earn Rs 5,000 a day selling juice to fitness enthusiasts working out in gyms nearby. Now, they just cover their noses and walk hastily away. My daily earnings have dropped to just Rs 500, thanks to the nagar nigram." Virendra Singh works as a guard at a jewellery shop on Kala Patthar Road, said his employer had asked him to request the corporation to remove the sludge from the road when a JCB machine was seen working on the drains a few days ago. "But after repeated requests, they didn't oblige. As you can see, half-dried sludge is lying just at the entrance of the shop. It is affecting business."

VK Bhatnagar, a visitor at Gaur Gravity Mall, said the entire Kala Patthar stretch "has become a virtual death trap." "The encroachment and jams during peak hours is frustrating. They have made this place a living hell, and unfortunately, nobody listens," he said.

Monsoon woes in Noida: Potholes, damaged roads return; commuters face daily struggles

NOIDA.(Agency)

The recent spell of monsoon showers in Noida once again exposed the poor condition of city roads, with several stretches developing rough patches and potholes. Commuters are facing a tough time navigating through these damaged portions, especially near key locations such as the Botanical Garden bus stand, Okhla Bird Sanctuary, and the road between Atta Peer and Sector 16 Metro station.

One of the worst-hit spots is the speed breaker near the Botanical Garden bus stand, which broke apart due to the recent rainfall. What was meant to slow down traffic has now become a hazard, with vehicles swerving dangerously to avoid the broken patch.

Gaurav Kumar, who travels from Sector 37 to Knowledge Park, crosses the Botanical Garden bus stand daily. "The potholes slow down traffic and increase the risk of accidents. A number of autos, buses, and e-rickshaws also stand here. They also use this stretch to travel to various locations. Lack of repair is worsening the situation," he said.

Similarly, the stretch near Okhla Bird Sanctuary, a key entry point from Delhi to Noida, has turned rough and uneven. A number of people coming from Kalindi Kunj, Sarita Vihar, and Okhla to Noida take this route. However, water stagnation after rainfall at this spot has further aggravated the condition, leading to increased wear and tear. "The condition of roads worsens every monsoon. It seems like repairs are just patchwork with no long-term planning," said Ritesh Kumar, a daily commuter. The road from Atta Peer to Sector 16 Metro station also has multiple patches that are deteriorating fast under the impact of rain and constant traffic movement. Experts say waterlogging and lack of timely maintenance are the main reasons behind such damage during the monsoon. Anurag Kulshrestha, founder of TRAX, a road safety NGO, said that when water seeps into the surface, it weakens the binding of the asphalt. "Waterlogging and repeated movement of vehicles over these weak spots cause the top layer to break, forming potholes."

Flagged down for flouting diversion norms, truck driver assaults Ghaziabad traffic cop, held

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

A 40-year-old truck driver who allegedly assaulted a traffic constable in Muradnagar was arrested on Tuesday. Following the incident that took place on Monday, head constable with the city traffic police Pramod Kumar had lodged a complaint against driver Salman, a resident of Delhi, and co-accused Rahul. Police said Salman "violated" the diversion rules established by the traffic police during the kanwar yatra on Eastern Peripheral Expressway (EPW). Rahul Kumar, also a resident of Delhi and co-accused, is absconding. "Police are checking CCTV footage to nab the other accused," ACP of Masuri Lipi Nagayach said. Pramod Kumar was deployed on kanwar duty from 7am to 8pm at the Duhai EPW at the Palwal ascent barrier, along with TSI Vinod Pundir and constable Vishal Sharma, for maintaining the diversion plan. Around 6pm, a six-wheeler truck approached from Ghaziabad and started heading towards Muradnagar. "In compliance with the orders of our diversion, we signalled the vehicle to stop. However, driver Salman and his companion Rahul started abusing me after I told them there was a diversion. They started misbehaving with me and seeing this, the TSI and constable came to help, but the accused attempted to run the truck over us with the intent to kill. We narrowly escaped," Pramod said.

"When the driver did not stop, we placed a barrier on the road ahead, which stopped the vehicle after the collision. The driver got out of the vehicle, continued to abuse us and started assaulting me. The duo tore my uniform and threatened to kill me," Pramod alleged. We caught Salman, but Rahul, who was in the truck, escaped with the vehicle. Both individuals violated the rules and obstructed govt. orders," Pramod said. The ACP said on the basis of the complaint lodged by the head constable, an FIR was registered in Muradnagar police station under sections 109(1) (attempt to murder),

Digital push: Senior officers to check usage of tech infra in Haryana's govt schools

Gurgaon.(Agency)

The Haryana govt has launched an initiative to strengthen digital learning in its govt schools, deploying senior civil services officers for on-ground inspections of digital education tools and infrastructure. This move comes in response to repeated complaints of underutilisation of digital resources, with some schools reportedly not using their digital boards at all. In Gurgaon there are over 1,300 digital boards from classes 8 to 12 and 133 information and communication technology labs in total. The directorate of secondary education, which previously issued warnings to heads of schools that were flagged for non-compliance, has now undertaken enforcement of its orders. On Monday, a comprehensive audit of schools began. A team from directorate of school education, led by a joint state project official, visited two schools in the city – Govt Senior Secondary School, Hayatpur, and Govt Upper Primary School, Harsara



– on Tuesday. The officials inspected whether language labs, computer labs and classrooms were being utilised appropriately. Jitendra Kumar, director of secondary education, had assigned seven senior civil services officers to inspect

labs and utilisation of language labs. After making visits to schools, officials said students were facing several hurdles in utilising the resources. Lack of proper training of teachers was a key issue.

"Some teachers, especially those who are not from the technical background, may not know how to use digital boards," said an education department official, adding that many do not adapt to the facilities as they are "used to their old methods". Another major impediment highlighted by the officials was the unreliable electricity supply to these schools. "There are electricity problems here. Facilities can't be like this," an official said. "But to counter this to an extent, solar systems have been installed in some schools, with support from the govt and NGOs, while others rely on inverters to power basic equipment like LEDs. However, a large govt project to install solar panels in all schools was reportedly withdrawn due to price issues," the official added.

Multiple recce before shot fired at Fazilpuria, say police; Sonipat man (25) arrested, Himanshu Bhau gang claims responsibility

