

# Bihar CM Nitish Kumar Hikes Journalists' Pension To 15K, Dependents 10K

**Bihar CM Nitish Kumar announced a hike in journalists' pensions to 15,000 per month and 10,000 for dependent spouses after their death. He emphasized journalists' role as the "fourth pillar of democracy" and reaffirmed the state's commitment to their welfare and dignity.**

**Bihar . (Agency)**  
Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has announced a substantial increase in the monthly pension provided to journalists under the Bihar Patrakar Pension Samman Yojana, a move widely seen as a significant step toward improving the welfare of the media community in the state. In a tweet shared, Chief Minister stated that the state government has issued instructions to the concerned department to raise the monthly pension amount for eligible retired journalists from 6,000 to 15,000. This move aims to ensure a more dignified post-retirement life for journalists who have spent their careers serving the public through the media. Additionally, in a compassionate gesture, Nitish Kumar also declared an increase in the pension given to the dependent spouses of deceased journalists. Under the revised Bihar Journalist Honor

Pension Scheme, the pension amount for spouses has been increased from 3,000 to 10,000 per month, to be provided for their entire lifetime.

Highlighting the importance of the press in democratic governance, Chief Minister

they can pursue their profession with impartiality and integrity, and retire with respect.

The announcement has been welcomed by journalist associations and media professionals across Bihar, who have long advocated for better financial support and recognition of their service. The move is expected to provide much-needed financial security to senior journalists and the families of those who passed away in service or post-retirement. This decision aligns with the Bihar government's broader efforts to support key democratic institutions and individuals who contribute to nation-building. It also underscores Nitish Kumar's acknowledgment of the challenges journalists face,

particularly after retirement, and the critical role they continue to play in society.

The revised pension scheme is likely to come into effect soon, with the state administration tasked with ensuring its smooth implementation.



## CM Rekha Gupta Unveils and Reviews Key Infrastructure Projects in Shalimar Bagh



in a planned way to ensure long-term benefits for residents. She also launched the Indraprastha Gas Limited (IGL) pipeline project worth Rs 54 lakh in VP and FP blocks, as well as new BMC roads in JP and KP blocks costing Rs 35 lakh. A specially designed play station for children in JP Block, developed for Rs 6 lakh, was also opened. In addition,

RMC roads worth Rs 1.35 crore are being built in JP, KP, MP and LP blocks, while a high-mast light has been installed in JD Block at a cost of Rs 2 lakh. Sharing details of the upcoming elevated road over the Munak Canal, CM Rekha Gupta said it will connect Inderlok Metro Station to the Delhi border and improve connectivity between the Outer

and Inner Ring Roads. She noted that the project would include roads on both sides of the canal and an elevated corridor above, turning the area into one of Delhi's most attractive localities. CM Rekha Gupta also announced the opening of 15 new 'Arogya Mandirs' to provide better primary healthcare in the constituency. She added that the long-abandoned building near Max Hospital will soon be converted into a modern super-specialty hospital. New water and sewer pipelines are also being laid in all blocks to address basic infrastructure needs before road construction begins.

During the visit, the Chief Minister inspected the road-widening project from Prembari Bridge to Singalpur village and directed officials to complete it quickly. She also laid the foundation stone for a new U-turn at NSP-Madhuban Chowk on Lala Jagat Narayan Marg, which will be built at a cost of Rs 40 lakh.

## Don't need your permission: Mahayuti ministers' letter war over meetings

**Mumbai. (Agency)**

A growing rift within Maharashtra's ruling Mahayuti coalition has resurfaced, with Social Justice Minister Sanjay Shirsat of the Shinde-led Shiv Sena clashing with BJP Minister of State Madhuri Misal over departmental meetings. The controversy erupted after Misal, responding to requests from MLAs, convened meetings and issued directives to officials—reportedly without informing or consulting Shirsat. This has fuelled speculation that the BJP is sidelining ministers from the Shinde-led Shiv Sena.

In a strongly worded letter, Shirsat accused Misal of holding review meetings without his approval and directed her to ensure that all future meetings are conducted under his chairmanship.

"We are aware that many meetings are being organised at my level in this regard. Therefore, for proper coordination from an administrative point of view, apart from the subjects which have been allocated to you, my prior permission is required to hold a meeting on other subjects," he said in a letter to Misal. However, the BJP minister issued a sharp rebuttal, asserting her authority as Minister of State to convene review meetings without prior approval. She clarified that no official decisions were taken during these meetings, only

suggestions were made, which she maintained were well within the scope of her responsibilities.

"As the Minister of State for the Social Justice Department, I have the authority to hold review meetings of the department. I do not feel the need to take your prior permission to hold these meetings," she said in a letter. Challenging Shirsat to substantiate his claims of overreach, Misal denied encroaching on his authority. She cited the Chief Minister's



directive to review 150 days of government work, asserting that her actions were well within her responsibilities. Misal also noted that the division of duties between the Minister and the MoS, formalised on March 19, 2025, lacked the Chief Minister's approval, as mandated by the Maharashtra Government Rules of 1975. Despite this and the absence of formal departmental records, she said she had been discharging her duties without any objections.

## Opposition loses more than government when Parliament is disrupted: Kiren Rijiju

**New Delhi. (Agency)**

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Saturday said that frequent disruptions in the House hurt the Opposition more, as they lose the crucial opportunity to hold the government accountable.

The remarks came after the first week of the ongoing monsoon session was largely washed out due to repeated protests by Opposition MPs. Speaking at the Sansad Ratna Awards event organised by Prime Point Foundation, Rijiju recalled how bureaucrats sometimes express relief when Parliament is adjourned. "Let me tell you, officers are relieved when Parliament doesn't function because they escape the grilling. The government can be held accountable in Parliament. When the House runs, ministers face tough questions. When it adjourns within minutes, those questions don't even get raised. Opposition loses more than the government when Parliament is disrupted," he said.

"Those who stall the House think they are damaging the government, but in truth, they are weakening their own role in a democracy," Rijiju added. Reinforcing the importance of parliamentary accountability, the minister said, "In any democracy, the government must answer to the people through Parliament. That is why allowing the House to run is essential for a functioning democracy." Reflecting on his journey in Parliament, Rijiju said he never considered Opposition MPs as adversaries.

"We are all colleagues. Before 2014, most of my parliamentary career has been on the Opposition benches. Political rivalries may exist, but there is no enmity," he said.

Drawing from a quote by Winston Churchill, Rijiju said, "A new MP once asked Churchill about the people sitting across the aisle, and he said they were political opponents. But when asked about those sitting on his side, he said they were our political enemies. That is politics, but we are not enemies."

Rijiju also said there is undue burden on Indian legislators compared to their counterparts in developed countries. "There, one MP represents approximately 66,000 people. Here, it is over 20 lakh. They are not asked to fix drains or get someone out of jail. But our MPs deal with personal grievances, infrastructure and law enforcement issues and are still expected to perform in the House," he said.

## 32-hr debate on Operation Sindoors kicks off from Monday

**NEW DELHI. (Agency)**

As the stand-off between Centre and the Opposition continued on the fifth day of the Monsoon session of Parliament, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Friday convened an all-party meeting where Opposition parties agreed to the agenda of taking up a special discussion on the Pahalgam terror attack and Operation Sindoors on Monday in Lok Sabha and the next day in Rajya Sabha, brightening the prospect of normalcy in both Houses. Briefing the media, Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said the decision to start a special discussion on the 'Terrorist attack in Pahalgam and in response to that

Operation Sindoors carried out by the Indian Armed Forces' was agreed to at a meeting of leaders of different parties chaired by Speaker Om Birla.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Home Minister Amit Shah and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar are expected to speak in the Lok Sabha amid indications that Prime Minister Modi may use the much-anticipated debate to turn up the heat on the Opposition, which looks to corner the government over alleged intelligence failures and US President Donald Trump's claims of mediating a "ceasefire" between India and Pakistan. From the Opposition benches,



LoP Rahul Gandhi, Congress leaders Gaurav Gogoi, Manish Tewari, SP's Akhilesh Yadav, NCP's Supriya Sule, and TMC's Abhishek Banerjee will be speakers among others. Asked about the Opposition's demand that Parliament discuss the Special Intensive Revision of Bihar electoral rolls, he said all

issues cannot be taken up at once and the Centre will take a call on other matters gradually.

Asked if PM Modi will speak in Parliament during the discussion, another key demand of the Opposition, Rijiju said the government cannot decide the speakers of opposition parties, and vice versa. He expressed hope that the Opposition will allow Parliament to function from next week, lamenting the waste of resources and efforts going into preparing answers for the questions to be asked by MPs during the Question Hour, which did not take place in the first week due to protests.

## It was my mistake: Rahul Gandhi admits failure in understanding OBC plight

**Reflecting on his 21-year political career, Rahul Gandhi said he had done justice to several issues, including the land acquisition bill, MGNREGA, the food bill, and the rights of tribal communities.**

**New Delhi. (Agency)**  
Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday admitted that not conducting a caste census earlier was his mistake and pledged to correct it now. Speaking at the 'Bhagidari Nyay Sammelan' organised for the OBC community at Talkatora Stadium in Delhi, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said the caste census exercise recently carried out in Telangana would trigger a political earthquake across the country.

Reflecting on his 21-year political career, Gandhi said he had done justice to several issues, including the land acquisition bill, MGNREGA, the food bill, and the rights of tribal communities. However, he acknowledged falling short in protecting the interests of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs). He said that while he had always understood the issues faced by Dalits and Scheduled Tribes, he had not grasped the

concerns of OBCs deeply enough in the past. He told the gathering that it was not the Congress party but he himself who had erred in not pushing for a caste census earlier. "I regret that if I had known more about your history and issues, I would have got the caste census conducted. That is my mistake and not that of the Congress. I am going to correct that mistake now," Gandhi said.

He further asserted that all Congress-ruled states would carry out a caste census and conduct what he termed an "X-ray" of the population. Gandhi described the Telangana caste census as a seismic political development whose aftershocks would soon be felt nationally. He said the timing of the exercise was appropriate, as it would now be carried out with greater depth and purpose than it might have been years earlier.

Attacking Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Gandhi said that he had met him personally a few times and found him to be "all show and no substance". He claimed that the media had "inflated" PM Modi's image and said the prime minister was not a real problem. "You have given him too much importance. He is not a problem," he said, telling the crowd that after meeting Modi, he realised "there is nothing".

# HC panel to advise BMC on avoiding litigation

## Mumbai.(Agency)

Bombay high court has appointed a special committee to examine the ward-wise nature of litigation involving the BMC that are reaching courts and to suggest remedial measures to the municipal commissioner. "Such a committee would make recommendations to the municipal commissioner in regard to the bulk of litigation, as to how it is being generated and/or can be avoided, its nature vis-a-vis different wards and the officers who are seen to have failed in their duties and become responsible for generation of such litigation," directed Justices Girish Kulkarni and Kamal Khata on July 18. They sought the committee's report and recommendations preferably within four months.

The committee will comprise Justice (Retd) Gautam Patel and senior advocate Naushad Engineer. The commissioner will recommend four officers who will also form part of the committee. Whenever the committee desires, the commissioner will make himself available to participate in the meetings. The court order came on petitions regarding illegalities in the "skeleton structure of 10 floors in the heart of a busy commercial area" of Mumbai at Dadar West on the junction of Gokhale Road and



Ranade Road. Redevelopment of R K Building halted abruptly in 2014 after 10 floors. Residents moved HC in 2012 saying they have been out of their homes since 2009 and to direct Mhada and developer Vilas Gaonkar to complete construction. The judges said 110 residential tenants are being kept away from their legitimately entitled redeveloped tenements since 15 years, while 12 commercial tenants are illegally occupying their premises "with the blessings of the

municipal machinery". Petitioners' advocates Sanjiv Sawant and Sandeep Bane said these 12 shops are operating without an occupation certificate. "These are all shops where hundreds visit for purchases," the judges added.

They noted that as a mere formality action was initiated for imposing a fine for unauthorised trade and storage.

The judges said "it is quite clear that farce of action is the rule of the day" and "there is an open racket the municipal officers are indulging to perpetuate illegalities". Only after HC's July 16 order, BMC officers "awakened from the deep slumber".

They wondered if the commissioner has attempted to find out from the law officer what kind of matters/disputes involving the BMC are coming to court and "why BMC is required to be the largest litigant in the court instead of spending its resources, time and energy in undertaking issues of public good".

"Is it a good sign that for years together the municipal corporation would keep generating and then defending these thousands and lakhs of proceedings in every court in the city?" they asked. Therefore, "being disturbed with the situation which is quite alarming if not salvaged in time", the judges.

## Sanitation takes a back seat at Monda Market

### HYDERABAD. (Agency)

Even a brief spell of rain turns Monda Market in Secunderabad into a cesspool, complains a regular. While the statement may be slightly exaggerated due to personal reasons, the fact that the market continues to function in unsanitary conditions cannot be denied.

The poor waste management and broken drainage pose health and safety risks to vendors and shoppers alike. Rotting vegetables, plastic waste and stagnant water have become routine sights, with no visible garbage bins in the area and irregular clearance by municipal workers.

Vendors say they generate between 10 and 15 kg of waste each day, but in the absence of designated disposal points, garbage is dumped in the open. Stray cattle feed on the waste, leading to concerns about animal welfare and the spread of disease.

"There are no dustbins here. The garbage van doesn't come regularly either," said Shankar Yadav, a vendor with 12 years' experience at the market. The accumulated waste, combined with blocked drains and broken manholes, worsens during the rainy season, turning lanes into slushy, foul-smelling passages. Shoppers say the conditions are deterring regular footfall. "It's impossible to walk inside the market. Open drains and sharp edges make it unsafe," said Meghna, a resident who used to frequent the market.

## 'Implement suggestion from PM Modi...': Punjab schools directed to sensitise parents on early signs of drug abuse



### Ludhiana. (Agency)

To implement suggestion from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Punjab schools have been directed to sensitise parents on how to identify the early signs of drug abuse in children.

In a letter issued by Punjab SCERT director Kiran Sharma to district education officers (DEOs) and school principals across the state, they have been directed to sensitise parents on how they can observe behavioural changes in their children to identify drug abuse at an early stage.

The Punjab SCERT director's letter while reproducing a direction received from the union ministry of education, states that during the DGP/IGPs conference held from November 29 to December 1 in Bhubaneswar last year, the Prime Minister had suggested: "Use of Parent-Teacher meetings to sensitise parents, including through informative videos, to identify early warning signs and behavioural changes which could be sign of narcotic usage. Sensitisation of people on the issue of narcotics through religious leaders and social activists to be ensured."

Directing the schools to implement this suggestion given by the Prime Minister, the letter to Punjab DEOs and principals states: "Keeping in view the suggestion given by the PM, teachers should take help of local enforcement agencies, screen documentaries and organize street plays and take help of experts to sensitise students and their parents on signs of drug abuse so that young lives could be saved."

## Telangana plans to implement focused welfare schemes for the underprivileged

### HYDERABAD.(Agency)

Equipped with data from the Socio, Economic, Educational, Employment, Political and Caste Survey, the Telangana government is now planning to implement focused welfare schemes, particularly for communities that have largely remained underprivileged.

Speaking to, sources revealed that caste-wise data on state government employees is also being collected to identify which communities have been underrepresented in government jobs. In March this year, the state government constituted an expert committee to conduct a detailed analysis of the data collected from the recently concluded caste survey with an objective of formulating inclusive and evidence-based policies for the welfare of all communities in the state.

The government also plans to ease the work of those practising various caste-based occupations like dhobi, carpentry and pottery by providing latest technology-enabled machinery.

Recently, the Telangana government announced wage incentives for handloom weavers under the Telangana Nethannaku Bharosa (assurance to weavers) scheme. A budget of Rs 48 crore was released for the initiative. Sources revealed that more such schemes are in the pipeline. The Telangana government passed two legislations — the Telangana Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Reservation of Seats in Educational Institutions and of

Appointments or Posts in Services under the State) Bill, 2025 and the Telangana Backward Classes (Reservation of Seats in Rural and Urban Local Bodies) Bill, 2025 — in the Assembly on March 17, 2025.

As these two Bills remain under scrutiny by the Union Home Ministry, the state



government has sent The Telangana Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Ordinance to Governor Jishnu Dev Varma. This ordinance aims to facilitate the enhancement of 42% reservations for BCs in local body elections. It is learnt that the Governor has sought the opinion of the Attorney General of India on the proposed Bill. Meanwhile, the Cabinet meeting, scheduled for Friday, was postponed as the Governor's nod for the Telangana Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Ordinance is still awaited. It appears that the government is firm on issuing 42% reservations to BCs in the local body elections, based on the caste survey data.

## Language row: Student thrashed by classmates with hockey stick over Marathi wedding invitation on WhatsApp group; FIR filed against 4

**Tensions flared in Navi Mumbai after a student, Suraj Pawar, was allegedly assaulted by classmates for sending a Marathi wedding invitation and requesting replies in the same language. The incident, involving a hockey stick attack, led to a police complaint and political intervention by MNS leader Gajanan Kale.**

### Mumbai. (Agency)

The ongoing language row in the state triggered tension in Vashi on Tuesday, when four students allegedly assaulted their 20-year-old classmate with a hockey stick outside ICLES' Motilal Jhunjhunwala College for sending a Marathi wedding invite on their WhatsApp group and insisting that they reply in the same language. Vashi police registered an FIR based on a complaint filed by the injured student, Suraj Pawar, against Faizan Naik and 3 others.

Pawar, a BSc IT student, said as there was a wedding in the family, he sent an invitation on the WhatsApp group. When Naik replied in Hindi, Pawar asked him why he had not replied in Marathi. The jibes and digs on the chat group



over using Marathi and Hindi soon escalated into an argument. On Tuesday morning, Naik and others allegedly thrashed Pawar and hit him with a hockey stick on the head outside the college building.

The incident spiraled into a political controversy with MNS leader Gajanan Kale arriving at Vashi police station after the FIR was lodged. Kale told TOI: "A minor issue of a wedding invite written in Marathi has caused a serious fight among the college students. This should not have happened. I feel that politicians like BJP MP Nishikant Dubey and Samajwadi Party's Abu Azmi are influencing youngsters, leading to such fights."

Activists pointed out that the recent viral videos of shopkeepers, security guards, and bankers being slapped by MNS workers for not speaking in Marathi have also caused "tension in society". "Politics over the use of any regional language must never stoop so low that the people indulge in violence. All languages in India are equally important," said an activist.

## Killer on the wheels: SUV driver fatally mows down 2, injures 3 in G'nagar

### Ahmedabad.(Agency)

An SUV driver, suspected to be under the influence, mowed into pedestrians and two-wheeler riders on Friday morning, killing two on the spot and grievously injuring three. The incident occurred at around 10am on the busy City Pulse service road near Randesan in Gandhinagar. Kudasan resident Hitesh Patel, aged around 40 years, was allegedly behind the wheel. After the out-of-control vehicle came to a halt upon hitting a manhole lid, a crowd pulled out Patel and manhandled him before cops arrived at the scene. Eyewitnesses described the accident as a "trail of destruction" while police sources said Patel had been involved in a fatal crash in 2012, too.

Hansa Rohitkumar Vaghela (56) and Nitin Vasa (63), both from Gandhinagar, were killed instantly, police said. Among the injured were Kamini Oza (65), who was admitted to Gandhinagar Civil Hospital, her

husband Vipin Oza (75) and a biker named Mayur Joshi (34), both admitted to SMVS Swaminarayan Hospital in the state capital.

Patel was allegedly speeding from Bhajipura towards City Pulse when the mayhem started. Footage from Shukan Sky building on the stretch shows his SUV speeding at over 100kmph, hitting a person and dragging the body a few metres before colliding with a two-wheeler, police said, adding that preliminary investigation points to Patel being under the influence of either alcohol or drugs at the time of the crash.

Gandhinagar superintendent of police, SP Ravi Teja Vasamshetty, said Patel was taken into custody and his blood samples sent for alcohol and drug testing. Infocity police have registered a case of causing death by negligence and culpable homicide not amounting to murder, under IPC sections related to reckless driving, endangering.

