

# PM to visit UK next week to sign trade pact, 1st trip to Maldives after standoff

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will undertake a two-nation tour to the UK and Maldives, signing a landmark free trade agreement with the UK and serving as Chief Guest at the Maldives' 60th National Day celebrations.

- **PM Modi to visit UK and Maldives from July 23-26**
- **Set to sign landmark India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA)**
- **First visit to Maldives since recent diplomatic tensions**

#### New Delhi. (Agency)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will embark on a significant two-nation tour to the United Kingdom and the Maldives from July 23 to 26, aimed at bolstering India's diplomatic ties through key trade deals and political engagements. The first leg of Prime Minister Modi's journey will be to the United Kingdom on July 23-24, where he will sign the landmark India-UK Free Trade

Agreement (FTA). The agreement is poised to impact 99 per cent of Indian exports to the UK by reducing tariffs, thereby facilitating British exports such as whisky and cars to India. This development follows three years of rigorous negotiations aimed at enhancing market access and creating a more favourable trading environment for both

nations.

The India-UK FTA is expected to significantly enlarge the bilateral trade basket and deepen security ties between the two nations. By easing trade barriers, both countries aim to achieve a more comprehensive economic partnership, reinforcing their strategic and economic collaboration. The Prime Minister will visit the Maldives

on July 25-26, where he will serve as the Chief Guest at the 60th National Day celebrations. This will be his first visit to the Maldives under President Mohamed Muizzu's administration, and also the first since recent strains in bilateral relations, primarily due to the "India Out" campaign led by some Maldivian leaders and the current regime's pro-China stance.

This visit is seen as a critical opportunity to address lingering concerns, foster mutual cooperation, and reaffirm India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy in the Indian Ocean Region. The focus will be on rebuilding trust and establishing a more robust partnership, crucial for regional stability and India's strategic interests. Prime Minister Modi's last bilateral visit to the Maldives was in June 2019.



# 'Take lie detector test': KTR accuses Revanth Reddy of snooping on his ministers

The explosive allegations come as the Congress faces growing pressure over its handling of high-profile cases, including the ongoing phone-tapping probe and the controversial Hyderabad drug syndicate links.

**Hyderabad. (Agency)**  
Bharat Rashtra Samiti (BRS) working president KT Rama Rao (KTR) on Friday launched a scathing attack on Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, accusing him of tapping phones of his own Cabinet colleagues. During an address in Khammam, KTR dared the Chief Minister to come clean on the allegations.

"I directly ask Revanth Reddy—if you are truly a man, speak the truth. Aren't you tapping the phones of Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka, Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy, and Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy, fearing they might snatch your seat?" KTR said, amping up the rhetoric.

"Will you swear to your grandson that you are not tapping

their phones? I challenge you to take a lie detector test. If you have the courage, prove it," KTR dared Reddy.

The explosive allegations come as the Congress faces growing pressure over its handling of high-profile cases, including the ongoing phone-tapping probe and the controversial Hyderabad drug syndicate links. Firing a rebuttal, Congress MLC Balmoori Venkat didn't mince any words. "BRS Government means



undergo a lie detector test to prove they didn't tap the phones of Judicials, journalists, or celebrities," he claimed.

Taking aim at KTR, Venkat claimed, "Several people caught in

- **KTR challenges Revanth to prove innocence with a lie detector test**
- **Congress MLC Balmoori Venkat counters, linking KTR to drug cases**
- **Venkat demands KTR to undergo drug test, questions his silence**

phone tapping. Phone tapping means KCR and KTR. Let KTR

previous drug cases had close links with KTR. After our

# Om Birla meets Korean delegation in Delhi, reaffirms India's stance against terror

#### New Delhi. (Agency)

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Friday reiterated India's firm stance against terrorism during a meeting with a visiting delegation from South Korea, led by former Prime Minister Kim Boo Kyum, at Parliament House in New Delhi. Condemning the recent Pahalgam terrorist attack that claimed the lives of 26 tourists, Birla said such acts demand a strong global response. He slammed Pakistan for failing to act against terror groups operating on its soil and stressed that India had exercised its sovereign right through Operation Sindoora—targeted precision military strikes aimed solely at dismantling terrorist infrastructure.

The Speaker further emphasised that the operation was measured, non-provocative, and aligned with India's policy of zero tolerance towards terrorism. He expressed hope for continued Korean support of India's counter-terror efforts. This came a day after the US designated Pakistan-based The Resistance Front (TRF), a Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) offshoot which was involved in the April 22 attack in the Baisaran Valley, as a terrorist organisation.

Pakistan, on Friday, claimed that it had already "dismantled" the terrorist network associated with the LeT and said any attempt to connect the Pahalgam attack to the now-defunct group was against the reality.

Meanwhile, Birla thanked Korea for condemning the Pahalgam attack and for the message of condolence from the Korean National Assembly after the Ahmedabad plane crash. A total of 260 people, including 241 passengers and 12 crew members, died when Air India flight AI 171 crashed near Ahmedabad airport moments after it took off on June 12.

Congratulating Korea on its recent Presidential election, Birla extended warm wishes to newly elected President Lee Jae-myung. He expressed confidence in stronger bilateral ties under Lee's leadership, noting the President's prior role as Chairman of the Korea-India Parliamentary Friendship Group.



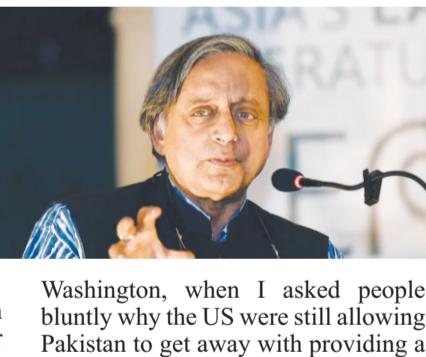
# "When I Asked People Bluntly...": Shashi Tharoor On US-Pak Cooperation

#### New Delhi. (Agency)

In the wake of the United States' designation of The Resistance Front (TRF) as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) and a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT), Congress leader Shashi Tharoor has offered insight into the behind-the-scenes diplomatic exchanges that preceded the announcement.

Taking to social media platform X, Mr Tharoor welcomed the US move but said it was long overdue. The TRF, a proxy of the banned Pakistan-based

Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), had claimed responsibility for the 22 April 2025 terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam that left 26 dead, marking the deadliest assault on Indian civilians since the 2008 Mumbai attacks. In his post, Mr Tharoor revealed that during his private meetings with US officials in Washington earlier this year, he directly questioned America's reluctance to hold Pakistan accountable for harbouring terror groups. "In my private conversations in



Washington, when I asked people bluntly why the US were still allowing Pakistan to get away with providing a safe haven to terrorist organisations, I

was pointed to Pakistan's alleged cooperation with the US on counter-terror operations, notably the recent surrender of the individual allegedly responsible for the Abbey Gate bombing that had killed 23 US marines at Kabul airport," Mr Tharoor wrote.

The reference is to the August 2021 suicide bombing at Hamid Karzai International Airport's Abbey Gate in Kabul, during the US troop withdrawal, a strike later claimed by ISIS.

# 50 calls from Fadnavis, no reply: Eknath Shinde rips into Uddhav for ditching BJP

#### Eknath Shinde

accused Uddhav

Thackeray of betraying Devendra Fadnavis and the BJP alliance in the 2019 assembly elections.

The allegations

highlight ongoing political tensions

within Maharashtra's

Shiv Sena factions.

#### Mumbai. (Agency)

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Friday hit out at Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray, accusing him of betraying his ally Devendra Fadnavis in 2019. Replying to the opposition's Last Week Motion in the legislative council, Shinde said, without naming Thackeray, that Fadnavis made "40-50 calls" after the alliance of the undivided Shiv Sena and BJP retained its majority in the 2019 assembly elections.

But there was no response (from Thackeray) to the BJP leader's calls, said Shinde.

"Maharashtra has never seen a chameleon changing colours so fast. He went with those whom he once considered lowly," Shinde said in an apparent reference to Thackeray joining hands with the Congress after severing the alliance with the BJP.

It was because of his (Shinde's) request that



Fadnavis had agreed to cede the post of Mumbai's mayor to the Shiv Sena in 2017 after the Sena won 84 seats and the BJP 82 in the civic polls, Shinde said.

"But he (Thackeray) betrayed Fadnavis in 2019 (by walking out of the alliance)," Shinde added. Shinde also claimed that while he and rebel Sena MLAs supporting him were camping in Guwahati in 2022 after rebelling against Thackeray, the latter

approached him for reconciliation, and at the same time told the BJP leadership in Delhi not to support the rebel group.

Shinde said the Thackeray government had announced starting a music school in the name of Lata Mangeshkar after the singing legend's death. But when the Mangeshkar family awarded the first Lata Deenanath Mangeshkar Award to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Thackeray got so upset that he decided against starting the music school, Shinde claimed. When he became chief minister in 2022, he started the music school, Shinde added. Notably, Shinde's reminder of Thackeray's betrayal of Fadnavis and the BJP in 2019 came a day after the Shiv Sena (UBT) chief met the Maharashtra Chief Minister. A day earlier, Fadnavis, in a tongue-in-cheek remark in the House, had asked Thackeray to come over to the ruling side.

First made in India semiconductor chip to be rolled out this year: IT Minister

#### Hyderabad. (Agency)

Union Electronics and Information Technology Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Friday said that the country's first indigenous semiconductor chip would be rolled out this year. Speaking at the 85th foundation day celebrations of Keshav Memorial Educational Society in Hyderabad, he said India was going to become one of the most important semiconductor nations in the world. Today, some of the most complex chips are designed in cities, including Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Pune, Gurugram and Chennai, he said.

"Now, we are starting the manufacturing of semiconductor chips. We have already approved six semiconductor plants. Their construction is going on. We will have the first Made in India chip in this year 2025," he said.



The Union Minister said as part of the India AI Mission, free datasets and others were being uploaded. "As many as one million people are being trained in the use of AI," he said. Vaishnaw also said India would be among the top two economies in the world by 2047. Observing that the world was going through a big change, he said the western countries which were dominating the economy are now being replaced by the "eastern hemisphere".

# Bomb threat emails to Bengaluru schools traced to offshore platform AtomicMail, cops suspect Telegram bots

**AtomicMail auto-deletes sender data in 7 days; cops say bots on Telegram may have triggered mass threat emails to 40 schools**

#### BENGALURU .(Agency)

After 40 schools in the city received bomb threat emails on Friday morning, police said the messages were sent using an offshore platform called AtomicMail.io, which deletes all user data, including sender details, after just seven days. Officials told TNIE that they are also looking into whether the emails were sent directly through such services or if they were triggered by "automated bots", some of which are reportedly sold freely on Telegram.

Since 2023, the services used in such threats have changed from Beeble to a Tor-based dark web mailer and now to AtomicMail, and they all don't log IP addresses, keep no user records, and operate under jurisdictions that either reject legal cooperation or require treaties that India doesn't have. According to officials, AtomicMail is part of a growing network of offshore platforms designed for "privacy-first" communication but misused for hoaxes, fraud, and cyber threats. This isn't the first instance of Bengaluru schools receiving such threats. Between 2022 and 2024, Bengaluru reported 133 such cases. In 2023, most emails were sent through Beeble. Later, threat actors moved to Tor.



based dark web services and, more recently, to AtomicMail, which has seen a rise in

abuse cases globally due to its short data retention window and lack of oversight.

**Bengal man held for derogatory remarks against Kannadigas**



#### BENGALURU .(Agency)

The Bommanahalli police on Thursday arrested a man from West Bengal for allegedly using derogatory remarks against Karnataka and Kannadigas.

The accused, Mithun Sarkar, a massage therapist, is a resident of Begur Road. According to the police, on Thursday, one delivery executive, Ranjith Mathew, was on his way to deliver an order to Sarkar. When they were conversing on the call, the executive called an argument broke out, as Sarkar insisted that Mathew speak in Hindi. He allegedly said, "We Hindi-speaking people make up 70% of the population in Karnataka. You people have gone overboard. If we leave, Kannadigas won't even survive," said the complaint.

Based on Mathew's complaint, a case was registered against Sarkar for intentional insult with intent to provoke the breach of peace. Following the incident, members of the pro-Kannada organisation Karnataka Rakshana Vedike also filed a petition demanding action against the accused. The police said that, based on the information provided by the delivery executive, Sarkar was traced and arrested.

**Chennai schoolgirl's rape case: Three DSP-led special teams formed to arrest accused**

#### CHENNAI .(Agency)

Three special teams, each led by a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP), have been formed by the Thiruvallur district police on Friday to arrest the man who allegedly abducted and raped a 10-year-old girl near Gummidi poondi a week ago. A senior official said the Thiruvallur district superintendent of police (SP) will supervise the investigation.

Sources said the teams have fanned out to areas like Gummidi poondi and Sulurpetta in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, a few kilometres from the inter-state border, to search for the suspect, as the police doubt, the suspect may have been shuttling between the villages across the border.

The incident happened on July 12, when the girl was returning from her school. She was abducted by a man and allegedly raped at a secluded spot in a mango grove near Gummidi poondi. The girl later escaped from the spot and informed her grandmother who took her to the Ponneri Government Hospital, after which she was transferred to the Government RSRM hospital in Chennai.

The police have obtained CCTV footage of the individual and are now working on location tracking data to zero in on the suspect. A case has been registered under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

A Class 4 student, the victim has been living with her grandparents, while her parents live across the border in Andhra Pradesh. AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami said the incident is deeply shocking, heart-wrenching, and hit out at CM MK Stalin questioning the state of law and order. Palaniswami demanded the arrest of the suspect and urged the government to ensure proper treatment for the victim.

# CBI court issues bailable warrants against DSP for ignoring summons; slams CBI Imphal chief for defying orders

#### Chandigarh .(Agency)

Learning that the head of branch of CBI's ACB (Anti-Corruption Bureau), Imphal (Manipur), is not permitting a DSP (Deputy Superintendent of Police) to appear before the Chandigarh court for examination in a graft case registered in 2017 against a Chandigarh Police Sub-Inspector (SI), a special CBI court Friday called the "approach of head of branch, CBI ACB Imphal, in violation of court's order", and said that it "cannot be appreciated".

The special CBI judge, Alka Malik, also issued bailable warrants of arrest in the sum of Rs 15,000 of CBI DSP Mohinder Ram, who did not appear before the court. The CBI court was hearing a graft case against Chandigarh Police SI Mohan Singh, then posted at Sector 31 police station, who was arrested by CBI for allegedly demanding a bribe of Rs 9 lakh and accepting Rs 2 lakh from a Manimajra

resident, Prem Singh Bisht. 4,000-crore

project under which it aims to The case, which is at the stage of trial evidence, Friday came up for hearing before the CBI court of Alka Malik, Additional District and Sessions Judge, Chandigarh. During the hearing, Manjeet, a prosecution witness, was present for his cross-examination, but was not examined as the defence counsel of Mohan Singh pleaded that cross-examination of this witness should be conducted on the day when DSP Mohinder Ram, another prosecution witness, will be examined. However, DSP Ram did not appear before the court on Friday.

It was learnt by the court that summons sent to DSP Ram were received back duly served through email. However, an oral request on his behalf was received through naib court that "he is not being permitted by the head of

## Railway gives nod to lay two additional lines between Perambur, Ambattur

#### CHENNAI .(Agency)

The Railway Board has given its approval for the construction of the fifth and sixth railway lines between Perambur and Ambattur in Chennai - Arakkonam stretch. The section currently has two fast lines and two slow lines, earmarked for the operation of express and suburban trains respectively. The two additional lines, spanning 6.4 km, are expected to ease congestion at Chennai Central, especially in the light of the upcoming new terminal at Perambur. The project has received a budget allocation of Rs 182 crore. According to official sources, the proposal seeking approval to construct the new lines on existing railway land adjacent to the current tracks, was submitted last year. It was included under the umbrella works for the financial year 2024-25.

"A coaching terminal is being planned at Perambur to ease the heavy traffic at Chennai Central. Around 75% of the train operations from Chennai Central are expected to be shifted to the

proposed terminal at Perambur. To support this, the 5th and 6th lines will be constructed to ensure smooth connectivity with the Perambur Coaching Terminal," said an official document. Currently, the line capacity utilisation is at 105.2% (without maintenance blocks) and is projected to reach 114.4% by 2028-29. "No land acquisition is required for the project. With the board's sanction now in place, tenders will be floated shortly," the official added.

Railway estimates indicate a financial rate of return of 17.45% and an Economic Internal Rate of Return of 34.43% for the project. Additionally, it is expected to handle an increased traffic load of 7.03 million tonnes per annum, according to the document.

Lines aim to decongest Central. The two additional lines, spanning 6.4 km, are expected to ease congestion at Chennai Central, especially in the light of the upcoming new terminal at Perambur. The project has received a budget allocation of Rs 182 crore



branch, CBI ACB Imphal, to appear before this court". The court said, "Such an approach of head of branch, CBI ACB Imphal, is in violation of this court's order and thus cannot be appreciated. Consequently, this request is declined."

The court observed that as per records, DSP Ram is being summoned in this "Old Action

Plan Case" pertaining to the year 2018, for the purpose of his cross-examination for about one year by now, but he has not appeared.

The court noted that on November 21, 2024, he was served, but he had sent his request which was granted by this court. Since then despite sending several summons to DSP Mohinder Ram, he has not appeared before this court and various requests have been received on his behalf or on behalf of head of branch, CBI ACB Imphal, directly in this court or through head of branch, CBIACB Chandigarh.

"It is thus evident that this witness is not appearing in glaring defiance of the orders of this court. Let him be now summoned through bailable warrants of arrest in the sum of Rs 15,000 with one surety in the like amount for August 4, 2025," ordered the court.

# Drenched and defenceless Friday's downpour paralyses Hyderabad

#### HYDERABAD .(Agency)

An unexpectedly heavy spell of rain lashed Hyderabad on Friday, throwing large parts of the city into disarray. The three-hour-long downpour was enough to flood roads, enter homes, paralyse traffic, and once again expose the city's vulnerability to extreme weather.