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Two days after a bullet was allegedly fired at the car of singer and rapper Rahul Yadav (Fazilpuria) in Sector 71 on Southern Peripheral Road (SPR), a suspect identified as Vishal (25) was arrested from Jajal in Sonipat. The accused, according to police, staked out Fazilpuria for multiple days, conducting recce of his house, studio and other routine locations. Fazilpuria came under attack on Monday evening. The bullet missed his car. No one was injured. "Vishal stayed in multiple rest houses in Gurgaon. On the day of the incident, he shared the location of the singer, following which his other associates fired at Fazilpuria from a Tata Punch car. Vishal accompanied another suspect while renting the Punch car," police spokesperson Sandeep said. Police, however, are yet to ascertain how many people were there in the car while shooting at the singer. An associate of gangster Himanshu Bhau, meanwhile, claimed

responsibility for the shooting. Police said they were verifying the authenticity of the claim. A message was circulated on Wednesday in which Sunil Sardhania, an alleged member of the Himanshu Bhau gang, took responsibility for the shooting. The message said the firing was intended to warn the singer to repay Rs 5 crore to one Deepak Nandal within a month to avoid severe consequences. The post also mentioned Inderjit Yadav, a close associate of fugitive gangster Bhau. Bhau and Yadav are believed to be managing the gang from abroad. Himanshu Bhau fled to Portugal in 2022 using a fake passport and faces around 35 criminal charges. He is known for firing over 30 rounds at his targets. Police have not yet acknowledged the post and are assessing its authenticity, saying it was not shared through any social media account but via messages in WhatsApp groups under surveillance. "Gangsters post warnings or claim responsibility through social media accounts as the Himanshu Bhau gang did

in the past. The gang is known to fire over 30 bullets in their shootouts. The viral message is under scanner," a police officer said. In the message, Sardhania indicated the firing was merely a warning, adding, "If we wanted to kill him, we would have killed him outside his office. We want our money back which was invested by Deepak Nandal through his associates and resources to make Fazilpuria a celebrity. Deepak invested Rs 5 crore for the same purpose. Earlier, he promised to pay back money by selling his land in case things wouldn't work for him." Sardhania also said Nandal wasted 10 years and Rs 5 crore on the singer, claiming that Fazilpuria ignored their calls for two years and flaunted his political influence after gaining popularity. Sources said Fazilpuria's police security was withdrawn after he contested in the Lok Sabha elections from Gurgaon but was reinstated following the shooting incident.

First global varsity campus under new UGC rules opens doors in Gurgaon

Gurgaon/New Delhi.(Agency)

University of Southampton on Wednesday unveiled its offshore campus in the city, becoming the first foreign university to set up base in India under the University Grants Commission (UGC) regulations 2023 that opened the country's doors to top overseas institutions. Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan and chief minister Nayab Singh Saini jointly inaugurated the campus, which is in a section of the International Tech Park in Sector 59, and called it a "landmark step" in India's higher education journey. Officials said the university will start with four undergraduate courses (BSc in business management, accounting and finance, computer science, and economics) and two postgraduate (MSc in finance international management) courses this August. More programmes will be added over time. The degrees, including in timeline and format, will be similar to that of the UK campus, and the programmes will adhere to the same academic standards and quality, the officials said. "Classes for the first cohort of around 170 students will start in August. Students will have the option of spending up to a year at Southampton's campuses in the UK or Malaysia too," an official said. Called Southampton Delhi, the Gurgaon campus has already attracted students

from across the country as well as from countries like the UAE and Nepal for its inaugural cohort. The university will hire over 75 full-time faculty members, many of whom have worked in institutions across the UK, US, Germany, Japan, Singapore and Australia. Though the fee structure was not declared on Wednesday, it is likely to be lower than fees for the same course at the UK campus. In Southampton, tuition fees can range between £18,000 and £33,000 – approximately Rs 21 lakh-Rs 38.5 lakh in current conversion rates. The application process is mainly online, and candidates have to submit a personal statement, letter of recommendation and passing certificates from Class 12 or college, depending on the course. Final selections will be made after an interview. Officials said it is not mandatory for candidates to submit results of English language proficiency tests like TOEFL and IELTS, which cost upwards of Rs 10,000 and are often mandatory when applying to colleges abroad. With a global alumni base of 2.9 lakh graduates, including 1,700 Indians, Southampton plans to involve its alumni as mentors and industry ambassadors for its Gurgaon operations. Its proposal to set up a full-fledged campus in India was the first by a foreign varsity to be approved by UGC last year. The norms, notified by UGC in

2023, permitted foreign universities ranked among the world's top 500 to set up branch campuses in India, decide their admission process, fee structure, and repatriate funds to their host campuses. The move aligned with the National



reviving our intellectual heritage from Nalanda and Takshashila to Pushpagiri and now Gurgaon," Pradhan added. He invited other international universities to explore similar collaborations to "co-create ecosystems of innovation, research, and education". Students enrolled in the Gurgaon campus will have the option of spending up to a year at Southampton's campuses in the UK or Malaysia. Courses starting in 2025 include BSc programmes in computer science, economics, accounting & finance, and business management, as well as MSc degrees in finance and international management.

Pradhan said the central govt has allowed 17 foreign universities to establish their campuses in India. Higher education secretary Vineet Joshi said UGC's new regulatory framework has streamlined and simplified the process for foreign universities to set up bases in India. "Southampton's presence here will deliver world-class education and help nurture talent in critical areas like digital innovation and global leadership," he said. UK's high commissioner to India Lindy Cameron said the launch of Southampton's campus in the city was proof of advancing ties between the two countries in the education sector.

Delhi High Court reserves verdict in AgustaWestland accused's plea for quashing non-bailable warrant against him

Agency New Delhi.

The Delhi High Court Wednesday reserved judgment in a plea by AgustaWestland deal accused and former Emaar MGF director Shravan Gupta seeking quashing of non-bailable warrants issued against him in the money laundering case by the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

The AgustaWestland VVIP chopper case concerns a 2010 agreement between the Indian government and AgustaWestland, a British-Italian helicopter design and manufacturing company, for the purchase of 12 helicopters meant for VVIP transport. The contract deal was allegedly riddled with corruption, involving kickbacks and bribes to Indian officials to secure it. Gupta had allegedly created an offshore corporate structure to launder the proceeds of crime generated by a co-accused in the case, who also reportedly received the same as kickbacks. According to the ED, Gupta received proceeds of crime amounting to approximately Rs 28.69 crore. He allegedly left the country in 2019 and has



failed to join the probe despite multiple summons and warrants. A trial court issued a non-bailable warrant against him on August 31, 2020. The ED made Gupta an accused in the case in February 2022 in

a supplementary chargesheet. Before the court of Justice Neena Bansal, senior advocate Vikas Pahwa, appearing for Gupta, informed the court that Gupta cannot participate in the probe physically

but is available to join online. It was also submitted that a fresh application has been filed seeking permission to appear virtually. According to a press release by the ED, after Pahwa sought an adjournment, Justice Krishna noted that the matter had previously been argued by both parties on two occasions, after which Pahwa requested an adjournment. The court observed that such conduct is "unbecoming of a senior advocate" and reserved the matter for verdict.

In May, hearing an application moved by Christian Michel James, an accused and alleged middleman in the AgustaWestland VVIP chopper case, Special Judge Sanjeev Aggarwal of Rouse Avenue Court said that it was "sad to see that the trial has not started in seven years". James, who was extradited from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in 2018 and has been in Tihar jail for close to seven years, had moved an application earlier requesting adequate security measures in prison, alleging that his tea was being poisoned and that there were threats to his life.

'Our brothers are coming...': In Northeast Delhi's Jafrabad, a 30-year-old tradition of unity welcomes kanwariyas each year

Agency New Delhi.

On a stretch of road that runs parallel to a mosque and a cemetery in Northeast Delhi's Jafrabad, Kanwariyas dressed in saffron arrive one after the other. As they approach a camp for kanwars, named 'Sadbhava Camp', the kanwariyas chant their usual refrain - "Bam Lahiri" and "Bol Bam." But at this particular camp, something is different. A group of men, wearing white kurta and skull caps, wait at the camp's entrance with rose petals in their hands.

"Hamare kanwariya bhai aa rahe hain, unka swagat kariye, unko namaste kariye, unko salaam kijiye (Our Kanwariya brothers are coming, welcome them, greet them, salute them)," a man announces. As the kanwariyas pass the camp, the men raise their arms and release the rose petals into the air.