A 15-year-old Class 10 student of Som Lalit School in Navrangpura, who jumped from the fourth floor of the school building on Thursday, succumbed to her injuries late at night while undergoing treatment. The incident, captured in school CCTV footage, showed the girl walking into the lobby, twirling a keychain, and suddenly leaping over the railing.

According to police, the girl jumped at 12.27pm from the school's fourth-floor balcony. Her friend reportedly tried to stop her but failed. She sustained severe injuries to her head, hand, and leg and was rushed to a private

hospital in Navrangpura, where she was admitted to the ICU. There was a plan to shift her to another hospital later, but she died around 10pm.

Inspector A A Desai of Navrangpura police said that a



case of accidental death has been registered and further investigation is underway. The deceased girl lived in Nararpura with her parents and siblings. Her father runs an optician's shop on Gandhi Road. Police said the family had gone to their native place in Rajasthan and would be questioned after their return.

Preliminary information revealed that the girl had returned to school just 15 days ago after a month-long medical leave. Her parents had submitted a medical certificate before she rejoined. School principal Leena Arora informed police that the girl appeared disturbed that morning and started shouting in class, after which a teacher calmed her down. The city DEO has sought a detailed report from the school. An FSL team reached the school soon after the incident for an on-site forensic examination. A postmortem was conducted and the report is awaited.

## Soldier's death by fellow soldier qualifies as 'battle casualty', rules Punjab and Haryana High Court

### Chandigarh.(Agency)

The Punjab and Haryana High Court has upheld an Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT) order granting liberalised family pension to Rukmani Devi, the mother of a soldier who died over three decades ago during Operation Rakshak in Jammu and Kashmir. The court dismissed a writ petition by the Union of India challenging the AFT's February 22, 2022, ruling, holding that the soldier's death from friendly fire during an operational deployment qualifies as a "battle casualty" under the Ministry of Defence's guidelines.

Delivering the order on July 16, a division bench of Justice Anupinder Singh Grewal and Justice Deepak Manchanda said: "It is manifest that a soldier deployed in a military operation, being shot by a fellow soldier, cannot be in any manner denied the benefits, which would be applicable to those soldiers who are killed in action." The case arose from the death of Rukmani Devi's son, an Indian Army jawan, who was on duty with Operation Rakshak in Jammu and Kashmir when he suffered a fatal gunshot injury on

October 21, 1991, fired by another soldier. Army Air Defence Records, through Part-II Order No. 01/BC/05/002 dated August 27, 1992, had categorised his death as a "battle casualty." However, the claim for liberalised family pension remained unresolved for decades.

In 2018, Rukmani Devi approached the AFT seeking relief. The tribunal directed the government to consider her claim, relying on its own 2017 decision in the case of Harvinder Kaur vs Union of India, where a similar claim was allowed for a widow whose husband had died during Operation Parakram. The Union government appealed, arguing that the cases were not comparable, as Harvinder Kaur's husband had died while the operation was ongoing, whereas Devi's son was killed in 1991.

The Centre also objected to the long delay of over 25 years in approaching the tribunal. However, the High Court rejected both arguments. Citing instructions issued by the Ministry of Defence in January 2001, the bench said the benefit of liberalised family pension extends to all armed forces



denying the arrears of pension..." the Supreme Court had ruled, and the High Court applied the principle to Devi's case. The bench pointed out that the AFT's 2017 ruling in Harvinder Kaur's case has attained finality, strengthening the claim of similarly placed families. The High Court concluded: "We do not find any illegality in the impugned order passed by the Tribunal. The petition stands dismissed accordingly." With the dismissal of the Union government's petition, the AFT's order stands, ensuring that Rukmani Devi receives the liberalised family pension due to her son's death in service.

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**Shiv Sena demands a complete stop to the dual power system and the rule of the Lieutenant Governor**

Jammu: With the tenure of the Lieutenant Governor ending on August 6, the post should be abolished and a complete stop should be put on the dual power system. A retired army or police officer should be appointed as the Governor and the state status should be restored with special privileges under Section 371, stated by Manish Sahni, President, Shiv Sena (UBT) Jammu and Kashmir unit. In a press conference held today at the party's state central office, state chief Manish Sahni said that the experiment of making Jammu and Kashmir a Union Territory with the abrogation of Section 370 in August 2019 has proved to be a complete failure. Which will be seen as a period of violation of the rights of the sons of the soil and conspiracies to destroy the local cultural identity. Nefarious and illegal activities like terrorism, target killing, drug trafficking, crime, and women trafficking are continuing as usual. Drug trafficking along with terrorism is at its peak in Jammu and Kashmir. According to the data of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), more than 1.12 lakh kilograms of drugs have been seized in Jammu and Kashmir between 2018 and 2022. At the same time, after the police department came under the Union Home Ministry and the increase in the jurisdiction of the Lieutenant Governor, the era of accountability is almost over. The dream of rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandits is still incomplete. Despite 11 months of formation of the elected government, four Rajya Sabha seats from Jammu and Kashmir are lying vacant. At the same time, by-elections are not being announced on the assembly seats of Budgam, Nagrota. Sahni has demanded from the Modi government at the Center to appoint a retired senior army or police officer (with experience of fighting terrorism) as the Governor, not a politician and to restore the state status with special privileges under Section 371. On this occasion Meenakshi Chhibber (President Mehila wing), Raj Singh (President Kamgar) were present.

**Lion Kang distributed saplings and gave a message of environmental protection**

Phagwara: Under the guidelines of Lions International 321-D District Governor Lion V.M. Goyal MJF, District Chairman (Peace Poster) Lion Gurdeep Singh Kang MJF today distributed saplings to environmentalists while giving a message of environmental protection. During this, ADC cum Corporation Commissioner Dr. Akshita Gupta and Mayor Rampal Uppal made a special visit to Lion Kang's office Kang Enterprises located in Central Town. They appreciated the efforts of Lion Gurdeep Singh Kang and said that planting saplings is very important for environmental protection. ADC Dr. Gupta appealed that the saplings to be planted should be well taken care of till they become trees. During this, the IEC of the corporation Expert Pooja said that the Municipal Corporation Phagwara is running a campaign called 'Adopt cleanliness, drive away disease' till July 31. She appealed to all the city residents to cooperate in this campaign. During this, Mayor Rampal Uppal, who was present in the highest position, said that Lion Kang always makes inspiring efforts towards social service and environmental protection, which is very commendable. Lion Gurdeep Singh Kang thanked all the dignitaries for coming and said that environmental protection is the primary duty of all of us because life on earth is safe only as long as natural resources are available in sufficient quantity. In which water, air and plants are of special importance. She said that just as humans need to make serious efforts to stop water misuse and air pollution, similarly planting more and more trees is also the need of the hour. If there are no trees, not only humans but every living being that breathes on earth will disappear. She promised to continue such efforts in the future as well.

**Haryana Government approves new Sub Health Centre at Pingaltu Village in Palwal**

Chandigarh: In a major step towards improving rural healthcare services, the Haryana Government has approved a new Sub Health Centre (SHC) at Pingaltu village in Palwal district. The initiative is aimed at providing quality primary healthcare services to the rural population and reducing the burden on district-level hospitals. Health Minister Arati Singh Rao informed that Chief Minister Sh. Nayab Singh Saini has granted approval for the construction and opening of Sub Health Centre at Pingaltu village in Palwal district. "The health and well-being of every citizen is a top priority for the Haryana Government. The opening of the Sub Health Centre in Pingaltu

is a testament to our commitment to strengthen grassroots healthcare infrastructure. This will particularly benefit women, children and elderly residents who will now have easier access to essential health services near their homes," she said. "Under Chief Minister Sh. Nayab Singh Saini's leadership, we are witnessing a rapid transformation in public health services, with a special focus on rural and under-served regions. The government is not just building infrastructure but bringing essential services right to people's doorsteps. The centre in Pingaltu will serve as a model for primary healthcare delivery in remote areas," the Health Minister added. Notably,

**"Taranjit Singh Sandhu's New Appointment Marks a New Era in India-US Relations**

Amritsar: Punjab BJP spokesperson Prof. Sarchand Singh Khiala has welcomed the U.S. decision to designate "The Resistance Front (TRF)," a shadow outfit of Lashkar-e-Taiba and responsible for the Pahalgam attack, as a global terrorist organization. He said this move is a strong international endorsement of India's national security approach and its firm stand on cross-border terrorism, as recognized at the United Nations and on global platforms. Prof. Khiala stated that this development is a major success under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and reflects the strategic foresight of Home Minister Amit Shah and External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar, who have consistently exposed Pakistan and its terror nexus before the international community. The U.S. acknowledgment marks a historic shift in India's political and strategic narrative. He emphasized that this matter is not limited to terrorism alone, but is deeply connected to India's political sovereignty, democratic values, and the safety of its citizens. He further said that the decisive American move puts Pakistan in the global dock. It is now evident that even former U.S. President Donald Trump, who hosted Pakistan Army Chief Asim Munir, has realized that double standards on terrorism are a dangerous path. He added that Pakistan's false narratives and ISI-backed terrorist groups have now come under the radar of the Western world. Prof. Khiala said TRF is not only responsible for the massacre of innocent civilians in Pahalgam but also for multiple attacks on Indian security forces. It was a key tool in Pakistan's larger conspiracy to disrupt the peace in Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370. Commenting on the success of 'Operation Sandhoo,' Prof. Khiala said, "Pakistan's strategy of funding, arming, and sheltering terrorists had become a threat to global peace. But the New India of the Modi era has shattered those intentions and made it clear that 'New India does not remain silent - it strikes back inside enemy territory and shows it to the world.'

Amritsar: Punjab BJP spokesperson Prof. Sarchand Singh Khiala stated that the appointment of Shri Taranjit Singh Sandhu, former Indian Ambassador to the United States, as Advisor to the Board of the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) and Chairman of its Geopolitical Institute is not only a testament to his diplomatic excellence and visionary leadership, but also signals the beginning of a new era that will elevate India-US relations to greater heights. Prof. Sarchand Singh, along with Dr. Ranbir Singh, met Shri Taranjit Singh Sandhu in the presence of Shri Parminder Singh Sandhu and congratulated him on his new responsibility. They said this achievement is a matter of great pride for Amritsar and the Punjab community at large. On the occasion, they held a thoughtful discussion on local political, social, and foreign affairs, sharing valuable insights about Punjabis in India and abroad, and also sought guidance from Mr. Sandhu. In an official statement, Prof. Sarchand Singh said that Shri Sandhu had served as one of the most trusted diplomats of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, and External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar. He earned a reputation as one of the most effective and sensitive envoys deployed by New Delhi on the strategic foreign policy front. Shri Sandhu served four diplomatic tenures in the United States, including three assignments in Washington D.C., where he significantly strengthened India-US relations. His foresight, seriousness, and nationalist outlook have helped transform Indo-US relations from strategic cooperation to a reliable and global partnership. He further stated that it was due to Shri Sandhu's hard work and crucial role that Prime Minister Modi's US visits and the historic India visits of American Presidents Joe Biden and Donald Trump have set new milestones in global diplomacy. Today, the India-US strategic partnership not only spans trade, solar energy, and advanced technologies but also plays a central role in space, education, and defence. With

strategic foresight, this partnership is becoming a model of global peace, development, and shared values. Prof. Khiala emphasized that in his new role as Chairman of the Geopolitical Institute and Advisor to USISPF, Shri Sandhu will provide strategic direction on initiatives like the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), the Indo-Pacific Quad, and the I2U2 grouping (India, Israel, USA, UAE). "I am confident that in this new role, Mr. Sandhu will further strengthen the vital relationship between India and the United States," he added. He noted that the USISPF has offices in Washington D.C. and New Delhi, and its members include top global corporations with a combined market capitalization exceeding \$10 trillion and over 6 million employees. The Forum has long acted as a bridge fostering friendly ties between the public and private sectors of India and the United States.

**Punjab State Food Commission Member Vijay Dutt Conducts Surprise Inspection in Amritsar District**

Amritsar: Shri Vijay Dutt, Member of the Punjab State Food Commission, conducted surprise inspections today at various government schools and Anganwadi centres located in the Guntala area and along Fatehgarh Churian Road in Amritsar district. The inspection aimed to evaluate the on-ground implementation of welfare schemes under the National Food Security Act (NFS). During the inspection, it was found that the Mid-Day Meal cooking staff were not adhering to the prescribed dress code — including head caps, aprons, and gloves — nor were they maintaining basic hygiene standards. Shri Dutt strongly reprimanded the school administrations and directed them to ensure strict compliance with all norms immediately. He emphasized that staff involved in meal preparation must strictly follow food safety and hygiene protocols, and their health check-ups must be conducted regularly. He also stressed that transparency and cleanliness should be maintained in the entire cooking and serving process. Shri Dutt instructed the schools to properly maintain food testing registers, provide clean and nutritious meals, and ensure regular health checks. The inspection aimed to evaluate the on-ground implementation of welfare schemes under the National Food Security Act (NFS). During the inspection, it was found that the Mid-Day Meal cooking staff were not adhering to the prescribed dress code — including head caps, aprons, and gloves — nor were they maintaining basic hygiene standards. Shri Dutt strongly reprimanded the school administrations and directed them to ensure strict compliance with all norms immediately. He emphasized that staff involved in meal preparation must strictly follow

**AI University a defining step toward building modern India: CM Yogi**

**The Sikh Times**

Lucknow, July 26: Unnao got a new identity on Saturday as Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath inaugurated India's first private AI-augmented multidisciplinary university, calling it a milestone in building a modern India. Blending education, technology, and cultural heritage, the new institution is set to become a hub for innovation and a key pillar of the National Education Policy. The Chief Minister highlighted the state government's push for digital and technical empowerment of youth, growing public-private investment, and key reforms fostering education-industry collaboration. He said the new university aligns with India's AI mission and initiatives like Startup India, and will play a vital role in elevating Uttar Pradesh's presence on national and global platforms. In his address, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath described Unnao as a land steeped in literature, culture, and history — blessed by the Ganga and home to icons of India's freedom struggle and literary renaissance. He recalled the legacy of figures like Raja

Rao Ram Baksh Singh and poets such as Pt. Pratap Narayan Mishra, Nirala, and Hasrat Mohani. Now, the district is poised for a technological leap with the establishment of the

tidisciplinary spirit to foster research, innovation, and holistic growth. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that one of the biggest challenges facing educational institutions has been their

platforms for career guidance, life building, and industry-oriented skill development. Campuses, he said, should not only impart education but also serve as gateways to opportunity, connecting students with relevant initiatives and preparing them for the modern workforce. He said that nearly 60 lakh youth in Uttar Pradesh have been provided tablets and smartphones to promote digital empowerment, noting that a spirit of healthy competition is now visible across educational institutions, with a strong focus on improving academic standards. Universities are increasingly committed to enhancing their NAAC assessments and NIRF rankings. As a result, six state universities have earned A++ grades, two have received A+ grades, and notable progress has been made in national rankings. The Chief Minister highlighted the historic strides made in higher education in Uttar Pradesh in recent years. Addressing past disparities, he said the government revised land norms to allow private universities on 50 acres in rural areas and 20 acres in urban

areas. This reform has led to the establishment of 23 new private universities in the last eight years, bringing the total to 47. He added that the state has also ensured universities in commissioners that previously lacked them, opening six new state universities. UP now hosts the country's first Ayush University, its first state medical university, and is constructing its first sports university in Meerut, along with the Mahatma Buddha Agricultural University in Kushinagar. The Chief Minister announced that Unnao district alone is witnessing the rollout of investment projects worth Rs 22,000 crore. Major contributors include Aqua Bridge Group (Rs 4,000 crore), Can Pack India Limited (Rs 1,300 crore), UV Beverage India Pvt. Ltd. (Rs 2,200 crore), and Om Logistics Ltd. (Rs 150 crore). He added that the state government is simultaneously strengthening infrastructure, with the capacity of the Police Training College—named after Shaheed Gulab Singh Lodhi—being doubled, and Rs 235 crore invested in the State Fire Training Centre.



**In a meeting regarding the maintenance of main city roads, the Municipal Commissioner gave strict instructions to the officials to work in a time-bound manner.**

Amritsar: Today, on 15th July 2025, a meeting was held by Commissioner Gulpreet Singh Aulakh with Municipal Corporation officials regarding the maintenance of main roads in the city. The performance related to the upkeep of the city's major roads was discussed during the meeting. It was informed that 649 challans have been issued and

notices served for garbage/debris lying in vacant plots around the main roads. The department is removing this waste and debris at its own level, and bills will soon be issued to the plot owners for the recovery of the related expenses. The meeting also addressed illegal encroachments on roads, sewer desilting, and patching. The Commissioner

instructed officials to submit a performance report within a week. Present in the meeting were Joint Commissioner Jai Inder Singh, Supervising Engineer Sandeep Singh, Executive Engineers Bhalinder Singh, Manjeet Singh, S.P. Singh, Swaraj Inder Singh, Health Officers Dr. Kiran, Dr. Yogesh Arora, Dr. Rama, Estate Officer Dharminder

Jeet Singh, and officials from the PWD department. Commissioner Gulpreet Singh Aulakh stated that he is personally monitoring the ongoing work for the maintenance of city roads. Municipal officials have been assigned duties for different roads, and weekly meetings are held to review progress. He strictly instructed officials to personally inspect each road and ensure that where civil work or drainage repair is needed—or where potholes exist—it should be repaired promptly. A week's time has been given to clear all debris heaps from the city's main roads. Furthermore, the Estate Officer has been directed to run an anti-encroachment drive with the help of traffic police to make the main roads encroachment-free within a week. For roads under the PWD department, instructions have been given to PWD officials for their development. They have assured that work will commence once approvals are granted. Regarding sewer desilting being carried out in various parts of the city using super sucker machines, the Joint Commissioner has been assigned to oversee and ensure this work is completed at the earliest

**U.S. Designation of TRF as Global Terrorist Group Validates India's Strategic Stand**

Amritsar, July 26: Punjab BJP Spokesperson Prof. Sarchand Singh Khiala has welcomed the U.S. decision to designate "The Resistance Front (TRF)," a shadow outfit of Lashkar-e-Taiba and responsible for the Pahalgam attack, as a global terrorist organization. He said this move is a strong international endorsement of India's national security approach and its firm stand on cross-border terrorism, as recognized at the United Nations and on global platforms. Prof. Khiala stated that this development is a major success under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and reflects the strategic foresight of Home Minister Amit Shah and External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar, who have consistently exposed Pakistan and its terror nexus before the international community. The U.S. acknowledgment marks a historic shift in India's political and strategic narrative. He emphasized that this matter is not limited to terrorism alone, but is deeply connected to India's political sovereignty, democratic values, and the safety of its citizens. He further said that the decisive American move puts Pakistan in the global dock. It is now evident that even former U.S. President Donald Trump, who hosted Pakistan Army Chief Asim Munir, has realized that double standards on terrorism are a dangerous path. He added that Pakistan's false narratives and ISI-backed terrorist groups have now come under the radar of the Western world. Prof. Khiala said TRF is not only responsible for the massacre of innocent civilians in Pahalgam but also for multiple attacks on Indian security forces. It was a key tool in Pakistan's larger conspiracy to disrupt the peace in Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370. Commenting on the success of 'Operation Sandhoo,' Prof. Khiala said, "Pakistan's strategy of funding, arming, and sheltering terrorists had become a threat to global peace. But the New India of the Modi era has shattered those intentions and made it clear that 'New India does not remain silent - it strikes back inside enemy territory and shows it to the world.'

