

# Bhagwant Mann said he feels sidelined by Kejriwal: Rekha Gupta's big claim

**► Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, speaking at the India Today Woman Summit 2025, said Bhagwant Mann was not being given full authority in running the affairs in Punjab.**

**New Delhi. (Agency)**  
Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta claimed that her Punjab counterpart, Bhagwant Mann, was being sidelined and not being given a free hand in running the affairs, in a seeming swipe at her predecessor, Arvind Kejriwal. Speaking at the India Today Woman Summit 2025, Gupta said Mann wanted to work towards eliminating the drug menace and reducing the state's debts, but was not being given full authority. She suggested that the Punjab government was being effectively controlled by AAP leaders who have been rejected by the voters in Delhi. "Bhagwant Mann is not being allowed to speak. I met him during a meeting of chief ministers recently. He was very upset. He told me that, despite being a woman, you have full authority in running Delhi. But, in Punjab, Kejriwal takes the centrestage while relegating me to the sidelines," Gupta quipped.

When prodded on the matter and asked if Mann had told her on record, she said, "Some things are understood without saying as well. He wants to work for Punjab. But he is not able to do so."

### 'ARVIND KEJRIWAL BETRAYED DELHI'

Accusing Kejriwal of "betraying" the people of Delhi, Gupta said several public-related works were neglected during the 10-year-rule of AAP.

"When I face Kejriwal, I will ask why he failed to work for Delhi and betrayed the people. Now he's making noise. Kejriwal used public money to build a Sheeshmahal. I could have stayed there, but I didn't. I live and work among people. My residence is called Jan Seva Sadan," she said.



by AAP and Congress for waterlogging woes in the capital. "This is the result of 27 years of poor planning. The AAP is now instructing party workers to shoot videos of waterlogged streets after rain. But the

Gupta, a surprise pick to lead Delhi by the BJP after it returned to power after 27 years, blamed years of mismanagement

water drains quickly because we have worked towards it. We have appointed officers for each flood-prone area. I myself visited Minto Bridge four times," she said.

### ON TACKLING POLLUTION

Acknowledging that pollution was a major issue facing Delhi, Gupta accused previous governments of just paying lip service in tackling it. She said the BJP government had already prepared a dust mitigation plan and listed several measures taken ahead of winter.

"Over 1,000 water sprinklers have been deployed across Delhi. Anti-smoke guns have been mandatory for high-rise buildings. Electric poles with mist fans have been introduced in some places on a pilot basis. Mechanical sweeping machines are also being procured," she said.

# Glad Trump stated facts: Rahul Gandhi backs 'dead economy' remark on India

**Rahul Gandhi backed Donald Trump's "dead economy" remark, accusing PM Modi of destroying India's economy. He questioned Modi's silence on the 25 percent US tariff and said the government has failed on the economic front.**

### New Delhi. (Agency)

Congress leader and Lok Sabha Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday backed former US President Donald Trump's scathing remarks on the Indian economy, calling it a "dead economy" and slamming the Modi government for its alleged mismanagement. On Trump's comment, Gandhi said, "Yes, he is right, everybody knows this except the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister. Everybody knows that the Indian economy is a dead economy. I am glad that President Trump has stated a fact. The entire world knows that the Indian economy is a dead economy. The BJP has finished the economy to help Adani."

A day after slapping India with sweeping trade penalties, chief The Congress MP raised sharp



among them a 25 per cent tariff on nearly all imports, US President Donald Trump unleashed a blistering tirade against New Delhi's ties with Moscow, deriding both nations as "dead economies" and brazenly declaring he "does not care" what India does with Russia.

Gandhi also alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi works solely for businessman Gautam Adani. "PM Modi works only for one person: Adani. This (India-US trade) deal will take place, and PM Modi will do exactly what Trump says. The main issue sitting in front of India today is that the government has destroyed our economy, defence and foreign policy. They are running this country into the ground."

Trump, on his social media platform Truth Social,

announced the imposition of a 25 percent tariff along with additional penalties on Indian imports starting August 1. He cited India's continued oil imports from Russia and what he called "longstanding trade barriers" as the primary reasons.

"Remember, while India is our friend, we have, over the years, done relatively little business with them because their tariffs are far too high — among the highest in the world — and they have the most strenuous and obnoxious non-monetary trade barriers of any country," Trump posted.

The Indian government, while reacting to the tariff imposition, said it is studying the implications and remains hopeful of finalising a fair bilateral trade agreement.

# When Congress leader, UPA-era NSA discussed Hindu terror with top US officials

### New Delhi. (Agency)

Seventeen years after an explosion ripped through Bhikku Chowk in Malegaon, killing six people and injuring over a hundred, a special NIA court in Mumbai has acquitted all seven accused. On Thursday, July 31, the court declared that the prosecution had failed to establish its case beyond reasonable doubt, closing one of India's longest-running terror cases. The Malegaon blasts of 2008 resulted in the first accusations of "Hindu terror" and "saffron terror" in India.

Among others, former BJP MP Pragya Singh Thakur and Lieutenant Colonel Prasad Shrikant Purohit, who had become the faces of the so-called "Hindu terror", were cleared of charges by the NIA court.

The court ruled that mere suspicion could not carry the weight of a conviction, noting that there was no evidence to prove Purohit procured RDX or assembled the bomb, nor that Thakur was the owner of the motorcycle used in the blast.



After the verdict, Congress leaders, including former

Madhya Pradesh CM and MP Digvijaya Singh, tried to distance the party and its members from the "Hindu terror" term. It was Digvijaya Singh who was one of the first proponents of the "RSS bomb-making factory" theory, linking the outfit to not just Malegaon but several other terror attacks. The verdict has reopened memories of how the Malegaon case became the springboard for a political narrative that sought to redefine terrorism in India.