"Hindu-Muslim-Sikh-Isai, aap mein hain hum sab bhai-bhai... Hindustan zindabad, Hindustan ki ekta zindabad (Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, we are all brothers... Long live India, long live the unity of India)," they chant.

As the petals land on the kanwariyas, for a moment, they slow down, confused. Then someone cheers, "Jai Bholenath", and the rest join in. Inside the camp, there is chilled water, fruits, soft drinks, and shade under a blue-and-white fabric tent erected by Seelampur MLA Zubair Chaudhary. A sign outside reads: "Sadbhava Camp mein aap sabhi kanwariyon ka hardik swagat."

The camp was first set up in 1994 as an attempt to reduce communal disharmony in the area. It was the initiative of Chaudhary's father, Chaudhary Mateen Ahmed, a five-time Congress MLA.

While the family has since shifted allegiance to the Aam Aadmi Party before this year's Delhi elections, the 31-year-old tradition of Muslims showering kanwariyas with rose petals continues. "Before 1994, when kanwariyas used to pass from here, fights or riots would break out. They usually chant 'Bam Bam' or 'Har Har Mahadev' but because the residents here didn't understand these chants, they felt they were being provoked. The tension would carry forward to Seelampur, where Muslims were targeted in retaliation," Zubair told.

Amid objections, Standing Committee sends back Bawana waste-to-energy plant proposal for amendments

Agency New Delhi.

Even as the Union Environment Ministry gave an environmental clearance (EC) to a proposed Waste-to-Energy Plant (WTE) in Bawana last month, the proposal to set up the plant in Narela has been sent back to the Department of Environment Management Services (DEMS) of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) on Wednesday for a revisit.

The decision was taken at the Standing Committee meeting on Wednesday amid staunch opposition against the project from the local residents. Following the decision by the Standing Committee at its second meeting since it was recently constituted, the item will be listed again for reconsideration after the DEMS makes amendments to the proposal, said officials.

An official of the Delhi Environment department said, "The MCD is authorised to take such an action. The role of our department is to grant NOCs." The Centre's clearance to the project came on June 20 and was made public by the Delhi Pollution Control Committee earlier this month. The EC was granted based on standard and specific conditions applicable to thermal power projects, including compliance with the Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 2006. The 15-acre plot where the proposed plant is to be developed was allotted by the civic body in February under a concession agreement, the Environment Clearance report stated. The 30-megawatt plant is to be developed under a public-private partnership with Jindal Urban Waste Management (Bawana) Limited in Sector 5 of the Bawana Industrial Area.

'We take every call seriously... even if it turns out to be a hoax'

"Six to seven members of the BDS, six members with the BDT, six to seven members of the local police stations, the SHO of the Cyber Police station, and two members of the dog squad are sent to the site in such cases," an officer explained.

Agency New Delhi.

Last year, when a private school in Outer Delhi's Paschim Vihar received a bomb threat in an email on December 20, around 20 personnel — including officers from the Bomb Disposal Squad (BDS) and the Bomb Detection Team (BDT), Delhi Fire Service, and even Cyber Police — were sent to the site. The threat turned out to be a hoax. It added to the list of similar emails sent to more than 200 schools in the Capital last year.



Each time, a batch of 20-22 personnel was sent to the site of the incident. "Six to seven members of the BDS, six members with the BDT, six to seven members of the local police stations, the SHO of the Cyber Police station, and two members of the dog squad are sent to the site in such cases," an officer explained.

Multiple instruments have to be used



Hoax bomb threat: 25 emails sent to 400 schools since last April, only few cases solved

Agency New Delhi.

"There are many explosive devices in the school..." This message was received by 200 schools via email in May, last year. It came as a shock to security agencies, as Delhi had never before encountered such a large-scale threat via email.

Subsequently, security agencies identified the sender's email address as sawariim@mail.ru. 'Sawarim' is an Arabic word frequently used by the terrorist organisation Islamic State in its propaganda videos. This connection pointed to a potentially deeper conspiracy.

The Delhi Police's counter intelligence unit, which is a part of the Special Cell, an anti-terror unit, registered an FIR and set up a dedicated team of cyber experts to access the details of the senders. During the probe, it was found that the service provider (mail.ru) — used to send hoax bomb

threats — was based in Moscow, said a source in the police.

With the help of Interpol, the police wrote to the National Central Bureau in Moscow, seeking details of the person who had created the threat email. However, the probe hit a roadblock. Police discovered that the sender had used a VPN (Virtual Private Network) or proxy server — an encrypted connection over the Internet — to hide his identity.

The email sent in May was one of the 25 such threats received by over 400 schools in Delhi since April 30, 2024. In some of these emails, the sender also mentioned critical installations such as hospitals, airports, and airline companies. Police sources said around 50 of these 400 schools have received such emails multiple times.

Few cases solved

One reason why police have been able to solve some of these cases is due to the mistakes made by juveniles, who had allegedly sent the emails, said sources. Last December, the Delhi Police had traced a student for sending a bomb threat email to his school, as he wanted to avoid an examination. The student had not used any VPN. He had used an email ID, making it easier for the police to track him. The child was counselled and allowed to go.

E-waste facilities being studied in Norway, Hong Kong to develop first-of-its-kind eco park in Delhi: Minister

Spread over 11.4 acres, the eco park will be developed through a Design, Build, Finance, Operate and Transfer (DBFOT) model, where a private entity is responsible for the entire lifecycle of a project before it is transferred back to the public entity.

Agency New Delhi.

The Delhi government is studying e-waste facilities in Norway and Hong Kong to develop a first-of-its-kind eco park in India, Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa said on Wednesday. The project, to be developed over the next 18 months in Holambi Kalan in North Delhi's Narela on a public-private partnership (PPP) model, will boost the circular economy and generate employment, he asserted.

"We are studying successful models across the world, including Norway, which is very eco-friendly, and Hong Kong, where e-waste facilities operate within cities but cause zero pollution," said Sirsa. The third-party feasibility study will review global models with a focus on the design and engineering of zero-emission, zero-landfill recycling parks, rare earth and precious metal recovery systems, and

pollution control infrastructure, among other things. "Our goal is to adopt only the cleanest and safest technologies. This will not only ensure environmental protection but also provide an economic boost to the local village and mark a major step towards freeing Delhi from its pollution burden," he added. Sirsa claimed that the upcoming facility will be the first-of-its-kind in the country with net-zero emissions and will be surrounded by a dense canopy of trees, making it one of the greenest plants ever built in the country.

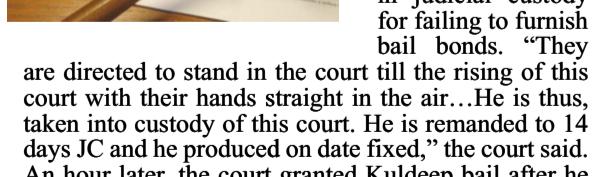
Spread over 11.4 acres, the eco park will be developed through a Design, Build, Finance, Operate and Transfer (DBFOT) model, where a private entity is responsible for the entire lifecycle of a project before it is transferred back to the public entity. It will involve a capital cost of Rs 150 crore and an operational cost of over Rs 325 crore, the Delhi government



said in a statement. "It is expected to cause a substantial reduction in pollution," the official statement underlined.