**Haryana Chief Secretary Calls for Swift Action on 'Mediation For the Nation' Campaign to Clear Legal Backlog**

Chandigarh: Haryana Chief Secretary Sh. Anurag Rastogi has issued a directive to all Administrative Secretaries in the state, urging them to take immediate and proactive steps in support of the nationwide 'Mediation For the Nation' campaign. This 90-day drive, running from July to September 2025, has been launched jointly by the National Legal Services Authority (NLSA) and the Supreme Court's Mediation and Conciliation Project Committee (MCPC). The objective of the campaign is to reduce the pendency of cases in

Taluka Courts, District Courts, and High Courts across the country through timely and effective mediation. As part of this initiative, a high-level meeting was convened recently by the Mediation and Conciliation Committee of the Punjab & Haryana High Court. The meeting was attended by the Chief Secretaries of Haryana and Punjab, the Home Secretary of UT Chandigarh, the Advocates General of both states, and the Standing Counsel of UT Chandigarh. Several key decisions were taken during the meeting to streamline the identification and referral of appropriate cases for mediation. The Director of the Mediation and Conciliation Centre of the Punjab & Haryana High Court will provide concerned departments with a list of pending cases, particularly those related to land acquisition and service matters. Departments whose matters are pending before the High Court have been instructed to review this list and identify cases with a high potential for resolution through mediation. Additionally, matters involving the Haryana

Shehri Vikas Pradhikaran (HSPV) and the Haryana State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation (HSIDC), especially under the HUID category, will also be considered for mediation. All departments have been directed to study the Haryana Government's Litigation Policy and consult with the Advocate General to identify cases that can be effectively resolved through alternative dispute resolution. Departments have been instructed to submit the final vetted list of mediation-worthy cases to the Director, Mediation and Conciliation Centre by July 25, 2025. These lists must also be shared with the Chief Secretary's Office and the Administration of Justice Department for further necessary action. To ensure timely coordination and compliance, the Additional Chief Secretary of the Administration of Justice Department has been assigned the responsibility to oversee departmental progress. The Director of the Mediation and Conciliation Centre has also been requested to initiate all required follow-up actions.

Amritsar: Shri Vijay Dutt, Member of the Punjab State Food Commission, conducted surprise inspections today at various government schools and Anganwadi centres located in the Guntala area and along Fatehgarh Churian Road in Amritsar district. The inspection aimed to evaluate the on-ground implementation of welfare schemes under the National Food Security Act (NFS). During the inspection, it was found that the Mid-Day Meal cooking staff were not adhering to the prescribed dress code — including head caps, aprons, and gloves — nor were they maintaining basic hygiene standards. Shri Dutt strongly reprimanded the school administrations and directed them to ensure strict compliance with all norms immediately. He emphasized that staff involved in meal preparation must strictly follow food safety and hygiene protocols, and their health check-ups must be conducted regularly. He also stressed that transparency and cleanliness should be maintained in the entire cooking and serving process. Shri Dutt instructed the schools to properly maintain food testing registers, provide clean and nutritious meals, and ensure regular health checks. The inspection aimed to evaluate the on-ground implementation of welfare schemes under the National Food Security Act (NFS). During the inspection, it was found that the Mid-Day Meal cooking staff were not adhering to the prescribed dress code — including head caps, aprons, and gloves — nor were they maintaining basic hygiene standards. Shri Dutt strongly reprimanded the school administrations and directed them to ensure strict compliance with all norms immediately. He emphasized that staff involved in meal preparation must strictly follow

## NEWS BOX

## US condemns French inquiry into social media platform X

WASHINGTON. (Agency)

US officials issued a harsh condemnation Friday of France's criminal investigation into the social network X, owned by billionaire Elon Musk, on suspicion of foreign interference. "As part of a criminal investigation, an activist French prosecutor is requesting information on X's proprietary algorithm and has classified X as an 'organized crime group,'" the US State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor wrote on their X account. "Democratic governments should allow all voices to be heard, not silence speech they dislike. The United States will defend the free speech of all Americans against acts of foreign censorship." Paris cybercrime prosecutors called for the police probe July 11 to investigate suspected crimes -- including manipulating and extracting data from automated systems "as part of a criminal gang." The social media company last week denied the allegations, calling them "politically motivated." X also said it had refused to comply with the prosecutor's request to access its recommendation algorithm and real-time data. The investigation follows two January complaints that alleged the X algorithm had been used for foreign interference in French politics. One of the complaints came from Eric Bothorel, an MP from President Emmanuel Macron's centrist party, who complained of "reduced diversity of voices and options" and Musk's "personal interventions" in the platform's management since he took it over. X said it "categorically denies" all allegations and that the probe "is distorting French law in order to serve a political agenda and, ultimately, restrict free speech." Tesla and SpaceX chief Musk has raised hackles with his forays into European politics, including vocal backing for the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party ahead of February legislative elections. "Democracy is too fragile to let digital platform owners tell us what to think, who to vote for or even who to hate," Bothorel said after the investigation was announced.

## Tunisians protest against President Kais Saied's authoritarian rule on July 25 anniversary

TUNIS. (Agency)

Tunisians took to the streets Friday to protest President Kais Saied, marking four years since he made moves to consolidate his one-man rule in a country once known as the birthplace of the Arab Spring pro-democracy uprisings. On July 25, 2021, Saied suspended parliament, dismissed his prime minister and invoked a state of emergency to begin ruling by decree. Though some cheered his efforts, critics called the moves a coup and said the events marked the beginning of Tunisia's descent toward authoritarianism. Crowds on Friday marched through the capital chanting "no fear, no terror, power to the people," carrying portraits of political prisoners and a cage that organizers said represented the state of political life in Tunisia. The country's most prominent opposition figures are behind bars, including Rachid Ghannouchi, the head of the Islamist Ennahda party, and Abir Moussi, leader of the right-wing Free Destourian Party. Women led much of the chanting, demanding the release of imprisoned opposition figures from across the political spectrum, including Moussi and attorney Sonia Dahmani. The two are among those who have been imprisoned since Saied's power grab as Tunisia's once-vibrant civil society has gradually been suppressed. Activists, journalists, dissidents and opposition figures have faced jail time, including many who have been charged with undermining state security.

July 25 also marks the anniversary of Tunisia's declaration as a republic in 1957. It later became the rallying cry of the pro-Saied "July 25 Movement," which pushed for a crackdown on the country's largely unpopular political class.

## Cambodia Calls For Ceasefire With Thailand After Deadly Clashes

Washington. (Agency)

Cambodia wants an "immediate ceasefire" with Thailand, the country's envoy to the United Nations said Friday, after the neighbors traded deadly strikes for a second day, with Bangkok also signaling an openness to talks. A long-running border dispute erupted into intense fighting with jets, artillery, tanks and ground troops on Thursday, prompting the UN Security Council to hold an emergency meeting on the crisis Friday. "Cambodia asked for an immediate ceasefire -- unconditionally -- and we also call for the peaceful solution of the dispute," said Phnom Penh's UN ambassador Chhea Keo following a closed meeting of the Council attended by Cambodia and Thailand. A steady thump of artillery strikes could be heard from the Cambodian side of the border Friday, where the province of Oddar Meancheay reported one civilian -- a 70-year-old man -- had been killed and five more wounded. More than 138,000 people have been evacuated from Thailand's border regions, its health ministry said, reporting 15 fatalities -- 14 civilians and a soldier -- with a further 46 wounded, including 15 troops. Fighting resumed in three areas around 4 am on Friday (2100 GMT Thursday), the Thai army said, with Cambodian forces firing heavy weapons, field artillery, and BM-21 rocket systems, and Thai troops responding "with appropriate supporting fire." Thai Foreign Ministry Spokesman Nikorndej Balankura told AFP that fighting had begun to ease off by Friday afternoon, however, adding that Bangkok was open to talks, possibly aided by Malaysia. We are ready, if Cambodia would like to settle this matter via diplomatic channels, bilaterally, or even through Malaysia, we are ready to do that. But so far we have not had any response," Nikorndej told AFP, speaking before the UN meeting had been held.

## Trump's trip to Scotland as his new golf course opens blurs politics and family's business

**Using a presidential overseas trip to help show off Trump-brand golf destinations demonstrates how the president has become increasingly comfortable intermingling his governing pursuits with promoting his family's business interests.**

PEDINBURGH. (Agency)

Lashed by cold winds and overlooking choppy, steel-gray North Sea waters, the breathtaking sand dunes of Scotland's northeastern coast rank among Donald Trump's favorite spots on earth.

"At some point, maybe in my very old age, I'll go there and do the most beautiful thing you've ever seen," Trump said in 2023, during his New York civil fraud trial, talking about his plans for future developments on his property in Balmedie,

Aberdeenshire. At 79 and back in the White House, Trump is making at least part of that pledge a reality, landing in Scotland on Friday as his family's business prepares for the Aug. 13 opening of a new golf course bearing his name. Trump will be in Scotland until Tuesday, and plans to talk trade with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. The Aberdeen area is already home to another of his courses, Trump International Scotland, and the Republican president is also visiting a Trump course near Turnberry, around 200 miles (320 kilometers) away on Scotland's southwest coast. Trump said upon arrival on Friday evening that his son is "gonna cut a ribbon" for the new course during his trip. Eric Trump also went with his father to break ground on the project back in 2023. Using a presidential overseas trip -- with its sprawling entourage of advisers, White House and support staffers, Secret Service agents and reporters -- to help show off Trump-brand golf destinations demonstrates how the president has become increasingly comfortable intermingling his governing pursuits with promoting his family's business interests.



The White House has brushed off questions about potential conflicts of interest, arguing that Trump's business success before he entered politics was a key to his appeal with voters. White House spokesperson Taylor Rogers called the Scotland swing a "working trip." But she added Trump "has built the best and most beautiful world-class golf courses anywhere in the world, which is why they continue to be used for prestigious tournaments and by the most elite players in the sport." Artificial Intelligence uses Artificial Intelligence uses Trump family's new golf course has tee times for sale. Trump went to Scotland to play his Turnberry course during his first term in 2018 while en route to a meeting in Finland

with Russian President Vladimir Putin. But this trip comes as the new golf course is already actively selling tee times. "We're at a point where the Trump administration is so intertwined with the Trump business that he doesn't seem to see much of a difference," said Jordan Libowitz, vice president for the ethics watchdog organization Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington. "It's as if the White House were almost an arm of the Trump Organization." During his first term, the Trump Organization signed an ethics pact barring deals with foreign companies. An ethics framework for Trump's second term allows them. Trump's assets are in a trust run by his children, who are also handling day-to-day operations of the Trump Organization while he's in the White House. The company has inked many recent, lucrative foreign agreements involving golf courses, including plans to build luxury developments in Qatar and Vietnam, even as the administration negotiates tariff rates for those countries and around the globe. Trump's first Aberdeen course sparked legal battles. Trump's existing Aberdeenshire course, meanwhile,

## Taiwan votes to decide whether to oust lawmakers from pro-China party in closely watched poll

TAIPEI. (Agency)

Taiwanese were voting Saturday to determine whether to oust about one-fifth of their lawmakers, all from the opposition Nationalist Party, in elections that could potentially reshape the power balance in the self-ruled island's legislature. The independence-leaning ruling Democratic Progressive Party won last year's presidential election, but the China-friendly Nationalists, also known as the KMT, and the smaller Taiwan People's Party have enough seats to form a majority bloc. Those who support removing the 24 lawmakers are angry that the KMT and its allies have blocked key legislation, especially the defense budget, and passed controversial changes that are seen as diminishing the power of the executive and favoring China, which considers the island its own territory. The opposition parties' actions sparked concerns among some Taiwanese about the island's democratic integrity and its ability to deter Chinese military threats, leading to the recall campaigns. The scale of the recall elections is unprecedented, with another seven KMT lawmakers facing similar votes on Aug. 23. But the KMT alleged the ruling party was resorting to political

retaliation after it lost the legislative majority, saying the recalls were undermining and challenging Taiwan's democratic system. The KMT holds 52 seats, while the ruling DPP holds 51 seats. For the DPP to secure a legislative majority, at least six KMT



lawmakers would need to be ousted, and the ruling party would need to win all by-elections, which would need to be held within three months following the announcement of results. For the recall to pass, more than a quarter of eligible voters in the electoral district must vote in favor of the recall, and the total number of supporters must exceed those against. If KMT loses its seats in the recall elections, the party can file new candidates for the by-elections and may be able to win back the seats. Outside a Taipei polling station, voters old and young were

waiting in line to cast their ballots. The poll will close at 4 pm local time, with results expected on Saturday night. The elections have intensified tensions between those backing the status quo and those favoring improved ties with Beijing. Critics accuse China-friendly politicians of compromising Taiwan and take issue with their meetings with mainland Chinese politicians. But these Taiwanese politicians claim their connections are vital for dialogue given Beijing's refusal to interact with the DPP. When asked about the recall election, China's Taiwan Affairs Office spokesperson Zhu Fenglian said in June that since the administration of Taiwan President Lai Ching-te came into power, it has sought to achieve "one-party dominance" and practiced "dictatorship" under the guise of "democracy," state broadcaster CCTV reported. She was quoted as saying that Lai's government has spared no effort in suppressing opposition parties and those who supported the development of cross-strait relations. Taiwan's mainland affairs council said on Wednesday that the Chinese authorities and state media had tried to blatantly interfere with the vote.

## Reverse migration: African Americans relocating to Kenya cite heritage and restoration

NAIROBI. (Agency)

Kenneth Harris spent most of his days in Atlanta yearning for a life in a place where his dark skin color is not a source of suspicion, but a mark of a shared heritage. His chance came two years ago when he bought a one-way ticket to Kenya. The 38-year-old retired veteran has found a community in the east African country's capital, where he now runs an Airbnb business. He loves admiring Nairobi's golden sunset from a rooftop terrace, and enjoys a luxurious lifestyle in a tastefully furnished apartment in an upmarket neighborhood. Harris is part of a growing wave of African Americans who are relocating to Kenya, citing the need to connect with their ancestors -- or "coming home," a phrase often used among the Black community.

Like dozens of other African Americans who have moved to Nairobi in recent years, Harris was attracted to Kenya's tropical climate and what he describes as the warmth and friendliness of the people he believes he shares a history and culture with.

In search of community and a better life

"I have always had that adventurous spirit, especially when I joined the military and got to go to different countries. So I am taking the opportunity to venture out to new places," he said. "That is what allowed me to make a home away from home and Kenya is my new home." Some friends have reached out to him to explore a "change from the US for their peace of mind," he said. Several other African Americans who have "come home" like him have set up thriving businesses in Nairobi that include travel agencies, restaurants and farms. Many African Americans who have sought a better life abroad or are considering it said President Donald Trump's administration -- with its crackdown on diversity programs -- isn't the main reason they want to move. Rather, most say they had been mulling a move for some time, and the current political environment in the US may be pushing them to act sooner than initially planned. "I can't say the administration is the reason why the people I know want to part ways from America. Some are planning to move for a better quality of living life," Harris said.

Austin Holleman, an American YouTuber who has lived in various countries for almost a decade, said he settled on Kenya nine months ago because people "look like me." It is not like going to Europe or going to some Latin American countries where there are not many Black people," he said. Holleman, who often films his daily life, said he felt that the social fabric in the US was "broken." In contrast, he said he felt socially accepted in Kenya. He cited an experience when his taxi driver's car stopped, and in five minutes they got help from a random stranger.

## Tens of thousands flee their homes as Thailand and Cambodia clash

SURIN. (Agency)

Tens of thousands of people sought refuge as border fighting between Thailand and Cambodia entered its third day Saturday, heightening fears of an extended conflict with the total death toll reaching 32. The U.N. Security Council held an emergency meeting behind closed doors late Friday in New York, while Malaysia, which chairs the 10-nation regional bloc that includes both countries, called for an end to hostilities and offered to mediate. The council did not issue a statement but a council diplomat said all 15 members called on the parties to de-escalate, show restraint and resolve the dispute peacefully. The council also urged the regional bloc, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations known as ASEAN, to help resolve the border fighting, the

diplomat said, speaking on condition of anonymity because the meeting was private. Cambodia's U.N. Ambassador Chhea Keo told reporters afterward that his country, which called for the emergency meeting, "asked for immediate ceasefires, unconditionally, and we also call for the peaceful solution to the dispute." He responded to accusations that Cambodia attacked Thailand asking how a small country with no air force could attack a much larger country with an army three times its size, stressing, "We do not do that." UN Security Council urges restraint by both sides. Keo said the Security Council called for both sides to exercise "maximum restraint and resort to diplomatic solution" which is what Cambodia is calling for as well. Asked what he expects next, the ambassador said: "Let's see how the

call can be heard by all the members there." Thailand's U.N. ambassador left the meeting without stopping to talk to reporters. The Thai Health Ministry on Friday said more than 58,000 have fled from villages to temporary shelters in four affected border provinces, while Cambodian authorities said more than 23,000 people have evacuated from areas near the border. The latest flare-up in a long-running border dispute between the two countries has killed at least 19 people in Thailand -- mostly civilians -- while Cambodia said Saturday that 12 people more have been killed on its side, bringing its death toll to 13. Thailand's acting prime minister, Phumtham Wechayachai, said Friday that Cambodia may be guilty of war crimes due to the deaths of civilians and damage caused to a hospital.

## Suspect arrested after University of New Mexico dorm shooting leaves 1 dead

ALBUQUERQUE. (Agency)

One person is dead and another wounded following a shooting early Friday at a University of New Mexico dormitory that prompted the evacuation of hundreds of students and a campuswide search for the suspect, who has since been taken into custody. University officials lifted a shelter in place order late Friday afternoon, saying there was still an active investigation and that the main campus in Albuquerque would remain closed. They said students were allowed to eat at the dining hall and return to their dorms but otherwise should avoid the crime scene. Mayor Tim Keller announced the arrest Friday evening, saying "we are deeply grateful that the offender is now in custody." The mayor did not release any information about the suspect or where and when the arrest took place. For much of the day, authorities had the area around the student housing complex

cordoned off with yellow tape as police vehicles blocked roadways and investigators gathered. The two people shot were inside a dorm building where they had been visiting a student, but they were not students themselves, said Lt. Tim Delgado with the University of New Mexico Police Department. Authorities have yet to release any other details about who was shot. Police had evacuated parts of the campus earlier in the day. "We had a student orientation going so there were like 400 kids in dorms, so we wanted to make sure they were safe," Delgado said.

Arificial Intelligence uses Arificial Intelligence uses Officials issued an initial alert just before 3:30 a.m. that a shooting had taken place. Campus police arrived at the Casas del Rio housing center to find two people with gunshot wounds -- one dead and the other with non-life-threatening injuries. Another alert asking



people to shelter in place was sent out just after 6 a.m. Mikey Beck, who was staying in student housing this week as part of new student orientation, said he heard gunshots overnight and saw what appeared to be an injured person hiding in some bushes. Two other people jumped out of a dorm window and ran, he said. Beck said he was excited to

start his freshman year but the incident was disconcerting. "It's really sketchy out here. Just being in Albuquerque is really scary," he said. Not far from the dorms, a line of university buses waited for students to board, many of them carrying backpacks and pulling small luggage carts with their belongings. The university was conducting a "staged, tactical evacuation," spokesperson Cinnamon Blair said in an emailed statement.

People were told not to move without direction from campus police. The university in central Albuquerque has about 23,000 students during the school year. New students like Beck have been visiting as part of scheduled orientations ahead of the fall semester, which begins in about three weeks.

## Buddhist circuit in focus, UP looks to strengthen tourism, investment ties with Japan

### Lucknow .(Agency)

The Uttar Pradesh government is exploring ways to strengthen business ties with Japan as the state Tourism Department is making extensive plans to start a tourism exchange and showcase investment opportunities with the East Asian country during the Japan Tourism Expo in September with a focus on the Buddhist Circuit.

Meanwhile, a delegation led by state Finance Minister Suresh Khanna is meeting investors in Japan. Tourism Department officials said besides the Buddhist Circuit, the state is preparing an elaborate plan to showcase investment opportunities in meditation centers, hotels, and cultural infrastructure under public private partnership (PPP) mode. The foundation of the ties was laid last year during the visit of Yamanashi prefecture Governor Kotaro Nagasaki, who was accompanied by leading Japanese business delegates. They not only signed MOUs for industrial cooperation but also discussed opportunities in tourism exchange with a joint promotion of Mount Fuji and hot springs in Japan, and Buddhist and cultural destinations such as Sarnath, Shravasti and Kushinagar in Uttar Pradesh.