### MALEGAON BLAST: SPRINGBOARD FOR HINDU TERROR BOGEY

In 2008, it was a Congress-NCP coalition that was in power in the state. The Congress-led UPA was in power at the Centre. The explosion on September 29, 2008, came during the month of Ramzan, striking a Muslim-majority town. The Maharashtra ATS, led by Hemant Karkare, traced the motorcycle used in the attack to Pragya Singh Thakur. The bike's registration number was fake, its chassis and engine numbers filed off, but forensic labs restored the erased identity and linked it back to her.

**"US Acting Unreasonable, India Should Not Give In": Shashi Tharoor On Tariffs**

**His remarks, to reporters outside Parliament, came as the US' tariff announcement hit Indian markers and rupee a day before it is set to take effect.**

### New Delhi. (Agency)

US President Donald Trump's decision to impose a 25% additional import duty plus penalty on goods imported from India is "completely unreasonable" even as negotiations for a trade agreement are underway, Congress MP Shashi Tharoor said on Thursday. The Lok Sabha MP from Thiruvananthapuram also said that India can exercise limited flexibility during the trade talks but should not entirely buckle under US pressure and keep its national interest as priority.

His remarks, to reporters outside

Parliament, came as the US' tariff announcement hit Indian markers and rupee a day before it is set to take effect. The 25% figure would single out India more severely than other major trading partners, and threatens to unravel months of talks between the two countries. The penalty was imposed on India for purchasing crude oil and military equipment from Russia.

"He had specified a penalty for our buying oil and gas from Russia. It could take up to 35% or 45%, we don't know how much. If you are going to talk about 100% penalty, then you are going



to destroy our trade. It may be just a bargaining tactic, as you know the trade negotiations are still going on. And therefore, there is a possibility that in the course of negotiations, this may

come up. If it doesn't, it will certainly damage (trade)," Mr Tharoor, who has off late been a vocal supporter of the Narendra Modi government, said.

"America is a very big market for us, our exports alone are 87-90 billion dollars. If there is a dramatic drop, then it will hurt us. From estimates already coming, we may end up losing half a percent of our GDP," he added. The Congress leader said the US' demands are "completely unreasonable and our negotiators have every right to resist". "For example, we have about 700 million Indians who are dependent.

# "Buffoon-In-Chief In White House": A Owaisi Targets Trump Over India Tariff

**►Asaduddin Owaisi called US President Trump the "buffoon-in-chief" of White House after the tariff announcement**  
**►India is an independent sovereign country, he said**  
**►The US' measures "are a clear and deliberate attack" Indian economy, he said**

**New Delhi. (Agency)**  
All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) chief Asaduddin Owaisi on Thursday hit out at US President Donald Trump and called him the "buffoon-in-chief in the White House", a day after the latter announced a 25 per cent tariff on all goods coming from India and an unspecified penalty on the country for buying Russian crude oil and military equipment.

In a post on X, the Lok Sabha MP said the US' measures are a "deliberate attack" on the Indian economy and will have an adverse impact on foreign direct investments (FDI), exports and jobs in the country. His remarks came as senior ministers in the Union Cabinet chaired a meeting on Mr Trump's announcement to impose 25% additional import duty plus



penalty on goods imported from India. The duty will come into effect from Friday. The unspecified penalty was imposed on India for purchasing crude oil and military equipment from Russia.

"Trump has announced that Indian exports will now come with a 25% tariff. It's sad to see my country's government being bullied

by a buffoon-in-chief in the White House," Mr Owaisi said. "This tariff will come with a vague 'penalty' for trading with Russia. India is independent sovereign country. Not a vassal state that gives salami in the Emperor's court," he added.

He said the US' measures "are a clear and deliberate attack on our sovereignty and economic standing".

"I've raised the issue of rising hostile trade practices against India in Parliament for years. These tariffs will hit Indian MSMEs, manufacturers, IT firms, service providers, and even our farmers. They'll deter FDI, damage exports, and hurt jobs. While Japan will pay 15%, Vietnam will pay 20% and Indonesia has a tariff of 19%. This will hit India's competitive advantage for US exports," he said.

# Bengaluru's 'silence zones' are its loudest pockets, reveals data

**BENGALURU.(Agency)**

Bengaluru's designated 'silence zones' are emerging as some of the city's loudest pockets, with noise levels breaching permissible limits by wide margins, particularly at night, outpacing even industrial areas in violations. According to the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board's (KSPCB) May data, the RVCE Mysore Road zone registered night-time noise levels of 57.8 decibel (dB), exceeding the legal limit by 44.5%, while the Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health (NIMHANS) zone reported a 29% rise above permissible levels.

Experts said one of the major contributors to this spike is 'phantom honking' — where drivers honk not to warn, but out of sheer habit or frustration, especially around silence zones where traffic moves slowly and enforcement is lax.

The KSPCB's own regional office complex at SG Halli reported one of the steepest violations in a residential category, with a 61.8% spike at night. Meanwhile, industrial zones like Peenya and Whitefield — typically assumed to be noisy — remained well within the prescribed limits. This year, on average, the night-time noise levels in 'silence zones' like NIMHANS and RVCE Mysore Road



were recorded between 61 and 64 dB(A) from February to April. This is over 50% higher than the allowed limit of 40 dB(A) in such zones. RVCE even touched a high of 70.3 dB(A), while NIMHANS recorded levels between 56 and 63 dB(A). These areas are meant to remain quiet due to their proximity to hospitals and educational institutions, yet every month they show clear and repeated violations.

Prof Ashish Verma, Transportation Systems Engineering, Convenor, IISc Sustainable Transportation Lab, pointed out that unlike cities like Mumbai and Delhi, Bengaluru lacks basic "noise barriers", which are urgently needed in areas near hospitals and schools. He cited the example of IIT-Bombay, where noise

barriers were successfully installed to mitigate the increased noise levels caused by the widening of the Jogeshwari-Vikhroli Link Road (JVLR) to keep the campus noise-free. In contrast, he said nothing of that sort has been done so far in Bengaluru, despite growing traffic and urban activity. Noise, he added, has major effects on physical and mental health, and this cannot be ignored.