The Minister had announced the plans to build the eco-park in Holambi Khan in June. Earlier on Wednesday, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta chaired a high-level meeting on the project, where it was decided that a global tender will be issued by the Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation (DSIIC). The facility will process up to

25% of Delhi's total e-waste annually within five years. India, currently the world's third-largest e-waste generator, produces more than 1.6 million metric tonnes annually, growing at 23% each year, as per the statement. It added that, of this, Delhi alone contributes 9.5%, but only 17.4% of e-waste is recycled globally, leading to a loss of nearly \$57 billion in valuable metals such as copper, lithium, and rare earth elements. The eco park will feature dedicated zones for dismantling, refurbishing, component testing, plastic recovery, and a second-hand electronics market. It will also include skilling and training centres for formal upskilling of workers. Once operational, it is expected to process 51,000 metric tonnes of e-waste annually, across 106 categories as notified under the E-Waste Management Rules, 2022, and generate over Rs 350 crore in revenue.



are directed to stand in the court with their hands straight in the air... He is thus, taken into custody of this court. He is remanded to 14 days JC and he produced on date fixed," the court said. An hour later, the court granted Kuldeep bail after he furnished the bail bonds.

"Since, the offence involved is bailable in nature. The accused Kuldeep is admitted to bail upon furnishing of P/B and S/B in the sum of Rs. 10,000/- each. Requisite Bail Bonds furnished. The same are attested and accepted... Kuldeep be released from the custody of the court," Judicial Magistrate First Class Goyal said in another order passed on the same day.

The case pertains to a complaint by Harkesh Jain, who had alleged that Kuldeep, along with Anil, Ram Kumar, Anand, Rakesh and Upasana, had entered into a conspiracy in March 2018 to grab his 334 sq yards of land in Khasra in Palam village.

Sensex opens flat, Nifty above 25,200; SBI shares up 1%

New Delhi. (Agency)

Benchmark stock market indices opened flat on Thursday, as the market remained in the consolidation phase due to a lack of fresh triggers. Metal and pharma stocks gained in early trade.

The S&P BSE Sensex was down 41.02 points to 82,593.46, while the NSE Nifty50 lost 13.30 points to 25,198.75 as of 9:30 am. Dr. VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Limited, said that there are no triggers for the market to break out of the consolidation range in which it has been stuck for two months now. Even an India-US interim trade deal has been discounted by the market, leaving no scope for a sharp rally decisively breaking the range. One positive and surprise factor that can trigger a rally is a tariff rate much below 20%, say 15%, which the market has not discounted. So, watch out for developments on the trade and tariff front," he added. Among the top gainers in early trade, Sun Pharma led with a strong rise of 0.88%, followed by Tata Motors which gained 0.43%. Kotak Mahindra Bank climbed 0.42%, while NTPC advanced 0.36% and Bharat Electronics Limited rose 0.31%.

Tech Mahindra faced the biggest decline, dropping 0.87%. Eternal Health fell 0.71%, while ICICI Bank went down 0.68%. State Bank of India lost 0.34% and Asian Paints declined 0.22%. The Nifty Midcap100 fell 0.07% while Nifty Smallcap100 gained 0.14%, and India VIX rose 0.26%. Among the sectoral indices, several showed positive momentum with Nifty Pharma leading at 0.52%, followed by Nifty Realty at 0.37%, Nifty Healthcare at 0.37%, Nifty Metal at 0.26%, Nifty Consumer Durables at 0.20%, and Nifty FMCG at 0.12%. Nifty PSU Bank faced the biggest decline at 0.65%, followed by Nifty IT which dropped 0.27%. Nifty Financial Services fell 0.24%, Nifty Private Bank declined 0.15%, Nifty Media went down 0.13%, Nifty Oil & Gas lost 0.03%, and Nifty Auto slipped 0.02%.

Perplexity teams up with Airtel to access India, a month after Google's free Gemini push

New Delhi(Agency)

CHENNAI: Just a month after Google announced a free one-year subscription to its premium AI toolset, Gemini 2.5 Pro, for college students in India, US-based AI-powered search platform Perplexity has now rolled out a similar offer. Customers of India's second-largest mobile operator, Bharti Airtel, can now access a free one-year subscription to Perplexity Pro. Valued at approximately ₹17,000 annually, the Perplexity Pro subscription is now available at no cost to Airtel users across mobile, broadband, and DTH services. According to Airtel, the offer is accessible to its entire subscriber base of around 360 million users. While the official announcement highlights postpaid and broadband users, many prepaid customers have also reported successfully activating the offer via the Airtel Thanks app. To claim the subscription, users must log in to the app, navigate to the "Rewards & OTTs" or "Credits" section, and tap on the Perplexity Pro banner.

Perplexity Pro includes access to AI models like GPT-4.1, Claude, and Grok 4, along with features such as file uploads, AI-powered image generation, reasoning-based search, dashboards, document parsing, and limited API access. The service is available across Android, iOS, Windows, Mac, and web browsers. This partnership positions Airtel as a frontrunner in integrating AI into telecom and digital services, offering powerful tools to students, professionals, and everyday users seeking smarter, faster ways to search, analyze, and create content using AI. In June, Google had offered a similar benefit to Indian college students—free access to Gemini 2.5 Pro, Deep Research, AI video generator Veo 3, and enhanced limits on NotebookLM—as part of its push to expand AI adoption in education.

Major Relief For Salaried Employees: EPF Withdrawal May Be Allowed Every 10 Years, Reports

New Delhi. (Agency)

New Delhi: Salaried employees may no longer need to wait for retirement or job loss to access their Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) savings. The Centre is considering a proposal by the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) to ease withdrawal norms. If approved, subscribers could be allowed to withdraw their entire EPF corpus or a portion of it once every 10 years, reported



Moneycontrol. Currently, EPF members can withdraw the full amount only after retirement, usually at the age of 58 or if they remain unemployed for over two months. Partial withdrawals are allowed but only for specific purposes like buying a house, medical emergencies, education, or marriage. Starting this month, EPF members can withdraw up to 90 per cent of their savings to buy land or build a house. Earlier, this benefit was available only to those who had contributed to their EPF for at least five continuous years. Now, the eligibility period has been reduced to just three years, making it easier for more people to use their savings for housing. What's New in EPF Rules.

Parliament panel proposes revival of key tax relief for companies: Report

The government is set to restore Section 80M in the new Income Tax Bill, easing dividend tax burdens for companies. The bill is likely to pass in the Monsoon Session.

New Delhi. (Agency)

A key parliamentary panel has proposed reinstating a crucial deduction under the Income Tax Bill 2025, a move that could bring major relief to Indian companies by avoiding double taxation on inter-corporate dividends. The Economic Times reported. The panel has recommended reviving Section 80M of

the old tax law, which allowed Indian firms to deduct from their taxable income any dividends received from other domestic companies. Its removal in the new draft bill had raised red flags across corporate India, especially for companies operating within multi-tier structures, where the same dividend income risked being taxed multiple times. The proposal is among over 285 tweaks suggested by the parliamentary select committee, headed by MP Baijayant Panda, which unanimously adopted its report on Wednesday. With the government greenlighting the bulk of the recommendations, the reformed tax legislation, meant to overhaul the six-decade-old Income Tax Act, is expected to be passed swiftly in the upcoming monsoon session of Parliament.