"Familiarisation trips from Japan are being regularly organised by the state Tourism Department to showcase the Buddhist Circuit in Uttar Pradesh, which is deeply intertwined with the life of the Buddha. The idea is to showcase the significant role of UP in the global Buddhist pilgrimage trail and encourage tourism exchange with Japan," said a senior government official.

Tourism and Culture Minister Jaiveer Singh said, "The state has seen a three-fold rise in tourist footfall the last eight years, and this reflects our focused strategy and global engagement. Our vision is to transform the Buddhist Circuit into a world-class spiritual and cultural gateway by integrating infrastructure, international connectivity and community involvement. We are welcoming countries like Japan to partner with us in building Buddhist temples, meditation centres, wellness retreats, and hospitality projects under PPP mode."

### Keep prices of essentials under check: NTR District Joint Collector

VIJAYAWADA. NTR District Joint Collector S Ilakkia has directed officials to closely monitor the prices of essential commodities and vegetables to protect consumer interests and curb black-market trade.

Speaking at the District Level Price Monitoring and Control Committee meeting held at her office on Thursday, Ilakkia stressed the need for regular analysis of production patterns, price fluctuations, and future trends to ensure affordability. She called for frequent inspections at farmers' markets, wholesale outlets, and retail stores across the district.



The committee reviewed recent price trends of vegetables and essentials like rice, dal, and palm oil, and noted disparities between farmers' markets and retail shops in Vijayawada.

In light of a price spike of Bengal gram, she instructed officials to hold discussions with dal millers and traders, and to promote peas as a cost-effective alternative. The officials also reported a slight rise in tomato prices. The Joint Collector ordered direct procurement from Chittoor to ensure tomatoes are available at reasonable rates through farmers' markets.

## Colonel, son assault case: 4 absconding Punjab Police inspectors rejoin duty, get posting

**Chandigarh .(Agency)**  
The four absconding inspectors of Punjab Police, among 12 accused of having assaulted a serving Army officer and his son in Patiala in March, have joined their places of posting under suspension and have further been transferred to Bathinda and Ludhiana ranges.

Police sources informed that Inspectors Harjinder Dhillon, Harry Boparai, Ronnie Singh and Shaminder Singh joined their places of posting on Wednesday at Sangrur, Barnala and Malerkotla and were Thursday posted out from these places. Inspectors Harjinder Dhillon and Shaminder Singh have been posted to Bathinda range while Ronnie Singh and Harry Boparai have been posted to Ludhiana range.

The district SSPs and the DIG Patiala Range Kuldeep Chahal maintained a cryptic silence over these developments and did not respond to media queries. The four Inspectors had been absconding ever since

the incident March 13 and joined duty only after the case was handed over to the CBI. It is being speculated that they rejoined duty fearing that they would be declared proclaimed offenders. The Punjab Police had failed to arrest them from the day an FIR was registered against them pertaining to the assault.

On March 13, Colonel Pushpinder Singh Bath and his son Angad were allegedly assaulted by 12 Punjab Police personnel, including four inspectors, over a parking dispute at a roadside eatery near Rajindra Hospital in Patiala.

The attack left Colonel Bath with a fractured arm and his son with head injuries. The family alleged that the assault was unprovoked, involved threats of a "fake encounter," and that the police

snatched Colonel's ID and phone. Punjab Police faced criticism for an eight-day delay in registering an FIR, initially filing one under "affray" based on a third-party complaint. After public outcry and intervention by the Punjab Governor and Army, a proper FIR was registered on

March 22. Twelve personnel were suspended, and a Special Investigation Team (SIT) was formed under ADGP SPS Parmar to probe the case. Later ADGP AS Rai headed the SIT following Parmar's transfer as Chief Director Vigilance.

Colonel Bath later moved Punjab and Haryana High Court, seeking a CBI probe due to distrust in the Punjab Police. The court questioned the FIR delay and police conduct. On April 3 the investigation was transferred to Chandigarh Police, with a new SIT led by SP Manjeet Sheoran, excluding Punjab cadre officers, to ensure impartiality. The SIT was tasked to complete the probe within four months.

However, due to dissatisfaction with the Chandigarh Police SIT's slow progress and perceived bias, the High Court transferred

the case to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on July 16. The court also criticized the Chandigarh Police SIT for creating "loopholes" to protect the accused and noted no arrests had been made despite the evidence.

Meanwhile, a petition was filed in the High Court demanding a time-bound Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into what it termed the "staged encounter" of 22-year-old Jaspreet Singh, a Canadian student, by Punjab Police in Patiala on March 13.

The petition has been filed by Gurtej Singh Dhillon, the brother-in-law of Colonel Bath, who was allegedly assaulted by the same police team on the same night. Dhillon has contended that the Punjab Police cannot be expected to conduct an impartial investigation into its own officers' role and alleged that the killing violated Jaspreet's right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution.

## HC pulls up Haryana judge for contradictory bail orders in forgery case, calls for probe

### Chandigarh .(Agency)

The Punjab and Haryana High Court has pulled up a Faridabad additional sessions judge for passing two contradictory bail orders on the same day, raising questions about procedural integrity in a forgery case.

Justice Sandeep Moudgil, hearing a plea by a petitioner, Rakhi, to cancel anticipatory bail granted to Priyanka Kumari, flagged the discrepancy in additional sessions judge Jyoti Lambha's November 19, 2024, rulings in a forgery and counterfeiting case (FIR No. 0105, Bhupani police station, Faridabad).

Court records show judge Lambha initially directed Priyanka during the morning hearing to join the investigation within three days. Later that day, she issued a written order granting her "absolute anticipatory bail," allowing liberty "without having undergone any period of custody."

The High Court formally sought an explanation, observing: "In the light of these

two orders of even date, this Court called for the explanation of Judicial Officer Ms. Jyoti

noted: "A perusal of the said explanation would make it ample clear that the judicial officer has pronounced an oral order having of the opinion that accused at the first instance be directed to join the investigation but later on she reached to an opinion that it is a case to be allowed and accordingly the order dated 19.11.2024 (Annexure P-6) came to be passed granting the accused absolute anticipatory bail at the first instance itself."

An affidavit by assistant commissioner of police

Rajeev Kumar Hari underscored the contradiction: "During the hearing ... the court orally issued directions ... but in the afternoon when SI Kamal Chand got the order typed, he found that the ASJ had granted anticipatory bail."

Calling for appropriate probe into the conduct



Lambha, Additional Sessions Judge, Faridabad vide order dated 09.12.2024 which was received by this Court vide memo No. 825 dated 16.12.2024 in the form of explanation qua the order dated 19.11.2024 (Annexure P-6) through the Registrar of this Court."

Calling out the irregularity, Justice Moudgil

### Gujarat ATS arrests Meerut man from Noida mobile shop over alleged Al-Qaeda links

#### New Delhi. (Agency)

A 25-year-old youth, who worked as a helper at a mobile phone shop in Noida's Chhijarsi village, was among four people arrested by the Gujarat Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) on Tuesday night for alleged links to the banned outfit Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS).

The accused was identified as Zeeshan Ali, a native of Meerut. In a statement, the Gujarat ATS claimed that they identified the four individuals who were using social media to radicalise and recruit vulnerable people and incite them to adopt extremist ideologies.

Noida Police officials confirmed Zeeshan was arrested by the Gujarat ATS after alerting them. They, however, had no prior intelligence about him, the officers said. Zeeshan was picked up from the mobile repair shop on Chhijarsi road. The shop owner, Mohammad Asad, currently visiting family in Meerut, told The Indian Express that he had no idea about Zeeshan's alleged activities. "I hired him because he belonged to a village near my maternal village in Meerut. He didn't talk much," he said.

Fardeen, from an adjacent shop, said: "He was coming to the shop for 20-25 days. He first visited to get his phone fixed, became friends with the owner since both were from Meerut. He started working here, but didn't do much. He was mostly playing games on his phone. He looked normal, so one asked questions."

Another shopkeeper said, "He said he was from Ashram Road, Meerut. He would sit at the shop all day, play on his phone. The owner was also from Meerut, so they got along. He told us he had another job too, but it seems unlikely because he would drop in at random hours."

According to locals, Zeeshan initially stayed in Chhijarsi, but on July 7, he rented a room in Chotpur, just across the road near the Hindon river. Khurseedha, the woman who rented him the room, said: "He paid Rs 2,500 in advance. I asked for his Aadhaar, to which he said he will bring it. He came only two or three times and wasn't sleeping here. He came once to collect his fan for repair. He never really stayed so we had no idea what he was involved in."



transferring the illegal proceeds of cyber fraud."

Cholera was subsequently arrested and legal action was taken against him, said the police.

During further investigation, the Shiv Corporation was found to be situated at Hudco

Society in Amreli's Savarkundla taluka, said the police. This address was given to the bank at the time of opening the account. However, when the police reached the address, they found no such firm at the address, said the officials. Instead, they found Shiv Corporation to be located at APMC Market. "Notably, during the police verification of the information provided by the bank, a photograph of the firm with a closed shutter was attached to it. On questioning the owner of the firm, Deepak Kumar Dhirajlal Mashru, it was found that the said photograph was taken in his absence," said the police.

During further investigation, many errors were found in the verification of this bank account, said the police. On checking with the bank in Amreli, the police said it found that relationship manager Savalia had carried out the verification of Shiv Corporation while opening the bank account.

will collapse like a pack of cards", Sharma alleged that a conspiracy is currently underway against the BJP in Punjab, yet the people remain aware of who is truly working for their welfare. The working president cautioned that certain political parties are attempting to disturb communal harmony in Punjab. "Even militancy couldn't shake the communal fabric of the state. But in the present scenario, what Punjab needs is a BJP government — one that can bring development, ensure harmony, and frame policies for the betterment of the people," he said. Reflecting on the BJP's past alliance with the SAD, which began in 1996 and lasted until September 2020, Sharma said: "At that time, we played the role of the younger brother in the alliance because it was necessary. It was, in fact, more of a social alliance than a political one, as Punjab was emerging from the shadow of militancy." He acknowledged that while the BJP paid a heavy political price for that alliance, the context has now changed. "Punjab has moved on, and the people now want the BJP because they believe in it and support it."

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## Ratan Thiyam | Manipur, his tortured, mesmerising muse

The one engagement of the many that I had with Ratan Thiyam that had history revolving around it was on October 30, 1984. I recall sitting with Ratan at a shoddy restaurant in Bhubaneswar, as we together translated into English his song 'Dharamkshetra Kurukshetra', sung at the close of the prologue by the flagbearers in his play Chakravyuha, now considered a classic of modern Indian theatre. The play was scheduled to be staged the next evening at an East Zone Theatre Festival sponsored by the Sangeet Natak Akademi. I was part of a national jury asked to select from the lot one play, or maybe a couple at the most, for a national festival of young directors to be held at New Delhi a few months later. The performance needed a synopsis in English for the viewers, none of whom knew a word of Meiteilon (or Manipuri), a language that belongs to the Tibeto-Burman group and is radically different from the languages in the Indian mainstream.

What else was radically different? The visuals: Ratan was an excellent painter and designer in his own right. The soundscape: with the dominance of cymbals, conch shells, and the single-string Manipuri lute pena. The rich dance movements: the delicate, slow movements of the Vaishnava raas woven together (and clashing at the same time) with the rhythmed violence of the Kuki-Zo martial practices. This complex presentation mode also told a complex story, reinterpreting the Hindu epic in a way that could not be conveyed in a summary of tight, compressed verbal text. Ratan had suggested that a translation of that one song, sung by the flagbearers in a war scene, could convey something of the complexity of meaning—for, at the end of it all, the play bodied forth and meant Manipur, as it was then (and worse now). Artificial Intelligence uses Artificial Intelligence uses Even as we worked on the translation, with Ratan explaining the Manipuri text in his mix of Bengali and English, the public address system blared away, the screeching loudspeakers carrying scraps of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's address at a rally in a square nearby. There was no way we could follow her words, which the press reported next morning: "Even if I die in the service of the nation, every drop of my blood will contribute to its growth." We finished our job even as the sirens of the patrol cars in the high-security convoy conveyed to us that the Prime Minister was on her way to the airport. Next morning, as she walked from her residence in Delhi to her office for a TV interview with Peter Ustinov, Indira Gandhi was riddled with 30 bullets by her security guards. Her death was announced later in the day. The Chakravyuha performance was cancelled. But the little of the rehearsals that we had witnessed was enough for us in the jury to select it for the national festival a couple of months later. When I met him at the festival foyer in New Delhi, I hugged him and he burst into tears. He had just lost his first wife, Mukhra, a brilliant singer-actress. Like all his plays, Chakravyuha revels in the spectacular grandeur of the multilayered Manipuri culture. Ratan took pride in its multiplicity, which he directly celebrated later in a play that he called Nine Hills and One Valley, for that is what Manipur meant to him—the valley Meiteis and the hill tribes contributing to a complex, composite culture now so tragically dismembered by a vicious political conspiracy. In most of his productions, whether those growing out of a variety of Indian and foreign classics—ranging from the Hindu puranas to Shakespeare, Molière and Manoj Mitra—or his own original pieces, especially his Manipur Trilogy, he addressed the crisis in Manipur, celebrating its rich conglomeration of cultures, and critiquing the master texts and hegemonic values through sly, satiric interventions by minor characters.

THE Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) recently took the lid off a large-scale scandal involving several private medical colleges. It has found collusion between government officials and private medical colleges to manipulate the regulatory process of the National Medical Commission (NMC) — the central body in charge of regulating medical education in the country.

The list of 34 persons named in the FIR is startling—eight officials of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, a Joint Director of the National Health Agency (who earlier worked in the NMC), a former Chairman of the University Grants Commission, doctors deputed by the NMC to inspect medical colleges, a 'godman' with a large following in Chhattisgarh, and officials of colleges run by religious bodies in Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh. Six persons, including NMC inspectors, were caught red-handed in Nava Raipur while transacting bribes worth Rs 55 lakh. This is not a rare incident. Just a couple of months ago, the CBI caught an NMC inspector while he was accepting Rs 10 lakh in bribe from the management of a private medical college. The NMC selects senior professors from government medical colleges and assigns them to inspect medical colleges seeking to expand the number of undergraduate and postgraduate seats or get their licences renewed, as well as those seeking to start new courses. The modus operandi reported this time is similar to what has been used for decades. Private medical colleges collude with insiders in the health ministry and the regulatory agency through middlemen to subvert regulatory norms relating to faculty requirements, hospital beds, etc. In the latest CBI case, health ministry officials gained access to information about the regulatory status of medical colleges, like inspection dates and names of inspectors assigned. The information was then shared with middlemen who alerted the medical colleges concerned. The colleges being inspected deployed ghost faculty and admitted fake patients to artificially project compliance during inspections, and bribed assessors in order to secure favourable inspection reports. The case has once again shown that the rot in medical education runs deep and pervades all stakeholders — private medical colleges, the regulatory body, the health ministry and faculty members of government colleges.

High hopes were pinned on the NMC when it was formed in 2020 to replace the Medical Council of India (MCI), which was a self-regulatory body run by medical

associations and state medical councils controlled by doctors. The MCI came into limelight in 2001 when its president Ketan Desai was caught for bribery and the Delhi High Court called the council 'a den of corruption.' The case dragged on for many years. After long-drawn discussions in parliamentary panels, expert committees, etc., it was decided to disband the MCI and replace it with a government-controlled NMC. The change was projected as a great reform, but barely five years down the road, we find that not much has changed on the ground.

The deeper malaise is the privatisation of medical education and the system of capitation fee (college managements selling seats at astronomical prices). The trend started with private colleges in Karnataka and

compiled by the Department of Medical Education in Madhya Pradesh. The capitation fee charged at the time of admission is said to be between Rs 50 lakh and Rs 1 crore. Doctors churned out by such colleges directly feed the corporatised system of health delivery.

Private colleges are taking advantage of the demand-supply equation of doctors. At present, the annual intake for MBBS seats is about 118,000. India has 13 lakh registered practitioners, which translates to the doctor-to-population ratio of 1:1,263 as against the WHO norm of 1:1,000. Besides the overall shortage, a disproportionate number of doctors are in cities. In March, the government announced an addition of 10,000 medical seats during 2025 and set a target of adding total of 75,000 seats over the next five years—without a clear roadmap.

The result is the hurried opening of private medical colleges and the expansion of the existing ones on the one hand, and pressure on the NMC to ease regulatory norms on the other. Unfortunately, the NMC has yielded to this pressure. For instance, it recently relaxed norms for the appointment of faculty to address the shortage and support the expansion of medical seats.

Instead of letting the NMC compromise on quality standards to meet government targets, the government should rethink the privatisation policy itself. Till every additional MBBS seat brings extra money for promoters of private colleges, corruption can't be eradicated. Among many suggestions made by expert committees in the past, the one made by the High-Level Expert Group on Universal Health Coverage in 2011 is highly relevant. It recommended functionally linking medical colleges to district hospitals and mandating a substantial proportion of local student enrolment.

This would have helped overcome the highly uneven distribution of medical colleges that has resulted in skewed and unequal availability of doctors. This, however, can't be implemented with a centralised regulator and without involving state governments.

Corruption in medical colleges not only undermines the integrity of the regulatory framework but also jeopardises the quality of medical education and public health standards. To tackle this, we need a comprehensive policy review with regard to privatisation of medical education, over-centralisation of regulation and corporatisation of healthcare.



## Harmful chemicals clip wings, imperil humans

### Loss in bird populations can potentially lead to reduced agricultural yields and perpetuate the reliance on harmful pesticides

The National Centre for Biological Sciences has found a drastic 25 percent decline in India's bird population over the last two and a half decades. Such a trend would affect soil nutrient cycles, pollination, seed dispersal and ecosystem balance, besides triggering a cascading effect on public health. The study highlights the poor understanding in India about the consequences of pesticides, which are implicated in the decline of open-habitat birds and insectivores, depriving the birds of their prey and leading to their population decline.

Pesticides are widely understood to be the main reason for the decline of insects, which in turn has affected several bird species worldwide. Among the main villains is a class of pesticides called neonicotinoids, which are chemically similar to nicotine and are rampantly used in agriculture and veterinary medicine in India.

Neonicotinoids have raised global concerns due to their harm to beneficial insects like bees and other pollinators. This led to the ban of three neonicotinoids by the European Commission in 2018. But their continued unregulated use in India has led to prey deprivation for grassland and raptor

bird species like the tawny eagle, greater spotted eagle, saras crane, great Indian bustard, Indian roller, Bengal florican and common pochard. Also blamed are changing agriculture patterns, water pollution, silt accumulation, unscientific desilting and poor lake rejuvenation that has affected wetland and aquatic birds like the northern pintail



duck, tufted duck, greater flamingo, Eurasian spoonbill, black-capped kingfisher, Baillon's crake, spot-billed pelican, lesser adjutant, painted stork and pied kingfisher.

Artificial Intelligence uses Artificial Intelligence uses It needs to be realised that a robust avian population across species is beneficial to ecosystems and human wellbeing. Loss in bird populations can potentially lead to reduced agricultural yields and perpetuate the reliance on harmful pesticides, only further aggravating the situation.

This can have an adverse impact on public health, besides signalling a wider biodiversity loss that can also negatively impact the economy in the long run. Agricultural scientists, farmers and the central and state governments need to wake up to these adversities arising from shrinking bird populations. They should spread awareness about the scientific use of pesticides and solar-panelled water pumps through strict regulatory measures. We cannot afford our skies to be even more forlorn.

## Language, longing and belonging in Maharashtra

### For a language to thrive, its sphere must be extended to practical use. Many who claim to be ardent supporters of Marathi often fail to recognise this

A few years back, a Hindi teacher at Moscow University told me to convey her gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "Since your PM speaks only in Hindi, instead of English, to interpreters while in Russia, a Hindi-to-Russian interpreter like me is now in demand," she explained. The moral of this story is that expanding the sphere of any language's application is a must to create a market for it. At a time Maharashtra politics is once again being stirred by the language issue, not just the Thackeray brothers, but many others in the state are missing this point. Marathi was recently—and very rightly—recognised as a classical language. Classical languages are defined as 'ancient languages with independent traditions and a rich literary history that continue to influence various literary styles and philosophical texts'. After Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam and Odia, Marathi as well Pali, Prakrit, Assamese and Bengali have now become classical languages of India. A high level of antiquity, the presence of a significant body of ancient literature preserved for generations, originality and distinctness of modern forms are the established criteria for granting the 'classical language' tag. Obviously, Marathi fulfilled all these requirements. However, getting the classical language tag doesn't change the ground situation.