Within 30 minutes, low-lying areas were inundated and arterial roads turned into streams, crippling both pedestrian and vehicular movement. In places like Vijayapuri Colony in the Mettuguda Division, Sindhi Colony, and near Prakash Nagar, water gushed into narrow lanes and flooded homes. Boats had to be deployed to rescue residents.

An activist posted on X: "We last saw boats being deployed in 2020 during floods. It is shocking to see the state of city

infrastructure—boats needed after just three hours of rain."

Other colonies such as VV Nagar, Nagole, Moosarambagh, Tolichowki, West Marredpally, and Uppal were also marooned. Overflowing nalas and water



bodies only worsened the situation. In commercial hubs like Madhapur, Kondapur, and Gachibowli, waterlogging was severe. Commuters travelling from the Financial District to Begumpet were stranded as major roads became immobile parking

lots. Traffic crawled along the Outer Ring Road, Inner Ring Road, and major corridors like Jubilee Hills checkpost, KBR Park stretch, Peddamma Temple Road, Apollo Hospital Road, and Ameerpet-Begumpet.

One commuter tweeted: "It took me nearly three hours to travel from Jubilee Hills to Begumpet, a distance that usually takes 30 minutes." Though Hyderabad Traffic police attempted to ease congestion with diversions and advisories, widespread flooding left few viable alternatives. App-based cab services like Uber and Ola faced disruptions, with drivers unable to navigate the submerged roads. Wait times stretched to over an hour, only for rides to get cancelled. Many were shocked by surge pricing, which doubled or tripled normal fares.

# Around Town: From milk centre to misal to chicken biryani—How Dadar's 84-year-old Adarsha keeps evolving

**Adarsha, the eatery in Dadar has grown into a bustling restaurant serving everything from tea and misal to dosa, pav bhaji, thalis, and its latest hit, chicken biryani. Its secret, they say, lies in 'not being a prisoner to their own style.'**

#### Mumbai .(Agency)

In pre-Independence Bombay, a young Bhalchandra Panshikar (of the famous sweet shop Panshikars) had successfully established a milk and mithai business. At his suggestion, his cousin Tryambak Mirwankar purchased a shop in Dadar and set up a milk centre called Adarsha in 1941. They sourced milk from a gotha (cowshed) in Goregaon and sold it from their shop on Ramade Road. Given the shop's proximity to Dadar railway station, customers suggested that they serve tea—and perhaps a few biscuits to go with it. They complied. A decade later came the demand for a snack. Tryambak turned to his wife Sushila, who happily shared her recipe for kothimbir vadi. Crispy on the outside, soft and slightly gooey inside, with barely a trace of oil on the surface—it was an instant hit.

The warm reception encouraged the addition of more Maharashtrian snacks: batata vada, thalipeeth, sabudana vada, kanda pohe, and upma followed.



As the milk business thrived, sweets were added too, with mava barfi and peda earning a reputation of their own. "Back when we started, eating out was frowned upon. It wasn't seen as a part of Indian culture or tradition," said third-generation custodian Sanket Mirwankar, 39, recalling stories passed down from his grandfather

and father. "By the 1950s, people wanted a quick bite before boarding the trains. So they added a very small dining area. The need was still for something that could be packed and taken along or eaten quickly before dashing home. The idea of sitting down for a meal became more acceptable around the 1970s," he said.

The 1970s and '80s saw the entry of the second generation. Sanket's father, Narayan Mirwankar, and uncle Dattatray Mirwankar joined the business one after another and expanded the menu.

"They added pav bhaji, misal, Punjabi dishes, and expanded the dining area to seat around 30 people. The Maharashtrian thali came next, and suddenly, Adarsha was a full-fledged restaurant. By then, we'd stopped selling sweets, and milk was only used for in-

# Yogi govt ensures quick justice to Divyangjans through mobile courts in UP

## The Sikh Times

Lucknow, July 19: Under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the Uttar Pradesh government is actively working to protect the rights of Divyangjans and ensure quick access to justice. As part of this commitment, mobile courts headed by the State Commissioner for Divyangjans are being organized across various districts in the state. These mobile courts have so far resolved 677 complaints on the spot, providing timely relief to Divyangjans. The courts have been held in several districts including Meerut, Sultanpur, Amethi, Ayodhya, Barabanki, Shravasti, Gonda, Bahraich, and Balrampur. During these sessions, authorities listen to grievances directly in the local area and issue immediate instructions to concerned departments for resolution. This initiative has spared many

Divyangjans from the hassle of repeatedly visiting government offices. The Uttar Pradesh government



Officers for the Disabled serve as Assistant Commissioners. This structure has made local monitoring and resolution of complaints more effective. So far, mobile courts have been held in 9 districts, where 677 complaints have been resolved on the spot. In the financial year 2024-

25, the State Commissioner's office received 503 complaints, and in 2025-26 (so far), 91 complaints have been registered. Out of these, 58 have been resolved and 33 are under process. According to data from the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities up to May 2025, a total of 2,699 complaints were received via the CM Helpline, online portals, PGI portal, and CM references, out of which 2,660 have been resolved. Only 39 complaints remain pending, but none of them have crossed the deadline, reflecting the Yogi government's commitment to addressing the concerns of Divyangjans. Whether it's related to pensions, certificates, or social facilities, the

government system is actively resolving these issues. For example, out of 212 CM reference complaints, 206 have been resolved; on the PG Portal, 394 out of 404 complaints have been addressed; via online platforms, 229 out of 233 complaints have been resolved; and from the 1850 cases on the CM Helpline, 1831 have been settled. These mobile courts not only deliver fast justice but also restore dignity and rights to Divyangjans. This initiative truly reflects the spirit of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' (Together with All, Development for All). CM Yogi Adityanath has always emphasized inclusive policies for Divyangjans, and the positive impact of these efforts is now visible on the ground.

## The Works of Second Saraihat Rail-Cum-Road Bridge across the Brahmaputra Soon to Start

### The Sikh Times

Maligaon, 19th July: The Second Rail-cum-Road Bridge at Saraihat over the Brahmaputra River has been sanctioned as part of the doubling of the Agthori-Kamakhya railway line under Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR). This major infrastructure project was sanctioned during the FY 2023-24 with a sanctioned estimate of Rs. 1,473.77 crore, and is targeted for completion by December 2029. As part of the progress, detailed estimates have been sanctioned by the Railway Board in February 2024 and the Design Drawing & Report has been finalized and duly approved by competent authority in March, 2025. The geotechnical investigations have been completed for the design of the sub-structure & superstructure and an EPC tender has been floated for the construction of the bridge, including approach roads, rail viaducts, earthwork and ancillary works. The tender is expected to be finalized soon and construction works will be started immediately after the same. The project includes construction of a 7.062 km-long stretch from Agthori to Kamakhya, featuring a 1.3 km-long steel composite girder bridge over the Brahmaputra River. The upcoming bridge will be designed with a double-line railway track on the lower deck and a three-lane roadway with footpaths on the upper deck. The north-end approach of 2.694 km will connect to Agthori station, while the south-end approach of 3.07 km will connect to Kamakhya station. Once completed, the new bridge will significantly enhance line capacity in the section, which is poised for industrial growth. Besides improving connectivity, the project is expected to create substantial employment opportunities for both skilled and unskilled workers in the surrounding areas.



## Union Minister Sh Manohar Lal congratulates Karnal city on being selected for the President's Award for cleanliness

Chandigarh: Union Minister for Power, Housing, and Urban Affairs, Sh Manohar Lal, said that Karnal city being included in the list of the cleanest cities in the country under the Swachh Survekshan is a matter of great pride and happiness for all of us. He congratulated the people of Karnal on the city being selected for the President's Award for cleanliness and urged the public to continue supporting efforts to maintain cleanliness in the future as well. He congratulated the public representatives, sanitation workers, and the residents of Karnal for this achievement, stating that it is a matter of great pride that Karnal city has been selected for the President's Award for cleanliness. He added that this recognition is the result of the dedicated efforts of the Safai Mitras and the continued support of the citizens. He said that under the Swachh Bharat Mission, the Swachh Survekshan campaign has been conducted for the past several years by a third-party agency. Based on the data provided by this agency and the population size, cities are divided into five categories. The first category includes cities with a population of over 10 lakh, while the second category includes those with a population between 3 lakh and 10 lakh. Karnal city falls under the second category. In reply to a question, the Union Minister said that 100 cities across the country were selected by the Government of India as part of a pilot project, and Karnal was one of them. He said that significant development has taken place in Karnal under the Smart City Project, and assured that any remaining work will be completed soon. On this occasion, MLA Karnal Sh Jagmohan Anand, MLA Indri Sh Ramkumar Kashyap, MLA Nilokheri Sh Bhagwan Das Kabirpanthi, Assandh MLA Sh Yoginder Singh Rana, Mayor Municipal Corporation Smt Renu Bala Gupta, and other dignitaries were present.

### During the rainy season, food and drink should be used carefully

Phagwara: By using food and drink carefully during the rainy season, we can easily avoid many diseases, this was expressed by Dr. Naresh Kundra, a pediatric specialist posted at Civil Hospital Phagwara. He said that in this season, there is a fear of vomiting and diarrhea in small children, due to which their body becomes dehydrated and the child can die. He said that the correct treatment for diarrhea is ORS and zinc tablets and they can be given to the child when necessary, which does not cause dehydration in the child's body and maintains strength. Therefore, in case of diarrhea, ORS solution should be prepared and given to the child continuously in small quantities after each diarrhea, along with zinc tablets should also be given for 14 days. He said that ORS should be given in homes with small children. There should be packets which are available free of cost from government health institutions. Regarding the dosage of zinc, he said that a child aged 2 to 6 months should be given half a tablet of 20 mg and a child above six months should be given one tablet daily for 14 days. By giving zinc tablets, the child recovers quickly and this zinc tablet also protects the child from diseases like diarrhea and pneumonia for three months. He said that during the rainy season, special attention should be paid to cleanliness, food and drink should be kept covered and used only after boiling it well. He said that during the rainy season, eating too ripe or too raw and unpeeled fruits should be avoided and water should be boiled and drunk, clean food should be eaten, hands should be washed thoroughly after going to the toilet and before eating.

## National Green Tribunal member Justice Dr. Ahmed calls for joint efforts for environmental conservation

Phagwara: National Green Tribunal member Justice Dr. Afroz Ahmed today reviewed the District Environmental Plan in Kapurthala district and termed the environment as a common heritage and called for joint efforts for its conservation. Today, while reviewing the District Environmental Plan in Phagwara with Deputy Commissioner Amit Kumar Panchal, Commissioners of Municipal Corporations and Heads of Departments, the National Green Tribunal member expressed satisfaction over the use of treated sewage water for irrigation in Kapurthala district. Terming the conservation

of groundwater as the biggest need of the hour, Dr. Afroz said that it is a natural gift which is the responsibility of all of us to conserve. Deputy Commissioner Amit Kumar Panchal during the meeting called on the Municipal Corporations of Kapurthala and Phagwara, Municipal Council Sultanpur Lodhi and Nagar Panchayats of Nadala, Dhillian, Bholath. Information was given about the proper disposal of garbage at Begowal. Apart from this, proper arrangements have been made to resolve the garbage problem in 81 villages of the district. Apart from this, water is being cleaned by constructing ponds under the

Thapar model. Dr. Afroz Ahmed, while reviewing the efforts made by the industries to stop pollution, asked the officials of the Pollution Control Board to ensure that pollution check devices are installed in all the industries. Apart from this, while reviewing the disposal of biomedical waste, he said that the segregation of biomedical waste in government and private hospitals and its proper disposal were also reviewed. Calling for organizing seminars in villages to make farmers aware of the problem of stubble burning in the agricultural sector, Dr. Afroz said that stubble should be tied in balers and used properly. Deputy

Commissioner Panchal assured the member of the Green Tribunal that the efforts being made by the district administration for environmental conservation would be further intensified. The district administration also honored Dr. Afroz Ahmed. On this occasion, Commissioner of Phagwara Municipal Corporation Dr. Akshita Gupta, Kapurthala Municipal Commissioner Anupam Kaler, Additional Deputy Commissioner Navneet Kaur Bal, Additional Deputy Commissioner Varinderpal Singh Bajwa, SDMs Davy Goyal and Alka Kalia and heads of all departments were present.

and tertiary (Tier-2 and Tier-3) cities. The State Government, while establishing a balance between development and the environment, has succeeded in drawing a new blueprint for growth with transparency in policy, speed in implementation, and farsightedness in vision. He said that the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Government created three new states—Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh. Today all three are standing on their own feet. After 2014, since the Modi Government came to power at the Centre, there has been a continuous "double-engine" government in Uttarakhand. He said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has, while sketching out a roadmap for national development, created new records in every field. Atal ji left the country's economy at 11th position; Modi ji has brought it to 4th. Now in 2027 we are going to become the world's third largest economy. Modi ji has lifted 25 crore (250 million) people above the poverty line. The Modi Government is providing food security to the poor by giving 5 kg of free grain, and also providing free treatment up to 25 lakh to 55 crore (550 million) people. During this period, for the first time piped water reached 16 crore (160 million) homes; toilets were provided in 12 crore households; 13 crore families received free LPG cylinders. In Modi Government's tenure, electricity reached 3 crore homes for the first time; 4 crore people were given permanent (pucca) houses. The Union Home Minister said that Modi ji has envisioned a Developed India by 2047, but without Developed Uttarakhand this goal cannot be achieved. For the country's overall development, the progress of smaller states—including the northeastern states—is also essential. The Government is paying special attention to this. He said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has, while sketching out a roadmap for national development, created new records in every field. Atal ji left the country's economy at 11th position; Modi ji has brought it to 4th. Now in 2027 we are going to become the world's third largest economy. Modi ji has lifted 25 crore (250 million) people above the poverty line. The Modi Government is providing food security to the poor by giving 5 kg of free grain, and also providing free treatment up to 25 lakh to 55 crore (550 million) people. During this period, for the first time piped water reached 16 crore (160 million) homes; toilets were provided in 12 crore households; 13 crore families received free LPG cylinders. In Modi Government's tenure, electricity reached 3 crore homes for the first time; 4 crore people were given permanent (pucca) houses. The Union Home Minister said that Modi ji has

will take the state to new heights of self-reliance and industrial prosperity. The Chief Minister said that out of investment agreements worth more than ₹3.56 lakh crore under the Global Investors Summit 2023, investment proposals exceeding ₹1 lakh crore have been successfully brought onto the ground. Today Uttarakhand is touching new heights in the fields of investment, innovation, and industrial development. He said that planned, systematic work is being done across the country to realize the Prime Minister's resolve of a Developed India. The Chief Minister said the State Government is continuously working toward industrial development in the state. More than 30 policies—including the Industrial Policy, Logistics Policy, Startup Policy, MSME Policy—have been implemented to provide a better

### Minister of State for Sports approves cash awards of Rs.3.66 crore for coaches

Chandigarh, July 19—Minister of State for Sports, Sh. Gaurav Gautam, said that Haryana's sports policy is one of the best in the country. As a result, athletes from the state are winning the maximum number of medals in international competitions and bringing pride to the nation. He said that coaches play a key role in shaping these medal-winning athletes, and the government deeply respects and values their contributions. In this regard, the minister has approved cash awards totaling Rs.3.66 crore for 31 coaches of medal winning players in international competitions. The coaches will receive their award amounts soon. Sh. Gautam said that coaches across the state should continue training athletes with dedication so that they can bring more medals for the country. The state government has recently released an amount of about Rs. 32 crore as cash award for the players who won medals in the 4th Para Asian Games 2022, he added. He said that Olympic gold medalists from the state receive Rs.7 crore, silver medalists receive Rs.5 crore, and bronze medalists get Rs.3 crore. To strengthen athletes financially, the government also provides a 3 percent job reservation quota for sportspersons.

### VARIOUS TYPES OF BRIDGE RELATED WORKS

E-Tender Notice No. DCBL/10/2025/MLG. Dated: 17-07-2025. Open E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: Tender No.: DCBL112025MLG. Name of works: Manufacture, Supply & Fabrication of 6x20.4m & 6x26.80m service girder and 10000 nos. C.C. Cribs under Dy. CE/Br-Line/Maligaon. (Note: 01 no. of girder (1x20.4m) will be fabricated and supplied by EWS). Approximate Tender Value: ₹36,53,74,611.22. Bid Security: ₹19,76,900.00. Date of closing of Tender: 11-08-2025 at 15:00 hrs. Date of Opening of Tenders: 11-08-2025 at 15:00 hrs. at office of the Deputy Chief Engineer/Br-Line/Maligaon, Guwahati 781011 (Assam). For details please visit [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in). Dy. CE/Br-Line/Maligaon

**NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY**  
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### NORTHERN RAILWAY

#### 1st CORRIGENDUM

The following correction is made in the tender letter No. 570-Sig-P.S.-Tender-137 dated 10.07.2025, issued by Deputy Chief Sig. & Telecom Engineer/C.P.S., 4th Floor, DRM Office, New Delhi:-

1. The tender document has been updated.

2. Description of item no. 106 has been changed.

3. All other terms and conditions mentioned in the tender will remain unchanged.

**SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE** 2193/25

### STORES E-PROCUREMENT

Tender Notice No.: S/50/Sr.DMM/KIR/PUB/e-Tender/2025-26/03; Dated: 17-07-2025. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works:-

**SN. 1: Tender No. KT255206;**

**Closing/ Opening Date: 11-08-2025**

Brief Description & Qty: Supply, Installation and commissioning of EOT Crane, Cap-10T, COFMOW Spec No. COFMOW/IR/EOT/C/2020, Rev-0; Consignee:- SSE/IC/C&W/New Jalpaiguri, NFR (West Bengal); Qty: 02 No.

**NOTE:-** For full details of Tender notice and tender documents, tenderer may log on to the website ([www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in)) prospective bidder who intend to participate in above tenders are required to log in themselves with the above website and submit their offer electronically, if they are already registered with IREPS. In case they are not registered with IREPS, they are advised to obtain class-III Digital Signature Certificate from the certifying agencies under Govt. of India IT Act 2000 and participate in the above tenders.