Urban planning itself also plays a role, with Prof Verma pointing out that many of Bengaluru's silence zones sit along arterial roads or near major traffic signals, exposing them to steady flows of commuter and heavy vehicle traffic. For instance, the NIMHANS zone lies beside a signal junction and flyover ramp, while RVCE is located on the congested Mysore Road corridor.

These overlaps between high-mobility infrastructure and protected zones, he argued, making it practically difficult to maintain noise below regulatory thresholds. Rajkumar Dugar, founder and convenor of Citizens for Citizens (C4C), highlighted that along with phantom honking, most vehicle horns on roads today are either too loud, shrill, or multi-toned and often illegal. "Honking is rampant even in silence zones, residential areas at night, and without any real need.

**Ahmedabad.(Agency)**  
The death of two lion cubs outside the Gir forest's protected zone has raised fears of a potential infectious disease outbreak in the area. The cubs, under a year old, were found dead a day apart on July 27 and 28, in the Jafraabat range of the Shetrupji division. Veterinarians say this could possibly be from an underlying infection caused by parasites, or the cubs could have been anaemic.

After the deaths, two lionesses and six cubs from the same pride were rescued on Tuesday, said Ram Ratan Nala, chief conservator of forest Junagadh (wildlife). Examination revealed low haemoglobin levels in some cubs. Measures for haemoglobin correction are ongoing, and the group will soon be returned to the wild, vets said. Dhananjay Sadhu, deputy conservator of forest for Shetrupji division, said the deaths and subsequent rescue of the pride are two different incidents. The cubs were weak, and the group was rescued to rule out the possibility of a disease outbreak, he said.

Sadhu said it is common that in litters of two or more cubs, the weakest one loses out on feeding, and eventually dies, adding that the deaths are related to such malnutrition. A senior veterinarian refusing to be quoted echoed the possibility. "But chances of an underlying parasitic infection cannot be ruled out. It's monsoon, and factors like

humidity, temperature, presence of tall grass or wooded areas influence tick activity."

An official said samples also need to be initially checked for canine distemper virus at the forest department's facility. "If they raise even the slightest suspicion, they should be sent to Pune for further verification," he said. Officials not wanting to be named said the area where the cubs



were found dead was outside the protected zone, pointing to a possible tick infection. Senior officials said teams are keeping a close watch in the Jafraabat area. "If more deaths are reported, especially of adults, the area will be sanitised, and a thorough scanning will be undertaken," an official said.

## 70-km roads to be built along SWDs in Bengaluru's RR Nagar



**BENGALURU.(Agency)**

Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao directed officials to initiate steps for road construction in the buffer zone of stormwater drains (SWD) near the Hosakerehalli Kodi Road in RR Nagar zone.

During an on-site inspection, he said land acquisition, if necessary, should be done through the Transferable Development Rights (TDR). He also inspected the adjoining crossroads near Kodi Road in Hosakerehalli and instructed that repair works be undertaken to ensure smooth vehicular movement.

BS Prahallad, Technical Director of Bengaluru Smart Infrastructure Limited (B-SMILE), said, "To reduce traffic congestion in the city, an ambitious project has been initiated to develop 300 km of roads along the SWD buffer zones under the 'Sanchara Yukta' programme. Of this, 70 km of roads are planned within RR Nagar zone. Developing roads in the buffer zone will improve connectivity to several areas."

## Confusion over misplaced gravestone at Puthumala



**PUTHUMALA.(Agency)**

A mix-up in the installation of a gravestone led to emotional scenes at the Puthumala graveyard on Wednesday, after the memorial stone of Mundakkai native Famil Ifaf was mistakenly placed on the grave of Puchiriamattom resident Pandian. The error came to light when Pandian's elderly parents, Palaniswamy and Pappathi, were unable to find their son's final resting place. After a distressing search, it was Pandian's brother, Babu, who identified the correct grave using the number etched on the headstone.

Pandian's mother, who is in her 80s, broke down in tears upon realising the mix-up. "We live in Kalladi. My parents are old and can't visit often. We hadn't installed a memorial stone yet, but the grave had a number. I visit regularly, so I was familiar with the location. Even the last time I came, there wasn't a memorial stone. When my parents arrived on Wednesday and couldn't find the grave, they panicked," said Babu.

He believes the confusion may have been caused by duplicate serial numbers. "The authorities may have given the same number to Ifaf's family. We don't want to blame anyone, but we'll approach them to make sure the error is corrected," he added.

Meppadi panchayat secretary Shaju M told that proper steps will be taken to remove the wrong memorial stone. "The issue has come to our notice. It is the family of the deceased who places memorial stones at graves. From my understanding, Ifaf's family had some confusions with the identification number. It was due to today's busy schedule that we couldn't address the issue."

## Young biker from state rides all the way to North Pole

**MUMBAI.(Agency)**

A young motorcyclist from Maharashtra has achieved an extraordinary feat by riding all the way from Maharashtra to Nordkapp, the closest accessible point to the geographic North Pole.

Yogesh Alekari, originally from Sangli and now residing in Mumbai, completed this remarkable journey under his Instagram handle @roaming\_wheels. Upon reaching Nordkapp in the Arctic Circle, he displayed a portrait of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, describing it as a moment of immense pride.

His expedition, which commenced on May 1 with former Rajya Sabha MP Vinay Sahasrabuddhe's send-off, carries the message of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam". Working in collaboration with Mumbai RTO, and with additional transport commissioner Bharat Kalaskar, Yogesh has been promoting road safety awareness internationally.

Starting from India, his route included Nepal, Tibet's Everest Base Camp at 17,700 ft, and



Lhasa. He continued through the Gobi Desert to Kazakhstan, visiting the Indian Embassy, before exploring Kyrgyzstan and

Uzbekistan. Despite a 25-day delay in Tashkent due to the Russia-Ukraine situation, he persevered, entering Russia via

## APSRTC free travel for women across state up to Express buses

**GUNTUR.(Agency)**

The APSRTC will implement the free bus travel scheme for women across all districts without any route restrictions, covering services such as Palle Velugu, Ultra Palle Velugu, Express, Metro Express, and City Ordinary, though formal GO in this regard is still awaited, said Managing Director Ch Dwaraka Tirumala Rao.