Artificial Intelligence uses Artificial Intelligence uses The Maharashtra government's proposal to introduce Hindi as one of the three languages to be taught under the three-language formula had nothing against Marathi. In no way would it have damaged the future of Marathi. It could be that the Thackeray brothers conveniently used it to mobilise public opinion. But on the ground, three things are clear. First, exploiting the issue of Marathi versus Hindi will certainly not help the cause of Marathi. Second, it may not help the Thackeray cousins revive

their electoral prospects. And third, it may not seriously dent the support base of the Mahayuti government. No doubt, in Maharashtra the prominence of the Marathi language cannot and should not be undermined at any cost. The three-language formula has been there for decades and many of my generation in the state learnt Hindi from the fifth standard. However, in the context of the recently-manufactured controversy, Marathi lovers would do well to be mindful of certain key factors.

The first and foremost is that the prestige of any language depends on whether its native speakers take pride in speaking it in public. Today, in Mumbai, many Marathi-speaking people routinely use either Hindi or English even while conversing with their Marathi-speaking friends. One of the many reasons for this strange behaviour is that somewhere deep in their minds, there is a feeling that speaking in Hindi or English adds to their dignity, as against their own mother-tongue. The impact of this complex is so grave that most Marathi-medium schools in Mumbai are on the verge of extinction.

Can one blame Hindi-speaking Maharashtra for this? Again, unlike in Chennai or Kolkata, in Mumbai, outsiders feel more at home as they can do very well without any working knowledge of Marathi. The Marathi theatre is known for its vibrancy and has a rich tradition. And yet, Marathi plays or movies hardly find a place in non-Marathi newspapers because most English and Hindi newspapers in Mumbai don't feel the need to have Marathi-speaking mediapersons among their staff. Unless the Marathi language and culture makes a powerful entry into the ethos of the non-Marathi people, Marathi cannot grow.

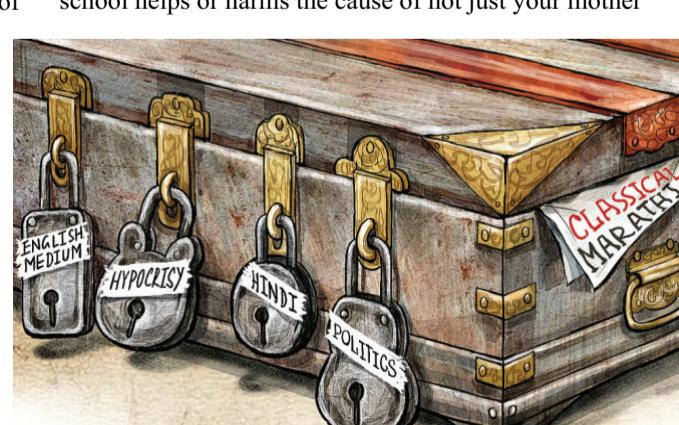
The next important factor is the element of hypocrisy

inherent to the conduct of the so-called saviours of Marathi. The Thackerays see no contradiction in the fact that while they advocate the use of Marathi from the rooftop, they don't mind not learning in Marathi medium. They fail to understand that language is the vehicle of culture and the medium of instruction in your school helps or harms the cause of not just your mother

Hypocrisy is also evident in the fact that those who are today opposing Hindi had extended a red-carpet welcome to English when it was introduced right from the first standard way back in 2001. Further, in 2006, the then Congress government had defended its decision to introduce a full-length, 100-mark examination of English language skills right from the first standard.

Clearly, it was a market-friendly decision and those opposing the teaching of Hindi today were silent when English was in a way 'imposed' on the students at such an early age. All in all, while the cause of the Marathi language needs to be taken up by all who live in Maharashtra, and not just those who have Marathi as their mother tongue. Whipping up an anti-Hindi sentiment is neither relevant nor acceptable. If learning English empowers one to tap global opportunities, learning Hindi has the potential to open up pan-India opportunities.

If Marathi is to gain strength, creating a market for it is the only effective way. While the state language must get state patronage, the public's patronage is even more critical. Hindi is the official language in nine states. Besides, in states like Odisha, West Bengal, Assam, Telangana and even Gujarat, people prefer to speak in Hindi than in English when they interact with an outsider. In many Northeastern states, Hindi is slowly replacing Assamese. Non-Marathi speakers definitely should long for learning Marathi and understand its culture comprehensively. But the prerequisite of their longing is generating a sense of belonging towards all that represents Maharashtra—not just language, but food culture, music, theatre and cinema too. And for that, the onus has to be shared by both Marathis and non-Marathis.



tongue, but also your mother culture.

To understand the meaning of a proverb in a particular language, one at times also has to scan through the history of the region where the respective language flourished. Today, many Marathi-speaking persons working in Marathi print and electronic media cannot speak their mother tongue without mixing Hindi and English terms. They don't understand that this adulteration of Marathi hampers its evolution as a knowledge-medium. After Veer Savarkar, rarely a public leader or a journalist has taken pains to evolve new coinages for emerging concepts in Marathi.

# Constructing dams in Kalesar sanctuary will cause irreversible damage, CEC tells SC

**Gurgaon.(Agency)**

Allowing construction of four dams inside Kalesar Wildlife Sanctuary in Yamunanagar is likely to cause "irreversible ecological damage, including the loss of critical habitat" for endangered species, the central empowered committee has recommended to the Supreme Court. CEC's advice to the top court came on a plea filed by lawyer Gaurav Kumar Bansal, who last year challenged Haryana govt's approval for the project despite earlier warnings by experts. "Permission to build the four dams inside the sanctuary should be denied. The interim stay on construction, already in place, should continue. The wildlife clearance given by the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) should be withdrawn because it was granted without considering these issues properly," CEC said in its July 9 submission to the top court. Additionally, it said, Haryana's forest department should prepare an

alternative watershed management plan to conserve water and prevent flooding without harming the sanctuary. The issue dates to 2016, when the Haryana govt proposed constructing four medium-sized dams — named Chikkan, Kansli, Ambawali and Khilanwalla — on seasonal tributaries (called khols), which feed into river Rupnara. In 2019, a report by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and a letter by the state's principal chief conservator of forests (PCCF) also warned against construction of the dams, saying that these structures could harm wildlife and would not be useful as the streams on which the project was being planned did not carry water all year-round. Despite these warnings, Haryana govt approved the project and preliminary work such as site clearance began in the wildlife sanctuary. The SC bench of justices BR Gavai and Sandeep Mehta in April 2024 issued an interim stay on construction of the four dams and directed

CEC to inspect the site to investigate the petitioner's allegations. A five-member team of CEC in Oct 2024 visited the sanctuary and noted that there were already eight earthen dams built by the forest department near the proposed sites for the new dams. These structures, the committee's report signed by member secretary Banumathi G said, are being used by wildlife and blend into the habitat without disrupting it. In conclusion, CEC said, the proposal to build dams on tributaries flowing through the sanctuary will lead to permanent destruction of habitat.

The committee also raised legal concerns and said that Haryana govt's proposal was not approved by the State Dam Safety Organisation (SDSO) or the National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA). This approval is mandatory under the Dam Safety Act, 2021. Most importantly, the committee said, the dams are not unavoidable and don't have to be built

inside the sanctuary. According to environmental laws, diversion of forest land in protected areas should be allowed only if there is no other option. "The stated objectives of the proposed dams, particularly in relation to irrigation, are not adequately justified, given conflicting data on irrigation dependency and the potential for locating such structures outside the sanctuary..."

The diversion of forest land for the proposed dams does not meet the threshold of 'unavoidable and site-specific need', the CEC report said.

Asked about the petition and CEC's report, Haryana govt officials said they cannot comment on the issue. "The plan was to construct dams for irrigation in the area. The matter is sub-judge," an irrigation department official said. The petitioner Gaurav Kumar Bansal told TOI that there have been ample warnings about construction of these dams in the sanctuary.

## News box

### Senegal national on tourist visa caught with cocaine in Gurgaon

**Gurgaon.(Agency)**

A Senegal national in possession of 15g cocaine and MDMA each was arrested from DLF-3. Fadiga, a resident of Dakar, had entered India in May 2024 on a tourist visa, a police official said. "The illegal substances in his possession were procured from another foreign national in Delhi and were to be sold in Gurgaon," the official added. Rs 3,120 in cash were also recovered from the accused during the search operation, which was conducted on July 24. "A tip-off was received that an African national would be coming to DLF-3's U block to deliver a package of narcotics. We identified him and recovered the illegal substances along with the cash from him," the officer said. "We found that he was first living in Mehrauli and then in Tughlakabad. He shifted to DLF-3 a couple of months ago," he added. A case has been registered at DLF-3 police station under sections 21B (contravention involves quantity, lesser than commercial quantity) and 22C (contravention involves commercial quantity) of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

## 4 lanes, 9 flyovers & 6 underpasses: New ?325cr highway to link south Haryana & Rajasthan

**Gurgaon. (Agency)**

In an infrastructure boost to south Haryana, the Centre has decided to develop a new 45km four-lane National Highway from Nuh to Ferozepur Jhirk and Alwar on Rajasthan border and issued tenders for the Rs 325-crore project, which is expected to cut travel time and enhance road safety in the region. The new highway, part of National Highway 248-A, will have nine flyovers, six underpasses and bypasses at Malab and Bhadas of Nuh. The govt has set a two-year completion target for the ambitious project. On completion, the highway is expected to reduce travel time to Rajasthan and tackle safety lapses on a stretch notoriously known as the "bloody highway," where over 2,500 fatalities have been reported in the past 12 years. This development is a result of persistent advocacy and public pressure over the years. The Mewat RTI Manch, a local activist group, has been at the forefront of this campaign since 2013, conducting hunger strikes and protests. Also, the group has filed a petition signed by over 20,000 residents to draw attention to the perils of existing narrow roads and demand immediate corrective measures.

Initially, a ?186-crore proposal was approved in 2019, but the project was put on hold following construction plan for Delhi-Mumbai Expressway through the area. Now, with a renewed focus and an increased budget, the Centre has moved forward with a revised estimate of ?325 crore. Union minister Rao Inderjit Singh, who has been a vocal advocate for the project, emphasised its transformative potential for Mewat. "The project is not just about a road; it's about giving the people of this region better connectivity, safety and opportunities they've long been denied," he said.

Locals and activists have expressed their approval of the project. "This is the result of our decade-long struggle. A safer and better-connected Mewat is finally taking shape," said Rajuddin, a prominent member of the RTI manch movement. Release of the tender has sparked celebrations across Nuh and nearby areas. At Badkali Chowk — the epicentre of several protests — residents gathered on Friday to express their gratitude.

Mohammad Habib, an INLD functionary at Ferozepur Jhirk, said, "This road has taken too many innocent lives. The BJP govt has finally taken a step that will prove to be a milestone for every Mewati."

## ASI dies by suicide in paying guest facility in Gurgaon

**Gurgaon.(Agency)**

An assistant sub-inspector (ASI) was found hanging in a paying guest accommodation in Sector 38.

Sunil Kumar from Mahendragarh was recently transferred from a city police station to the proclaimed offender (PO) staff unit around a month ago, where he was assigned to track down absconding criminals. Sunil was residing in a rented room at a PG in Sector 39. On Friday morning, police received information from the PG staff that Sunil was found hanging in his room, an officer said.

A police team reached and immediately took down the



body for a post-mortem examination. However, no suicide note was found at the spot, the officer added. Sunil is survived by his wife and two children. The reason behind Sunil's suicide remains unclear. "A police team has been formed to determine the exact cause of the suicide. Investigators are also questioning other residents and staff of the PG, as well as Sunil's colleagues, to understand the circumstances leading up to the incident," the officer added.

## Girl turns hostile & no evidence: Gurgaon man accused of rape walks free

**Gurgaon.(Agency)**

Gurgaon: A man accused of raping a 10-year-old girl in Nov 2022 walked free as the girl and other witnesses turned hostile. The medical report and forensic evidence did not support allegations of rape. While acquitting the accused, a city court observed that "A person is presumed to be innocent until guilt is proved against him beyond all reasonable doubt. The prosecution failed to establish the guilt of the accused." A case was registered in Nov 2022 on the complaint of the minor's mother, alleging her daughter was sexually assaulted by the accused when they were out for work. In the complaint, the woman stated that the girl, along with her siblings, was returning home from the park when a man lured her by promising to give her a melon. The accused took her inside a room while her siblings were standing outside. The man was arrested within days of the registration of the FIR, and a chargesheet was filed in Jan 2023 against the accused under section 6 (sexual assault) of the POCSO Act and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the IPC. However, during the trial, the mother of the victim changed her statement and said the minor was playing in the park when some unknown person misbehaved with her, and they ran away when she raised an alarm. She told the court that the man never committed any sexual act with the minor. The minor also changed her statement, as did the father of the minor. Sanjoy Mondal, a security guard at the park of Sector 17-A, said police had taken his signature on a blank paper, and he was not aware of any sexual assault. Manish Shandilya, counsel for the accused, said the accused never committed any sexual assault upon the victim. The allegations were in no way sustainable in court and were found to be vague during the trial, and acquitted the accused of all the charges levelled against him.

## Chilla elevated road much delayed, now pillar steel found subpar

**Noida.(Agency)**

A long-delayed infrastructure project meant to ease traffic between Delhi and Noida has come under fresh scrutiny after the Noida Authority flagged the use of substandard steel in its construction. The quality of steel used in the Rs 893-crore Chilla Elevated Road, under construction by the Uttar Pradesh State Bridge Corporation Limited (UPSBCL), was flagged during a recent review by Noida Authority. The inspection revealed that a non-approved grade of steel was being used in the piling work for the project. On Friday, CEO Lokesh M expressed dissatisfaction with the UPSBCL for using substandard steel in the pillars and issued a notice to the construction agency, directing it to replace the material with the approved grade of steel. UPSBCL general manager Sandeep Gupta told TOI that the particular brand of steel being used is an NHAI-approved supplier listed under national specifications. "The steel used meets the required BIS standard for high-strength deformed bars used in reinforced concrete and is compliant with IRC and MORTH specifications applicable to the

project," Gupta said. He added that the brand is widely accepted and used by other public sector undertakings, including the Indian Railways, UP PWD, and the Greater Noida Authority. He also said that regular third-party lab testing is conducted to verify the steel's mechanical and



chemical properties, and test reports are available for review. UPSBCL, however, has assured the Noida Authority that it will discontinue use of the current steel brand. Going forward, only materials from reputed suppliers such as SAIL, TATA, RINL, or JSPL will be used for the rest of the work. While only 6% of the work has

been completed since construction resumed in March this year, the overall progress stands at approximately 20%, including earlier work done before the project stalled in 2021. The six-lane, 5.9-km elevated corridor aims to connect the Chilla Regulator near Mayur Vihar to the Mahamaya Flyover in Noida, offering relief to thousands of daily commuters who currently face up to an hour of congestion along the Delhi-Noida Link Road. First proposed in 2012 and inaugurated by chief minister Yogi Adityanath in 2019, the Chilla elevated road has faced years of delay due to funding bottlenecks, the relocation of a GAIL gas pipeline, and the Covid pandemic. No construction took place between 2021 and early 2025. The project resumed only after MG Contractors was appointed in December 2024, having submitted the lowest bid — 7% below the estimated cost.

Once completed, the corridor is expected to significantly ease congestion near Film City, Sector 14A/15A, and improve access to Greater Noida, Kalindi Kunj, and Faridabad.

## 5 miscreants with multiple criminal cases arrested in separate encounters in Noida

**Noida.(Agency)**

Five miscreants — with multiple criminal cases registered against them — were arrested in three separate encounters between Thursday and Friday. On Friday, Surajpur police arrested two miscreants during a check near Khodna village. Three men approached a corporate office on a scooter, when police signalled them to stop, but the accused tried to flee towards the forest area near Khodna, prompting a chase. The accused then fired at the police and two of them were injured in retaliatory action, a deputy commissioner of police (Central Noida) Shakti Mohan Avasthy said. Suspects — Prashant (24), a native of Bulandshahr, and Harshit Chauhan (25), a native of Aligarh — currently live in Dadri.

Two pistols with cartridges, jewellery related to a theft case, the scooter, and Rs 12,000 cash were seized from their possession.

While Prashant has 16 cases against him under various offences of the IPC, NDPS and the Arms Acts, Harshit has 17.

The third suspect who was with them fled the scene, police said. On Thursday, two miscreants passed on a motorcycle when Ecotech 3 police were conducting checks in Sector 10. Additional deputy commissioner of police Hirdesh Kathariya said the suspects tried to flee to the dirt road towards Sadullapur and were chased. In the gunfight that ensued, both miscreants — Pankaj and Pintu, residents of Wave City in Ghaziabad — were injured. Two illegal pistols and cartridges, five power displays

of a stolen generator, nine PCC cards, the motorcycle, a screw hammer and a pan were recovered from their possession. ADCP Kathariya said during interrogation, the duo said they would steal the electronic display parts of soundless generators from various places at night. They were involved in many incidents of theft in various police station areas. Police said Pankaj is implicated in 16 previous cases and Pintu in one. Also on Thursday, Phase 1 police nabbed a suspect in an encounter near Sector 14, DCP Yama Prasad said. While the team was conducting checks, the suspect passed on a motorcycle and tried to flee. He was chased by the team and slipped from the motorcycle.

## A week on, all in Gurgaon detention centres freed, except 10 'illegals'

**Gurgaon.(Agency)**

Gurgaon: A week after a drive to identify Bangladeshi and Rohingya living illegally in the city began, leading to around 250 people being rounded up at four holding centres, everyone — barring 10 foreigners who will be deported — has been freed. After the verification exercise was complete, the last batches of detainees were sent home on Friday, though the four community centres remain notified as holding centres.

The drive generated panic among migrant families from West Bengal and Assam, many of whom have left the city, scared of detentions and questions. The police verification drive had initially rounded up around 500 people. Around 50% of them were sent to the holding centres for checks that involved background verification from police in home districts. TOI had reported in its July 25 edition that during these checks, 10 of those detained had been found to be Bangladeshi citizens who had made Indian IDs like Aadhaar and voter cards. At the Sector 40 community centre, one of the four detention facilities, only one remained on Friday — one of the 10 men identified as a Bangladeshi national. "He was detained

from Sector 53 after arriving from Delhi. He couldn't provide proof of Indian citizenship. So, we have initiated his deportation process," said a police officer familiar with the case.

At the community centre in Badshapur, which previously held over 100 people, all detainees were freed after they provided proof of their Indian citizenship and the documents were vetted. Some Bangladeshi nationals are still housed here. Sandeep Kumar, spokesperson for the police, said, "There is zero detention at all four centres now. All migrants were released after verification of their documents." But even as the drive has managed to identify illegals, it has left a considerable section of the Bengali-speaking migrant population shaken. Many of those released described their time in detention as "the most traumatic days" of their lives. They also expressed disappointment over the lack of support from political parties in their home states — particularly Trinamool Congress — despite public statements of outrage from the party and West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee. They said no political leader or any organisation from their home states had visited them despite the show of support on social media.

centre in Sector 40. No politician from Assam offered any help. The cops released all my men after verification. Of the 400 migrants who stay in Baliawas, only about 100 are here. The rest have left for home," he added. Local labour organisations, however, rallied behind the detainees, condemning what they described as harassment. The state secretary of the Democratic Women's Committee, Usha Saroha, along with other labour union functionaries, pointed out that many affected workers have been long-term residents of the city, working in industries, at construction sites, and as domestic staff. CITU general secretary Jaibhagwan said, "Bengali-speaking minorities are being specifically targeted. Many citizens are being mistreated under the pretext of verification." A senior police officer said the deportation process for the 10 Bangladeshi nationals is under way and the identification drive is not over. "The drive against illegals will continue in the coming days and these four designated holding centres will also operate for now. In case we find any suspect, they will be housed here," the officer added.