Divisional Materials Manager, Katihar

**Sr. DEE/ G & Chg., Alipurduar Jr.**

**NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY**  
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## NEWS BOX

## Deadly violence in Syria could reshape domestic and regional alliances

**BEIRUT . (Agency)**

An eruption of violence in Syria this week that entangled government forces, Bedouin tribes, the Druze religious minority and neighboring Israel highlighted just how combustible the country remains seven months after its longtime authoritarian leader was toppled.

The Druze and other minorities increasingly mistrust a central government run by a man once affiliated with al-Qaeda, even though he has pledged to protect Syria's diverse ethnic and religious groups since helping to oust Bashar Assad after a nearly 14-year civil war. This sectarian turbulence within Syria threatens to shake-up postwar alliances and exacerbate regional tensions, experts say. It could also potentially draw the country closer to Turkey and away from Israel, with whom it has been quietly engaging since Assad's fall, with encouragement from the Trump administration.

The spark for this week's violence

Deadly clashes broke out last Sunday in the southern province of Sweida between Druze militias and local Sunni Muslim Bedouin tribes. Government forces intervened, ostensibly to restore order, but ended up trying to wrest control of Sweida from the Druze factions that control it. Hundreds were killed in the fighting, and some government fighters allegedly executed Druze civilians and burned and looted their houses. Driven by concerns about security and domestic politics, Israel intervened on behalf of the Druze, who are seen as a loyal minority within Israel and often serve in its military.

Israeli warplanes bombarded the Syrian Defense Ministry's headquarters in central Damascus and struck near the presidential palace. It was an apparent warning to the country's interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa, who led Islamist rebels that overthrew Assad but has since preached coexistence and sought ties with the West. The Israeli army also struck government forces in Sweida.

## Trump's tariff threat pushes Lula's popularity and worsens legal troubles for Brazil's ex-President Bolsonaro

**WASHINGTON . (Agency)**

U.S. President Donald Trump may have thought that pressuring Brazil with higher tariffs would help his ally, the country's former President Jair Bolsonaro, but the move apparently backfired.

Last week, Trump sent a letter to Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva threatening a 50% import tax and directly linking the decision to Bolsonaro's trial, which he called a "witch hunt." "This trial should end immediately!" Trump wrote Thursday evening in a second letter, this one addressed to Bolsonaro. He added that he had "strongly voiced" his disapproval through his tariff policy. Rather than backing down, Brazil's Supreme Court escalated the case, worsening Bolsonaro's legal troubles. On Friday morning, federal police raided Bolsonaro's home and political office. The former president was ordered to wear an ankle monitor, banned from using social media, and hit with other restrictions. Meanwhile, President Lula — who was facing higher unpopularity, growing opposition in Congress and increasing risks to his likely reelection bid — seems to have gained politically from the situation. Now the 79-year-old leftist Lula, in office for the third non-consecutive term of his long political career, is seeing renewed acceptance, congressional support against Trump and plans to run one last time to defend Brazil's sovereignty.

Lula has appeared more energized in public since Trump's announcement. At a national students assembly Thursday, he wore a blue cap reading "Sovereign Brazil Unites Us" — a contrast to MAGA's red cap.

## Israel, Syria leaders agree on ceasefire: US envoy

**WASHINGTON . (Agency)**

The leaders of Israel and Syria have agreed to a ceasefire days after major Israeli strikes, a US envoy said Friday, as he urged all sides in war-torn Syria to lay down arms. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Syria's new leader Ahmed al-Sharaa "have agreed to a ceasefire" also backed by neighbors Turkey and Jordan, said Tom Barrack, the US ambassador to Turkey who is also point man on



Syria. "We call upon Druze, Bedouins, and Sunnis to put down their weapons and together with other minorities build a new and united Syrian identity in peace and prosperity with its neighbors," he wrote on X. Israel on Wednesday carried out major air strikes inside the Syrian capital Damascus including on the army headquarters. Israel said it was defending the Druze community after deadly clashes between the minority, which has a presence in Israel, and Bedouins in the southern Syrian area of Sweida. Some diplomats and analysts see Israel as maximizing the damage it can to weaken its historic adversary Syria, after Sharaa's Islamist forces toppled longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad, an Iranian ally, in December. The United States on Wednesday announced a deal in which Syrian government forces retreated from Sweida.

# Venezuela releases jailed Americans in deal that frees migrants deported to El Salvador by US

**Expulsion sparked debate on Chinese social media about privacy and nationalism****Student accused of improper interactions with foreign gamer, videos circulated****State media question legality of publishing student's name****CARACAS.(Agency)**

Venezuela on Friday released 10 jailed U.S. citizens and permanent residents in exchange for getting home scores of migrants deported by the United States to El Salvador months ago under the Trump administration's immigration crackdown, officials said. The complex, three-country arrangement represents a diplomatic achievement for Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, who helps President Donald Trump in his goal of bringing home Americans jailed abroad and lands Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele a swap

that he proposed months ago. "Every wrongfully detained American in Venezuela is now free and back in our homeland," Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in a statement in which he thanked Bukele, a Trump ally. Bukele said El Salvador had handed over all the Venezuelan nationals in its custody. Maduro described Friday as "a day of blessings and good news for Venezuela." He called it "the perfect day for Venezuela." Venezuelans leave El Salvador's mega-prison Central to the deal are more than 250 Venezuelan migrants freed by El Salvador, which in March agreed to a \$6 million payment from the Trump administration to house them in its notorious prison. That arrangement drew immediate blowback when Trump invoked an 18th century wartime law, the Alien Enemies Act, to quickly remove the men that his administration had accused of belonging to the violent Tren de Aragua street gang, teeing up a legal fight that reached the U.S. Supreme Court. The administration did not provide evidence to back up those claims. Artificial Intelligence uses Artificial Intelligence uses The



Venezuelans had been held in a megaprison known as the Terrorism Confinement Center, or CECOT, which was built to hold alleged gang members in Bukele's war on the country's gangs. Human rights groups have documented hundreds of deaths as well as cases of torture inside its walls. Lawyers have little access to those in the prison, which is heavily guarded, and information has been locked tight, other than heavily produced state propaganda videos showing tattooed men packed behind bars. Photos and videos released by El Salvador's government on Friday showed shackled Venezuelans sitting in a fleet of buses and boarding

## Pakistan records annual current account surplus of USD 2.1 bn, PM Shehbaz hails it as 'sign' of development

**ISLAMABAD . (Agency)**

Pakistan recorded a current account surplus of USD 2.1 billion during the current fiscal year ending June 30, according to official data. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif hailed the development as a sign of an improving economy. The country faced a perennial issue of balance of payment and periodically rushed to the International Monetary Fund and other financial institutions to get monetary support. The latest data of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on Friday showed the current account surplus was recorded at USD 2.1 billion, compared to a deficit of USD 2.1 billion during the previous fiscal year.

It was apparently achieved following a strict policy to discourage unnecessary imports of luxury items, which were a drain on the current account. Other factors included encouraging remittances by expats and promoting exports of traditional and IT-related items. Adviser to the Finance Minister Khurram Shehzad took to X to announce that the surplus was the highest in 22 years. [The] country's

current account for June 2025 closes in a USD 328m surplus, taking the full-year surplus to over USD 2.1bn, he wrote. Shehzad added that remittances surged by 27 per cent year-on-year to reach a historic USD 38



billion. Artificial Intelligence uses Artificial Intelligence uses He said that in the current fiscal year, textile exports increased by 7.4 per cent year-on-year to USD 17.9 billion, while IT (information technology) and IT-enabled services exports climbed to USD 4.6 billion, a year-on-year increase of 44 per cent. Last, but not the least, Pakistan Equities Market (KSE-100) crossed 140,000 points, making a

historic mark in its history, with market value crossing Rs 16.8 trillion (close to USD 60bn), he wrote. Prime Minister Sharif expressed gratitude for the current account surplus, calling it very welcome. Foreign exchange reserves

have exceeded USD 19 billion due to government measures, he was quoted as saying in a statement from his office.

"The main reason for the stability in current account surplus is a significant increase in remittances and exports," he added. Improving financial and economic indicators show that the country's economy is on the path of stability. Sharif said the government is taking priority steps to provide a business and investment-friendly environment in the country.

Despite the positive development, Pakistan still needs to do a lot, as it is in the middle of an IMF programme of USD 7 billion. The 39-month Extended Fund Facility binds it to carry out several reforms, including ending subsidies and privatising several loss-making entities.

## An explosion at a Los Angeles sheriff's facility has left three people dead

**Attorney General Pam Bondi in a post on X said it "appears to be a horrific incident." She said federal agents are at the scene to learn more.****LOS ANGELES . (Agency)**

A deadly explosion early Friday shook a law enforcement training facility in Los Angeles was being investigated as a possible training accident, officials said. The explosion was reported around 7:30 a.m. at the Biscailuz Training Facility, said Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department spokesperson Nicole Nishida. She said three members of the department died. It was not immediately known

what caused the explosion or what the department members were doing at the time. Sheriff's homicide detectives were on the scene. An early line of the investigation was looking at a possible



training accident, according to a law enforcement official briefed on the matter who was not authorized to discuss the matter by name and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity. Attorney General Pam Bondi in a post on X said it "appears to be a horrific incident." She said federal

agents are at the scene to learn more. "Please pray for the families of the sheriff's deputies killed," Bondi wrote.

Arson investigators from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Los Angeles Fire Department and members of the Los Angeles Police Department bomb squad were assisting at the training facility, Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass said in a post on X. California Gov. Gavin Newsom's office said he's been briefed and that the Governor's Office of Emergency Services is in contact with the Sheriff's

Department and closely monitoring the situation. He later posted on X that members of the State Fire Marshal were helping with the investigation at the request of the ATF. Aerial footage from KABC-TV shows the explosion happened in a parking lot filled with sheriff patrol cars and box trucks.

to return to the White House, claimed his warning had already dented the group's unity. "They didn't want to be tarred," Trump said. "They're virtually afraid to meet." The administration has reportedly set an August 1 deadline for the proposed tariffs to take effect, following an earlier July 9 cutoff for reaching new trade agreements. Trump said he would soon send letters to the countries outlining the proposed rates if no deal is made. "I hit them very, very hard, and it will end very quickly. I don't think they'll do it," he added, suggesting the Brics coalition lacked the cohesion to mount a serious economic challenge. In the same address, Trump reiterated his opposition to a US central bank digital currency, stating flatly: "It won't happen under my administration." With forums such as the G7 and G20 groups of major economies hamstrung by divisions and the disruptive "America First" approach of the US president, the Brics group is presenting itself as a haven for multilateral diplomacy, Reuters reported. Since issuing the threat, Trump has repeatedly claimed without evidence that the Brics leaders have rejected the claim that the group is anti-American.

## Loss for Japan's Ishiba in upper house election could worsen political instability amid US tariffs, rising prices

**Measures to mitigate soaring prices, lagging incomes and burdensome social security payments are the top focus of frustrated, cash-strapped voters****TOKYO . (Agency)**

Japan's Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba faces an increasingly uphill battle in Sunday's upper house election, and a loss could worsen political instability at a time of daunting challenges, such as rising prices and high U.S. tariffs. A poor performance would not immediately trigger a change of government but it would deepen uncertainty over his fate and Japan's future path. The ruling Liberal Democratic Party suffered a humiliating loss in a lower house

election in October as its usual supporters registered their unhappiness over past corruption scandals and high prices. Ishiba is struggling to regain voter confidence.

His minority government has since been forced into making concessions to the opposition to get legislation through the Diet, or parliament. That has hindered its ability to quickly deliver effective measures to curb rising prices and win wage increases. On top of shortages and soaring prices for rice, a traditional staple, Ishiba has been stymied by President Donald Trump's tariff demands.

Frustrated voters are rapidly turning to emerging populist parties, including one that is promoting anti-foreign policies and backpedaling on gender equality and diversity.

Here's a look at Sunday's election:

Instability, win or lose

Ishiba has set a low bar for the vote — a simple majority. Half of the 248 seats for six-year terms in the upper house are being decided, and the LDP and its junior coalition partner Komeito would need to



win a combined 50. Added to the 75 coalition-held seats that are not being contested in this election, it would be a big retreat from the 141 seats the coalition held before the election. If the ruling coalition fails to secure a majority, "there will be a move within the LDP to dump Ishiba," said Yu Uchiyama, a University of Tokyo professor of political science. "It makes a leadership very unstable." Under any successor, the ruling coalition would be a minority in both houses, he said. If Ishiba's coalition secures a majority and he stays on, his leadership will remain weak, with little hope of improved support ratings,

Uchiyama said. "Either way, it is essential for the minority government to seek opposition parties' cooperation to achieve any policy."

**Trump, rice and price woes**

Measures to mitigate soaring prices, lagging incomes and burdensome social security payments are the top focus of frustrated, cash-strapped voters. Rice prices have doubled since last year due to supply shortages, overly complex distribution systems and other reasons related to Japan's farming, causing panic buying as Ishiba has struggled to resolve the crisis. Trump has added to that pressure, complaining about a lack of progress in trade negotiations, blaming a lack of sales of U.S. autos and American-grown rice to Japan despite a shortfall in domestic stocks of the grain. A 25% tariff due to take effect Aug. 1 has been another blow for Ishiba. Ishiba has resisted any compromise before the election, but the prospect for a breakthrough after the election is just as unclear because the minority government would have difficulty forming a consensus with the opposition.

**Ludhiana: GADVASU professor duped of Rs 20 lakh in cyber fraud; probe on**



**Ludhiana .(Agency)**

A senior professor at the Guru Angad Dev Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (GADVASU), Ludhiana, was allegedly duped of Rs 20 lakh by a cyber fraudster posing as a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) officer, police said on Friday.

The victim — Dalpat Singh Malik, professor of Department of Livestock Production Management — was targeted by the cyber criminal, who staged a “digital arrest”, claiming his name had surfaced in a human trafficking investigation.

On July 2, Malik received a video call from the accused — dressed in office uniform, with a CBI logo in the background — who claimed to be a Bengaluru-based officer at the investigating agency. He told Malik that two men, arrested by the CBI, had identified him as an “accomplice”, following which, an “arrest warrant” was issued against him.

Fearing the “digital arrest”, Malik on July 3 transferred Rs 10 lakh to a bank account as mentioned by the accused.

The accused later demanded Rs 10 lakh more from the professor if he wanted to avoid the “digital arrest”, which he on July 15 transferred from a joint account he shares with his wife. Noticing the transaction, Malik’s wife — who is an advocate — questioned him. After Malik shared the ordeal with his wife, she found the matter suspicious and immediately consulted a police officer known to her. The police officer confirmed there was “no such legal concept as a digital arrest”, and that Malik was duped in a cyber fraud.

An FIR was then registered against the accused under sections 318(4) (cheating), and 319(2) (cheating by personation) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) at the Cyber Crime police station, officers said.

Inspector Satvir Singh, Cyber Crime police station, said: “The professor was threatened with arrest, and made to believe he could avoid it by staying under a ‘digital arrest’ as well as paying Rs 20 lakh. The accused manipulated him, convinced him through fake official visuals.” An investigation is underway to trace the accused at the earliest, police said. “We are obtaining the bank details where the professor made the payments. We suspect multiple mule accounts may have been used in this case,” the inspector said.

## Tambaram corporation’s new HQ eyes December completion

**CHENNAI .(Agency)**

The Tambaram City Municipal Corporation’s new administrative headquarters, under construction at the Tambaram Sanatorium at a cost of Rs 43.4 crore, is expected to be completed by December 2025.

The office complex, located in Ward 33 of the



Perungalathur zone, is being developed on a 4.69-acre plot with a built-up area of 12,441 square metres. It comprises a ground floor and three upper floors. The ground floor will

## Searches at 15 locations linked to Chhangur Baba in UP and Mumbai, Rs 60 cr funds identified: ED

**The ED initiated the investigation on the basis of an FIR registered by the ATS, Lucknow, recently, alleging a large-scale conspiracy involving unlawful religious conversions**

**Lucknow .(Agency)**

THE DIRECTORATE of Enforcement (ED), Lucknow Zonal Office, on Friday said search operations were carried out at 15 locations linked to Jamaliuddin alias Chhangur Baba, his alleged close associate Naveen Rohra and others in Balrampur, Lucknow, and Mumbai under the provisions of Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002 in connection with a money laundering case. A press release issued by the ED said that 22 bank accounts linked to Chhangur Baba and his associates have

been analysed so far. Funds amounting to more than Rs 60 crore received by Chhangur Baba and his associates have been identified, the release said. The ED initiated the investigation on the basis of an FIR registered by the ATS, Lucknow, recently, alleging a large-scale conspiracy involving unlawful religious conversions, utilisation of foreign funding, and activities posing a potential threat to national security. Chhangur Baba and his associates are alleged to have established an extensive network. Baba is also accused

of systematically inducing, coercing, and manipulating individuals of other faiths — particularly Scheduled Castes and economically disadvantaged persons — into religious conversion.

During the searches, several documents were seized which revealed that funds that are mostly “proceeds of crime” were transferred to different people for purchasing a number of immovable properties worth crores of rupees and carrying out construction activities in these properties, the release said.

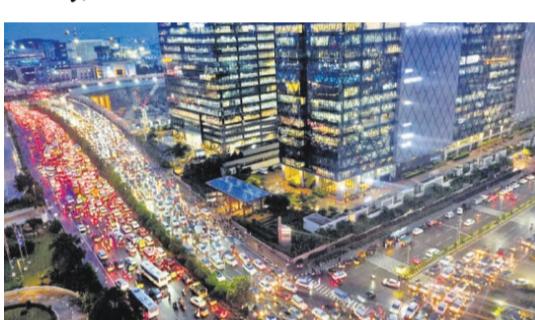


## Boats out as heavy downpour brings Hyderabad to its knees

**HYDERABAD .(Agency)**

A torrential downpour on Friday evening left Hyderabad and Secunderabad struggling under severe waterlogging, paralysed traffic, and widespread disruption across several parts of the city. The rains, which began in the late afternoon and intensified into the night, inundated roads and colonies, submerged low-lying neighbourhoods, and brought evening commutes to a standstill.