Speaking at a review meeting of Nellore Zone RTC depot managers on Wednesday, said the free bus travel scheme reflects the government's commitment to women's empowerment. The scheme will be implemented from August 15, using existing RTC buses and personnel. RTC officials should take measures to ensure smooth implementation of the free travel scheme, he said.



implementation of the scheme, he said. About 1,050 new buses will soon be inducted, and that 1,500-2,000 diesel buses will be replaced per annum with electric buses as per Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's vision, he said.

## 25% tariff threatens key export sectors

**Ahmedabad.(Agency)**

Industries across Gujarat are bracing for potential turbulence after US President Donald Trump announced a sweeping 25% tariff on all Indian imports. The move has rung alarm bells, particularly in Gujarat's textiles sector, which counts the US among its top export markets.

"The move to impose a 25% tariff on Indian textile imports to the US is a significant setback for the industry," said Ronak Chiripal, promoter of Chiripal Group. "Such a tariff would impact price competitiveness, particularly for mid- to high-value products. While recent trade agreements with the UK and Australia are creating new opportunities, uncertainty around the US-India trade deal creates a planning and margin challenge for Indian exporters." The impact is expected to spill over into other key sectors as well, including

chemicals and ceramics, both of which contribute significantly to Gujarat's export basket. Exporters across sectors are actively diversifying markets and product lines, emphasizing the



real impact to start showing in the coming months." Trade experts say the development could re-ignite pressure for an expedited bilateral trade pact with the US, especially as geopolitical dynamics are rapidly shifting. Nilesh Jetpuriya, former president of the Morbi Ceramic Association, said, "The Morbi ceramics industry will be impacted, but we are closely analysing the tariff structure on other key ceramic-supplying countries. Last year, there was a process to impose anti-dumping duties on Indian ceramic products, which led to the US share in our exports falling to 7.5% from 9.5% the year before."

## Planting roots in Greater Noida, Western Sydney finds a second home in India

**CHERUTHURUTHY.(Agency)**

**MUMBAI.** It was more than just a ribbon-cutting moment—it was the sowing of seeds. With a nod from India's University Grants Commission, Western Sydney University (WSU) is now poised to establish its first international campus in Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh, from August 2026. It's a move that's as strategic as it is symbolic, bringing to India the pedagogical heart of one of Australia's most forward-thinking institutions.

But this isn't WSU's first footfall on Indian soil. For over two decades, the university has quietly and steadily nurtured a robust relationship with the country. Indian students—comprising 20% of its international cohort—have been a permanent thread in the university's multicultural tapestry. Currently, more than 1,300 Indians are enrolled across WSU's campuses in Australia, drawn to its industry-aligned, globally-accredited programs. Now, with the India campus, the bridge between the two nations just got shorter—and a lot more real. The campus will open its doors with undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Business, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, eventually growing into disciplines like Data Science and core Sciences. But it's the promise of



relevance that's most striking. With plans to embed agriculture-focused content into its curriculum, the university is looking beyond textbooks—straight into the heart of India's rural economy.

Professor Jennifer Westacott AC, Chancellor of WSU, calls it a "major strategic commitment" that aligns global academic excellence with India's national priorities. "We're not just expanding our footprint. We're partnering with India's vision," she said. That vision includes delivering education that plugs into India's skill gaps, collaborates with industry, and catalyses community-led innovation. Signature addition to the Greater Noida campus is 'Launch Pad', WSU's globally recognised startup

incubator that has already backed over 1,000 ventures in Australia. This isn't just a classroom with beanbags—it's a full-fledged business accelerator. Indian students will get hands-on training in entrepreneurship, from ideation to funding, with access to mentors, networks, and industry partners. It's an ecosystem designed to

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# PM showed seriousness on the demand to bring Kartarpur Sahib to India, raised the issue in Parliament: Ramdas Malik

New Delhi. The issue of bringing Kartarpur Sahib to India, which has been raised for years by Delhi BJP Business Cell Co-convenor and social worker Ramdas Malik, has now got recognition at the national level. By raising this sensitive and historical issue in Parliament, PM Modi has given a clear indication that the government is taking the sentiments of the Sikh community very seriously. Ramdas Malik said that for a long time there has been a demand that efforts should be made to include Kartarpur Sahib, which is currently located in Pakistan, within the borders of India so that crores of devotees can get the right to pay obeisance on the land of their first Guru, Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji, without visa. Malik said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while speaking on this subject in Parliament, said that Kartarpur Sahib is a symbol of faith of Sikhs and it is unfortunate that this place is across the border today despite being just a few kilometers away from India. The government is seriously considering this subject and concrete steps can be taken on this in the future. This statement has brought a new ray of hope for the Sikh community, especially the devotees of Delhi and Punjab. Reacting to this, Ramdas Malik said, this was not just my voice but the voice of the entire Sikh community. Today the Prime Minister has honoured our struggle by raising this issue in the Parliament. Now we hope that the government will take concrete steps in this direction. Political analysts believe that if this attempt succeeds, it will not only be a historic achievement from a reli-

gious point of view but can also give a new direc-



tion to India-Pak relations. When Pakistan was defeated in the 1965 war, the Prime Minister of the Congress government, Late Shri Lal Bahadur

Shastri

signed an agreement with Pakistan in Tashkent. At that time, the agreement should have been made on the principle of 'give and take' - that is, on the basis of transactions. Under that agreement, India could have demanded Kartarpur Sahib or POK (Pak-occupied Kashmir) from Pakistan. India could have put a condition that if Pakistan is willing to make an agreement, then it will have to hand over these holy places to us. But this did not happen, and this decision proved to have a deep impact on the morale of our forces. After this, when the second war took place during the tenure of the Congress government, during that time also, the Shimla Agreement was signed with Pakistan's Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto during Indira Gandhi's time. In that agreement too, India could have demanded Kartarpur Sahib. Pakistan was completely helpless at that time. It had come to its knees and could have agreed to hand over Kartarpur to India. But unfortunately, the Congress Party was never serious about this subject. The policy of Congress has always been of Muslim appeasement, through which they wanted to secure the vote bank of the Muslims of India. And this was the reason why they always tried to keep Pakistan happy. And gave priority to political gains over the interests of the country.