# Delhi Police busts Rs 100-crore drug syndicate, Cameroonian kingpin arrested

The police seized 2.7 kg of cocaine, 1 kg of MDMA, 1 kg of cannabis, Rs 2.07 lakh in cash, a Honda City car, and forged Aadhaar cards during the operation. The total value of drugs seized so far is estimated to be over Rs 100 crore.

#### Agency New Delhi.

A major international drug syndicate operating out of Delhi has been busted by the Delhi Police Crime Branch, which has arrested five foreign nationals allegedly linked to the network. The accused are citizens of Nigeria, Cameroon, and Cote d'Ivoire, and were apprehended from various locations in the national capital. The police seized 2.7 kg of cocaine, 1 kg of MDMA, 1 kg of cannabis, Rs 2.07 lakh in cash, a Honda City car, and forged Aadhaar cards during the operation. The total value of drugs seized so far is estimated to be over Rs 100 crore.

The syndicate came under the police radar on June 13, when a suspicious parcel was intercepted at a courier office in Moti Nagar, Delhi. A search of the parcel revealed MDMA concealed in a woman's shoes and a suit. Investigations into the

parcel led the police to uncover a high-tech drug distribution network with international links.

The syndicate was allegedly operated by Callistus, also known as Kalis, based in Nigeria. From there, he coordinated operations across India, Australia, Japan, and Malaysia. In India, the delivery system reportedly mimicked food delivery apps, with orders, location sharing via WhatsApp, and cash collection all managed digitally. The network operated at three levels: Level A handled stock and data management, led by two individuals named Godwin and Ibe. Level B managed cocaine processing, overseen by a person identified as Philipp. Level C handled ground-level deliveries, carried out by Kouliae and Kelechi. Orders and payments were managed via WhatsApp



and hawala channels.

The syndicate's leader is reported to have used women as couriers to smuggle drugs both within the country and internationally, allegedly to maximise profits and avoid detection.

The group's earnings from the drug trade were routed to Nigeria through hawala channels. In India, payments were handed over to

hawala agents, while in Nigeria, relatives of syndicate members received the equivalent amount in local currency. The syndicate reportedly charged a 5% commission on each transaction.

The five accused arrested in connection with the case are Kameni Philipp from Cameroon, who allegedly managed the Indian network; Colley Philipp from Cote d'Ivoire, identified as a specialist in party drug deliveries; Godwin John, a Nigerian national linked to MDMA supply; Victor, who arrived in India on a medical visa and later worked as a delivery agent; and Austin, who had reportedly been living illegally in India since 2011. According to police, the syndicate's Delhi-based operations were part of a wider international network using digital tools for managing drug orders and payments. The case is under investigation.

## Alerts issued across Maharashtra as heavy rain disrupts life, schools shut



#### Agency New Delhi.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Friday informed of the possibility of heavy to very heavy rainfall in parts of Maharashtra on Saturday, including coastal and hilly regions. In its latest weather forecast for the region, the weather department has predicted very heavy showers in parts of Pune, Satara and Nashik on July 26. A red alert has been issued for Palghar district and for the ghat (hilly) areas of Pune district.

Meanwhile, Palghar District Collector Dr. Indu Rani Jakhar has declared a holiday for all schools, colleges and Anganwadi centres on July 26 in view of the weather warning. The district is likely to receive very heavy showers in the next 24 hours, according to the forecast. An orange alert has been issued for Mumbai, Raigad, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts in the Konkan region, as well as for the ghat areas of Nashik and Satara districts.

According to the meteorological agency, areas under the red alert may receive heavy to very heavy rainfall at some places, and extremely heavy rainfall at isolated locations. Regions under the orange alert may receive heavy to very heavy rainfall at isolated places. As per the latest post by Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC), Mumbai on X, isolated places in Marathwada may experience thunderstorms with lightning, gusty winds of 30-40 kmph and heavy rainfall.

Furthermore, the weather department said the deep depression is likely to move towards north Odisha and Jharkhand, bringing continued rainfall, as per PTI report.

## Bihar woman raped by 2 in moving ambulance after she fainted in Home Guard exam



#### Agency New Delhi.

A woman participating in the Home Guard recruitment process at the BMP-3 parade ground in the Bodh Gaya police station area in Bihar was raped by the ambulance driver and technician while being transported to the hospital, police said on Friday.

The incident occurred on July 24, after the woman fainted during a race and was rushed to a hospital in an ambulance stationed at the site. According to a press release by Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Anand Kumar, the woman candidate informed police about the assault. Based on her complaint, ambulance driver Vinay Kumar and technician Ajit Kumar were arrested within two hours.

A special investigation team led by Bodh Gaya SDPO Saurabh Jaiswal was formed to handle the case. A forensic team was sent to collect evidence and CCTV footage from the area helped identify the accused. A First Information Report (FIR) has been filed at the Bodh Gaya police station and the investigation is underway. SSP Anand Kumar said the investigation will be completed promptly, a charge sheet will be filed soon and efforts will be made to ensure a fast-track trial and legal action against both the accused.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Droupadi Murmu led the nation in paying tribute to the soldiers who laid down their lives during the Kargil War, as India observed the 26th Kargil Vijay Diwas on Saturday. "Heartfelt greetings to the countrymen on Kargil Vijay Diwas. This occasion reminds us of the unparalleled courage and valor of those brave sons of Mother India who dedicated their lives to protect the nation's pride. Their passion to sacrifice everything for the motherland will continue to inspire every generation. Jai Hind!" Prime Minister Modi said in a message.

President Murmu echoed similar sentiments, calling the day a symbol of "extraordinary valour, courage and steadfast determination" of the nation's soldiers. "Their dedication and supreme sacrifice for the nation will forever inspire citizens," she said.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh also paid

tribute, saying, "Kargil Vijay Diwas is an unforgettable day of pride and the saga of victory for our nation's brave soldiers. In the year 1999, our soldiers, through 'Operation Vijay,' brought the enemy to their knees, setting an indelible example of indomitable courage and valor. The nation will forever remain indebted to your sacrifice and dedication."

Earlier in the day, Singh arrived at the National War Memorial in Delhi to offer tributes. Videos surfaced showing him joined by Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, Chief of Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi, Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal AP Singh, and Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi in paying homage to the fallen soldiers.

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan on Saturday paid homage to the brave soldiers who laid down their lives

during the 1999 Kargil War. Extending his greetings to the Indian Armed Forces, veterans, and their families, General Chauhan saluted the courage and supreme sacrifice of India's war heroes. He described the operation as a symbol of extraordinary bravery and leadership in the face of overwhelming odds.

"The enemy, having occupied higher peaks fortified with strongholds, had the tactical advantage and the element of surprise," said General Chauhan. "Yet, our forces

## Calling spouse dark not abetment: Court frees man 30 years after wife's suicide

#### Agency New Delhi.

Nearly three decades after being convicted for abetting his wife's suicide, a man has been acquitted by the Bombay High Court, which ruled that domestic quarrels, including remarks about complexion and threats of a second marriage, do not constitute criminal harassment under the law. The judgment was delivered by Justice S M Modak, who was hearing an appeal filed in 1998 by a then 23-year-old shepherd from Satara district. The man had been sentenced to five years in prison by a Sessions Court in Satara for offences under Sections 498A (cruelty to a married woman) and 306 (abetment of suicide) of the Indian Penal Code.

The case dated back to January 1995, when the man's wife died by suicide after jumping into a well. Prior to her death, she had reportedly told her parents that she was being harassed by her husband and in-laws. According to the prosecution, the husband had taunted the woman over her dark complexion, said he did not like her, and threatened to marry another woman, while her father-in-law criticised her cooking and expressed dissatisfaction with the food she prepared.

However, the High Court found that these incidents amounted to domestic discord, not criminal conduct.

"They can be said to be quarrels arising out of matrimonial life. They are domestic quarrels. It cannot be said to be of such a high degree as to compel the woman to commit suicide. So, an offence under Section 498 A of the Indian Penal Code is not made out," said the bench. The Court said that while there was evidence of tension and disagreements within the household, they did not meet the legal threshold required to prove cruelty or abetment of suicide.

## Centre clears Rs 29,558 crore for indigenous defence technology development

#### Agency New Delhi.

The Indian government has approved projects worth Rs 29,558.66 crore for the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) over the past three years to strengthen indigenous defence capabilities. The funds are meant for research and development of new defence technologies.

In 2023, 40 projects were sanctioned with a cost of Rs 3,842.71 crore. In 2024, the number increased to 43 projects worth Rs 22,175.49 crore. In 2025 so far, 20 projects worth Rs 3,540.46 crore have been cleared.

One of the key developments is the Kaveri Derivative Engine (KDE), which will power unmanned combat aircraft. Two projects related to this have been approved — Flightworthy Kaveri Dry Engine Development at a cost of Rs 472.42 crore and Technology Demonstration of Kaveri Derivative 'Dry' Engine at Rs 251.17 crore.

The government is also taking steps to improve the partnership between the civil and military sectors in defence. Development-cum-Production Partners (DcPPs) are being selected to speed up prototype development and production. Industries are also being involved early in the process to help bring academic research to life through DRDO's Industry Academic Centres of Excellence (DIA-CoE).

The Centre for Military Airworthiness and Certification (CEMILAC) is working with the DGCA to create common certification rules for drones used in both civil and military operations. It is also in talks with international agencies like EASA and aircraft companies such as Airbus and Embraer to develop local certification processes for military aircraft.

To encourage innovation, DRDO has signed MoUs with defence industrial corridors, opened its testing facilities to private companies, and made its patents freely available to Indian industries. It has also introduced a new policy with zero transfer of technology fees and no royalty for companies supplying to the Indian Armed Forces.

## Who blessed pan shop? High Court pulls up Mumbai civic body for footpath stall

The court not only ordered the immediate removal of the unauthorised structure but also instructed the Municipal Commissioner to initiate an enquiry into officials who failed to act against the encroachment for over six years.

#### Agency New Delhi.

The Bombay High Court has directed the Municipal Commissioner of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) to investigate the role of civic officials who allegedly "blessed" the existence of an illegal pan, bidi and gutka stall set up on a footpath outside a housing society in Mumbai. The court not only ordered the immediate removal of the unauthorised structure but also instructed the Municipal Commissioner to initiate an enquiry into officials who failed to act against the encroachment for over six years.

A division bench comprising Justices G S Kulkarni and Arif S Doctor was hearing a petition filed by Nirvana Housing Society.

The petition alleged that despite the BMC demolishing the illegal stall in

November 2019, it had resurfaced and continued to operate without any valid license or permission. An inspection report dated July 17, 2023, confirmed the existence of the stall, which lacked both health and trade licenses.

The BMC informed the court that a notice had been issued to the stall operator on July 23, 2025, under the Mumbai Municipal Corporation Act, giving 48 hours for voluntary removal.

Failing compliance, the civic body stated it would proceed with demolition. Although represented by legal counsel, the stall owner failed to file a reply affidavit. The court noted this as a tacit admission of the stall's illegality.

Calling the structure a "rank unauthorised" encroachment, the bench underscored that footpaths are public spaces meant for pedestrian use and cannot be appropriated for private profit. The court also questioned how the stall obtained an electricity connection and why BMC officials had not taken suo motu action earlier. "Such lawlessness cannot be permitted," the bench observed, directing the Municipal Commissioner to issue show-cause notices to the Ward Officer, Assistant Commissioner and relevant Field Officers.



## Hooligan, used to harass girls: Rabri Devi's big charge on BJP's Samrat Choudhary

#### Agency New Delhi.

As elections in Bihar draw closer, political parties are intensifying their campaigns, making every effort to win, while also engaging in a blame game. In the latest exchange of accusations, former Chief Minister Rabri Devi on Friday accused Deputy Chief Minister and BJP leader Samrat Choudhary of hooliganism and harassing girls in the past. "I have known him since childhood he used to do hooliganism at Boring Road. He used to harass girls at Boring Road," Rabri Devi said while talking to the media.

While reacting to the former Chief Minister's statement, Samrat Choudhary told reporters that Rabri

Devi was upset because the Supreme Court had declared her husband, Lalu Prasad Yadav, a criminal and because her son is making all sorts of excuses.

defeat in the elections, is making all sorts of excuses, so it is natural that she is in pain," Samrat Choudhary said.

Furthermore, earlier in an interview with news agency PTI, Rabri Devi also alleged that the JD(U)-BJP alliance had planned to kill her son Tejashwi Yadav to thwart his electoral challenge. During the interview, she said there had been earlier attempts on Tejashwi's life, possibly two to four times. She claimed that once a truck had tried to hit his vehicle.

The statement followed a recent incident in the Bihar assembly, where members of the ruling side reportedly moved towards Tejashwi Yadav. Rabri Devi said the ruling alliance wanted to eliminate her son to stop him from contesting the elections.



tried the odds - scaling near-vertical cliffs under intense enemy fire and in extreme weather at dizzying altitudes - and emerged victorious."

He remembered the fallen soldiers who upheld India's territorial integrity with unmatched valor, determination, and patriotism. General Chauhan also referred to Pakistan's betrayal during the conflict, pointing out that regular Pakistani troops, disguised as

Mujahideen, attempted to escalate the battle beyond the Great Himalayan Range. Underscoring the continued relevance of Kargil Vijay Diwas, the CDS noted it serves not just as a day of remembrance, but as a source of inspiration. He stressed the importance of jointness, readiness, and courage in modern warfare, citing the success of Operation Sindoar as a demonstration of the armed forces' capabilities.

During the 1999 Kargil War, Extending his greetings to the Indian Armed Forces, veterans, and their families, General Chauhan saluted the courage and supreme sacrifice of India's war heroes. He described the operation as a symbol of extraordinary bravery and leadership in the face of overwhelming odds.

"The enemy, having occupied higher peaks fortified with strongholds, had the tactical advantage and the element of surprise," said General Chauhan. "Yet, our forces



## NEWS BOX

**Tim David scores fastest T20 century for Australia in series-clinching win****BASSETERRE. (Agency)**

Tim David scored the fastest century for Australia in a Twenty20 international which lifted the tourists to a series-clinching six-wicket win over West Indies in the third game of a five-match series on Friday. David and Mitchell Owen's unbroken 128-run stand guided Australia to 215-4 off 16.1 overs to seal the victory and an unassailable 3-0 series lead.

Making the most of the small dimensions at Warner Park in St. Kitts, David brought up his first international century from the final ball of the match with his sixth boundary. His blistering 102 not out, with 11 sixes, came from just 37 balls and bettered the mark of 43 balls set by current team-mate Josh Inglis against Scotland last year. It was also the third fastest century among ICC member nations, with only India's Rohit Sharma and South Africa's David Miller bettering the mark with 35 balls, both in 2017.

"I didn't think I would have the opportunity to score 100 for Australia, so I'm so grateful for



that opportunity and pretty stoked," David said. David's fireworks overshadowed a brilliant unbeaten century by West Indies captain Shai Hope (102 off 57 balls) which featured eight boundaries and six sixes to lead West Indies to 214-4 off its 20 overs. Hope combined with opening partner Brandon King to put on 125 runs in 11.4 overs as the hosts made a rapid-fire start after losing the toss and being asked to bat first. Artificial Intelligence uses King made a spritely 62 off 36 balls before holing out to Sean Abbott off Mitchell Owen. The skipper raised his deserved ton in the 19th over with a single off his 55th ball to join Chris Gayle as the only West Indies male player with centuries in all formats. Brief cameos from Shimron Hetmyer (9), Rovman Powell (9), Sherfane Rutherford (12) supported Hope's solo assault on Australia's bowlers and lifted the hosts past 200. David's blasts Australia out of trouble. Australia's chase started haphazardly with Glenn Maxwell opening again with skipper Mitch Marsh run out for 20 going for a tight single.

**IND vs ENG 4th Test Weather Updates: Chilly winds and rain forecast for Day 4 in Manchester****New Delhi. (Agency)**

As Day 4 of the crucial India vs England fourth Test begins at Old Trafford on Saturday, weather has once again emerged as a major talking point—particularly from India's perspective, as they look to claw their way back into the series.

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After a bright and sunny Day 3, clouds gathered ominously over Manchester on Friday evening. TimesofIndia.com's senior reporter Sahil Malhotra reported from the ground: "In not very pleasant news for the Indian cricket team, chilly winds and dark clouds have taken over Manchester after day three. The forecast doesn't look very good for day four and day five. Day four at least could be India's day to bat, and India did find it very difficult when they batted under clouds on the opening day."

Malhotra added: "If India get to bat on Day 4, the forecast is there for rain. Dark clouds have taken over, chilly winds have taken over, and this could get tricky for the Indian team who are already playing catch-up in



this Test."

India vs England Old Trafford Weather Updates

According to the UK Met Office forecast for Manchester, the day is expected to begin with light rain, turning to overcast conditions by late morning. Temperatures will range between 16°C and 20°C. There is a 50-60% chance of rain in the morning session, but things could improve later with chances of showers reducing to 40% by tea and 30% by stumps.

India, trailing 1-2 in the five-match series, also face the mental hurdle of never having won a Test match at Old Trafford. Meanwhile, England are firmly in control, having ended Day 3 at 544/7 with Joe Root's masterful 150 pushing them 186 runs ahead. Ben Stokes remains unbeaten on 77 as the hosts look to seal the series.

**Spain's women battled sexism and indifference. Now the world champions are eyeing European title****Spain leads the way at the Euros for goals scored, ball possession, passing accuracy and clean sheets.****BARCELONA. (Agency)**

If the women's soccer players of Spain have gone from nobodies to title contenders in less than a decade, it hasn't come easy. The national team has had to fight for better coaching, decent travel conditions, and modern training facilities. It paid off with a World Cup title in 2023, the Nations League crown last year, and on Sunday they face England in the European Championship final. "It has been a constant with the national team that we have had to fight for acceptable work conditions that would allow us to play at our best," former Spain defender Marta Torrejón told The Associated Press by phone on Friday. Torrejón lived through the lean years, the time when playing for her country felt like, in her words, a "waste of time."

And she knows from talking with Barcelona teammates who still play for their country how much things have improved.

Torrejón retired from international soccer after the 2019 World Cup as Spain's then most-capped player with 90 appearances. She has since helped Barcelona win three Champions League titles and a slew of other trophies. She also played a part in one of the revolts Spain's women have staged to demand more from the men who run the game. After the 2015 World Cup, Torrejón and other players successfully pushed for the removal of coach Ignacio Quereda, who had run the team for nearly three decades, for his poor preparation ahead of the team's first appearance in the competition.

Quereda was later accused by former players of verbal abuse, an allegation he denied. "I enjoyed playing for the national team, but the preparation and attention to the player was minimum. It felt, to put it bluntly, like a waste of time," Torrejón said. "The level of practice and the level of physical training both plummeted compared to what we had (at Barcelona). It was like taking a step back." I am told that isn't the case now, and I am very glad to hear that." Torrejón said she saw steps in the right direction under former Spain coach Jorge Vilda, who replaced Quereda, but felt there

was still more untapped potential in the team when she retired. After Torrejón quit the team, some players announced in 2022 they would no longer play for Vilda unless he ran a more professional operation. He was



backed by the federation. Some players returned to play for him, and the team made history by winning the 2023 World Cup. The celebrations were overshadowed by the behavior of then-federation president Luis Rubiales, who kissed a player on the lips without her consent during the awards ceremony in Sydney. Vilda backed Rubiales, but he was swept away with his boss when

the players stood up to force change, from the removal of Rubiales to improving the travel, preparation and staffing of the team. Torrejón said she had heard from Alexia Putellas and Irene Paredes, stalwarts

of Spain and Barcelona, that things are better since Rubiales and Vilda left. New coach Montse Tomé has enhanced the training methods. Spain leads the way at the Euros for goals scored, ball possession, passing accuracy and clean sheets. In Spain's 1-0 semifinal win over Germany, Aitana Bonmatí leaned on the team's analysts, who informed her the opposing goalkeeper tended to leave her near post unprotected. The result was an exquisite winner from a tight angle. Barcelona and other clubs have lifted Spain's mid-fielder Patri Guijarro agrees with Torrejón that the sustained investment Barcelona has provided for the past decade in the women's game has boosted the national team.