Large stretches of arterial roads were rendered impassable, as vehicles crawled through waist-deep water in some areas or remained stuck for hours. Commuters were stranded across key junctions including Gachibowli, Madhapur, Lakdi-ka-pul, Punjagutta, Raidurg, Miyapur, Kukatpally, Tarnaka, LB Nagar and Uppal. The impact was especially acute during peak office hours, with long tailbacks reported on thoroughfares connecting the IT corridor to residential zones.



with distress calls. Emergency response teams were deployed to manage the situation, with Disaster Response Force (DRF) and monsoon emergency teams pressed into service. In one of the worst-affected pockets, the Patnay

## Showers drive up metro ridership as traffic surges on rain-battered roads in Kochi

**KOCHI .(Agency)**

Kochi Metro ridership has surged in the last three weeks, with an increasing number of commuters turning to the mass rapid transit system as incessant monsoon rains add to the proliferating network of potholes, which have exacerbated the gridlock on key stretches of road, especially during rush hour. “While our average daily ridership is one lakh, this was breached several days this month,” a Kochi Metro spokesperson said.

Total daily ridership was 1,10,458 on July 7, an impressive 1,32,973 on July 8, 1,15,196 on July 10, and 1,13,873 on July 14. However, the city’s much-touted Water Metro has seen a dip in patronage since the onset of heavy rains: Daily passenger footfall was 2,704 on July 15, against the average of 6,000. “Earlier, I used to take a private bus to the railway station. But now I get down at JLN Stadium and catch the metro. I do this to avoid slow-moving traffic on Banerjee Road. Traffic woes have compounded with the arrival of rainy season.

I switched to the metro after I missed my return train one day,” said Aparna S, an IT professional who commutes daily between Alappuzha and Infopark.

Pothole-riddled and waterlogged roads have compounded the misery of motorists and pedestrians alike and traffic blocks are now a

common sight at major intersections such as Palarivattom, Edappally and Vyttila. “With incessant rains continuing to lash the city, daily city commuters, especially those living near metro stations, have switched over to the elevated transportation system,” pointed out V C Jayendran, convenor of the Tripunithura Rajanagar Union of Residents Associations (TRURA), an umbrella organisation of nearly 140 residents’ associations.

Highlighting the metro’s unique advantage, he added, “It assures that you reach your destination on time.

It takes only 15 minutes to travel from Tripunithura railway station to South railway station. It cancels out the unpredictability of taking to congested roads.” The situation is especially bad at Vyttila Junction. “Now, the queue of vehicles at the junction extends all the way to Elamkulam metro station during the morning and evening peak hours,” rued Vyttila councillor Sunitha Dixon.

Expressing anguish over the delay in implementing a traffic-reform plan, she noted that measures such as the ‘free left turn’ haven’t been effectively implemented. “Stakeholders should carry out the proposals on a war-footing,” Sunitha said, adding that the Kerala Road Fund Board has allotted Rs 1.5 crore for developing the junction.

**Crocodile on Vadodara road: Why cleaning of Vishwamitri canals has some from the species looking for new territories**

**Vadodara .(Agency)**

On Friday, the video of a small crocodile making its way through a road in Vadodara, as some people stopped their vehicles to take a closer look while others took out their mobile phones to record the spectacle, went viral.

This was not the first such sighting in the last few weeks, though. In the last three weeks, as many as nine crocodiles have been rescued from various parts of the city and handed over to the forest department.

Officials said Vadodara Municipal Corporation’s (VMC) extensive project of cleaning culverts and canals linked to the Vishwamitri as part of the flood-mitigation plan has resulted in some baby and sub-adult crocodiles emerging in city areas close to the river and its network of canals in search of new territories.

The incident captured in the viral video is from Wednesday, they said.

Vadodara Range Forest Officer Karansinh Rajput told The Indian Express: “About eight or nine crocodiles have been rescued so far since mid-June... They are all about two feet long and have mostly emerged from the nallahs in the nearby areas. They were rescued by animal activists and brought to the forest department. According to the procedure, we keep them under observation for two days and if there are no injuries that need treatment, they are released back into the Vishwamitri.”

Rajput said unlike these baby and sub-adult crocodiles, the larger species get trapped in residential areas only when river water floods the city.

Dr Pratyush Patankar, curator of the VMC-run Sayajibaug zoo, who was on the panel of the Vishwamitri project to supervise the shifting of crocodiles if needed, told The Indian Express that the cleaning of the culverts has meant that the agencies have “realised for the first time” that the crocodiles also reside and mark territories in the canals. Patankar said, “After the desilting and dredging, Vishwamitri has taken the shape of a river... The culverts are now being cleaned and it is likely that these crocodiles were inhabiting the culverts.

## ‘Akin to a Satyagrah’: Alleging inadequate compensation for power project, farmers’ body plans four-day-long footmarch

**Surat .(Agency)**

Farmers in four talukas of Surat will likely take out a four-day-long footmarch “akin to a Satyagrah” on June 23 against the Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL) for allegedly giving them inadequate compensation in lieu of installing electricity towers and power transmission lines in their agricultural fields.

The Khedut Samaj, Gujarat (KSG), an organisation of farmers in the state, held a meeting in this regard in Surat’s Bardoli town on Thursday evening. The meeting was attended by over 100 farmer leaders from seven talukas in Surat district, and they were asked to contact those affected by the project. Sources in KSG stated that three high-tension lines, each with a capacity of 765 KV, are at the centre of the contention. While one passes from Ahmedabad to Navsari (in South

Gujarat), the second goes from Vataman (Ahmedabad District) to Navsari. The third line will be between South OLPad in Surat district to Boisar in Maharashtra. These lines are connected to Khavda in Kutch district where a private company has installed a 30,000 megawatt solar and wind power plant. The work of transmission and installation of electric towers had been given to PGCIL, added the sources.

KSG state president Jayesh Patel had held a meeting in this regard with the affected farmers in OLPad taluka last Sunday.

KSG’s Surat district president Parimal Patel said, “The meeting went by successfully and we have taken an important decision to take out a foot march, which would probably be held on July 23. The foot march will start from Virpor village in Mandvi taluka and cover different affected villages in Mandvi,



Palsana, Bardoli, and Kamrej talukas of Surat district.”

He said a distance of 80km will be covered in the foot march. “Cooperative leaders, social workers, and members of KSG will

participate in the foot march, which will culminate at Arak Pardi village in Palsana taluka. It would take around four days to complete the rally, which will start from Mandvi. We plan to conduct another foot march covering OLPad, Mahuva, and parts of Bharuch and Navsari,” said Parimal. He said, “During the foot march, we would make the affected farmers more aware of their right to the compensation amount. The foot march would be akin to a Satyagrah. The affected farmers have not been paid well by the PGCIL.” Farmers from around a hundred villages in OLPad, Mandvi, Palsana, Bardoli, Kamrej, and Mahuva have been affected by the high-tension transmission line, said Parimal. “At some locations, the work is still underway, while at others, the electric poles have already been installed. The farmers of Mandvi taluka have stopped PGVCL (power distribution company) officials from carrying out the work related to setting up electric towers in their agricultural fields.” PGCIL officials, meanwhile, did not respond to repeated requests for a comment.

## Time to enable India's own Big 4 consultancies

The global consulting business, worth \$250-300 billion, is dominated by the Big 4 audit firms plus McKinsey, BCG and Bain. Let's call them the Big 7. While the balance sheets of these firms are opaque, estimates suggest that their revenue from consulting (excluding audit) in India alone is to the tune of \$5-6 billion and is growing rapidly. Even though a lot of public attention is focused on the audit business, the consulting business is a factor of magnitude larger. Interestingly, this is an industry where Indians thrive worldwide, including in the Big 7. Yet, there are no large Indian consultancies that can rival the Big 7. Here, we explore the factors that constrain the emergence of large Indian consultancies to compete globally. Quite apart from the economic case, this is also a national security issue. If all expertise is outsourced, the dependence can be weaponised. In 2023, for instance, it was reported that a Big 7 firm leaked confidential Australian government information to US companies, leading to multiple investigations. The current framework in India has three constraints that perpetuate the dominance of the Big 7. The first set of challenges relate to government contracts that account for 40 percent of the market. We found that restrictive clauses prevent domestic firms from meeting the eligibility criteria. Excessive balance-sheet thresholds, for example, prevent domestic firms from even competing. Consider a January 2025 request for proposal worth ₹1.3 crore from the industries and mines department of a state government to hire management consultants. Its pre-qualification criteria required a consulting revenue of ₹21.50 crore over the last three years, between 200-300 consultants on the payroll, plus experience of having done at least five government projects worth over ₹5 crore (almost four times the project value). Such conditions make it very difficult for most Indian firms to qualify. Artificial Intelligence uses Another major issue is that the technical track record is evaluated at the firm level, and not the individual level. This benefits the incumbent Big 7 and not the individuals who worked on the projects. If the same people move to an Indian firm or start a firm of their own, their past credentials are not counted in evaluating technical expertise in bids for government contracts. The government was aware of similar issues in the audit business. The prime minister exhorted Indian chartered accountants to build their own Big 4 firms in his July 2017 address to the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI). Then, in April 2021, the RBI issued a circular to diversify the auditing of financial institutions. This has led to significantly higher participation by Indian firms. However, similar efforts by the government to support domestic firms in consulting have had limited success. In 2017, the central government issued a Public Procurement (Preference to Make in India) Order, giving preference to local service providers. However, the definition of 'local content' in the order is so loose that the Big 7 qualify simply because they hire Indian staff or have Indian proxy firms.

The second structural constraint that holds back Indian consultancies is the lack of an enabling framework for multi-disciplinary partnerships (MDPs) that can match the full-service capabilities of foreign firms. The big obstacle to MDPs comes from professional regulatory bodies such as the ICAI, the Bar Council of India and the Institute of Actuaries, which either prohibit clubbing of Indian expertise or impose prohibitory restrictions that defeat the purpose.

**We must ensure that our Army meets the optimum requirement standards in terms of manpower, firepower and technology.**

Is the Kashmir issue 'resolved'? The transition from the brink of an all-out war to this moment of peace and quiet has been sudden. Two nuclear powers moved from bombing each other, deploying drones, fighter jets and navies, and mobilising army formations to an abrupt ceasefire and mutual claims of victory. To the uninformed, the skirmish would be bewildering, given the initial scope and scale followed by the sudden cessation — were both sides just testing new weapons and casing each other out? To any old hand, it's another scene from an old play with a louder chorus. Since Independence, we have fought four wars and have had numerous skirmishes with Pakistan. The Partition was on communal lines, and that bloody conflagration has been the bedrock of hatred on which much of the subsequent conflicts have been based. Jammu & Kashmir is the only Muslim-majority state-turned-UT in India, and Pakistan desires Kashmir. The fact that along with Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), it is located strategically at the confluence of four nations (Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and India) makes it even more desirable. The Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), often referred to as the new Silk Road, has the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor as its fulcrum, connecting Xinjiang to Gwadar through PoK. This corridor opens Central Asian countries and onwards to Europe through direct land routes for Chinese trade. It furthermore connects China to the Middle East with a much shorter sea route through Gwadar. Chinese contracts and investments in the BRI totalled \$124 billion with over 176 deals in the first six months of this year, bringing the total investment in this initiative to \$1.3 trillion. The highest investments have been in Africa and Central Asia (Financial Times, July 17). No wonder the Chinese have repeatedly declared their unequivocal support to the Pakistani state. We witnessed this friendship during the recent confrontation. Chinese-made fighter planes, missiles, communication and surveillance satellites and security systems were reportedly used. To those sections of the media and intelligentsia referring to Pakistan as a bankrupt state and a pushover — welcome to the real world of geopolitics. Pakistan is like those business firms which are in Chapter 11 (Bankruptcy Code) but know how to market themselves to potential suitors while juggling their debtors and gaming the system — they do it well.

The scale of armed conflict has escalated from artillery duels to far more complex theatres of war. Now, there is no longer the odd headline about an exchange of fire in Poonch and Rajouri and the ebb and flow of its intensity.

The new era of warfare features drones, satellites, guided missiles and what not. The ramifications will not be limited to remote border regions but will be felt across the whole nation — we must be ready for this.

The Minister of External Affairs (MEA) put its annual report on its website on July 11. The report said India would not compromise on issues relating to national security and would take firm and decisive steps to deal with all attempts to undermine its security and territorial integrity. However, Pakistan's attitude has not changed even after the recent deterrent action.

The tone and tenor of its Army Chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir, has become more belligerent, and he repeatedly describes Kashmir as Pakistan's jugular vein. He has been encouraged by US President Donald Trump, who hosted him for lunch at the White House. The Pakistan Air Force Chief was invited to the Pentagon, where he

Pakistan's post-Partition hangover and the multiple losses it has suffered in the four wars, along with its vested interests, commits it to carry on trying to acquire Kashmir. Earlier, it was through aiding and abetting terrorism, which was a methodology well learned and developed by the ISI while assisting the US in building the Afghan Taliban. The ISI used it to try and tie up Indian resources in a shadow war, hit morale, keep the issue alive and deliver defeat through a thousand cuts.

So, what happens when the next Pahalgam or its equivalent occurs? Will it be a full-scale war, as declared? Will it be a similar limited skirmish? Will we get played by mischievous elements hoping to profit from conflict? It is given that in view of the changed policy, we will have to always maintain a high level of readiness in all important theatres. We will have to ensure that our Army meets the optimum requirement standards in terms of manpower, firepower, surveillance systems, technology, etc as we climb this ladder of escalation.

The Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal AP Singh, has been complaining from the day he took over that he does not have even the sanctioned strength of squadrons. He has also argued that indigenous production is lackadaisical, and we have to buy 'off the counter' as time is of the essence. The Navy appears to be better off, but constant upgrades are necessary.

Even the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), Gen Anil Chauhan, has stated that India cannot win modern wars with outdated weapons. He has underscored the need to adopt future-ready technology, primarily through indigenous development. Policies must be built on equipment platforms available and those to be procured.

As India grows and tries to find its place at the global high table, so do the powers which feel threatened by us — it is the way of things. We

must be very watchful on the diplomatic front. We cannot always act unilaterally, and we need friends and allies. During the recent conflict, we did not receive support from our neighbours or any of the major world powers. Pakistan had solid backing of China and Turkey. We will have to take a deep dive into our foreign policy and not listen to MEA's platitudes; this requires work at the highest political and bureaucratic levels. The matter brooks no delay, and we must decide on the interim and long-term measures.

We must understand the enemy, or rather, enemies, their friends and their capabilities. We must accept that in this matter, we are virtually alone at the moment, and it would be difficult to face this humongous task without friends and adequate resources for our armed forces.

## Jaishankar in China: A recalibration for regional stability

**At the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's foreign ministers' meeting, Jaishankar extended the conversation to the global stage. India called out terrorism unequivocally, citing the Pahalgam attack as a test for the SCO's founding values**



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's visit to China, his first since the 2020 border clashes, marks a cautious yet deliberate recalibration of India-China ties. In talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Jaishankar's tone was forward-looking and frank. Coming as the two countries mark 75 years of diplomatic relations, the visit underscored both the opportunities for engagement and the urgency of addressing unresolved issues.

People-centric initiatives such as resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra and enhanced flight connectivity signal a thaw after five years of diplomatic frost. Beyond this, Jaishankar emphasised the core priority for taking the ties to a meaningful plane: peace and stability along the Line of Actual Control. While recent steps towards disengagement are encouraging, India continues to press for complete de-escalation. Jaishankar also flagged trade restrictions and barriers to market access as impediments to genuine economic cooperation. He called for the resumption of hydrological data-sharing and broader trans-border cooperation regarding rivers. These are

reminders of regional interdependence that require transparency and trust to thrive. That is why differences need to be addressed and prevented from escalating into disputes. This is not just vital for bilateral stability; it's essential for regional peace. A predictable India-China relationship will shape the broader Asian security architecture and aid India's efforts to navigate an increasingly multipolar world with more strategic space.

Artificial Intelligence uses Artificial Intelligence uses At the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's foreign ministers' meeting, Jaishankar extended the conversation to the global stage. India called out terrorism unequivocally, citing the Pahalgam attack as a test for the SCO's founding values. He also laid out a pragmatic roadmap: more trade, better transit, support for the North-South Transport Corridor involving Russia and Iran, and adherence to territorial integrity. On Afghanistan, India urged the SCO to step up development aid. Regional responsibility, Jaishankar stressed, must not take a backseat to geopolitical calculations. His message to Beijing and the region was cooperative: trust must be rebuilt, differences managed, and competition kept from becoming conflict. Stability and strategic maturity are essential for a shared future in a multipolar world. India and China, as two major civilisational powers and rising economies, can do far more together to contribute to that future. Rebuilding trust and addressing mutual concerns with sincerity will not only benefit both nations.

## F-35 woes no longer in stealth mode

**Production delays, poor logistical support, and rising maintenance costs were already causing headaches for F-35 users when a British jet made an emergency landing in Thiruvananthapuram. Over a month on, the jet remains grounded, shining more light on the deeper troubles plaguing this US 'national treasure'**

From the moment a British F-35B made an emergency landing at the Thiruvananthapuram International Airport more than a month ago, there has been a re-evaluation of the US-made 4.5-generation stealth fighter, and a silent but roiling global upset in the \$60.2-billion aerospace and defence industry. This aerial sector in the international arms industry is estimated to hit \$75.5 billion by 2030—an increase by a quarter from now caused by military aircraft escalating performance by AI-enhanced design and the use of rare, exorbitantly-priced composite materials.