Industry stakeholders had strongly lobbied

for the return of Section 80M, arguing that its absence would increase tax burdens and discourage efficient corporate structuring. The committee's report,



which will be presented in the Lok Sabha on the first day of the session, reflects several such industry concerns. Another important recommendation involved reinstating language that clarifies

residency status for Indians working abroad. The phrase "for the purpose of employment" has been retained to remove any ambiguity in interpreting residency rules. The panel also proposed restoring provisions that allow the tax department to issue a nil withholding tax certificate for specific payments—another rollback of a clause originally removed in the draft bill.

It may be noted that the panel chose not to alter core provisions of Section 247(1), which deals with searches and seizures, although this section witnessed the most debate during the committee's 36 sittings. Stakeholders who appeared before the panel also raised concerns over the faceless assessment mechanism and called for simplification of TDS rates and processes.

Personal loan rates 2025: How much are SBI, ICICI and others charging

New Delhi(Agency)

If you are planning to take a personal loan this year, it is good to know how much different banks are charging in 2025. Personal loans are a quick way to get money when you need it most, whether it's for medical needs, a wedding, a holiday, or even to pay off other debts. Unlike a home or car loan, you do not need to keep anything as security.

WHAT ARE THE LATEST RATES?

Many banks in India have updated their personal loan interest rates for 2025. Most banks are offering rates starting from about 9.50% per year and going up to 10.50% for some customers, depending on their credit score and repayment ability. For example, as of July 13, Bank of Maharashtra is offering one of the lowest rates at 9.50% per annum with a processing fee of up to 1%. State Bank of India's personal loan rate ranges between 10.30% and 15.30% per annum with a processing fee of up to 1.5%. Private banks like ICICI Bank are charging rates between



10.85% and 16.65% per annum with a processing fee that can go up to 2%.

EXTRA CHARGES YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

Apart from the interest, you also need to pay a processing fee when you take a personal loan. This can be anywhere between 2% to 3.5% of the loan amount, depending on the bank. You will also have to pay GST on this fee. Some banks, like Indian Overseas Bank, charge as low as 0.5% as processing charges, while others, like IndusInd Bank, may charge up to 3.5% or more.

BENEFITS AND RISKS OF PERSONAL LOANS

A personal loan can really help during emergencies because you get quick approval, and you don't have to mortgage your gold or property. It also comes with fixed EMIs and tenure, so you know exactly how much to repay every month. However, because there is no security kept with the bank, the interest rates are higher compared to secured loans. If you fail to pay your EMIs on time, it can spoil your credit score and make it difficult for you to get loans in the future.

Are e-commerce firms hiding your rating New survey reveals the truth

59% consumers say negative reviews often not published on e-commerce sites

41% shoppers always check reviews before buying online

80% want mandatory rules for review transparency, not voluntary

New Delhi. (Agency)

A survey has found that most e-commerce platforms in India are not publishing negative reviews from customers. The survey by LocalCircles shows that 59% of consumers who posted low ratings or negative reviews in the past 12 months say their reviews were not published some or most of the

time. The survey received over 64,000 responses from consumers in 314 districts across India. The



findings raise serious questions about transparency in India's growing e-commerce sector, where online reviews play a crucial role in purchase decisions. The survey asked consumers about their experience when posting negative reviews on e-

commerce and quick commerce apps. Out of 16,519 responses, only 11% said their negative reviews were "published as is." The breakdown shows: 35% said reviews were "not published sometimes"; 24% said reviews were "not published at all"; 30% did not give a clear answer.

This means nearly 6 in 10 consumers who tried to post negative reviews found they were blocked or removed.

Consumers Still Rely on Reviews Despite Problems Despite these issues, consumers continue to use ratings and reviews when shopping online. The survey found that 41% of shoppers always check ratings and reviews before buying, while 35% sometimes check them. Another 24% check reviews specifically for expensive or non-branded products.

TCS benching policy sparks fear among employees after first cycle: Report

The policy, introduced on June 12, limits the time employees can remain without project work to just 35 days. After this, they face the risk of losing out on promotions or even losing their jobs.

New Delhi. (Agency)

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) has completed the first round of its new bench policy, and many employees are now feeling anxious about their future at the company. The policy, introduced on June 12, limits the time employees can remain without project work to just 35 days. After this, they face the risk of losing out on promotions or even losing their jobs. Several workers have taken to social media platforms like Reddit to share their worries. Some say they are being pushed into projects that do not match their skills. Others complain about being rejected by

clients during interviews or being asked to work in cities far from their home locations. One post said, "This is the first step towards employment rationalisation based on utilisation. Brace for layoffs."

Another user, who recently joined the company, wrote, as quoted by The Economic Times, "I was trained in Java, but within a month of being on the bench, I was being forced into a support project that doesn't use Java or Python."

There is no official number on how many employees might be affected. However, industry experts say that about 15-18% of workers in top Indian IT firms are usually on the bench. With a workforce of around 6.13 lakh employees, the impact at TCS could be wide-reaching. An employee rights group, the Nascent Information Technology Employees Senate (NITES), has raised the issue with the government. In a letter to Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, NITES called the policy "inhumane" and "exploitative." The group accused TCS of threatening employees with job loss and denying them experience letters if they fail to find

a new project in time. "These are not non-performing employees, but skilled professionals who find themselves temporarily without allocation. Instead of support, they are met with suspicion, coercion, and threats," said NITES president Harpreet Singh Saluja. On the other hand, some voices on Reddit support the move, claiming that some staff have misused the bench system. "This may help TCS trim some seriously underperforming resources, those stuck on TCS like a leech," one user posted. In response to the growing concerns, TCS CEO and MD K. Krishivasan told The Times of India that the policy simply makes an old practice more structured. "It's always been expected that associates take responsibility for their careers," he said. "While HR supports project placement, we also expect associates to proactively seek new assignments after completing existing ones." He added that TCS invests in training its employees and wants to see them deployed after that. "Projects are driven by client needs, not personal choice. If skill gaps exist, we try to close them before deployment."

Krithivasan did not answer questions about whether TCS has stopped salaries for employees on the bench for long periods. According to a report by The Economic Times (ET), the company is facing pressure from rising employee costs and slower business growth. TCS recently reported its third quarter in a row of decline. At the same time, artificial intelligence (AI) is automating many routine IT tasks, making it harder to place entry-level engineers. IT companies are likely to get stricter with bench policies because of soft business conditions and a shift toward high-demand skills," said Pareekh Jain, founder and CEO of IT consulting firm EIIR Trend. He added that employee costs are affecting company profits, so tighter rules may follow across the industry. Other experts agree. Nitin Bhatt, who leads the technology sector at EY India, said that tech companies are now asking employees to upgrade their skills to match changing client needs. "By revisiting bench policies, companies are pushing workers to reskill in areas like AI, cybersecurity, and digital engineering," he said.