"Each and every day we work well in our clubs and I think that is reflected in the achievements of the clubs but also in the national team," Guijarro said at Spain's camp in Lausanne, Switzerland, on Friday.

**Bumrah benefits massively when there's support at other end, 4th Test slightly beyond India: Trott****India endured arguably their worst day on the field on Day 3 of the Manchester Test as Joe Root's record-breaking 150 put the hosts in complete command.****New Delhi. (Agency)**

Former England cricketer Jonathan Trott observed that India pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah benefits massively when there is support at the other end but feels the ongoing fourth Test in Manchester is now "slightly beyond" the visitors. Down 1-2 in the five-match series, India trail England by 186 runs in at the end of Day 3 in the fourth Test.

India endured arguably their worst day on the field on Day 3 of the Manchester Test as Joe Root's record-breaking 150 put the hosts in complete command. Despite having Bumrah available for what could be his last Test of the series as it was pre-decided that the right-arm pacer would play three of the



five Tests on England tour, the Indian bowlers struggled to break through. "Bumrah's areas were pretty good, and his economy reflects that. He was just a bit unlucky. But the bigger issue is pressure from both ends," JioHotstar expert Trott said. "Bumrah benefits massively when there's support at the other end, and that wasn't the case today (Friday). When you're slightly under par as a bowling unit like India were, control from both ends becomes crucial," he added.

While Trott had some sympathy for the young

India captain Shubman Gill on his first assignment as leader, he said the fourth Test is beyond India's control as they have fallen behind by a big margin. Shubman Gill is on his first trip to England as a batter and has also been thrown into the deep end as captain? carrying immense responsibility," he said. "He fought well across the first three Tests, but this game feels slightly beyond India, considering the challenges and resources. India's bowling was hampered by Akash Deep's unavailability? he picked up 10 wickets in the last Test but missed out due to injury." Anshul Kamboj came in, but struggled to rise to the demands of Test cricket. One area India could've improved is their bowling combination? seamers bowled nearly 82 overs for just three wickets, while spin got four wickets in just 52 overs. That's something they'll need to reassess," he added. Trott said Root has found a balance in the aggressive Bazball approach and conventional style of batting is working well for the England great.

"Joe Root's method is just so solid, you don't see him shift gears dramatically. When Bazball first came in, he experimented a bit? ramping seamers, playing reverse scoops? but he's set that aside now," he said.

**MANCHESTER. (Agency)** After a forgettable Day 2, India bowlers struggled for wickets on Friday as England reached 544/7 at stumps with Joe Root scoring a 150, even India bowling coach Morne Morkel, former South Africa pacer, is trying to comprehend what went wrong as far as dipping pace of India's speedsters especially debutant Anshul Kamboj is concerned. "That's something that we're definitely also trying to get our heads around. On a surface where it gets a little bit flat, you need a little bit of energy behind the ball. I think that's definitely one of the factors for us so far in our bowling innings. It's just getting that little bit of zip off the wicket to create the opportunities we've got behind LBW," Morkel told journalists after the day's play here at the Old Trafford Ground. "To look at the workloads of guys like (Mohammed) Siraj and those guys, they've had heavy workloads. I'm sure that's his first Test match so far. It's important for us that we want to grow and develop a nice fast bowling unit. So not too much to judge on that. But yeah, I think it is also a heavier outfield. But in terms of commitment and effort that the guys have put in, I don't think

**Anna Kalinskaya's dog adorably runs on court to celebrate owner's victory****Washington Open 2025: Anna Kalinskaya's dog Bella raced towards her owner after the 6-3, 7-5 win over Clara Tauson in the quarterfinals of the WTA 500 tournament.****New Delhi. (Agency)**

Anna Kalinskaya's affectionate dog, Bella, stole the spotlight at the 2025 Washington Open with a heartwarming celebration of her owner's quarterfinal victory. On Friday, July 25, after Kalinskaya defeated Clara Tauson 6-3, 7-5 in an hour and 35 minutes, Bella sprinted onto the court, racing toward her, prompting smiles and laughter from the crowd and commentators alike.



Commentators described the moment as an emotional "touchdown," with one calling Bella "clearly delighted" and another suggesting she might be a "lucky mascot" for Kalinskaya's tournament run. The joyful scene unfolded on July 25, 2025, the day Kalinskaya secured her spot in the semifinals of the WTA 500 hard-court event in Washington, D.C. In a gritty match played under difficult, humid conditions, Kalinskaya broke Tauson's serve early in

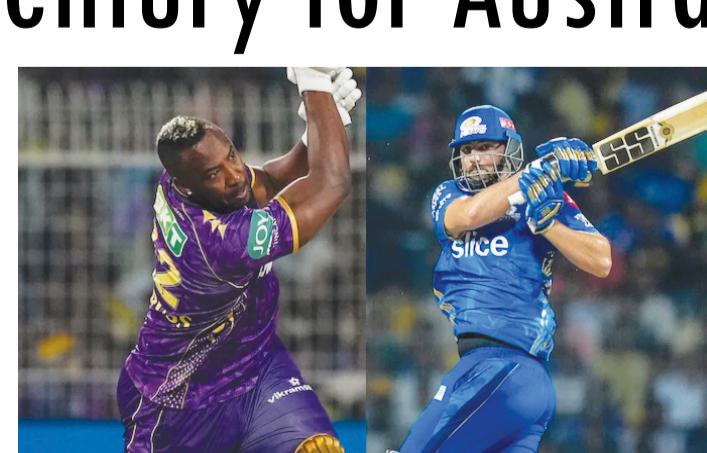
the first set and never looked back, taking it 6-3. In the second set, Tauson rallied to level at 5-5, but Kalinskaya regained control, breaking serve in the decisive twelfth game to close out the match. The unseeded Russian showcased her mental toughness under pressure - delivering on big points and maintaining composure as Tauson raised her intensity. The win served as revenge for Kalinskaya's loss to Tauson at Wimbledon earlier in July, where Tauson had prevailed 6-3, 7-6 by turning the tide in key moments. Reaching the final marked a career milestone for Kalinskaya, highlighting her rising form in 2025 and growing confidence on hard courts. Her semifinal victory set up a showdown with Emma Raducanu, who had defeated Maria Sakkari in the other bracket, setting the stage for a final between two underdogs who had surged through the draw.

we can fault that. You need that little bit of energy on the ball on good surfaces where the ball at times is not doing as much." He was also asked about the thought process behind picking Kamboj, why Shardul Thakur under bowled and Washington Sundar introduced so late in the bowling attack. "So the discussion going into the Test match was somebody, a bowler that can bowl volume, one of the guys that can bowl overs, somebody that can ask questions at the stump, off stump, an accurate sort of bowler. And I think Anshul on a domestic level has done that. He's done really well on the India A tour. And he was a guy whose name has been in the mix for a long time. And they gave him the opportunity for that." Shardul, yeah, it's a bit of a tough one. When you have four seamers, when you're going at five runs an over, I think there's a gap in your mindset. You want to bring strike bowlers back to try and take wickets for you.

**Tim David reveals using Andre Russell's bat to hit fastest T20I century for Australia****Tim David said he used Andre Russell's bat in the 3rd T20I vs West Indies****David scored the fastest T20I hundred off 37 balls for Australia****Australia beat West Indies by 6 wickets at Warner Park****New Delhi. (Agency)**

Tim David etched his name into the record books on Friday, July 25, after producing a blistering 37-ball century — the fastest ever T20I hundred by an Australian. In a

remarkable twist, the milestone came using a bat borrowed from West Indies all-rounder Andre Russell. The powerful innings propelled Australia to a commanding six-wicket victory, as they chased down a target of 215 with 23 balls to spare at Warner Park in St. Kitts. David also set a new national mark for the fastest T20I half-century, reaching fifty in just 16 balls. The previous record of 17 balls was jointly held by Marcus Stoinis and Travis Head. His century eclipsed the 43-ball effort by Josh Inglis against Scotland in Edinburgh last year and underlined David's growing reputation as one of Australia's most dangerous T20 finishers. "I've been carrying that Dre Russ bat around for a year and it felt like it was the best time to use it," David said in the post-match presentation ceremony.



"I've spent a lot of time working on power hitting but now I'm working on my shot selection." Top 5 fastest T20I hundreds for Australia. Warner Park is a great place to bat." David said that playing in the Caribbean Premier League (CPL), where he

represented the Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR), helped him deliver his performance at Warner Park. "I was just having a great time in the middle playing for Australia. It was nice to have a period at home and get my body right. I didn't think I would get the opportunity to get a hundred for Australia so I'm stoked. The pitch was good and small boundaries, so you have to back your strengths. Warner Park is a great place to bat and it was great to have experience here in the CPL," David added. The fourth and penultimate T20I of the series will take place on Saturday, July 26 (Sunday, July 27) at Warner Park.

**Tata Sons profit jumps nearly 10-fold in last half-decade to hit Rs 26,232 crore in FY25**

**New Delhi. (Agency)**

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

The net worth of the company also surged nearly three-and-a-half times to Rs 14,680 crore in FY25 from Rs 45,586 crore in FY20. Tata Group's aggregate revenue stood at Rs 15,34,341 crore in FY25 as compared to Rs 7,89,057 crore in FY20, as per Tata Sons' annual report for 2024-25. Tata Motors remained the biggest revenue earner for the group at Rs 4,45,939 crore in FY25, up from Rs 2,64,041 crore in FY20. Tata Consultancy Services was the next with a revenue of Rs 2,59,286 crore in FY25, up from Rs 1,61,541 crore in FY20. Tata Steel was the third biggest revenue earner for the group at Rs 2,20,083 crore in FY25, up from Rs 1,50,794 crore in FY20.

Among the unlisted entities, Air India, which was acquired by the Tata Group in 2021, reported revenue of Rs 78,636 crore in FY25 and Tata Electronics, established in 2020, posted revenue of Rs 66,601 crore in FY25. Tata Digital posted revenue of Rs 32,188 crore in FY25, up from just Rs 7 crore in FY20. As per the annual report, Tata Sons Chairman N Chandrasekaran's total in FY25 was at Rs 155.81 crore, up 15 per cent from Rs 135.32 crore in FY24. He is among the highest-paid industry leaders in India. For FY25, Tata Sons said based on its performance, the directors have recommended a dividend of Rs 64,900 per ordinary share on 4,04,146 ordinary shares, which if declared by the shareholders, would involve a cash outflow of Rs 2,622.91 crore.

**Atal Pension Yojana adds 39 lakh new subscribers in FY26; total exceeds 8 crore**

**New Delhi. (Agency)**

Social Security scheme Atal Pension Yojana has crossed 8 crore total gross enrolments, with an addition of 39 lakh new subscribers so far in the current fiscal, the Finance Ministry said on Friday. APY was launched on May 9, 2015.

"The Atal Pension Yojana (APY), a flagship social security scheme of the Government of India administered by PFRDA, has achieved a significant milestone by surpassing 8 crore total gross enrolments with an addition of 39 lakh new subscribers in the current Financial Year (FY 2025-26) alone," the ministry said in a statement. Launched with a vision to create a universal social security system for all Indians, APY is a voluntary, contributory pension scheme, focused on the poor, the underprivileged, and workers in the unorganised sector.

APY assures a guaranteed monthly pension of Rs 1,000 to Rs 5,000 for the subscriber post-60 years of age, the same pension to the spouse after the subscriber's demise, and return of the accumulated corpus to the nominee after the death of both. It is open to all Indian citizens between the age of 18-40 years, except those who are or have been income tax payers.

**ITR Filing 2025: Skipped ELSS and PPF You Can Still Cut Taxes—Here's How**

**New Delhi. (Agency)**

If you missed investing in tax-saving options like ELSS, PPF, or five-year fixed deposits for the financial year 2024-25, you can still lower your taxes or claim a refund for any extra tax paid when filing your income tax return. Here's how Section 80C can help and what else you should know: Section 80C lets you claim a deduction of up to Rs 1.5 lakh on your taxable income. This deduction isn't only for investments—it also covers some expenses. For example, amounts put into your Employee Provident Fund (EPF) through salary, and tuition fees you pay for your children's education, are both eligible. EPF contributions by you (deducted from salary) and Public Provident Fund (PPF) deposits

Tax-saving fixed deposits (5-year FDs at banks or post offices) Equity-Linked Savings Schemes (ELSS mutual funds) Life insurance premiums for self, spouse, children

National Savings Certificates (NSC)

Sukanya Samridhi Yojana (for girl children)

Principal repayment of a home loan

Tuition fees paid for your children's full-time education (school, college/university in India)—can claim for up to two children

Special tips about tuition fee deduction:

Both parents can each claim for two children (so, up to four children can be covered per family if both file taxes). Preschool, nursery, and playschool tuition fees are also allowed, as long as it's part of the receipt. Only actual tuition fees qualify. Bus fees, donations, development charges, or capitation fees do not count. The deduction applies only to courses taken in India at formal educational institutions. Fees for coaching classes, distance learning, or studies abroad are not covered—even if paid to a foreign university. Extra-curricular or hobby class fees are not eligible. Important reminders:

Make these investments/payments during the financial year for which you are filing returns. Filing your ITR is required to claim the deduction; you must also have receipts or proof of eligible payments. The deduction cap covers all Section 80C, 80CCC, and 80CCD(1) claims combined.

# Taxed into the pit lane: Why India's Formula 1 dream ran out of track

**Formula 1 didn't leave India because of a lack of fans or infrastructure. It left because of unclear policies, tax confusion, and a system that didn't treat it like a sport.**

**New Delhi. (Agency)**

More than a decade ago, India tasted the thrill of Formula 1 (F1) racing. For three unforgettable years, the Buddh International Circuit in Greater Noida came alive with the roar of engines, the blur of cars hurtling down the straights, and the electricity of 90,000 fans on their feet. Sebastian Vettel, Lewis Hamilton, and Michael Schumacher—some of the biggest names in motorsport—raced on

Indian soil, waving to Indian crowds. It wasn't just a sporting event. It was a statement. A belief that India could take its place on the global F1 calendar and stay there. And then, it was over. No farewell, no countdown, no final lap. Formula 1 vanished from the Indian grid, leaving behind silence and a track that never got to fulfil its promise. Why did Formula 1 vanish from India? The answer lies not in track design or lack of fanfare, but in a tangled web of taxes, red tape, and regulatory confusion.

**F1 IS A COSTLY AFFAIR**

Organising a Formula 1 race isn't cheap. Building an F1-grade racing circuit can cost anywhere between \$200 million to over \$1 billion. But that's just the beginning. Each race weekend brings additional expenses like pit lane facilities, hospitality centres, media rooms, security, road upgrades and marketing. Altogether, staging a single F1 weekend can cost approximately Rs 500 crore to Rs 1,250

crore. Such costs are often shared by race organisers, sponsors and national or state governments. In India's case, while the infrastructure was put in place and the race was held successfully for three years,



government support was limited. This, experts believe, became a major roadblock for the event's long-term future.

**LABELLED AS 'ENTERTAINMENT'** One of the biggest issues that led to the early exit of F1 from India was taxation.

According to tax expert Dr Suresh Surana, "Formula 1 was classified as

'entertainment' and not 'sport' for tax purposes in India because Indian tax authorities and courts determined that the event did not fit within the specific statutory exemptions or favourable tax treatments available to 'sporting events'."

This meant the race organisers had to pay entertainment tax on ticket sales and business income tax, making it more expensive to host the event. In 2011, the Supreme Court ordered Jaypee Sports International, the company responsible for the circuit, to deposit the entertainment tax amount in a separate account before the race could take place. "The Supreme Court did not allow the exemption to be operative pending the dispute's final resolution, meaning the Grand Prix was treated as an entertainment event for taxation. This meant that earnings from the event did not qualify for sport-related tax exemptions or benefits," said Dr Surana.

## Meta hires ChatGPT co-creator as chief scientist to lead new AI lab

**Meta has appointed ChatGPT co-creator Shengjia Zhao as chief scientist of its new Superintelligence Lab, aiming to advance AGI and regain AI leadership after Llama 4's weak performance.**

**New Delhi. (Agency)**

Meta Platforms META.O has named Shengjia Zhao, the co-creator of OpenAI's ChatGPT as the chief scientist of its recently launched Superintelligence Lab, CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced on Friday. Zhao, who previously served as a research scientist at OpenAI, co-created several major models including ChatGPT, GPT-4, and OpenAI's mini models 4.1 and 0.3. He also led work on synthetic data. Now, he will be setting the research direction for Meta's most ambitious AI division and working directly with Zuckerberg and Alexander Wang, Meta's Chief AI Officer and the former CEO of Scale AI. "In this role, Shengjia will set the research agenda and scientific direction for our new lab working directly with me and Alex," Zuckerberg posted on Threads.

"Shengjia has already pioneered several breakthroughs including a new scaling

paradigm and distinguished himself as a leader in the field. I'm looking forward to working closely with him to advance his scientific vision."



While Zhao's name first appeared in a June memo listing high-profile hires, Zuckerberg confirmed Friday that Zhao is not only leading the lab but also co-founded it, having been "our lead scientist from day one." Zhao's appointment marks a major move in what has become an AI talent arms

race. Meta has been aggressively recruiting top researchers, many from OpenAI, offering lucrative compensation packages and forming partnerships with AI startups. The strategy comes in the wake of Llama 4's underwhelming performance and reflects Meta's efforts to regain ground in the race toward artificial general intelligence (AGI). Meta Superintelligence Lab is a new division focused on developing foundation models like the Llama family, in addition to long-term AGI goals. It operates independently from FAIR (Fundamental AI Research), Meta's original AI research group led by deep learning pioneer Yann LeCun.

Zuckerberg has made it clear that Meta intends to pursue "full general intelligence" and open-source its progress—a bold and controversial approach in the AI community.

**Thiruvananthapuram startup Netrasemi raises Rs 107 crore from Zoho Corp, Unicorn India Ventures**

**KOCHI. (Agency)**

Kerala-based semiconductor startup Netrasemi has raised Rs 107 crore in the Series A round from Zoho Corporations Ltd & Unicorn India Ventures. This is the single largest funding raised by the startup compared to the earlier rounds. In the earlier rounds, the company had raised a total of Rs 125 crore.

Speaking to TNIE, Jyothis Indirabhai, co-founder and CEO of Netrasemi, said, "The funds raised will be used for accelerating research and development initiatives, expand manufacturing capabilities, enhance marketing efforts to capture larger domestic and global market share, bring four system-on-chip variants with advanced AI and video analytics features into production and address compute platform requirements of original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) for surveillance,



## US-China trade talks: Can China reduce its export dependence

**BEIJING. (Agency)**

China's high dependence on exports will likely be a key focus of a new round of US-China trade talks this coming week in Stockholm, but a trade deal would not necessarily help Beijing to rebalance its economy.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has said he hopes the negotiations can take up this issue, along with China's purchases of oil from Russia and Iran, which undercut American sanctions on those two countries. Hopes rose for a breakthrough in talks after US President Donald Trump announced deals with Japan, Indonesia and the Philippines this week. The US wants China to do two things: Reduce what both the US and the European Union see as excess production capacity in many industries, including steel and electric vehicles. And secondly, to take steps to increase spending by Chinese

consumers so the economy relies more on domestic demand and less on exports. "We could also discuss the elephant in the room, which is this great rebalancing that the Chinese need to do," Bessent told financial news network CNBC. He said China's share of global manufacturing exports at nearly 30%, "can't get any bigger, and it should probably shrink." China is tackling the same issues — for domestic reasons. The issues are not new, and China has been working to address them for years, more for domestic reasons than to reduce its trade surpluses with the US and other countries. Bessent's predecessor as treasury secretary, Janet Yellen, made industrial policy a focus of a trip to China last year. She blamed government subsidies for flooding the global market with "artificially cheap Chinese products." The European

Union, whose top leaders met their Chinese counterparts in Beijing on Thursday, has cited subsidies to justify EU tariffs on electric vehicles made in China. In the 1980s, the US pressured Japan to boost consumer spending when American manufacturing was overwhelmed by exports from the likes of Toyota and Sony. Economists have long argued that China likewise needs to transform into a more consumer-driven economy. Consumer spending accounts for less than 40% of China's economy, versus close to 70% in the United States and about 54% in Japan. Chinese leaders have spoken about both factory overcapacity and weak consumer spending as long-term problems and have sought over the past 20 years to find ways to rebalance the economy away from export manufacturing and massive investments in dams, roads.