The F-35 is apparently at the very cutting-edge of technology, although its abilities are reportedly, in some fundamental aspects, more manufacturer-driven mystique than real. Nonetheless, it remains the most guarded piloted aerial weapon in existence, its digitalisation and technology—all F-35 fuselages are assembled at a facility in California—shrouded in impenetrable American ownership rights. In more ways than one, the jet is treated as an undeclared American national treasure. And treasure means inaccessibility. This is what happened with the F-35B—the second-generation of F-35s—that plonked down on June 14 at Thiruvananthapuram. Initially, the British refused to let any Indian technician—or security personnel—approach it on the tarmac. This distancing continued for weeks while the southwest monsoon rains pelted down. The \$109-million aircraft just stood in the open until July 6 while the UK tried to fathom what had gone wrong,

finally zeroing in on hydraulic failure. It was eventually shifted to an isolated hangar. Twenty-four British personnel —14 technical experts from the Royal Air Force (RAF) and 10 ground crew—are now trying to repair the breach, so to speak. Hydraulics, however, seems to be one of the more minor issues besetting the aircraft. There are reports that, after a month of trying to 'fix the fubared' (to employ military colloquialism), the technicians might have to dismantle it and cart it off in a giant C-17 Globemaster military transport plane. There are no CCTVs in the hangar or outside. Discussions between the repair facility and F-35B's primary operating base at RAF Marham in Norfolk, England are carried out on uneavesdroppable secure satellite communication. There are no Indian personnel anywhere in the vicinity. None of this is going well for the credibility of the F-35. There is a lot in the US riding on an undisturbed view of the F-35 as invulnerable. The profits of Lockheed Martin, whose dependability has taken a hit because of long delayed contractual deliveries of the F-35 series—both to the US and other militaries—and the reputation of the US administration, which has been flacking the F-35's sale since the National Export Initiative that was part of the Obama Doctrine, depends on the unassailability of this fighterjet. But this might already have been in question. The 'stealth' British F-35, reportedly on a routine flight outside the Indian Air Defence Identification Zone, was

tracked by India's Integrated Air Command and Control System—despite being 'invisible' to radar. This is also because, as Navy Lookout, an 'independent Royal Navy news and analysis' platform, reported, "The Aircraft Signature Assessment Facility needed to verify and maintain the aircraft's stealth characteristics, was originally due in 2021 but will not be available until the



2030s." So badly is the UK hamstrung that, in a July 11 report titled The UK's F-35 capability, its independent National Audit Office (NAO) headed by the Comptroller and Auditor General said the F-35 "global programme has had a series of issues which have delayed production and hindered logistical support while technology upgrade and support costs have also increased markedly over recent years". In its view, "the capability achieved for the estimated £11 billion spent to date is a disappointing return so far compared with MoD

plans". While the UK defence ministry has publicly forecast a whole-life programme cost of £18.76 billion, the NAO's estimate is £71 billion. The NAO also said only one-third of the UK F-35 fleet "was available to perform at least one of seven possible required missions in 2024 against the MOD's target".

Damning as this revelation is, it is in step with America's paranoia about the F-35. In January 2023, the Pentagon barred all Israeli pilots who had a foreign passport from flying the F-35I Adir fighters. Israel has long had a dual citizenship policy, and many IDF personnel have foreign passports. (A Shiluv/Ipanel survey in 2016 for the Channel 2 news channel found 17 percent of Israelis with foreign passports—and, surprisingly, 56 percent desiring one.) Included in the US's stipulation was that all F-35 ground crew—avionics technicians, weapons loaders, fuellers, maintenance personnel (in charge of electricals, hydraulics, engines, airframes), emergency responders, etc—also hold only an Israeli passport. The degree of paranoia is mindboggling. It imagines, first, that only 'pure' Israelis should be allowed to fly the F-35, even though some of the first pilots in the Israeli Air Force, which was founded in 1948, were foreign volunteers. In any case, the force today has only a tiny handful of pilots with dual citizenship—and none among the 400 reservist pilots, 300 of whom are fighter pilots.

# New water pipeline to link boosting stations in Gurgaon, enhance supply by March 2026

**Gurgaon. (Agency)**

Gurgaon: By early next year, GMDA is preparing to commission the boosting station at Gwalpahari to end the decade-long wait for piped water supply in the area. To make the station operational, GMDA has prepared an estimate for laying a 3.6km water pipeline connecting it with Sector 72 boosting station. The 450mm diameter pipeline, once laid, will carry treated water from Sector 72 to Gwalpahari. The pipeline project is expected to cost around Rs 3.77 crore. According to GMDA, around 2.2km of this stretch was laid by HSV in 2012. The remaining 3.6km will now be laid to complete the link, an official said, adding that tenders for the work were expected to be floated soon. In addition to this, a 4km pipeline will be laid in Gwalpahari to distribute water from the boosting station to households and commercial establishments. This secondary network will include pipelines of varying

diameters, ranging from 300mm to 600mm. "This boosting station is essential for resolving long-standing water supply issues in Gwalpahari and its neighbouring areas. We have prepared the estimates for laying the pipeline and machinery and the station's construction is underway," said a senior GMDA official. The work on civil infrastructure, which includes the construction of the boosting station, an underground water tank of 4,000 kilolitres, a sump, and a pump house, started in July last year and is being executed at a cost of Rs 4.3 crore. With 50% of it completed so far, officials expect to finish the remaining work by March 2026. An additional estimate of Rs 2.82 crore has been prepared for the procurement of equipment and machinery, including pumps, needed to run the station effectively. The station is designed to source treated water from Chandu Budhera water treatment plant



(WTP), which will be routed first to the Sector 72 boosting station and then boosted to Gwalpahari for final

distribution. The project was initially conceptualised in 2019 and allotted to an agency in 2020. However, legal hurdles related to land acquisition delayed the project. It was only in 2023, after clearance of the land hurdle, that the metropolitan authority started the tendering process. Once operational, the project will bring relief to Gwalpahari residents, who have long been dependent on borewells and private tankers for water. The area is home to several upscale societies, including Valley View Estate, Paras Quartier, Ireo Gurgaon Hills, Krish Provence, ASF Insignia, and Vatsal Valley. According to GMDA's infrastructure development plan, the projected population here is expected to grow to 43,516 by 2031 and cross 51,700 by 2041, underlining the urgent need to ensure availability of basic amenities like water.

## Haryana private schools try to bypass fee scrutiny with this '0'

**Gurgaon. (Agency)**

Haryana's directorate of secondary education has warned private schools of action after detecting discrepancies in fee structures declared by them. According to the directorate, most private schools filled '0' in the section for declaring 'under head fees' in Form 6 submitted for the 2025-26 academic year. 'Under head fees' includes amount charged by schools for non-academic purposes such as building funds, library, laboratory, sports and development costs. "Almost each school in the column 'under head fee' for the year 2025-26 filled zero, which the case may not be, because schools are charging fees from students," the directorate's July 17 memorandum noted. It has now asked district education officers (DEOs) to ensure that schools under their jurisdiction correct the entries by July 31, failing which the department can initiate action, including penalties and restrictions. Haryana has 10,701 recognised private schools, which have to mandatorily submit Form 6 to the govt every academic year. The form includes details about the school, registration certificate, breakdown of the fee structure and operational costs. This document makes the business of schooling transparent and helps authorities prevent any arbitrary increase in fees. Norms state that schools must publicly display their Form 6 on campus notice boards or their websites. Inaccurate disclosures can be punished with a ban by the govt on increasing school fees in an academic year. Parents said on Friday that the govt's warning was much-needed, considering most private schools in Gurgaon charge anywhere between Rs 15,000 to Rs 30,000 as monthly fees.

"If almost all private schools have shown zero under-head fees, then it is clearly not the case. Most schools charge high amounts as fees. This is a cover-up. Schools preach values such as truthfulness, but when it comes to fees, they do the exact opposite," said Pradeep Rawat, head of Gurgaon Parents Association.

## Hoax bomb threat targets school, sparks panic in Gurgaon

**Gurgaon. (Agency)**

Panic gripped HSV Global School in Sector 46 after it received a bomb threat via email around 12.30am on Thursday. After nearly two hours of combing the premises, no explosives or suspicious items were found. Police later said it was a "hoax". The anonymous message claimed explosives had been planted in different classrooms, hidden inside polythene bags. According to the sources, the person who sent the email wrote that he would be happy to see the destruction and hue and cry. The sender also said he would also end his own life after the destruction.

While Friday's classes were cancelled, the school has informed parents normal operations will resume from Monday. According to the school principal, children had arrived at the campus on Friday morning, unaware of the late-night threat.



"As soon as we saw the email, we informed the police. Some students had already come to school, but we immediately sent them back home as a safety precaution," the principal said.

Following the alert, teams from Sector 50 police station, the bomb disposal squad, dog squad and senior police officials

reached the school and carried out an extensive search operation. The entire school building was evacuated and secured during the search.

Similar threatening emails were also sent to several other schools across Delhi-NCR, raising concerns of a coordinated hoax. While police initiated a detailed probe, they were yet to register the case awaiting formal complaint from the school till filing of the report. A cyber investigation is now underway to trace the origin of the email and identify those responsible for it. ASI Sandeep said, "Nothing suspicious was found at the spot. Police are on alert and will ensure the public safety."

Authorities have urged the public to stay calm, assuring that security has been increased in schools and all necessary safety measures are being followed diligently.

## ACB busts land scam, 4 nayab tehsildars & patwari among officials charged with corruption

**Gurgaon. (Agency)**

The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) has uncovered a scam involving fraudulent sale of prime govt land, implicating four nayab tehsildars and HSV's officials among others. The 1.5-acre prime land, situated near Hero Honda Chowk and earmarked for developing Industrial Sector 37 and widening Badshahpur drain, was allegedly sold by a DLF-1 resident identified as Rakesh Batra in collusion with four nayab tehsildars of Kadipur tehsil, a patwari and HSV officials. The revenue officials involved have also been accused of causing financial losses to the exchequer by collecting lower stamp duties. The scam came to light when Praveen Rao, a resident of Rewari, filed a complaint with ACB in May 2024, supported by documents. He alleged that in 2022, Batra in collusion with officials and employees of MCG, Kadipur tehsil and HSV illegally subdivided and sold land that had been acquired by HSV for development projects. Batra, who owned

the adjacent land, sold more plots than he legally possessed, effectively selling property belonging to HSV, formerly known as HUDA. The land was acquired by the govt agency in Khandwa, Kadipur and Naharpur in 1988 for developing the sector. Approximately 3 acres of Batra's nearly 4-acre landholding were included in this acquisition. Batra challenged the acquisition in Punjab and Haryana high court in 1990, but the court dismissed the petition in 2001, and the land was subsequently handed over to HSV.

In 2001, Batra applied to the department of town and country planning (DTCP) for a change of land use (CLU) for the remaining land. By 2004, he had secured the CLU in the name of Shanti Ispat Ltd for 26,771 square yards of land. However, according to revenue records, after the 2001 land acquisition, he only had 22,365 square yards remaining. Batra managed to obtain a CLU for an additional 4,406.25 square yards by misleading HSV and DTCP. In 2009, HSV acquired another

half acres of Batra's remaining land in Khandwa for widening of the Badshahpur drain. In collusion with naib tehsildars from Kadipur tehsil, Batra subdivided approximately 5 acres of land into 22 plots and sold them to various people through eight registries, according to an ACB officer. Also, seven different parts, totaling 11,759 square yards, were transferred to his brother Pawan Batra and son Aman Batra. According to regulations, a plot with change of land use can't be subdivided and sold. Batra sold most of the plots allegedly to the family of Gulshan Kumar, a HSV senior. Kumar purchased plots in his wife Vandana's name and registered two deeds. In total, Batra transferred and registered 25,102 square yards of land, effectively selling 7,712 square yards of HSV's land. HSV's estate officer-1 became aware of Batra's activities and wrote to the Kadipur tehsildar in April 2022, highlighting that attempts were being made to sell HSV-acquired land.

## Heritage peepals chopped, NGT wants green fines for violations



Vel and Afroz Ahmad. HSPCB was not originally a party in the case. The tribunal directed the board to file an affidavit calculating the environmental

## As plaster chunks fall at Noida-built flats, close calls & maintenance question

**Noida. (Agency)**

Goswami family of house number 6A of Block 2 at the Noida Authority-owned LIG flats in Sector 99 was enjoying a quiet Sunday on June 22 when the plaster from a flat above collapsed on their balcony and the railings came off. Although no one was injured, it was the second such incident in the society built just 16 years ago in six months. On Jan 23, a chunk of plaster fell on the car of Pradeep Saxena, a resident of Block L, shattering its roof, window and shield. On July 15, the wall plaster came off the building in Block 16. Over the last few months, there have been several similar incidents where residents narrowly escaped injury due to plaster falls, causing widespread fear within the community.

Despite numerous complaints, both written and oral, addressed to the Authority, residents claim no action has

been taken. The society RWA said anyone could have been injured and demands accountability, along with immediate and permanent repairs from the civic body. Narottam Sharma, RWA president of Sector 99 LIG Flats, said, "Noida Authority is taking this issue very casually. Approximately 70 flats' leases have already been cancelled, and they are now under the charge of the authority.

These flats are locked and in a dilapidated condition. So, they are responsible for any injury or accident caused by these plaster falls from their flats." He demanded immediate inspections of all blocks within 48 hours and the prompt removal of any dangling plaster. The sentiment was echoed by Mohinder Singh, RWA general secretary of Sector 40, who criticised the authority for its lack of oversight. "They appear to be in sleep mode."

## News box

**Hisar principal murder echo: Ticked off for holding hands, Haryana students return with 3 others to thrash chemistry teacher**

**KAITHAL. (Agency)**

After the recent killing of a school principal in Hisar district, a chemistry teacher posted at Govt Senior Secondary School in Serhada village of Kaithal district was allegedly thrashed by students over a disciplinary remark. The village is around 27 kilometres from the district headquarters. Notably, a school principal in Bass village in Hisar district was stabbed to death by a school student on July 10 over disciplinary remarks, and a similar attack in Kaithal district has triggered fear among the teacher fraternity. Following the assault, the village panchayat and school staff locked the school premises and launched a protest outside the main gate, demanding strict action and better security for teachers. Ravi Kumar, principal of the school, said two days ago, two children came to his office - one from Serhada village and the other was a school student - to get their documents attested. Both were walking hand in hand. When they were holding hands, a teacher advised them to maintain discipline in the school and to come in proper uniform. The students did not react at that time and left the premises peacefully. However, the next day, on Thursday, more than five children gathered outside the school at dispersal time and attacked the chemistry teacher. A few teachers present at the spot intervened and managed to rescue him, said the principal. Both children were handed over to the police, but the police are yet to arrest others who were involved in the attack, he added.

Rajjoud police station in-charge Raj Kumar told TOI that the accused, who were adults, had been arrested in the matter. They have been identified as Abhimanyu and Aman, aged 21 and 23. A case under sections of BNS has been lodged.

## Food-policing by Ghaziabad outfit forces KFC outlet to go vegetarian

**ROHTAK. (Agency)**

Ghaziabad: An outfit with a track record of vandalism, led by a man with more than two dozen FIRs against him in Delhi-NCR, went food policing at two eateries in the city, one of them a Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) outlet, warning them against serving non-vegetarian items during kanwar yatra. The KFC outlet at Sector 11 in Vasundhara gave in to intimidation from the vigilante group on Thursday morning and put up a notice, saying "we are serving only veg". The other eatery targeted was Nazeer, which has an outlet in the same area.

The official govt order limits restrictions during the yatra to shops selling raw meat along the designated kanwar route, which have been asked to close. Incidentally, neither of the two eateries targeted are on the kanwar route. Police on Friday said they had taken suo motu cognisance and filed an FIR against 10 unknown persons for violating Section 163 of BNS. But no one has yet been taken into custody. The outfit is headed by Bhupendra Tomar alias Pinky Choudhary, who said they would not allow any eatery to serve non-veg food during kanwar yatra, but would "give them the option of staying open for business if they agreed to serve only veg".

Nikita Rana, manager of the KFC outlet, told TOI they downed shutters after the Thursday morning incident around 11.30am and reopened at 4pm, with only vegetarian items on the menu. "This affected footfall by more than 70% as KFC has a primarily chicken-based menu," she said.

## Soya replaces chicken at many stalls in NCR with vendors 'taking no chances'

**Noida. (Agency)**

The aroma of butter chicken and kebabs that typically wafts through the streets of food hubs in Noida and Ghaziabad has gone missing. As the kanwar season unfolds, street food vendors in the twin cities have voluntarily dropped non-vegetarian items from their menus — not because of any govt directive, but out of caution and fear of backlash from vigilante groups.

Even if they aren't along kanwar routes, vendors who would sell plates of chicken tikka and curries till a week ago "aren't taking any chances" this time. The ripple effect of this self-imposed restriction is visible across popular food hubs — from the road outside Indirapuram's North India Mall to Noida's bustling Sector 132. "We took it as a message from last year. This time, we didn't even try. We will only have paneer and veg options till the sawan month is over," said a momo seller near at North India Mall, reflecting on previous warnings by outfits against selling non-vegetarian items during the holy month.

At Swarn Jayanti Park, another street food haunt popular among youngsters, egg and chicken rolls have been taken off the menu. An order for a plate of egg fried rice was politely declined as well by a vendor selling Chinese dishes. "Not just me. No one here is selling non-vegetarian food for now," he told TOI. The fear is palpable among vendors in other areas as well. In Sector 132, a usually crowded food hub known for its chicken kebabs, the offerings are restricted to soya chaap and paneer tikka. "No one told us to stop. But we don't want any trouble. If someone objects to the sale of non-vegetarian food and creates a scene, we'll lose more than just a day's earnings. We aren't taking any chances," another vendor said. Some vendors cited economic reasons for the decision. "If there is no demand during the sawan month, there won't be any supply either," said the owner of an eatery in Indirapuram, noting that non-vegetarian items were both perishable and more expensive. At more established locations like Windsor Street and Brahmaputra Market, while non-vegetarian items are still on the menu, their display has been discreetly removed. This is merely to respect people's religious sentiment during the holy month. We are still serving non-veg food, but only if someone comes up with an order.

# Pilots' body sends notice to WSJ, Reuters over Air India reports, seeks apology

The Federation of Indian Pilots has filed a legal notice against The Wall Street Journal and Reuters for speculative reports on the Air India crash. The reports have been criticised for causing undue distress and damaging reputations.