Health projects worth 2,256 crore to be inaugurated across Haryana by next month

The Sikh Times

Chandigarh: The Haryana Health Department is accelerating efforts to improve health-care infrastructure, workforce, and services across the state. The department has hired 720 new doctors and is actively working to fill remaining vacancies in hospitals. This was stated by Health and Family Welfare Minister Arti Singh Rao during a press conference held in Panchkula today. She said 785 medical facilities across the state—including Primary Health Centres

(PHCs), Community Health Centres (CHCs), Sub-Health Centres, and Civil Hospitals—are slated for upgradation. Of these, administrative approval has already been received for 534 facilities, with the rest under process. Regular coordination meetings with the Public Works Department (PWD) are being held to expedite construction and renovation work. The minister highlighted the state's extensive

NAME CHANGE

I, HILBERT known as KM MEERA D/o GAJENDRA LAL, and W/o SAURAV CHANDRA, R/o Flat No. 403, Block-C, VVIP, Extension, Raj Nagar Extension, PO: Raj Nagar Extension, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh-201017, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as MEERA CHANDRA, for all future purposes.

NAME CHANGE

It is for general information that I, PUTUL KUMAR W/o MANOJ KUMAR THAKUR R/o H-105, Gali No. 15, Sangam Vihar, Pushpa Bhawan, PO: Pushpa Bhawan, Dist. South Delhi, Delhi-110062, declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as KHUSHBOO DEVI in my minor daughter namely MAHI KUMAR aged 15 years in her School Records. The actual name of my father and mother are YAMUNA PRASAD and DHARAM SHEELA respectively which may be amended accordingly.

PROVISION OF BALLAST LESS TRACKS

E-Tender Notice No. GMW-082025-MLG, Date: 11-07-2025. E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work:

Name of Work: Provision of ballast less tracks at Binnigra, New Mal Jn., Hasimara and Dalgona Railway Stations of N.F.Railway (Total length = 6.301 Km).

Approximate Tender Value: ₹44,74,42,291.98/-

Earliest Money deposit: ₹23,87,200/-

Date & time of closing of tender at 15:00 hrs. and opening of tenders at 15:15 hrs. on 12-08-2025.

For complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available in the website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>

**GM (W), Maligao
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers With A Smile**

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Sonali Raut

Sets Internet On Fire With Hot New Viral Photos, Fans React

Sonali Raut is once again making headlines and setting social media on fire with her latest photoshoot that has fans buzzing with excitement. Known for her glamorous presence, Sonali shared a series of pictures on Instagram, flaunting a cleavage-baring outfit. Taking to her Instagram handle, Sonali shared a series of photos in which she is seen flaunting her cleavage. The actress opted for subtle makeup and fans were also seen reacting. Many dropped heart and fire emojis in the comment section. Recently, the actress took to social media to share a carousel of dazzling photos from Artist Cottages, Morjim, Goa, captioned: "Everyday I'm Sparkling!!" Dressed in a shimmering silver gown that perfectly hugs her frame, Sonali oozes charm and poise in every frame. The halter-neck sequined outfit, paired with glittering statement earrings, silver bracelets, and classic black heels, gives off major red carpet vibes. Her wavy locks, dramatic eye makeup, and subtle nude lips further enhance the elegance of the look. The series of five photos captures her posing effortlessly in front of a sea-green tiled wall, striking a mix of sultry and poised expressions. Whether seated gracefully



on a pastel green chair or leaning against the bar with confident ease, Sonali radiates an aura of timeless glamour and playful sophistication. The mood of the shoot is further amplified by the background track "Kaali Kaali Aankhein" by Emiway Bantai, giving the post a modern desi-glam touch. Known for her bold persona and striking fashion choices, Sonali Raut continues to redefine digital glamour with every new post. Whether it's her fashion-forward red carpet appearances or candid behind-the-scenes glimpses from her shoots, the actress has steadily carved a niche for herself on social media. Her rise to fame can be traced back to her appearance in the 2010 Kingfisher Calendar when she was just 19. Sonali later made her Bollywood debut in the 2014 film 'The Xpose,' alongside Himesh Reshammiya and Yo Honey Singh. Her acting career further expanded with roles in 'Great Grand Masti' and the web series 'Dangerous,' which starred Karan Singh Grover and Bipasha Basu, directed by Bhushan Patel, and produced by Mika Singh.

Disha Parmar

Gives Up On Car's Backseat For Daughter Navya's Quick Nap

Television sensation Disha Parmar is joyfully embracing every bit of motherhood with her daughter, Navya, and her social media posts are proof of this. The actress, who shares the little one with singer Rahul Vaidya, loves sharing snippets of their little one's cute antics and adorable moments on Instagram. Her latest video is no exception. Giving another glimpse of her daughter, the 'Bade Acche Lagte Hain' actress gave fans a peek into an utterly cute video of her munchkin napping in the car. Disha recently took a much-deserved family break to spend some quality time together. The family outing, which included Disha, Rahul, their daughter Navya, and in-laws, was filled with laughter, love and some irresistibly cute moments. In a heartwarming video shared on Instagram Stories, Disha shared a sweet moment of baby Navya peacefully napping in the car. She stretched out comfortably across the entire seat, meanwhile, the doting and slightly amused mother was seen sitting on the car floor, making space for her little princess.

Captioning the video with humour and affection, she wrote, "Madam decided to take the whole seat to sleep... and here I am... sitting on the floor."

Disha Parmar and Rahul Vaidya first crossed paths during a music video. Their friendship soon blossomed into love, and the singer

proposed to Disha Parmar during his stint on the reality TV show 'Bigg Boss 14.' The couple later got married in 2021 in Mumbai in the presence of their close ones. Two years later, they embraced parenthood with the birth of their daughter, Navya, in September 2023.

Speaking about Disha's professional life, the actress became a household name with her debut role in the popular show 'Pyaar Ka Dard Hai—Meetha Meetha Pyaara Pyaara' in 2012. Her performances in shows like



Woh Apna Sa, Bade Achhe Lagte Hain 2 and Bade Achhe Lagte Hain 3 added to her fame.

Besides television shows, Disha has also appeared in the sitcom web series 'I Don't Watch TV.' Bankrolled by Nakuul Mehta, Ajay Singh, and Alekh Sangal, the series is based on the real lives of the television actors. It also featured Nakuul, Janek Parekh, Karan Wahi, Dilnaz Irani, Rithvik Dhanjani, Kritika Kamra, Alekh Sangal, Drashti Dhami, Ram Menon, Sanaya Irani and Sana Sheikh, among others.

Ashish Chanchlani Turns 'Spotboy' For Elli AvrRam Amid Dating Buzz; Cute



Ashish Chanchlani has shared an adorable video with Elli AvrRam on social media amid their dating rumours. On Wednesday, the content creator took to his Instagram handle and dropped a video which featured a glimpse of their humorous bond. In the clip, Ashish jokingly refers to himself as a spot boy for Elli, helping her with her dress. At the end of the video, he asks playfully, "Can I push you off the bridge, ma'am?" This prompts a fun laugh from both of them. Captioning the video, Ashish wrote, "Finally, we have been waiting to tell you." Watch it here: Soon after the video was shared, netizens reacted to it and referred to Elli as their "bhabhi". Some even urged Ashish to reveal their wedding date.