## Chinese JVs signal shift in India's electronics manufacturing

**Indian majority ownership, strategic Chinese participation, and compliance with FDI norms are considered a practical middle path**

**CHENNAI. (Agency)**

Indian-majority joint ventures with conditional Chinese investment are emerging as a new model for electronics manufacturing — combining global expertise with local control. This evolving structure, as seen in the Dixon-Longcheer and Epack-Hisense partnerships, illustrates the potential for scaling India's electronics footprint under the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) and component manufacturing schemes. With this, the country's electronics sector is undergoing a shift from simple assembly to deeper component and design integration. Driven by PLI incentives and facilitated by new JV models, these structured partnerships — with Indian majority ownership, strategic Chinese participation, and compliance with FDI norms — are considered a practical

middle path. A key advantage of this model lies in its balance. As long as the rules remain clear, partnerships equitable, and technology localised within India's value chain, such collaborations can support both domestic manufacturing and export-oriented production under the "Make in India" initiative.

**Dixon and Epack Models**

Dixtel Infocomm, a joint venture between Dixon Technologies (74%) and China-based Longcheer (26%), received government approval from MeitY on July 25. The venture will manufacture smartphones, tablets, smartwatches, AI PCs, automotive, and healthcare electronics. The equity split and focus on technology transfer and localization of non-semiconductor subcomponents align with India's regulatory framework, marking a potential shift in policy. In parallel, Dixon is forging multiple component-level partnerships with Chinese firms — including Chongqing Yuhai Precision (precision mechanicals), Kunshan Q Tech (camera/fingerprint modules), HKC (display modules), and is in talks with Vivo for handset manufacturing. These moves support deeper backward

integration under the electronics component scheme. Separately, Chinese appliance major Hisense has contracted Epack Durable Ltd to manufacture air-conditioners, refrigerators, washing machines, and small appliances at a new facility in Sri City, Andhra Pradesh.



Production is set to begin by June 2025, targeting 1 million room AC units by FY28, with a strong export orientation. Hisense plans to acquire up to a 26% stake in the Epack subsidiary operating the plant, bringing in design, tooling, and technical know-how. The collaboration is expected to generate up to US\$1 billion in revenue over five years, with investments of 800-1,000 crore. Epack, India's second-largest AC contract manufacturer, also serves brands such as Daikin, Panasonic, Haier, and Blue Star, with facilities

across Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. Under the government's 25,000 crore Electronics Component Manufacturing Scheme, Indian electronics manufacturing services (EMS) firms such as Micromax, Zetwerk, and Syrma SGS are pursuing similar partnerships with Chinese suppliers — covering areas like display modules, PCBs, and camera subassemblies. Micromax already has a JV with Taiwan's Phison (MiPhi) for NAND storage and is exploring partnerships with China's Huaqin via its group company, Bhagwati Electronics.

Optiemus has secured audio/IoT sourcing from OnePlus, becoming the third Indian manufacturer (after Xiaomi and Realme) to collaborate with Chinese brands for local production. The incentive scheme aims to reduce India's heavy dependence on imports — with Chinese firms currently accounting for 70-75% of component supplies. By partnering with original design manufacturers (ODMs) and component makers from China, Indian firms are seeking to localize critical sub-component manufacturing — such as display modules, camera units,

# Devoleena Bhattacharjee

Celebrates '7 Months Of Love' With Son Joy: 'Pure Magic'

Saath Nibhaana Saathiya actress Devoleena Bhattacharjee and her husband Shanawaz Shaikh embraced parenthood in December last year. They welcomed their son 'Joy' on 18th December 2024. Their baby boy turned 7 months old a few days ago, and the actress has now shared some adorable pictures with him, as she celebrated 7 months of motherhood. She wrote that she is enjoying every moment of this new chapter of her life, and that it has been 'pure magic.' On Friday, Devoleena Bhattacharjee took to her Instagram to share a series of photos with her son Joy. The pictures show her holding her baby in her arms as she enjoyed a stroll with him in Guwahati. The actress beams with joy, as she spends time with her son. In her caption, she wrote, "7 months of holding my heart outside my body... From those tiny fingers wrapping around mine to sleepless nights filled with snuggles—every moment has been pure magic. You've turned my world into a soft, beautiful chaos I never want to escape from."

She further added, "Here's to growing together, one giggle, one cuddle, one milestone at a time. You, my little love, are my greatest journey. #7MonthsOfLove #MummaAndBaby #MilestoneMoments." Check out the post below!

Devoleena often shares the most adorable pictures of her baby boy.

A few days ago, she visited Kamakhya Temple with her hubby Shanawaz and their son Joy. Sharing pictures from the visit, she wrote, "Blessed at the Shakti Peeth A divine day at the sacred Kamakhya Temple, where faith meets motherhood and love surrounds every step. Grateful for this spiritual moment as a family at one of India's most powerful temples dedicated to Maa Kamakhya." Meanwhile, last month, she also posted cute pictures of

baby Joy from his first photoshoot. Devoleena and Shanawaz welcomed their baby boy on December 18. Announcing the same on social media, the actress shared an adorable post that read, "thrilled to announce the arrival of our bundle of joy, our baby boy 18.12.2024. elated parents, Devoleena and Shanawaz." The caption of the post read, "Hello world! Our little angel BOY is here 18.12.2024." Devoleena tied the knot with her gym trainer Shanawaz Shaikh in December 2022. It was a court wedding in Lonavala with just close friends in attendance.



## Sonali Bendre

### Says Nothing Beats Reading When It Comes To Self-Care



For Sonali Bendre, the word self-care means spending time doing something she loves most, and it is nothing but reading. The Bollywood actress, who has always found books to be her greatest companions, shared a video on the occasion of International Self-Care Day. Through it, she revealed that her "Happy Place" was exploring new books and reading them. The 50-year-old actress, who also owns a book club in her name, was seen browsing through the shelves at a bookstore, searching for her perfect next read. Dressed casually in a blue T-shirt and flared jeans, she was also seen reading the description of the books. The video was originally shared by the Instagram page of Sonali's Book Club with the caption "A bibliophile's version of self-care? One more book... or maybe five. #InternationalSelfCareDay."

#### Sonali Bendre Shared How Reading Books Helped Her Through Her Cancer Recovery Journey

Back in 2018, Sonali was diagnosed with metastatic cancer. After three years of treatment in the US, she got free of the disease in 2021. While discussing that difficult phase of her life, she told The Times of India how reading helped her through the journey and continues to be her comfort zone. She said, "My book club kept me grounded." Speaking about her healing journey, Sonali added, "The community there became a huge

support system. It was such a comforting experience, because throughout that phase, we were selecting books, having discussions and sharing our thoughts. There were also times when I chose a book, and the community would suggest that maybe it wasn't the right time for that particular read. They would recommend books that could assist me in my healing process."

#### Sonali Bendre's Books



Besides reading books, the actress has also written two. In 2015, she published her first one, titled The Modern Gurukul: My Experiments with Parenting. Sonali shared three principles of parenting through the book that would help parents find a balance between traditions and modernity. In April this year, she published her second book, called A Book of Books. It is a guide for all types of readers, from those who are starting to read to those who have already mastered it. Through it, she shared her tips and some fun activities that one can use to start or grow their love for books.

**It Was A Bigg Boss 17 Reunion At Munawar Faruqui's First Copy Success Party**



The makers of First Copy, featuring Munawar Faruqui, organised a grand success party in Mumbai on Thursday, July 24. The success party was indeed a star-studded affair, as celebrities and A-listers attended the glamorous event in full style. Among them were Munawar's fellow Bigg Boss 17 contestants Ankita Lokhande, Vicky Jain and Samarth Jurel.

**Vicky Jain, Ankita Lokhande and Samarth Jurel's Looks**

The trio appeared together at the success party, putting their best fashion foot forward. Ankita Lokhande turned up the heat as she donned a gorgeous bright red mini dress. The actress paired her ensemble with matching red heels and kept her hair in a messy bun. Complementing her outfit, Vicky Jain opted for a neutral-toned look. The Laughter Chefs contestant looked dashing in white trousers and an off-white jacket, which he paired with a black t-shirt underneath. He further elevated his look with gelled hair and black sunglasses.

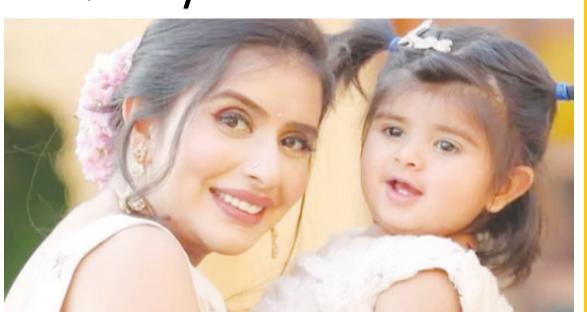
On the other hand, Samarth Jurel was seen in more casual attire as he opted for a black sweatshirt and paired it with matching trousers. Samarth's head-to-toe black look exuded effortless charm as he posed with the couple. Before entering the event, the trio was seen smiling and talking as they posed for the shutterbugs.

#### The Trio's Friendship

The trio's friendship deepened during their time at Bigg Boss 17. Throughout the years, they have been seen celebrating together on various occasions, including Samarth's birthday. Moreover, Vicky Jain and Samarth Jurel also share a close off-screen bond with each other. All three of them share a great bond with Munawar Faruqui.

On the other hand, Ankita Lokhande and Vicky Jain started dating in 2019 before getting married in a lavish ceremony in 2021. The couple has participated in various reality TV shows, including Smart Jodi, Bigg Boss 17 and Laughter Chefs.

**In New Vlog, Charu Asopa Says Those Who 'Support Quietly' Are Overlooked**



Charu Asopa is currently focusing on raising her daughter, building her clothing brand and creating content while making space for self care and gratitude in a new city.

Actor and digital creator Charu Asopa, who moved to Bikaner a few months ago with daughter Zianna, is opening up about life as a single mother. In her latest vlog titled Kuch Baaten Yun Hi, the actress spoke about managing work, fitness, parenting and self care while adjusting to a new city and routine. Fans who follow Charu already know she juggles many roles. She runs her ethnic clothing label, consistently uploads vlogs and stays committed to her fitness regime. But in her new video, the actress delved into a more personal space and opened up about what helps her keep going — a solid support system.

#### Charu Asopa On Her Support System

Charu shared a candid anecdote from her gym session that left a deep impression on her. "Aaj main jab workout kar rahi thi, main ek pair se exercise kar rahi thi, aur doosra pair support mein tha. Maine apne trainer se bola ki jisse main exercise kar rahi hu, usme itna takeleef nahi ho raha, lekin jo support kar raha hain, uspe zyada ho raha hain," she recalled added, "Toh unhone bola jo support karta hai usko zyada takeleef hoti hai."

The words struck her. "When someone is out there doing something, we see their struggle. But the ones behind them who support quietly are often overlooked. They are the reason we can do what we do," she went on to say.

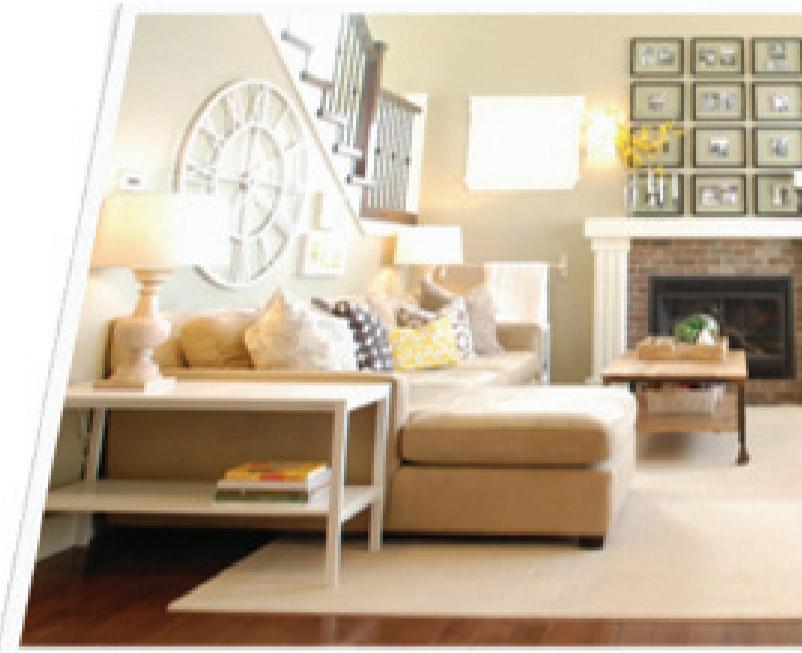
Charu credited her family, home staff and especially a woman named Priya for helping her manage life so seamlessly. She shared, "I'm able to shoot, go to the gym, handle my business and still stay calm because I know they are there. They tell me, 'You go ahead and work, we'll take care of everything here'—and that's what makes all the difference".

#### Charu Asopa's Powerful Message

Charu's message was very simple yet powerful. Never forget to express gratitude to those who support you. She emphasised, "Always be thankful to the people behind you. Gratitude is very important." Her move from Mumbai to Bikaner sparked unnecessary speculation with some trolling her for "selling suits" and claiming she left the city because she could not afford it anymore. Charu shut down the rumours with grace saying, "Aisa kuchh nahi hai ki bohot gareebi mein mera jeevan yaapan ho raha tha aur jis tarah aap logon ne portray kiya hai. Ek maa hone ke naate mera sirf focus change hua hai."

# How to make your Living room look Home

**Make your living room homely, comfortable yet elegant. Here are a few ways to do it...**



In a home, the living area, or the receiving room, is one of the busiest rooms. It's also the room, guests initially see and form a lasting



impression about the home. Hence, the living area should be well-decorated, well-laid out and inviting to guests and family members. It should project a homely, comfortable yet elegant image.

Decorating your home, particularly your living area, allows you to combine creativity, elegance and good taste. Make

good use of space, accessories and furniture available to you so you can create a living area that is inviting, relaxing, homely and elegant.

#### Window treatments

Are your drapes older than you are? May be it's time for a change. If you want to make your room less — or more — formal, window treatments can do the trick. Look through catalogs and magazines for window treatments you like, and then figure out how to make them yourself. An inexpensive fabric draped over a new curtain rod may be all you need. And don't forget to consider sheets or even your old dupattas, as window treatments. They're inexpensive and you can easily find something to complement your decor.

#### Lamps and lighting

Overall lighting sets the mood for any room. Step back and review the lighting in your living



#### Colours

Colours have psychological effects on people and their moods. When applied in your living area, colours can intimidate, invite or irritate. Decorating using colours is also an inexpensive way of decorating because it only involves painting or papering walls.

If you want your living area to be warm and inviting, then use bright orange, yellow or green. Green has several shades and it's one of the most flexible colours around. And orange sofa can be teamed with a red carpet. Whatever colour you pick for your walls, make sure your carpets and furniture are coordinated.

#### Photographs and artwork

Try breaking up the monotony of books on a shelf by tucking photos between stacks of books, or propping photos on easels for display. You can also slip pictures under glass table tops. A picture ledge (a narrow shelf specifically made for pictures) is a great place for displaying all sorts of artwork — and it keeps you from covering your walls with nail holes. Consider grouping pieces together for an eye-catching focal point.

#### Rearranging furniture

Your lifestyle or taste determines what the focal point of your living area is. If you have a piano, and this is the focal point of your living area, your furniture could be set around it. When rearranging your furniture, also consider traffic in your living area. Does the arrangement of your furniture allow free movement and flow? Does it give an uncluttered look?

It is always good to arrange furniture in off-square angles like shown in the picture above.

#### Carpets and rugs

A carpet or an area rug can be an easy way to mark off a conversation area in your living room. You can angle the rug for extra decorating drama. A brown floor can look nice with a dark chocolate carpet.

You can also add a comfy throw or your sofa and make just about any piece of furniture look like a great place to curl up.



# Decorating a room for your Child

Decorating your kid's room can be fun and exciting. You can totally indulge your inner child with the colours and prints you get to play around with. However, it's important to remember that the occupant is going to be a kid. As interior designer Renu Chainani says, "It can also be a very challenging task. Since kids are in their growing years, they need all the space in the world to run, jump and play without hurting themselves."

While you focus on making the room look all cute and beautiful, you also need to pay absolute attention to safety. Actor Sudhanshu Pandey — father of two young and boisterous sons — Nirvaan and Vivaan says, "Kids will be kids. No matter how much you try to protect them, they will run, jump, fall and hurt themselves. As parents it is our responsibility to ensure that there is nothing in the room that can cause them bodily harm."

So what are the most important factors that you need to heed while planning out your

kid's room? "Safety, space and storage," says Renu adding, "There's just no excuse where safety is concerned. No sharp corners and edges." That was precisely what TV actress Gouri Tonk did in her daughter Pari's room. "She's a growing girl and would often have her friends over. Hence, we decided to give her a dedicated room. Safety was our first concern. All her furniture- bed, study table, cupboard, etc have rounded corners and the walls, soft, rounded edges. The floor has skid proof tiles," she says. Still on the point of safety, electrical fittings are an extremely important consideration. "Keep plug points at safe heights. Also, ensure that you go in for safety sockets so kids cannot push their pencils or toys into them," Renu warns. Another important factor, as Sudhanshu points out, is window heights. "Windows in kids rooms should either be placed relatively higher or should be well shielded with a properly fitted grill," he says.

Space is another big consideration. "In

cities, space is the biggest constraint. An ideal way to ensure space in a kid's room is to opt for compact beds— pull-out, bunk or wall-mounted. This way, during the day time, there is plenty of space for them to play," says Renu. That's exactly what Gouri and Sudhanshu have done. While Gouri got the room equipped with a sliding bed, Sudhanshu opted for bunk beds for his boys. "Personally, this is the best feature of their room. The boys have so much fun in them," says the actor.

Last, but definitely no less in importance, is the consideration for storage space. Says Renu, "For kids no space, however big it is, seems enough." And Gouri couldn't disagree. "We have made a lot of provision for space. There are plenty of drawers in Pari's room that are placed at her level," she says.

There's pride in her voice when Gouri talks about her daughter's room. So we can't resist but ask her what part of the room she personally loves. "There's a small cabinet over her study table filled with all her Barbie dolls and one Barbie Prince dolls. It's my favourite because even I love dolls," she says laughing. Ezee has the prestigious Woolmark certification for adhering to international standards of being safe on woollens.

## 5 tips to care for expensive oil Paintings

# Paintings

**1. Room selection:** Paintings are displayed at the best place at home where it gets maximum views, but room selection is a handy task. A room should have proper lighting, but make sure to hang paintings away from direct sunlight, bright overhead lights and fireplaces. Don't keep the painting in the room with fluctuating temperature and also make sure, the wall where the painting is to be hanged is not damped/moist, as all these conditions tend to harm the painting in many ways.

**2. Hanging the painting:** Before you hang the painting, make sure the hook is appropriate and strong, so that the painting doesn't fall and get damaged. Don't rely on regular nail for hanging a priceless painting.

**3. Handle with care:** Whenever you need to take down the painting for cleaning, always handle the

frame without touching the surface of the painting with hands. Never use a rough cloth piece to clean the painting. The hands should be washed and dried to avoid the moisture from damaging the surface of the painting.

**4. Cleaning of painting:** The painting should not be regularly cleaned, but only when required. The front of the painting should be cleaned gently with a soft brush to remove the loose dust on the painted surface, alternatively a soft micro fibre cloth can also be used as the painting requires soft treatment and not harsh. The back of the painting could be cleaned with soft brushes.

**5. Expert call:** If you find any insect infestation, any yellowing or damage on the painting, wrap it in a bubble wrap and take it to an expert/art restorer for examination or restoration, as the case may be.