## "Viksit Amritsar" – A Visionary Step by Taranjit Singh Sandhu Towards a Brighter Future for the City

Amritsar, July 21: Former Indian Ambassador to the United States, current advisor to the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum, and Chairman of the Geopolitical Institute, Sardar Taranjit Singh Sandhu has continued to work with full dedication towards realizing the vision he presented for the development of Amritsar during the Lok Sabha elections, under the banner of "Viksit Amritsar". With active collaboration from the Indian diaspora—especially global communities connected to Amritsar—he is striving to transform the city's economic, technological, and social landscape. Despite being one of India's most historic and culturally rich cities, Amritsar still faces serious challenges and developmental needs. In response, the "Viksit Amritsar" initiative has launched several concrete measures aimed at sectors such as healthcare, tourism, agriculture, industry, trade, education, information technology, women empowerment, and youth entrepreneurship. The central office of this mission has been established at Samundari House, Amritsar. Sardar Taranjit Singh Sandhu, founder of "Viksit Amritsar", senior BJP leader and a trusted associate of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, and External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar, expressed satisfaction that the initiative has already extended support to reputed institutions rising above caste and religion, such as: And has also provided financial assistance to Rotary International Club's upcoming hospital near Ajnala. He further added that "Viksit Amritsar" has taken significant steps to transform the city into a global academic and industrial hub. The initiative played a crucial role in establishing the first phase of collaboration between Guru Nanak Dev University (GNDU) and Maryland State University (USA). GNDU Vice-Chancellor Dr. Jaspal Singh has already visited Maryland, and the Governor of Maryland is expected to visit Amritsar soon with a delegation to sign an MoU and advance collaboration in the field of computer science. Sandhu also announced that scholarships will be offered to Amritsar students currently studying at Maryland University under this initiative. Additionally, Dr. Varinder Kumar Pal, Director of the Institute of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi, is expected to visit GNDU to sign an MoU focused on research for urban planning and beautification of Amritsar. These collective efforts aim to develop Amritsar into a trade, industrial, and tourism hub. Sardar Taranjit Singh Sandhu emphasized that all these are personal and private initiatives, not government schemes. He stated, "If the people of Amritsar rise above the boundaries of caste, religion, and political affiliation, and come together as one, we can change the destiny of our city. Amritsar can re-emerge with a new shine and renewed identity."

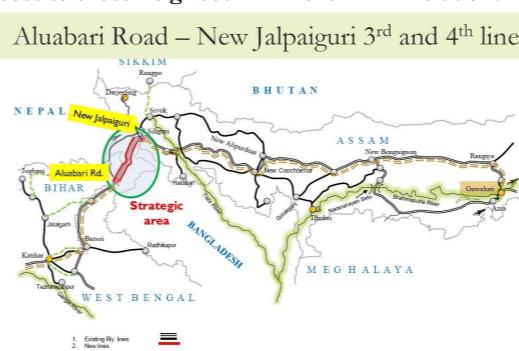
## Road - New Jalpaiguri 3rd and 4th Line approved by Union Cabinet To boost rail connectivity in Northeastern States

### The Sikh Times

Malgao: The Union Cabinet has approved the 3rd and 4th railway line between Aluabari Road and New Jalpaiguri which marks a significant milestone in enhancing rail connectivity in the Northeastern region of India. Spanning a total length of 57 kilometres, under the jurisdiction of Northeast Frontier Railway, the project is approved at an estimated cost of approximately Rs. 1,786 crores. This project aims to address the growing demand for transportation infrastructure in one of the country's most vital regions. By introducing additional tracks, it will

reduce congestion, allowing for more efficient and faster movement of both passenger and freight trains, thus cutting travel times and improving the overall reliability of services. The increased rail capacity will not only ease the burden on the existing infrastructure but will also facilitate the transportation of goods such as tea, timber and agricultural products, thus boosting the local and regional economy. This project is part of the Delhi - Guwahati High Density Network route and holds strategic importance due to its proximity to the international borders with Bhutan, Bangladesh and Nepal, providing vital

access to these neighbour- ment will include 7 sta- Aluabari Road - New Jalpaiguri 3rd and 4th line



ing regions. It passes through districts in Bihar (Kishanganj) and West Bengal (Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling and Uttar Dinajpur), serving as a crucial link for both passenger and freight transport. The infrastructure develop-

tions, 99 bridges and the construction of 3 Road Over Bridges and 8 Road Under Bridges. The project aims to facilitate the movement of 21.6 million tons of additional cargo, leading to a savings of Rs 2,551 crore in logistics costs. It will also contribute significantly to fuel conservation by saving 2.14 crore litres of diesel every year. In the broader context, the Aluabari Road - New Jalpaiguri 3rd and 4th Line project is poised to not only strengthen transportation infrastructure but also act as a catalyst for economic growth, regional integration and enhanced quality of life in the Northeast. This project will enhance the overall efficiency of the transportation network across Bihar, West Bengal and the Northeast,

easing congestion on this crucial corridor that serves as a vital gateway between the eastern and NE region of India. NFR remains committed towards executing this project efficiently, ensuring maximum benefit to the region's connectivity and development.

### NAME CHANGE

I, Sudhir Chander D/o Bindra Chander, R/o A-560, Shastri Nagar, North West Delhi-110052, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Sristi Chander.