#### Agency New Delhi.

The Federation of Indian Pilots (FIP) has initiated legal action against The Wall Street Journal and Reuters over their recent reports suggesting pilot error or cockpit confusion as the cause of the June 12 Air India crash. The pilots' body alleged these reports erroneously attributed the cause of the crash to pilot error without substantiated evidence.

In a formal legal notice, the federation has demanded an official apology from the media outlets, criticising them for what it describes as "selective and unverified reporting". The FIP's statement highlighted that such actions are "irresponsible", especially while the investigation remains ongoing. It also argued that the media should uphold journalistic integrity and avoid spreading misinformation that could mislead the

public.

"We are instructed to place on record that the publication of such speculative content is highly irresponsible, and has caused grave and irreparable harm to the reputation of the deceased pilots, who are unable to defend themselves. In doing so, Reuters has also inflicted unnecessary distress on the bereaved families, and diminished the morale of the pilot fraternity, which operates under immense pressure and public responsibility," the legal notice said.

The federation further emphasised that while the crash attracted significant public attention, it is not a time to "create public anxiety or angst towards the safety of the Indian Aviation Industry,

particularly on the basis of unfounded facts". The FIP has urged the media to refrain from speculating until the



investigation is complete.

The recently released preliminary report by the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) said that the fuel control switches

for the engines of the crashed flight had moved from the "run" to the "cutoff" position moments before impact, cutting off fuel supply to both engines. The report also cited a conversation between the pilots regarding the fuel switches, in which one pilot asked the other if he had changed their position, which the second pilot denied.

The pilot's federation requested that the media desist from publishing or circulating any content that speculates on the cause of the crash or attributes fault to any individuals, especially deceased pilots, in the absence of official confirmation and final report.

The FIP stressed that premature conclusions could jeopardise the integrity of the ongoing investigation.

## Can't live like this: Noida student dies by suicide, blames harassment by teachers

#### Agency New Delhi.

A second-year BDS student, Jyoti Sharma from Gurugram, died by suicide in her hostel room at a private university in Greater Noida on Friday night. The police have arrested two university staff members in connection with the death. Sudhir Kumar, Additional DCP of Greater Noida, said, "Two staff members from the management of the university have been arrested on the basis of the complaint lodged by the family members of the student." The woman's body has been sent for a post-mortem, he added.

A suicide note found in Jyoti's room accused two professors and the university administration of mental harassment. She wrote that she had been mentally harassed and humiliated for a long time, which caused her distress. Jyoti expressed a desire for the accused to face legal action. "I want them to go behind the bars. They mentally harassed me. They humiliated me. I have been in this stress for a long time. I want them to feel the same thing," Jyoti wrote in her suicide note.

After the incident came to light, students protested against the university administration, alleging negligence. They said Jyoti was stressed due to accusations of forging signatures. A minor scuffle broke out between protesters and police during the demonstration. Sudhir Kumar stated that tensions had escalated due to anger among the deceased's family and university students toward the university administration.

Sudhir Kumar added, "There was anger among the deceased's family and university students against the university administration, which was resolved through dialogue by police officials. Peace has been restored at the scene, and further legal proceedings are ongoing." Meanwhile, Dr. Ajit Kumar, the university's Public Relations Officer, confirmed that two faculty members have been suspended. "For now, two teachers have been suspended. A committee has also been formed to investigate the matter. Action will be taken against those found guilty based on the committee's report," he said.

## Chemotherapy training for Delhi doctors begins under PM's cancer day care centre initiative

#### Agency New Delhi.

As a part of establishing cancer day care centres announced by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman during her Budget speech, the Delhi State Cancer Institute on Friday began training doctors from Delhi hospitals for providing chemotherapy to patients at the District Day Care Cancer Centres (DCCCs).

The training is being imparted under PM's cancer day care centre initiative to four General Duty Medical Officers (GDMOs) and Nursing Officers from Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital, Rao Tula Ram Memorial Hospital, Janakpuri Super Speciality Hospital and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya Hospital. Dr Diwakar, Director, Delhi State Cancer Institute, said on Friday that this was the first such initiative in Delhi where training is being provided to doctors to provide chemotherapy for cancer day care centres.

The training at Delhi State Cancer Institute is being conducted in batches over the coming months and will continue till November. According to Dr Diwakar, the move has been taken to strengthen cancer care services across the country and hands-on training on chemotherapy.

He said the first batch comprises four medical officers and four nursing officers from four different DCCCs.

"The training is designed to equip frontline healthcare professionals with essential skills in chemotherapy drug handling, patient monitoring, and clinical management, in alignment with the guidelines of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW)," he said. Dr Diwakar said the move will enhance the clinical competence of healthcare providers at the grassroots level, especially in outer areas, where early and effective cancer intervention is crucial.

"We will first stabilise the patients at our centre and from here we can transfer the patients to these day care centres where trained staff and doctors will look after the patients undergoing chemotherapy," he said. In February, Minister Sitharaman had announced the establishment of day-care centers for cancer treatment at all district hospitals over the next three years. This initiative aims to improve access to essential cancer treatments, while also easing the heavy patient burden on large tertiary care hospitals in metropolitan cities.

## Don't have Pahalgam attackers yet, but...: Priyanka Chaturvedi on match with Pak

In a hard-hitting post, Rajya Sabha MP Priyanka Chaturvedi reminded the Centre and BCCI of its 'no-engagement' stance with Pakistan following the Pahalgam attack.

#### Agency New Delhi.

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Priyanka Chaturvedi said the BCCI allowing ex-Indian cricketers to feature in a match against Pakistan in the World Championship of Legends (WCL) tournament reflected its "moral bankruptcy" despite publicly adopting a hard stance on cricketing ties with the neighbouring country. In a hard-hitting post, Chaturvedi also reminded the Centre of its "no-engagement" stance with Pakistan following the Pahalgam terror attack, which left 26 dead.

The Rajya Sabha MP said while India was yet to nab the Pahalgam terrorists, over three months after the incident, it was "desperate to resume" cricket matches with Pakistan.

"Absolutely shameless! Hello GoI (government), what happened to no



engagement with Pakistan? We don't have the Pahalgam terrorists yet but here we have an Indian side desperate to resume cricket matches with Pakistan," Chaturvedi tweeted.

"If nothing else, atleast think of those families who lost their loved ones in the terror attack. Hello BCCI, ICC - the blood money you'll seek shows your moral bankruptcy," she further said. The WCL, which kicked off on July 18 in England, brings together former international cricket stars

from different countries. India, which will be led by Yuvraj Singh, will clash against Pakistan on Sunday (July 20) at Edgbaston.

Chaturvedi also shared a poster of the high-profile clash featuring former cricket stars Suresh Raina, Yuvraj Singh, Shoaib Malik, and Mohammad Hafeez.

The WCL, a private league, is organised by actor and co-owner Ajay Devgn and founder Harshit Tomar. It is approved by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB).

After the Pahalgam attack, BCCI vice-president Rajeev Shukla emphasised that India would not play any bilateral cricket against Pakistan - not even in neutral venues. However, Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya recently said the Centre had no objection to India playing against Pakistan in multilateral sporting events.

## Two women dead, two men critical in suspected family mass suicide in Maharashtra

#### Agency New Delhi.

In a suspected case of mass suicide, two women from the same family were found dead, while two male members are in critical condition in a village in Maharashtra on Friday morning. Two young children from the family have been found safe. The deceased have been identified as 45-year-old Rameja Alaudin Patil and 30-year-old Kajal Sameer Patil. The male members of the family, identified as Alaudin Makbool Patil and Sameer Alaudin Patil, have been admitted to a hospital for treatment.

According to police, preliminary evidence suggests that all four may

have consumed poison. The family resided on Dhalgaon Road in Nangole village in Sangli district in Maharashtra. On Friday morning, an

elderly woman in the household found the four unconscious adults and alerted the neighbours. Upon arrival,

the neighbours found all four unresponsive and rushed them to the hospital.

Sub-Divisional Police Officer Sunil Salunkhe and Police Inspector Jyotiram Patil visited the house and conducted an inspection.

During the investigation, the police recovered four glasses, a knife, sliced lemons and a toxic chemical commonly used for animals. Based on this evidence, the officials believe the incident was a deliberate act.

The two children of Sameer Patil were found safe and are currently in protective care. A detailed investigation is underway by the Kavathe Mahankal Police to ascertain the exact circumstances leading to the tragedy.



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## Chhangur Baba presented himself as RSS body member, used PM's pic on letterhead

During meetings with officials and political leaders, Chhangur Baba, the alleged mastermind of the religious conversion racket, used to name-drop several prominent RSS functionaries.

#### Agency New Delhi.

Chhangur Baba, the alleged mastermind of a religious conversion racket busted in Uttar Pradesh, presented himself as a senior functionary of an RSS-affiliated body while meeting officials and even used the photo of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the letterhead of the organisation, investigators said. Chhangur Baba, alias Jamaluddin, was made the general secretary (Awadh) of an organisation named Bharat Pratikar Seva Sangh, which was being run by another key accused, Eidul Islam.

Investigators said the name of the organisation was strategically chosen to create a false impression that it was associated with the RSS.

Islam even established a bogus centre in Nagpur - the headquarters of the RSS - to

make the outfit look credible.

During meetings with officials and political leaders, Chhangur Baba and Islam used to name-drop several prominent RSS functionaries to lend credibility to their claims of affiliation.

Chhangur Baba, a spiritual leader from Balrampur, was arrested earlier this month for allegedly orchestrating a large-scale religious conversion racket. He particularly targeted minor girls from economically weaker sections. The Special Task Force (STF), investigating the case, also found that Islam was involved in illegal purchases of village community lands by colluding with local administration officials.

CHARGES AGAINST CHHANGUR

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CHARGES AGAINST CHHANGUR

crore from foreign sources, including Gulf countries and possibly Pakistan.

The financial angle is being probed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). It has alleged that Chhangur Baba owned properties worth over Rs 100 crore in UP and Maharashtra, mostly on encroached government land. Moreover, the ED has found evidence of money laundering worth Rs 60 crore while probing 22 bank accounts linked to Chhangur Baba and his aides. The agency has found

that the spiritual leader purchased a complex named 'Ranwal Greens' in Mumbai through a suspicious deal. The ED has also obtained documents that reveal his links to a Panama-based company named 'Logos Marine'.



BABA

In its FIR against Chhangur Baba, the Uttar Pradesh Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) has said that he was plotting to set up a terrorist training facility with the help of foreign funding.

He is alleged to have received over Rs 500

Rajasthan government school teacher records obscene videos of students, arrested



#### Agency New Delhi.

A government school teacher in Rajasthan's Chittorgarh district has been arrested for allegedly recording private and inappropriate videos of students on his mobile phone, police said on Friday. The teacher, Shambhul Dhakad, was posted at Anvalha School in the Begun panchayat area. The incident came to light after some parents and villagers learned about his misconduct and informed the police and local authorities. Soon after the news spread, a large number of angry villagers gathered at the school and tried to lock its main gate in protest.

As the situation grew tense, Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Manasvi Naresh, Naib Tehsildar Vishnulal Yadav and Begun Police Station Officer Shivalal Meena reached the spot to control the crowd and assess the situation.

A preliminary investigation was carried out, during which the statements of several students were recorded. The police took Shambhul Dhakad into custody immediately.

According to officials, the investigation confirmed that the teacher had recorded objectionable videos. Following this, Chief Block Education Officer Anil Porwal announced Dhakad's suspension with immediate effect. A four-member committee has also been formed to further investigate the matter. State Education Minister Madan Dilawar has taken serious note of the incident. "I have directed officials to conduct a detailed probe and take strict action against the accused," he said.

## Delhi Police arrest 2 in digital arrest scam

#### Agency New Delhi.

The Delhi Police have busted a digital arrest scam and arrested two key accused from Bengaluru and Kolkata, officials said on Saturday.

The crackdown came after a Delhi-based doctor who was allegedly defrauded of Rs 14.85 lakh registered a complaint. One of the accused, Mohammad Sahin Khan, was arrested from near Victoria Hospital in Bengaluru, on July 2, while the other individual Budhadeb Hazara, an MBA graduate, was later nabbed from Kolkata, they said.

According to the police, investigations have revealed that the bank accounts used in the doctor's case are linked to at least 10 other similar complaints filed across Maharashtra, Gujarat, Telangana, Delhi, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, and Karnataka. The same modus operandi involving fake digital arrest calls and extortion tactics was used in these cases, they said.

The doctor allegedly received a threatening call from an individual posing as a government officer who coerced him into transferring the amount under the pretense of a digital arrest, the police said.

According to the Delhi Police, a special team tracked the fraudulent transaction that took place on February 26, 2024, to a bank account operated under a fake address of S K Rice Wholesaler & Trading, the police said. "Through technical surveillance and analysis of digital trails, the team traced the location of the accused in Bengaluru," said Nidhin Valsan, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Central.

During interrogation, Khan disclosed that he had provided his bank account details to Budhadeb Hazara, a resident of West Bengal on his advice and allurement, he said. "For giving his bank account's internet user ID and password, cheque book, and ATM card, he received a commission of Rs 1.5 lakh from Hazara," DCP Valsan added.

## NEWS BOX

## Euro 2025: Spain ruthlessly ends Switzerland's spirited run in quarterfinals

**New Delhi. (Agency)**

BERN: Spain ended Switzerland's dreamy midsummer run through its home Women's European Championship in a 2-0 win in the quarterfinals on Friday despite missing two penalty kicks. Swiss resistance was broken by the world champion's two goals in a five-minute spell midway through the second half. Athena Del Castillo slotted in a shot from Aitana Bonmati's flicked assist in the 66th, just four minutes after coming off the bench, and Clàudia Pina curled a shot from the edge of the penalty area in the 71st.



Spain will play France or Germany in the semifinals next Wednesday in Zurich. The winner will face defending champion England or Italy in the July 27 final at St. Jakob-Park, Basel. "These players are making history," Spain coach Montse Tomé said. Her team sang on the field in their celebratory team photo after reaching the semifinals for the first time in 28 years. Spain has a tournament-leading 16 goals yet could not score from the spot. Mariona Caldentey skewed her penalty badly wide in the ninth minute and Alexia Putellas' shot was saved by Livia Peng in the 88th. Switzerland's spirited young team gave its noisy home fans hope of a stunning upset, even more so after Caldentey's bad miss was greeted by a grateful roar in the sold-out Wankdorf Stadium. "We had some luck but the world champions Spain were too good for us today," Switzerland coach Pia Sundhage said.

Spain also struck the posts of Switzerland's goal three times including in back-to-back chances in a frantic scramble at a corner in the 60th.

## England spinner's 17-year-old brother lights up T20 Blast with hat-trick

**New Delhi. (Agency)**

17-year-old Farhan Ahmed was on fire as he picked up a hat-trick in Nottinghamshire's T20 Blast match against Lancashire on Friday, July 18, at Trent Bridge in Nottingham. He dismissed Luke Wood, Tom Aspinwall, and Mitchell Stanley, finishing with impressive figures of 4-0-25-5. At 17 years and 147 days old, Farhan - the younger brother of England spinner Rehan Ahmed - became the second-youngest player to take a hat-trick in T20 cricket. Earlier in the match, Farhan also claimed the wickets of Lancashire captain Keaton Jennings and T20 veteran Chris Green. Thanks to his exceptional bowling, Nottinghamshire bowled Lancashire out for 126 runs in 20 overs. Nottinghamshire went on to win by four wickets, although Tom Moores earned the Player of the Match award for his impressive 75-run innings.



Despite their win and Farhan's outstanding performance, Nottinghamshire failed to qualify for the quarterfinals. In the ongoing T20 Blast, Farhan has taken eight wickets from six matches at an economy rate of 8.09.

Farhan Ahmed rising rapidly

Last year, Farhan made headlines as Nottinghamshire's youngest first-class cricketer at just 16 years and 189 days old. On his debut, he took seven wickets for 140 runs against Surrey at Trent Bridge. He went on to become the youngest player in England's first-class cricket history to take 10 wickets in a match - also setting the record for the youngest player in County Championship history to achieve a 10-wicket haul. Across 13 first-class matches and 21 innings so far, Farhan has taken 38 wickets, including two four-wicket hauls, one five-wicket haul, and one 10-wicket haul. Farhan was also part of the England squad for the 2024 U19 World Cup, where he took five wickets in four games at an economy rate of 3.22.

# Will IPL money via The Hundred rescue financially struggling county cricket clubs

- **The Hundred is expected to raise approximately 520 million pounds**
- **Smaller counties rely heavily on ECB for their funding**
- **IPL owners have recently invested in The Hundred**

**New Delhi. (Agency)**

Will the investment by IPL owners in The Hundred competition ease the financial struggles of the majority of 18 county clubs in England? It is a "make or break" question facing the struggling clubs in the county circuit right now. According to the recently-released Leonard Curtis Cricket Finance Report, the gap between the top clubs and the smaller ones is widening with the big three -- Welsh Fire, Birmingham Phoenix, London Spirit, Trent Rockets -- have drawn huge sums from American investors. The eight counties hosting The Hundred teams, including the hosts of Test matches in the summer, are sitting pretty but the majority of the remaining 12 face an existential threat. "The Hundred money allows the 18

smaller clubs like Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, and Derbyshire are hugely reliant on the funding from the parent body -- the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB). The sale of equity in the eight franchises of The Hundred is expected to raise approximately 520 million pounds, a part of which would be shared with the county clubs. The ECB decided to sell stakes of the eight franchises ahead of The Hundred's fifth season that begins on August 5, day after the conclusion of the Test series between India and England.

Four out of the eight teams have attracted investments from IPL franchise owners connected to Mumbai Indians (49 per cent of Oval Invincibles), Sunrisers Hyderabad (100 per cent of Northern Superchargers), Delhi Capitals (49 per cent of Southern Brave) and Lucknow Super Giants (70 per cent of Manchester Originals). The other four teams -- Welsh Fire, Birmingham Phoenix, London Spirit, Trent Rockets -- have drawn huge sums from American investors. The eight counties hosting The Hundred teams, including the hosts of Test matches in the summer, are sitting pretty but the majority of the remaining 12 face an existential threat. "The Hundred money allows the 18

first-class counties to look to the future rather than simply survive from one summer to the next," said former England captain Michael Vaughan in the report. "I would like to see counties being transparent with each other



and sharing knowledge about what works for them. Sometimes petty rivalries prevent that from happening and divisions between the Test host counties and the others develop."