For the unversed, Ashish Chanchlani left everyone surprised earlier this month when he seemingly confirmed that he is dating actress-model Elli AvrRam. The content creator took to his Instagram handle and shared a beautiful picture with Elli in which he was seen holding her in his arms. While this has sparked speculation about their relationship, Ashish also wrote in the caption— "Finally. Meanwhile, on the work front, Ashish is currently preparing for the release of his highly anticipated project, 'Ekaki.' This series represents a shift from his traditional comedic style, as it promises to offer a unique blend of horror and comedy, reflecting Ashish's signature approach in his digital content. Serving as his directorial debut, 'Ekaki' will be released on the ACV Studios YouTube channel, and fans are eagerly looking forward to its launch. In this project, Ashish takes on multiple roles as a writer, actor, producer, and director, making 'Ekaki' a potential game-changer in his career. On the other hand, Elli AvrRam is a Swedish-Greek actress based in Mumbai.

In India, Elli gained recognition after participating in 'Bigg Boss 7' in 2013. She has also been a part of films like 'Mickey Virus,' 'Kis Kisko Pyar Karoon,' 'Naam Shabana' and 'Goodbye.'

Divyanka Tripathi Captures Picture-Perfect Moment With Vivek Dahiya



Divyanka Tripathi celebrated her ninth wedding anniversary with her actor husband, Vivek Dahiya. The couple chose to keep their celebration private but are now enjoying a trip to Dubai. They have been sharing lovely pictures and moments from their getaway on social media. The 'Yeh Hai Mohabbatein' actress recently posted a sweet photo of Vivek, in which he can be seen smiling with a rose, and she couldn't help but shower love on him. In the photo shared on her Instagram stories, Vivek is seen sitting without a shirt and a rose tucked behind his left ear. He had a shy look on his face, which clearly melted Divyanka's heart. She tagged her husband in the story and added heart emojis, showing how much she adored the moment.

Divyanka Tripathi and Vivek Dahiya have always been open about their love on social media. But earlier this year, the couple faced a rough patch when rumours about their divorce started spreading online. For several weeks, the talks kept growing. When the news started getting too much attention, Vivek came forward and cleared the air by calling the reports completely false. He also shared how he and Divyanka dealt with the situation together.

Speaking to ABP News, the actor said, "We are having a lot of fun. Divyanka and I were laughing at these rumours. While eating ice cream, we thought that if it got any longer, we should order popcorn too. It's entertaining for us. I saw the reports, and Divyanka and I laughed them off. We know how clickbait works. I do YouTube vlogging too, so I get this business model very well. If you post a sensational thumbnail, people will click. But there's nothing inside. People should avoid giving views to baseless news. It's fake entertainment."

Vivek Dahiya and Divyanka Tripathi first met while working on the sets of 'Yeh Hai Mohabbatein.' Their friendship quickly turned into a deep connection, and they soon fell in love. The couple got married on July 8, 2016, surrounded by fans and family. Since then, they have worked on various shows, including the dance reality show 'Nach Baliye 8,' where they impressed fans with their chemistry and performances.

Soak in the regalia of the fairytale-like princely state of Jodhpur in Rajasthan's second largest city.

As little kids, we would pester our grandparents to tell and retell the stories of beautiful queens, handsome maharajas, fierce battles and bejewelled royal palaces. I managed to behold and soak in the regalia of one such fairytale-like princely state on my recent trip to Rajasthan's second largest city and home to the Maharajas since 1459, Jodhpur.

Colourful cityscape

The silky sand dunes of the Thar Desert dotted with camels basking in the sun, towering forts and palaces glistening in red sandstone and the narrow lanes leading to shops that open into an alluring world of handicrafts are some of the welcoming sights here. We were fortunate to have a host-cum-tour guide to walk us into different eras every time we stepped inside historical monuments, temples and gardens. Madan Lal Jangid, a 69-year-old French professor, entrepreneur, researcher and an avid traveller could not be dismissed as one of those guides who takes tourism to be a revenue-making business. "I cannot wrap up the history of a place in 45 minutes, make money and let you go feeling satisfied. I remember when a diplomat from Canada had been here, we spent at least 4-5 hours in Mehrangarh Fort discussing the many stories behind every pillar and rock. That is how you connect; summarising a history in stock-and trade terms is a fruitless exercise," asserts he. Our car moved through the nooks and crannies of the city in a way that the seat's window became a frame to the colourful images outside running past one after the other. From veiled women keeping up with their husbands' pace, the paan wala sprinkling water on the cascading betel leaves, little boys encircling foreign tourists to that old woman under the shade of the Clock Tower with a heap of coloured shoelaces awaiting buyers; the transition seemed like we turn pages in a photo album.

The Royal quarters of Mehrangarh Fort

The mighty walls of the Mehrangarh Fort have many secrets buried inside. Maintained by the present generation of Marwar Kings, Maharaja Gaj Singh II, the expansive courtyards, exquisite palatial spaces like the Moti Mahal (Pearl Palace), Phool Mahal (Flower Palace), Sheesha Mahal (Mirror Palace), and hidden balconies for women to listen to court proceedings, chambers and galleries enrich the fort's heritage. Our host informs us that this is the only fort where you will find the provision of an elevator allowing people to not worry about any physical barriers during their tour. There is yet another purpose of the elevator; it leads you to the Mehran Terrace, a roof-top restaurant where people take delight in indulging in the traditional Rajasthani thali. And what better way to admire the beauty of a world-class historical monument than sitting on the terrace beneath the twinkling stars and dim-lit candles on the dining table?

On reaching the top floor, the view of the entire cityscape is breathtaking. All the gates of the fort are visible and the panoramic view seems sketched on a blue canvas. Blue, because the cluster of buildings are bathed in that colour and there is a reason too. The colour was earlier identified with a certain privileged section of society, a marker of a higher caste but slowly as civilization

Jodhpur

A royal retreat

grew, such social indicators ceased to have any significance. Subsequently, blue emerged as the universal colour of all communities irrespective of distinctions. Jodhpur is not only known as the 'sun' city, it is also referred to as the 'blue' city, like Jaipur is the Pink City.

Note: The rooftop restaurant opens during the evenings after the fort closes. Tourists who do not intend to move around the fort and would rather revel in the maharaja-style dining on the terrace can do so. The Chokhela garden (200-



year-old and recently refurbished) is often mistaken to be the Mehran Terrace but both are different, though within the premises of the fort area. The Chokhela Garden leads to the Mehran Terrace

Jaswant Thada

Located half way up the road that climbs onwards to the Mehrangarh fort is Jaswant Thada. Immaculate in white marble, this mausoleum was built in the year 1899 in the memory of Maharaja Jaswant Singh II. A tomb with an array of domes is the crematorium for Jodhpur rulers. As the sun rays kiss the milky surface of the monument, the memorial comes alive in a glaze and its intricate carved jalis (screens) emit a glow.

The grandeur of Umaid Bhawan

This palace was born out of a crisis. When consecutive seasons went without rain, a famine-like situation arose that threatened the economic lives of people. Maharaja Umaid Singh decided to construct a palace that would not only relieve employment worries but also remain a monument of symbolic value for years. A visionary and benevolent king succeeded in his famine-relief policy that provided employment to thousands for a period of

almost two decades from 1929-44. Anecdotes are many when it comes to discussing the Umaid Bhawan (initially called Chittar Palace for it stood on the Chittar Hills). The Art Deco furniture and impeccable interiors were originally crafted by Maples of London but unfortunately all furnishings could not reach the Palace. In the wake of World War II, the furniture-laden ship succumbed to a tragedy and was sunk by the Germans en route to India. Nothing could deter the Maharaja's plans and in came a Polish artist and refugee from war-torn Europe, Stephen Norblin, who mended what was wrecked. Familiar with the work of Art Deco connoisseurs, Norblin did not fail the King. As you look through the paintings (essentially inspired by the episodes of Ramayana), gaze at the artefacts ranging from antique clocks (some in the shape of railway locomotives and others in windmills) to ornate ceilings; you would be quick to notice a harmonious "blend of occidental symmetry and oriental texture," in the words of our host.