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## NEWS BOX

## Australian court rejects X Corp's appeal in child safety case, orders legal costs

**MELBOURNE . (Agency)**

An Australian appeals court on Thursday ruled against X Corp., rejecting a challenge to a safety watchdog's demands for details on how the Elon Musk-owned company was combating widespread child exploitation material on its platform.

Three federal court judges unanimously rejected X's appeal against a federal court decision in October last year that the company was obliged to respond to a notice from eSafety Commissioner Julie Inman Grant on child abuse material being shared on X, which is incorporated in Texas. The judges also ordered X to pay the commissioner's legal costs. Inman Grant's office describes itself as the world's first government agency dedicated to keeping people safe online.

Inman Grant has driven world-first legislation that will ban Australian children younger than 16 from social media platforms including X from December.

The federal court case goes back to early 2023, when Inman Grant asked some of the world's largest technology companies to report on what they were doing about child abuse material appearing on their platforms. A reporting notice, issued under Australia's Online Safety Act, was sent to Twitter Inc., incorporated in Delaware, in February that year. Twitter merged with X the following month. X arguments against complying with Inman Grant's order included that Twitter no longer existed as a legal entity and that X did not carry its predecessor's regulatory obligations in Australia. Inman Grant, a former Twitter employee, welcomed Thursday's ruling. "This judgment confirms the obligations to comply with Australian regulations still apply, regardless of a foreign company's merger with another foreign company."

## Lithuania Prime Minister Gintautas Paluckas steps down amid corruption probe

**VILNIUS. (Agency)**

Lithuania Prime Minister Gintautas Paluckas stepped down on Thursday following investigations into his business dealings that prompted protests in the Baltic country's capital calling for his resignation.

Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda announced Paluckas' resignation to the media on Thursday morning. A spokesperson for Paluckas did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Paluckas, a newly established leader of the center-left Social Democrats, ascended to the role late last year after a three-party coalition formed following parliamentary elections in October. His entire cabinet is now expected also to resign, potentially leaving the country without an effective government weeks before Russia holds joint military exercises with neighboring Belarus. Lithuanian foreign policy is unlikely to change as a result of the government shakeup. Nausėda, who was elected separately, is the country's face on the world stage and has been one of the most stalwart supporters of Ukraine in its fight against invading Russian forces. Paluckas has recently been dogged by media investigations into his business and financial dealings. Several media outlets published investigations in July regarding Paluckas' past and present ventures and alleged mishandlings, including ones more than a decade ago. The Baltic country's anti-corruption and law enforcement agencies subsequently launched their own probes.

In a devastating blow to his reputation, the media also revealed that Paluckas never paid a significant part of a 16,500 euro fine (\$19,039) in connection with a 2012 criminal case dubbed the "rat poison scandal."

Paluckas was convicted of mishandling the bidding process for Vilnius' rat extermination services while serving as the capital city's municipality administration director. Judges for the country's top court in 2012 ruled that he abused his official position by illegally granting privileges to the company that offered the highest price in the bid.

## Russia's Earthquake Among 10 Strongest Ever. Here's What They've In Common

**Melbourne. (Agency)**

Today at about 11:30am local time, a magnitude 8.8 earthquake struck off the coast of Russia's Kamchatka Peninsula in the country's far east.

Originating at a depth of roughly 20 kilometres, today's powerful earthquake - among the ten strongest in recorded history and the largest worldwide since 2011 - has caused building damage and injuries in the largest nearby city, Petropavlosk-Kamchatsky, just 119 kilometres from the epicentre.

Tsunami warnings and evacuations have reverberated through Russia, Japan and Hawaii, with advisories issued for the Philippines, Indonesia, and as far away as New Zealand and Peru. The Pacific region is highly prone to powerful earthquakes and resulting tsunamis because it's located in the so-called Ring of Fire, a region of heightened seismic and volcanic activity. All ten most powerful earthquakes recorded in modern history were located on the Ring of Fire. Here's why the underlying structure of our planet makes this part of the world so volatile.

Why does Kamchatka get such strong earthquakes? Immediately offshore the Kamchatka Peninsula is the Kuril-Kamchatka Trench, a tectonic plate boundary where the Pacific Plate is being thrust beneath the Okhotsk Plate. While tectonic plates move continuously relative to one another, the interface at tectonic plates is often "stuck". The strain related to plate motion builds up until it exceeds the strength of the plate interface, at which point it is released as a sudden rupture - an earthquake. Because of the large areas of interface at plate boundaries, both in length and depth, the rupture can span large areas of the plate boundary.

## Dozens killed by IDF while seeking food in Gaza as US envoy heads to Israel

### Footage showed wounded people being ferried away from the scene of the shooting in wooden carts, as well as crowds of people carrying bags of flour.

**DEIR AL-BALAH . (Agency)**

At least 48 Palestinians were killed and dozens were wounded by Israeli troops on Wednesday while waiting for food at a crossing in the Gaza Strip, according to a hospital that received the casualties. The latest violence around aid distribution came as the US Mideast envoy was heading to Israel for talks. Israel's military offensive and blockade have led to the "worst-case scenario of famine" in the coastal territory of some 2 million Palestinians, according to the leading international authority on hunger crises. A breakdown of law and order has seen aid convoys overwhelmed by desperate crowds. US envoy Steve Witkoff, who has led the Trump

administration's efforts to wind down the nearly 22-month war and release hostages taken in Hamas' Oct. 7 attack that sparked the fighting, will arrive in Israel on Thursday for talks on the situation in Gaza. Wooden carts ferry wounded as survivors carry flour. Shifa Hospital in Gaza City said the dead and wounded were among crowds massed at the Zikim Crossing, the main entry point for humanitarian aid to northern Gaza. It was not immediately clear who opened fire and there was no immediate comment from the Israeli military, which controls the crossing. Associated Press footage showed wounded people being ferried away from the scene of the shooting in wooden carts, as well as crowds of people carrying bags of flour. Al-Saraya Field Hospital, where critical cases are stabilized before transfer to main hospitals, said it received more than 100 dead and wounded. Fares Awad, head of the Gaza Health Ministry's emergency service, said some bodies were taken to other hospitals, indicating the toll could rise. Israeli strikes and gunfire had earlier killed at least 46 Palestinians overnight and into Wednesday, most of them among crowds seeking food, health officials said. Another

seven Palestinians, including a child, died of malnutrition-related causes, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. The Israeli military did not immediately comment on any of the strikes. It says it only targets



militants and blames civilian deaths on Hamas, because the group's militants operate in densely populated areas. Israel has 'eased' its blockade but obstacles remain. Under heavy international pressure, Israel announced a series of measures over the weekend to facilitate the entry of more international aid to Gaza, but aid workers say much more is needed. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, or IPC, the leading world authority on hunger