In a separate interaction with PTI, Vaughan said the fresh investments into The Hundred would help England produce better cricketers. "There is an expectation that it's (Hundred investments) going to help County cricket. What it does is help England produce better players because some of our players go to the IPL and mix with some of

the legends of the game and coaches and they come back better players. The IPL is not going to move and it's not going to get any smaller, so the game is going to accelerate," he said, referring to the money pumped in by the IPL teams.

Stuart Cain, CEO of Warwickshire County Cricket Club, believes the fresh influx of cash in English cricket will help all 18 counties but in the long run they need to develop multiple revenue streams. "In its simplest form, that money will help red-ball cricket and T20 cricket thrive in all the counties, not just the eight franchises where there are teams." So, if you're a Worcestershire or Northamptonshire or Leicestershire where you don't have a

Hundred team, but you have that money, you can build better stadiums, which will attract more fans, give them a better experience. So, they want to come back again," Cain told PTI. "It allows you then to create more money, which you can invest in the squad, which means that you can employ better red-ball players. If we can make it even more attractive through the investment from The Hundred money, then I think that the 18 counties will all benefit and the game in general will benefit."

## Shubman Gill's real test starts now with India trailing 1-2, says Chappell

**New Delhi. (Agency)**

Former Australia captain Greg Chappell believes Shubman Gill has displayed greatness with the bat and shown glimpses of his potential as a young captain, but said his real test begins now with India trailing 1-2 in the five-match Test series against England. India lost the third Test against England at Lord's by 22 runs to go 1-2 down in the series. The two teams will face off in the fourth Test of the Anderson-Tendulkar Trophy at Manchester starting July 23.

"As India prepare for the final two Tests of their series in England, the spotlight now shines firmly on their 25-year-old captain Shubman Gill. A bright young talent, he has shown greatness with the bat and glimpses of leadership potential, but this moment will define his trajectory as a Test captain."

"It's not an easy environment in which to grow, but it's the one he's in - and the stakes couldn't be higher," Chappell wrote in his column in ESPNcricinfo.com. Chappell wants Gill to set the tone for the side with his actions. "Gill must



## Smriti Mandhana sends hearts with adorable reply on Palash Muchhal's birthday wish

- **Smriti Mandhana celebrated her 29th birthday on Friday, and Palash Muchhal shared an adorable birthday wish for her.**
- **Mandhana is currently participating in the ODI series against England.**

**New Delhi. (Agency)**

Smriti Mandhana had a sweet response after her rumored boyfriend, Palash Muchhal, wished her a happy birthday. On Friday, July 19, Mandhana celebrated her 29th birthday and received heartfelt wishes from teammates and members of the cricketing community. Currently in England for an ODI series against Nat Sciver-Brunt's side, Mandhana is representing India. Amid the celebrations, Palash Muchhal — brother of playback singer Palak Muchhal — shared a warm message, calling Mandhana his



biggest cheerleader and praising her for being his source of strength. Palash wrote, "From the very start, you've been my calm in the chaos, my biggest cheerleader, and the most inspiring soul I know — on the field and off it. You've shown me what grace under pressure looks like & what quiet strength truly is. Happiest Birthday Mr Nags teases Smriti Mandhana. Earlier this year on the RCB Insider Show, Danish Sait (a.k.a. Mr. Nags) playfully

teased Smriti Mandhana by dropping Palash Muchhal's name into the conversation. As part of his signature banter, Mr. Nags asked if there were any "plus points" in her life — before cheekily twisting the phrase to "Palash points. Caught off guard, the 28-year-old Mandhana laughed and responded, "What is Palash?" Mr. Nags didn't miss a beat, quipping, "You tell me, what is Palash? You turn into Balash (blushing) when I mention Palash."

Mandhana, a core member of RCB since the inaugural season of the Women's Premier League (WPL), couldn't contain her laughter. Turning away from the camera, she chuckled, "Marwayega ye mereko" — Hindi for "He's going to get me into trouble." Mandhana is currently set to play in her second T20I against England on Saturday, July 19 at the Lord's Cricket Ground. Mandhana scored 28 runs in the first ODI at the Rose Bowl in Southampton before Lauren Bell dismissed her.

Mandhana also became only the second Indian woman after Mithali Raj to reach the landmark of 4500 ODI runs. She also completed 1000 partnership runs in ODIs with the talented Pratika Rawal.

## Bangladesh vs Pakistan T20I series Live Streaming: Squads and all you need to know

- **Pakistan and Bangladesh will lock horns in 3 T20Is**
- **Ahmed Daniyal earned his maiden T20I call-up**
- **Bangladesh have retained their squad from their series win vs Sri Lanka**

**New Delhi. (Agency)**

Bangladesh and Pakistan are set to face off in a bilateral T20I series beginning Sunday, July 20. All three matches will be played at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, Bangladesh, led by Litton Das, have retained the same squad that secured a 2-1 series win over Sri Lanka earlier this month.

The Tigers will be looking to bounce back from their 0-3 defeat to Pakistan in the previous away T20I series. Pakistan,



meanwhile, have made several changes to their lineup. Pacer Ahmed Daniyal, who impressed for Peshawar Zalmi in the 2025 Pakistan Super League (PSL), has earned his maiden T20I call-up. In four PSL matches, Daniyal claimed six wickets at an economy rate of 8.93, including a three-wicket haul. He also contributed with the bat, scoring 24 runs at an average of 24 and a strike rate of 171.42. Veterans Fakhar

Zaman and Faheem Ashraf have also been recalled to the squad. Notably, Babar Azam, Mohammad Rizwan, and Shaheen Shah Afridi have been rested for the series. Litton Das (capt), Tanzid Hasan, Parvez Hossain Emon, Mohammad Naim, Towhid Hridoy, Jaker Ali, Shamin Hossain, Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Rishad Hossain, Mahedi Hasan, Nasum Ahmed, Taskin Ahmed, Mustafizur Rahman, Shoriful Islam, Tanzim Hasan Sakib, Mohammad Saifuddin, Salman Ali Agha (capt), Abrar Ahmed, Ahmed Daniyal, Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman, Hassan Nawaz, Hussain Talat, Khushdil Shah, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Mohammad Haris (wk), Mohammad Nawaz, Sahibzada Farhan (wk), Saim Ayub, Salman Mirza, Sufyan Moqim

When to watch Bangladesh vs Pakistan T20I series live in India? Matches in the series between Bangladesh and Pakistan will start at 5:30 PM IST, 06:00 PM local time and 12 PM GMT.

## Asia Cup 2025 in limbo as India refuses to attend meet in Bangladesh: Sources

- **The ACC meeting is scheduled to be held on July 24**
- **BCCI and other members have decided to boycott the meeting**
- **Mohsin Naqvi is adamant about holding the meeting in Dhaka**

**New Delhi. (Agency)**

Uncertainty over the 2025 edition of the Asia Cup looms large after the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and several other

member boards decided to boycott the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) meeting if it is held in Dhaka. The ACC meeting is scheduled to be held on July 24 in the capital of Bangladesh. A top source told India Today that the BCCI has officially informed both the ACC and Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairperson Mohsin Naqvi that it would not participate in the meeting if it was held in Dhaka. The decision stems from the strained political relations between India and Bangladesh. Cricket boards of Sri Lanka, Oman, and Afghanistan have also backed India, citing similar reservations about the venue. Despite the mounting opposition,



ACC chairperson Mohsin Naqvi is said to be adamant about holding the meeting in Dhaka. STORIES YOU MA. "The BCCI has clearly communicated its stance to both the ACC and chairperson Naqvi. They have also

personally requested a change in venue, but there has been no response so far," the source told India Today. According to ACC's constitution, any decision made at the meeting in Dhaka without the participation of key member boards could be deemed invalid. This has raised concerns about a potential deadlock on the hosting of the Asia Cup. Sources have further suggested that Naqvi's insistence on keeping the meeting in Dhaka was being perceived as an attempt to exert undue pressure on India over Asia Cup matters. With only five days left for the scheduled meeting, no official communication has been made by the ACC regarding any venue change, leaving the future of the Asia Cup uncertain.

## Adani group exits AWL Agri Business; sells remaining 10.42 pc stake for Rs 3,732 cr

### New Delhi. (Agency)

Adani Group on Friday exited AWL Agri Business (formerly known as Adani Wilmar) by selling its remaining 10.42 per cent stake in the company for Rs 3,732 crore through open market transactions, according to the BSE data.

Adani Commodities LLP (ACL), a subsidiary of Adani Enterprises, offloaded a total of 13,54,82,400 equity shares in 11 tranches on Friday, amounting to a 10.42 per cent stake in AWL Agri Business, as per the block deal data on the BSE. The transaction was valued at around Rs 3,732.54 crore and executed at an average price of Rs 275.50 apiece. Meanwhile, Dubai-based Shajarat Investment FZCO purchased a little over 11.07 crore equity shares, or 8.52 per cent in AWL Agri Business for Rs 3,049.99 crore.

Quant Mutual Fund (MF), IDFC MF, Bandhan MF, Jupiter Fund Management, Morgan Stanley Asia Singapore, US-based Susquehanna International Group, Franklin Templeton, Vanguard, and Singapore-based Duro Capital were among the buyers of AWL Agri Business shares on the BSE.

Shares of AWL Agri Business slipped 1.31 per cent to close at Rs 274.60 apiece on the BSE. On Thursday, billionaire Gautam Adani-promoted Adani Group said it has sold a 20 per cent stake in AWL Agri Business to Wilmar International Singapore for Rs 7,150 crore, as part of its decision to exit the FMCG business and focus on the infrastructure vertical.

In January, ACL had already sold a 13.51 per cent stake in AWL through the offer for sale route, generating Rs 4,855 crore. AWL Agri Business sells edible oil and other food products under Fortune brand.

In December last year, Adani Group had announced divestment of its entire 44 per cent stake in AWL to sharpen its focus on core infrastructure businesses.

During the 2024-25 fiscal, AWL Agri Business Ltd had posted a net profit of Rs 1,225.81 crore on a total income of Rs 63,910.28 crore.

## RBL Bank Q1 Results: Net Profit Declines 46% YoY To Rs 200 Crore, Recovery On QoQ

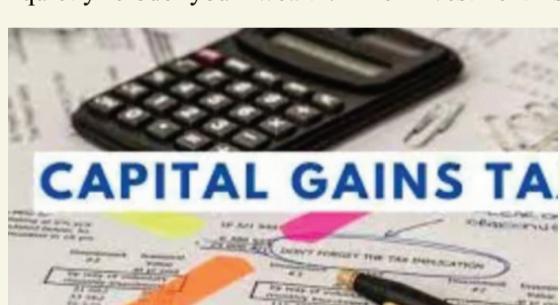
### New Delhi. (Agency)

RBL Bank on Saturday reported a 46.16 per cent year-on-year decline in its net profit to Rs 200 crore for the first quarter ended June 30, 2025. However, it is significantly higher on a quarter-on-quarter basis as compared with the Rs 69 crore profit recorded in Q4 FY25. Its net profit had stood at Rs 371.5 crore in the corresponding period last year. RBL Bank's total standalone income stood at Rs 4,510 crore in Q1 FY26, slightly up from Rs 4,476 crore in Q4 FY25. Interest income remained steady at Rs 3,441 crore, while other income, including fees, commissions, forex earnings, and investment gains, rose to Rs 1,069 crore from Rs 1,000 crore in the previous quarter. Its operating profit before provisions stood at Rs 702.9 crore, down sequentially from Rs 861 crore but sharply lower than the Rs 859 crore posted in Q1 FY25.

## 54EC Bonds: The Hidden Cost of Dodging Capital Gains Tax—This 'Safe' Move Could Cost You Lakhs

### New Delhi. (Agency)

If you just sold property and want to avoid the 12.5 percent long-term capital gains tax, Section 54EC bonds might look tempting. These government-backed bonds, available from REC, NHAI, PFC, and IRFC, let you invest up to Rs 50 lakh within six months of the sale and get a full exemption on your LTCG tax, which could otherwise cost you over Rs 6.5 lakh. But this strategy has trade-offs that can quietly erode your wealth. The investment is



locked in for five years: you cannot sell, pledge, or use the bonds as collateral during this period, or you lose the tax benefit. The interest rate is just 5.25 percent per year, and the interest is fully taxable as per your slab. For those in the highest tax bracket, your net return could drop to around 3.75 percent a year—barely outpacing savings or inflation. Further, if your capital gain is more than Rs 50 lakh, only the invested amount is exempt and the rest is taxed. Since 2018, Section 54EC only applies to gains from sale of land or building held at least 24 months, not shares or mutual funds. Minimum investment is Rs 10,000 per bond, and there is no tax deducted at source, but you must declare the interest when filing returns. These bonds are AAA-rated and considered safe, but are illiquid and may not suit those seeking higher returns or flexibility. You could also explore other exemptions like Section 54 (if you reinvest in residential property), which might offer better returns or more options, depending on your goals. In short, while 54EC bonds can save you a lump sum in taxes, you might end up with far lower returns than if you paid the tax and reinvested elsewhere.

# Weekly Review: Rupee slips marginally, commodities trade volatile

**Amazon lays off hundreds from AWS despite 17% revenue rise**  
**Microsoft cuts 9,000 jobs amid rising AI infrastructure costs**  
**Google offers voluntary exit programme, avoids forced layoffs**

### New Delhi. (Agency)

CHENNAI: During the week of July 14 to 18, the Indian rupee saw a mild depreciation while commodity markets remained volatile, with silver continuing its strong upward trend and crude oil staying elevated due to global supply concerns. The Indian rupee weakened slightly against the US dollar over the week. It started around 85.97 on July 14 and closed near 86.14 on July 18, reflecting a depreciation of about 10-15 paise. The currency remained in a narrow



range of 85.98-86.15 throughout the week, with low volatility. Persistent foreign fund outflows and global dollar strength contributed to the rupee's subdued performance. Crude oil prices stayed firm amid geopolitical concerns. Indian Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri warned that prices could spike to

\$130-140 per barrel if Russian supplies are disrupted. India has continued to diversify its oil import sources to mitigate price shocks. Though exact price movements varied daily, overall sentiment remained cautious due to potential supply constraints. Gold prices softened slightly over the week.

## India in talks with US teams to conclude fifth round of talks for proposed trade pact: Official

The fifth round of India-US bilateral trade agreement (BTA) talks concluded in Washington, D.C., on July 17th. Both nations aim to finalize an interim trade deal before August 1st, avoiding the reimplementations of Trump-era tariffs.

### New Delhi (Agency)

New Delhi: India and the US teams have concluded the fifth round of talks for the proposed bilateral trade agreement (BTA) in Washington on July 17, an official said. The negotiations were held for four days (July 14-17) in Washington. "The Indian team is coming back," the official said.

India's chief negotiator and special secretary in the department of commerce Rajesh Agrawal leads the team for negotiations. These deliberations are important as both sides are looking at finalising an interim trade deal before August 1, which marks the end of the suspension period of the Trump tariffs imposed on dozens of countries including India (26 per cent). On April 2 this year, US President Donald Trump announced these high reciprocal tariffs. The implementation of high tariff was immediately suspended for 90 days till July 9 and later till August 1 as

America is negotiating trade deals with a number of countries. Issues related to agriculture and automobiles are learnt to have figured during the fifth round of negotiations. Matters related to ways to deal with non-market economies, and SCOMET (Special Chemicals, Organisms, Materials, Equipment, and Technologies) also came up for discussions. India has hardened its position on the US demand for duty concessions on agri and dairy products. New Delhi has, so far, not given any duty concessions to any of its trading partners in a free trade agreement in the dairy sector. Certain farmers' associations have urged the government not to include any issues related to agriculture in the trade pact.

India is seeking the removal of this additional tariff (26 per cent). It is also seeking the easing of tariffs on steel and aluminium (50 per cent) and the auto (25 per cent) sectors. Against these, India has reserved its right under

the WTO (World Trade Organization) norms to impose retaliatory duties.

The country is also seeking duty concessions for labour-intensive sectors, such as textiles, gems and jewellery, leather goods, garments, plastics, chemicals, shrimp, oil seeds, grapes, and bananas in the proposed trade pact. On the other hand, the US wants duty concessions on certain industrial goods, automobiles, especially electric vehicles, wines, petrochemical products, and agri goods, dairy items, apples, tree nuts, and genetically modified crops.

The two countries are looking to conclude talks for the first tranche of the proposed bilateral trade agreement (BTA) by fall (September-October) this year. Before that, they are looking for an interim trade pact. India's merchandise exports to the US rose 22.8 per cent to USD 25.51 billion in April-June quarter this fiscal year, while imports rose 11.

## Yes Bank Q1 Results: Net Profit Jumps 59% YoY to Rs 801 Crore, NII Up 5.7%

### New Delhi (Agency)

Yes Bank Q1 Results: Yes Bank on Saturday reported a 59% year-on-year jump in its standalone net profit to Rs 801 crore for the first quarter ended June 2025, according to a regulatory filing. Its net interest income, which is the difference between interest earned and interest expended, rose by just 5.7% to Rs 2,371 crore during April-June 2025, benefiting from a decrease in the cost of funds. Its net profit had stood at Rs 502 crore in the corresponding quarter last year. On a quarter-on-quarter basis, Yes Bank's profit after tax (PAT) increased over 8%, up from Rs 738 crore in the January-March 2025 quarter.

The private sector lender generated an

interest income of Rs 7,596 crore, down 1.6% from Rs 7,719 crore



recorded in the corresponding quarter last year. Meanwhile, non-interest income rose by 10.9% to Rs 1,739 crore. Yes Bank's asset quality remained constant. Its gross non-performing assets (GNPA) stood at 1.6% and net NPA at 0.3% as of June

30, 2025. Its provision coverage ratio (PCR) saw an increase to 80.2%. The lender's net interest margin (NIM) stood at 2.5%, showing a year-on-year increase, aided by a reduction in deposits due to PSL shortfall and a decrease in SA rates, though this was somewhat countered by the impact of repricing. Yes Bank disbursed Rs 5,224.41 crore in interest during the reported quarter, compared to Rs 5,475 crore in the same period last year, reflecting a decrease of 4.6%.