Umaid Bhawan has been divided into three sections- one portion is dedicated to the museum and exhibition area, the other is converted into a hotel and the third segment is owned by the current family of the royals headed by Maharaja Gaj Singh II.

Clock Tower and marketplace

Rajasthan is a land that celebrates colour and what better way to explore it than doing the rounds of the market area on the Nayi Sadak with the huge Clock Tower in the backdrop. Once you take a left from the Nayi Sadak, you reach the inviting world of lac bangles

crevices of lush green trees you can catch a glimpse of the Mandore temple that is believed to be named after Ravana's wife, Mandodari. On one hand, while a woman is a symbol of divinity, she is also subjected to atrocities like sati and dowry deaths; a conundrum unresolved.

Osian Village and the Great Indian Desert If Jaisalmer prides in its Golden Fort (fondly known as 'Sonar Kella' after Satyajit Ray's film by the same name), Jodhpur too flaunts the 'Khajuraho of Rajasthan', i.e. Osian Village. It is one of the ancient villages and pilgrimage centres of the Oswal Jain community that is home to ruins of Brahmanical and Jain temples dating back to the 8th Century. Almost a two-hour drive from the main city, Osian is an oasis in The Thar Desert. Once in our lifetime, some of us wish to see snow, some want to feel the sea from up-close and others long to be on the mountains. But when you find yourself standing in the middle of a desert, surrounded with nothing but golden-yellow sand dunes, the openness engulfs you. Footprints on the desert that begin to form a trail but suddenly dissolve after a distance seem like a reminder of how fragile permanence can be. Tents and resort camps situated on the picturesque Osian sand dunes can make for a peaceful stay for tourists hoping to escape their busy lives.

Bishnoi Villages The Chipko Movement can be traced back to the origin of the Bishnois (a community of nature and wildlife lovers) that revolted against the Maharaja's decision to fell trees in order to build the Mehrangarh Fort. Since the feudal power dismissed the protests by the bishnois who hugged the trees as an act of resistance, many of them were hacked with the trees. Since then, there is a day that commemorates the sacrifice of the bishnois in Khejri Village. A glimpse into the cultural life of the bishnois in Khejri Village, (south-east of Jodhpur is considered a place of pilgrimage) can definitely be a value addition to your trip. Village tours and safaris are conducted in Khejri and Guda Bishnoi Villages; they are home to chinkaras and blackbucks that roam the countryside throughout the day but return to their native villages as the sun sets.

Trivia: Most clothing items on sale are second-hand; yes, it is believed that these articles where once worn by the queens and now redesigned and modified to allure shoppers. Slip into that Rajasthani attire and feel like a real queen if you will

Jodhpur: A royal retreat

Credit: Reuters

Mandore Garden is more than flower-beds. Gardens are supposed to make you feel happy but I entered into the gates of the Mandore Garden with a heavy heart. It was once a prominent entry point to the Mehrangarh Fort but today stands like an ordinary gateway. Its walls embossed in palm prints continue to speak of the cruel ritual of sati (burning of wives in the funeral pyre of their dead husbands) rampant during the time. Once inside, between the



Things to do in Shillong—the abode of clouds

The city of Shillong is often considered to be a place where nature is in its primal beauty; where clouds and the sun express their own camaraderie through a vivid interplay of sunshine and shadow; where the colonial remnants meet the upsurge of modern day influence and where music runs through the veins of everyone you come across. So naturally, there is a

lot to see in Shillong, which is, by the way, true to the core; but to tag the city as merely a 'places to visit paradise' would be sheer injustice to the lesser known opportunities for action and adventure. Things to do in Shillong can be turned into a full-fledged vacation idea rather than just a part of the itinerary.

Embark on a musical journey in the city

often referred to as India's Rock Capital and a watchful stroll along the narrow alleys is a good start to have. Extend your sojourn and see names like Lou Majaw, Afflatus and Soulmate in their own territory. For the ones who like things ready-on-a-platter, we suggest you visit Shillong during any music concert. Once your thirst for melody is quenched, time for some water rappelling at the Elephant Falls; golfer or non golfer, Shillong Golf Course is one place you would not want to miss out on; take a leisurely stroll along the Wards Lake and indulge in water activities like boating, skiing and rowing at the Umiam Lake.

Take a stroll around Wards Lake

Located in the midst of the colonial era Shillong, Wards Lake is a popular hangout place for the tourists and locals alike. Unlike the Umiam Lake, this one is more planned and all the facilities have been provided keeping in mind requirements of the leisure traveller. The entire area is adorned with flower beds, beautiful trees, lovely high lands and a bridge. Seekers of tranquility will have their share of personal space amid a growing city; nature lovers can admire the man-made corner for the greens and photography enthusiasts will not mind spending some

time in Wards Lake. Extend your walk towards the northeast direction of the lake and after about 15 minutes you will arrive at the Shillong Golf Course which with all its greenery and pine trees!

Boating at Umiam Lake

Located about 15 kms north of Shillong, this lake is basically a water reservoir that was formed due to the damming of the Umiam river. Historically this lake holds a special place in North East India, courtesy the fact that the dam that gave birth to Umiam Lake is the first Hydel power project in the region. A massive water body, the total catchment area of the lake and dam is spread over 220 square kms. This beautiful lake is a paradise for the nature lovers and ones who crave for a hide out from the daily hustle of city life. The water of Umiam Lake is very clean and hence offers a never-to-be missed opportunity of boating and other water activities.

Hire a boat and sail into its crystal clear water to enjoy the surrounding beauty of the entire landscape. The water sports complex at Umiam Lake offers adventure sports options like water skiing, sailing and rowing to the visitors.

Golfing in Shillong Golf Course

Courtesy its past as the British capital of the then undivided Assam, Shillong has the imprints of the days bygone; Shillong Golf Course is one of them. But it will be sheer

injustice to the magnanimous entity if we box it up only as a colonial remnant and a place for the professional players to test their skills. The 18-hole course is a green paradise with grass spread across like carpet with trees standing like watchful protectors. The lush green hills that form the backdrop of beautiful pine and rhododendron trees add to the splendor of the landscape. Be a part of the golf tournaments that are held on this venue to be one with the surroundings and its legacy.

Waterfall rappelling at Elephant Falls

Elephant Falls is the combination of three small torrents that form a strong stream that adorns the fern-covered rocks. The place got its name in the colonial era when the Englishmen spotted a giant rock resembling an elephant near the fall. The rock got destroyed during an earth quake and the Englishmen left the country but the name stayed. Due to its origin in three streams, the water force of Elephant Falls is one to reckon with which offers ample opportunities for adventure sports like waterfall rappelling. For starters, you can try rappelling from the height of 40 ft and don't worry; you will be well harnessed under expert surveillance. Climb down from your starting point and feel the immense water pressure on you while you struggle to find your footing in the slippery rocks.