## Russia hits Kyiv with missile and drone attack, killing six, injuring 52

**KYIV. (Agency)**

Russia attacked Ukraine's capital with missiles and drones overnight, killing at least six people including a 6-year-old boy, Ukrainian authorities said Thursday. Kyiv City Military Administration head Tymur Tkachenko said at least 52 other people were injured in the attacks, and that the number was likely to rise. A large part of a nine-story residential building collapsed after it was struck, Tkachenko added. Rescue teams were at the scene to rescue people trapped under the rubble. "Missile strike. Directly on a residential building. People are under the rubble. All services are on site," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy wrote on his official Telegram. Images from the scene showed plumes of smoke



emanating from a partially damaged building and debris strewn on the ground. At least 27 locations across Kyiv were hit by the attack, Tkachenko said, with the heaviest damage seen in the Solomiyskyi and Sviatoshynskyi districts. US President Donald Trump said Tuesday he's giving Russian

President Vladimir Putin a shorter deadline — Aug. 8 — for peace efforts to make progress or Washington will impose punitive sanctions and tariffs.

Western leaders have accused Putin of dragging his feet in US-led peace efforts in an attempt to capture more Ukrainian land.

## Myanmar junta ends state of emergency in election run-up

### The order gave junta chief Min Aung Hlaing supreme power over the legislature, executive and judiciary, but he has recently touted elections as an off-ramp to the conflict.

**NEW YORK. (Agency)**

YANGON: Myanmar's junta ended its state of emergency on Thursday, ramping up plans for a December election that opposition groups pledged to boycott and monitors said will be used to consolidate the military's power. The military declared a state of emergency in February 2021 as it deposed the civilian government of democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi, sparking a many-sided civil war which has claimed thousands of lives.

The order gave junta chief Min Aung Hlaing supreme power over the legislature, executive and judiciary, but he has recently touted elections as an off-ramp to the conflict. Opposition groups including ex-lawmakers ousted in the coup have pledged to snub the poll, which a UN expert last month dismissed as "a fraud" designed to legitimise the military's continuing rule. The junta seized power making unsubstantiated claims of fraud in a

2020 election. Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy won in a landslide, and she remains jailed alongside their other top leaders. "The state of emergency is abolished today in order for the country to hold elections on the path to a multi-party democracy," junta spokesman Zaw Min Tun said in a voice message shared with reporters. "Elections will



be held within six months," he added. An order signed by Min Aung Hlaing cancelled the emergency rule which handed power to him as the armed forces chief, returning it to the head of state. However Min Aung Hlaing also occupies that office as the country's acting president. "We have already passed the first chapter," Min Aung Hlaing said in a speech in Naypyidaw

reported in state newspaper The Global New Light of Myanmar on Thursday. "Now, we are starting the second chapter," he told members of the junta's administration council at what the newspaper called an "honorary ceremony" for its members.

No date set. Analysts predict that following the election he will keep a role as either president or armed forces

chief and consolidate power in that office, thereby extending his tenure as de facto ruler. A flurry of notices announced a new "Union Government" had been formed alongside a "National Security and Peace Commission" to oversee defence and the election process, both led by Min Aung Hlaing. "The upcoming election will be held this December, and efforts will be made to enable all eligible voters to cast their ballots."

The Global New Light of Myanmar reported, paraphrasing another part of his speech. A foreign ministry spokesman of junta ally China said Beijing supports "Myanmar's various parties and factions properly resolving differences through political means under the constitutional and legal framework."

## How an LGBTQ+ cafe's neon sign became a beacon for hate in Berlin

### Last year, there was a 40% increase in violence targeting LGBTQ+ people in 12 of Germany's 16 federal states as compared to 2023.

**BERLIN. (Agency)**

A neon sign inside the Das Hoven cafe in a trendy Berlin neighborhood proudly proclaims "QUEER AND FRIENDS." The sign was intended to show the cafe is a safe space for LGBTQ+ people. But it has also become a beacon for hate and homophobic attacks. Owner Daniel Zarte said there are 45 pending criminal investigations related to the cafe over the past year and a half, ranging from verbal and physical attacks on patrons and workers to windows being broken or covered in feces and swastika graffiti. One person even stood outside the cafe with a gun. "An act of terror," Zarte

said. "I sometimes have panic attacks in the morning and am afraid to look at my cell phone because I'm afraid that something has happened again. Attacks against queer people and gay-friendly establishments are rising across Germany, including in Berlin, a city that has historically embraced the queer community. Last year, there was a 40% increase in violence targeting LGBTQ+ people in 12 of Germany's 16 federal states as compared to 2023, according to the Association of Counseling Centers for Victims of Right-Wing, Racist and Antisemitic Violence. Activists say those figures only show a fraction of the problem's scope because victims are often afraid to come forward. They partly blame the rise of the far-right across Europe, including in Germany where the Alternative for Germany party made significant gains in the February election. Hostility toward LGBTQ+ people serves as a "rallying cry" for believers in right-wing extremism, according to Judith

Porath, the association's managing director. Experts have seen an increase in demonstrations and violence among neo-Nazis, most of whom are young men.