Yes Bank's Advances increased by 5% YoY to Rs 2.41 lakh crore, on the back of a 19% jump in commercial banking and an 11.2% rise in the micro banking sector. Its retail advances increased by only 0.3%.

## Apple Ships \$5-Billion iPhones From India In Q1 FY26, India's Smartphone Exports Hit \$7 Billion

### New Delhi. (Agency)

Apple has exported over \$5 billion worth of iPhones from India during the April-June quarter of FY26, accounting for nearly 70% of the country's total smartphone exports, according to preliminary data reviewed by Moneycontrol. This is a sharp rise from around \$3 billion in the same quarter last year, underscoring India's growing role in global electronics manufacturing. Fuelled by Apple's ongoing production ramp-up via Foxconn and Tata Electronics, India's total smartphone exports crossed \$7 billion in the June quarter, marking over 40% growth year-on-year from approximately \$5 billion in Q1 FY25. While Apple's iPhone exports remained strong, they were slightly lower than the January-March quarter, when shipments touched Rs 48,000 crore (\$5.58 billion). That earlier spike was partially driven by Apple building inventory ahead of new U.S. import tariffs effective April 2. A slight dip in Q1 is typical, as global demand softens

in anticipation of new iPhone launches in September. Foxconn and Tata Lead the Export Charge. Foxconn contributed the majority of iPhone shipments in the quarter, with Tata Electronics—which recently took over Pegatron's operations—also playing a significant role. A large portion of India-made iPhones continues to be exported to the US market. "Mobile phones have been one of the major success stories, and continuous support from the government is needed, especially in light of the targeted Chinese restrictions around capital equipment, rare-earth minerals, and the availability of skilled Chinese technical personnel," a Moneycontrol report cited an industry executive as saying. The executive further noted that the entire \$2 billion jump in India's electronics exports in Q1 came solely from smartphones.

Smartphones Now India's Third-Largest Export In FY25, India's smartphone production touched \$64 billion, with exports accounting for \$24.1 billion —

or about 38% of the total output. From being ranked 167th among export categories in FY15, smartphones have now emerged as India's third-largest export by FY25, trailing only engineering goods and petroleum



products. China's Informal Restrictions Raise Concerns. The Indian Cellular and Electronics Association (ICEA), which represents major players including Apple, Foxconn, Tata Electronics, Google, Dixon, Lava, Oppo, and Xiaomi, has raised alarms over China's informal trade restrictions. In a letter dated July 1

On July 14, 24K gold was priced around 29,988 per gram, falling to 29,933 by July 17, and recovering marginally to 29,934-9,938 by July 18. On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold futures for August hovered around 297,559 per 10 grams. Globally, gold prices held near \$3,344 per ounce but ended the week around 0.5% lower due to stronger US economic data and a firm dollar. Silver:

Silver outperformed other precious metals, continuing its sharp rally. Prices surged to 2114.875 per kg during the week, with gains supported by strong industrial demand and investor interest. Silver has been one of the best-performing assets in 2025 so far, outpacing gold in returns. In conclusion, the rupee traded weak but stable, closing near 86.14/US Dollar, while crude oil remained elevated on supply concerns. Gold saw mild profit-booking even as prices remained steady, and silver rallied sharply, driven by industrial demand and bullish sentiment.

## Meet Kuok Hui Kwong: Malaysia's Richest Heiress Takes The Helm Of \$2.19 Billion Shangri-La Asia

### New Delhi (Agency)

Shangri-La Asia has named Kuok Hui Kwong as its new CEO starting August 1, ending the leadership gap since December 2022 when the previous CEO, Lim Beng Chee, stepped down. Lim is still on the board as a non-executive director. Kuok will now handle both the chair and CEO roles, which the company says will help keep its strategy and daily operations aligned.

Kuok, 47, has been part of Shangri-La's leadership for years, joining the board in 2016 and becoming chair in 2017. She had already stepped in quietly to lead the company after her brother stepped down last year, having served as deputy chair before that. She studied East Asian Studies at Harvard and is the sixth of eight children of Robert Kuok, the founder of Shangri-La and Malaysia's richest man. Outside of hotels, she has worked in media, including as CEO of the South China Morning Post for a short time in 2012 before Alibaba bought the newspaper in 2015. She also held a board position at the Bangkok Post. Despite her senior roles, Kuok avoids the media and keeps a low profile. Kuok has a significant financial stake in Shangri-La, holding over 95 million shares and a stake in Kerry Group, a major shareholder of Shangri-La. She currently earns a base salary of HK\$576,000 (around US\$73,000) per month, with bonuses and pension benefits. Shangri-La Asia runs over 100 hotels globally under brands like Shangri-La, Kerry Hotels, JEN, and Traders, with assets worth US\$13.2 billion. The Kuok family owns stakes in 77 of these properties, and the group also has businesses in wine, golf, and real estate.

In 2024, Shangri-La Asia's revenue rose 2 percent to US\$2.19 billion, but its profit fell by 12 percent to US\$161.4 million. Revenue grew in Hong Kong and the Philippines but was weaker in mainland China, Singapore, and the UK. By the end of 2023, Shangri-La had around 25,500 employees, a small drop from the previous year, but the company avoided large layoffs even during the pandemic.

Now, with both strategy and daily operations under Kuok's control, she is expected to guide Shangri-La's recovery and growth while maintaining the company's long-term vision.

to IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, ICEA warned that such disruptions pose a risk to India's \$32 billion export-linked electronics manufacturing and the gains made under the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme. The industry describes these measures as "carefully calibrated" restrictions that are impacting the import of capital equipment, critical minerals, and Chinese skilled technical personnel—resources vital for scaling up electronics production. "The interventions by the Government will ensure supply chain continuity, enable technology transfers, and—most importantly—preserve India's competitiveness as a manufacturing hub by keeping overall manufacturing costs low," ICEA Chairman Pankaj Mohindroo wrote in the letter, which was also sent to the Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of External Affairs, and DPII.

# Mrunal Thakur's Flower Errand Comes With A Sweet Message For Paparazzi

Mrunal Thakur just gave her fans the most refreshing moment and no, it wasn't during an event or via a social media post. The actress was spotted casually shopping for flowers at a local shop. Dressed in a light blue buttoned top and beige trousers, Mrunal blended boss-lady vibes with laid-back charm. Add those black sunnies and she served a look worth bookmarking – simple, striking and oh-so-Mrunal. But it wasn't just the outfit stealing all the limelight. When the paparazzi tried to do what they are best at, catching extra shots of Mrunal, she flashed her bright smile and cheekily told them to take rest in Marathi. "Aaram kara," she said. Isn't it sweet?

Mrunal Thakur has been keeping busy with back-to-back shoots and promotional endeavours. Lately, she has been out and about promoting her upcoming film *Son Of Sardaar 2* alongside Ajay Devgn. Directed by Vijay Kumar Arora, the comedy drama features an impressive star cast including Ravi Kishan, Sanjay Mishra, Neeru Bajwa, Chunky Pandey, Kubbra Sait, Deepak Dobriyal, Vindu Dara Singh, Roshni Walia, Sharat Saxena, Sahil Mehta and the late Mukul Dev.

The trailer of the film, unveiled earlier this month, brought back Ajay Devgn as lively Jassi. It is packed with action, quirky humour, drama and an unmissable Punjabi flair set against the scenic backdrop of Scotland.

Sharing the clip on Instagram, Ajay Devgn wrote, "Action! Emotions! Confusion ka bhaandaar. JASSI is back, aur iss baar sab kuch double hain! (And this time everything is double.) Warning: Trailer may cause excessive laughter, confusion, and Sardaar ke side effects! Sardaar Is Back."

Adding to Mrunal's impressive filmography is *Dacoit*, set to release in December 2025. In the film, Mrunal stars opposite Adivi Sesh, breathing life into a story about the relationship between love and rebellion. It is being shot in both Hindi and Telugu. *Dacoit* is helmed by Shanel Deo and produced by Supriya Yarlagadda under the Annapurna Studios banner.

That's not all. She will also share screen space with Varun Dhawan and Pooja Hegde in *Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai*, directed by David Dhawan. The film also boasts an impressive ensemble cast including Maniesh Paul, Jimmy Shergill, Mouni Roy, Chunky Panday, Rakesh Bedi and Ali Asgar.



## Too Sexy To Handle!

# Priyanka Chahar Choudhary's Stunning Lilac Outfit Is Total Fashion Goals

Priyanka Chahar Choudhary and her Instagram feed are surely something to die for. The *Udaariyaan* actress never disappoints her fans when it comes to giving fashion goals, and her recent dump is no less. Priyanka took to her social media and shared a series of pictures in a stunning bodycon dress – and why lie, she ate and left no crumbs. In the series of pictures that Priyanka has shared on her social media, the actress can be seen acing a stunning lilac fishtail bodycon dress featuring striking cuts and a tube design. The giant flower designs stitched at the front made the whole outfit look even more glamorous. The actress left her hair open in soft curls, and the minimal makeup along with those stylish accessories – it's just giving sexy.

For the accessories, Priyanka wore multiple bracelets and a watch, a chic choker with a minimalistic locket, and those beautiful earrings were the show-stealers. The actress added a jute bag to finish off the look.

As soon as Priyanka dropped this post full of glamour, her

fans started reacting to it. One wrote, "Absolutely flawless – every detail, from dress to makeup to hairstyle, is perfect!" "Stay blessed and hottie as always," another user wrote. A third fan shared, "Kitni pyari lgti ho aap sach mein yr."



Priyanka Chahar Choudhary is a popular name in Indian television. Starting her career as a video jockey in Jaipur, Priyanka rose to fame through her role in the widely acclaimed TV serial *Udaariyaan* and the reality show *Bigg Boss 16*. Known for her fearlessness, confidence, and style, Priyanka has won many hearts through her serials. Besides *Udaariyaan*, some

of her most popular shows include *Swapnoddana*, *Dus June Ki Raat*, *Gathbandhan*, *Ishqholics*, among others. Previously, the *Udaariyaan* actress made headlines after she was spotted with DJ Hershey on a trip to Ibiza amid breakup rumours with Ankit Gupta. Dating rumours between Priyanka and Ankit sparked after their sizzling on-screen chemistry on *Udaariyaan*.

**Nia Sharma Stuns In Pink Mini Dress, Jasmine Bhasin Calls Her 'Sexy Pookie'**



Television actress Nia Sharma never fails to leave her fans mesmerized with her stunning pictures. While the actress signed off from the sets of *Laughter Chefs* season 2 last month, she has now shared some stunning pictures of herself from the sets. The actress looked like an absolute diva in a pink mini dress, and pictures from her photoshoot garnered compliments from Mouni Roy, Jasmine Bhasin and many others. Nia Sharma sizzled in a strapless pink mini dress with ruffled detailing. She let her outfit do the talking, and accessorized her look minimally with a dainty golden necklace, matching bracelets and rings. Her makeup was on point, and she had her hair tied up in a chic bun hairstyle. One video clip shows her striking poses for pictures confidently. Other photos show her getting ready for the shoot in her vanity van. Her caption, and background music garnered a lot of attention! "Essentially a pookie, forced to be a gangsta in this cruel world," she wrote, and added the 'Pookie Anthem' song in the background.

Commenting on her photos, Mouni Roy wrote, "Caption and the song," along with red heart and laughing emojis. Meanwhile, Jasmin Bhasin wrote, "Sexy pookie." Many fans dropped fire emojis and heart eyed emojis in the comments section.

Last month, Nia Sharma signed off from the sets of *Laughter Chefs* season 2. Having shot the last episode of the reality show, she decided to share some fun behind-the-scenes moments from the shoot and pen a sweet tribute to her co-stars. The carousel began with a video of the star-studded cast waving at the camera while saying "Bye" with bright smiles on their faces. In yet another clip, Nia, alongside Ankita Lokhande, Vicky Jain, Karan Kundra, Abhishek Kumar, Reem Shaikh, Rahul Vaidya, Sudesh Lehri and the crew, were seen screaming at the top of their voices.

**Urmila Matondkar's Last Evening' With Rekha, Manish Malhotra Was All About 'Friendship'**



In case you missed it, Urmila Matondkar has shared a heartwarming video montage from ace designer Manish Malhotra's mother's birthday celebration. The video features Urmila alongside the evergreen Rekha as they join Manish in celebrating the special day. It opens with a touching frame of Rekha and Urmila adorably posing together, their radiant smiles saying it all. In the next moment, Manish joins the leading ladies, flashing a bright smile as the trio shares a beautiful memory.

One of the highlights? Rekha and Urmila with Manish's mom, making her feel special on her birthday evening. The veteran actress adorably plays with her cheeks, whereas Urmila sits on the floor – a sweet gesture to showcase her respect for the designer's mom. Manish, always the doting son, was seen beaming with pride as he joined the trio for a tender moment. The side note of the post read, "Sharing some heartwarming moments of last evening which was filled with affection, love, friendship, respect and admiration. An evening so



inspiring n amazing that it is carved in my heart." Earlier, a heartwarming moment from the evening went viral on social media. It captured both Urmila and Rekha posing sweetly for the paparazzi, with Manish himself joining them for the quick photo session. In the video, Urmila leaned gently towards Rekha in a subtle gesture of affection, whereas the latter held Urmila's chin. Manish was also seen engaging with the media as he stood smiling beside the ladies.

For the birthday bash, Rekha and Urmila Matondkar opted for elegant glam. Urmila kept it classy and chic in a white maxi dress, whereas Rekha decided not to experiment and brought her signature charm in a beige slit kurta paired with white pants.

It needs to be noted that Karan Johar, a long-time friend of Manish, also attended the birthday party and is seen posing with his mother in one of the pictures shared by the designer himself on Instagram. Meanwhile, Manish Malhotra is set for his appearance in the India Couture Week 2025 organised by FDCI.

# 5 Must dos while shifting home

Anyone who has shifted homes will be able to tell you it is no easy task. The entire business is emotionally and physically taxing.

From hiring the best movers to telling goodbyes to friends, every step should be closely planned. Here are five simple steps which will help you move to your new home comfortably.

## The A to Z list:

Take time and prepare a checklist. Write down everything which needs to be done, from paying your newspaper boy to the list of people you need to say goodbye. It is easy to let something important slip away while you are having so much in your mind. A list will give you the confidence that you will not miss out on anything.

## Plan your move in advance:

The more time you have the easier the shift is. A gradual change is better than a last-minute huff-puff. It not only gives you enough buffer time in case everything does not go according to plan but also helps you and your family to emotionally adjust to the fact that you are moving to a new home.

## Talk to your children:

Dealing with kids while shifting is one helluva task. Most of them will find leaving their friends and surrounding traumatic. Sit with them and tell them what will change and what will remain the same. Ask them to collect phone numbers and mail ids of their friends so that they can stay in touch. Talk to them about their new school and type of people they will come across. Involve them while packing up their bags and goodies so that they feel responsible and not left out.

## Pack with care:

Today packing is well taken care by professional movers. But that does not mean you should not be involved. Who would like to see their favourite vase broken during the moving process. Make sure everything is properly bundled and fragile items are well packed before loading. Consider taking your favourite items along with you in the car.

## Be positive:

Yes, shifting residence will sap your energy. Do not let the grief of leaving your home and anxiety

about the new surroundings overwhelm you. Learn to take one day at a time. Focus on the shift and hope for a good home and happiness. The positive energy will help you move forward without trouble.



## Best kept silver cleaning secrets

Experts from Episode Silver give you some damage control tips to maintain your silverware this monsoon...

### Tarnish

Silver tarnishes when in contact with atmospheric sulphur. Therefore use your silver regularly as usage breaks the sulphur sulphide film that causes tarnish.

For food products, be sure to wipe dry after washing. Use of soft cloth.

For decorative products, wipe daily during the daily house dusting process. This delays tarnishing.

### Cleaning Silver

Heavily tarnished pieces can be cleaned with :- Foam, Sprays or liquid paste silver polishes.

Both Indian and imported polishes are

available in the market. Use a soft chamois cloth. Silver dips are also very effective. Use a weak solution of washing soda and water to clean heavily stained Tea or Coffeepots. Pierced work should not be cleaned with a cloth as it may get stuck on the edges. Use a soft brush.

Silver can be washed in dishwashers, but avoid contact with stainless steel as a reaction can occur.



## 6 Simple tips to host a potluck party



The one thing that makes potluck parties a fun event is that it gives everyone an opportunity to involve in hosting the party. However, it requires some planning for sure.

We give you 6 simple tips to hosting a successful potluck party

### Make a guest list

To begin with, slot a day and time as per the convenience of everyone. A potluck party should have atleast 6 to 7 people or couples for it to be fun and memorable. The more the

better.

### Let each one pick a dish

Once you figure out the guest list, you can ask each member what they would like to prepare instead of you deciding the dish for everyone. Every individual has a speciality dish that he/she can cook well. Co-ordination is a must to ensure there are a perfect number of appetizers, main course and desserts.

### Do not miss out on the essentials

If you are of the view that a potluck party host just needs to provide the venue, you are wrong.

The basic items such as plates and utensils, tissue papers, water and other drinks is solely your responsibility. So ensure that everything is well stocked.

### Pay attention to the food

Apart from the essentials, you also have to take care of the food and the temperature at which it is

served. If a dish needs to be warmed in the oven before serving or if some dessert has to be refrigerated, do it.

### Opt for use-and-throw wares

If there are too many guests coming over, choose dishes or plates made of thermocol, paper or plastic. This way you would not need to wash all the utensils once the party is over and in turn save up all your time and energy. Moreover, keep a huge bin near the kitchen so that the guests can dispose the plates in

### the bin after use.

Appreciate and thank everyone

After the successful potluck party, do not forget to thank each and every guest individually for attending the party and also for taking all the necessary effort in making it a memorable one.