Bastian Fink, the head of MANEO, an organization tracking anti-gay violence in



the capital city, said those who are openly queer on Berlin's roads "automatically run a very, very high risk simply because of who they are. To be attacked, to be insulted, to be spat on. We have these scenarios every day." The fear was palpable at Saturday's Christopher Street Day parade in Berlin. The annual Pride event

crises, has stopped short of declaring famine in Gaza but said Tuesday that the situation has dramatically worsened and warned of "widespread death" without immediate action. COGAT, the Israeli military body that facilitates the entry of aid, said over 220 trucks entered Gaza on Tuesday. That's far below the 500-600 trucks a day that UN agencies say are needed, and which entered during a six-week ceasefire earlier this year. The United Nations is still struggling to deliver the aid that does enter the strip, with most trucks unloaded by crowds in zones controlled by the Israeli military. An alternative aid system run by the Israeli-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, or GHF, has also been marred by violence. More than 1,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire while seeking aid since May, most near sites run by GHF, according to witnesses, local health officials and the UN human rights office. The Israeli military says it has only fired warning shots at people who approach its forces, and GHF says its armed contractors have only used pepper spray or fired warning shots to prevent deadly crowding.

## May sell oil to India some day: Amid tariff rift, Trump says US to develop Pakistan's oil reserves

**World. (Agency)**

Just hours after hitting India with steep tariffs, US President Donald Trump revealed a new trade agreement with Pakistan focused on developing the country's oil reserves. In a pointed remark, he suggested Islamabad might sell oil to New Delhi "some day." In a post on Truth Social, Trump stated that the US and Pakistan were currently in the process of selecting an oil company for the partnership.

"We have just concluded a Deal with the Country of Pakistan, whereby Pakistan and the United States will work together on developing their massive Oil Reserves. We are in the process of choosing the Oil Company that will lead this Partnership. Who knows, maybe they'll be selling Oil to India some day!" Trump wrote. The US President's post came hours after he announced a 25% on India and an additional penalty for India's purchases of Russian energy and military equipment. Trump's surprise announcement came a day after Indian officials said that a US trade team would visit from August 25 to negotiate a trade deal.

The announcement is being seen as a pressure tactic to get New Delhi to agree to demands made by the US, which has, in recent days, got favourable trade deals with major partners like Japan, the UK and the European Union. Commenting on the development, New Delhi said it is studying the implications of these tariffs and is still hopeful of concluding a fair, balanced and mutually beneficial trade agreement.

"India and the US have been engaged in negotiations on concluding a fair, balanced and mutually beneficial bilateral trade agreement over the last few months. We remain committed to that objective," it said.

Meanwhile, Trump, in a Truth Social post, further stated that he had conversations on trade deals with leaders of many countries, noting "all of whom want to make the United States extremely happy." "We are very busy in the White House today working on Trade Deals. I have spoken to the Leaders of many countries, all of whom want to make the United States 'extremely happy.' I will be meeting with the South Korean Trade Delegation this afternoon. South Korea is right now at a 25% Tariff, but they have an offer to buy down those Tariffs. I will be interested in hearing what that offer is," the post read. He also noted that many countries are currently making offers to the US for "Tariff reduction." "Likewise, other Countries are making offers for a Tariff reduction. All of this will help reduce our Trade Deficit in a very major way. A full report will be released at the appropriate time. Thank you for your attention to this matter. MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!" it further read.

commemorates the 1969 Stonewall rebellion in New York City, when a spontaneous street uprising was triggered by a police raid on the Stonewall Inn gay bar on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village. "The mood is actually tense: People are afraid, they are unsettled," Thomas Hoffmann, a member of the event's executive board, said Saturday. Hundreds of thousands of people showed up for the celebration, dancing to techno beats as they marched to the iconic Brandenburg Gate. "That is really a powerful, wonderful sign for more equality," Hoffmann added. Hoffmann and others have long wanted German lawmakers to amend the constitution to explicitly include the legal protection of queer people from discrimination based on gender identity. But that looks unlikely to become a political priority. For Zarte, the stress of hate crimes and politics is nonstop, except during the Christopher Street Day parade, which always brings him to tears.

15-yr-old moves HC to get her Class X certs from parents



Ahmedabad. (Agency)

A 15-year-old girl from Vadodara has approached the Gujarat high court seeking directions to the Child Welfare Committee to obtain her education certificates from her parents so that she can continue her studies in Vadodara. The parents had secured her admission in Class 11 at a school in Patan, but she was reluctant to join them, preferring to stay with her maternal grandparents who had obtained provisional admission for her at a school in Vadodara. In her petition, the girl stated that her parents separated over 13 years ago, and she, her mother and maternal grandparents had been living together. Her father neither visited her nor acknowledged her birth. After the prolonged separation, her parents divorced in 2018. However, during the Covid-19 lockdown, the parents resumed communication and reunited.

The parents began living together in Patan, leaving the girl who continued to be raised by her grandparents in Vadodara. The elderly citizens also bore her educational expenses.

According to the petition, after the girl completed Class 10, her parents obtained her marksheet and leaving certificates and insisted she join them. The mother even secured her admission at a school in Patan. However, the girl insisted on living with her grandparents and continuing her studies in Vadodara.

Her grandparents approached the Child Welfare Committee in Vadodara to secure her testimonials from her parents after her mother left them. They managed to obtain duplicates of her education certificates and secured provisional admission for her in Class 11 at a Vadodara school. However, the school authorities insisted on the original documents to finalise her admission and eventually cancelled it.

## Staffer held for Rs 378 crore crypto theft from Bengaluru firm

BENGALURU. (Agency)

In a major online heist, cyber fraudsters hacked the digital wallet of Bengaluru-based Neblio Technologies Private Limited, a cryptocurrency exchange firm, and siphoned off Rs 378 crore. The Whitefield CEN police, who have registered a case, said that a company employee was arrested on suspicion of involvement in the fraud. According to the FIR filed on July 22 by Hardeep Singh, vice president of Public Policy and Government Affairs at the company, the theft occurred on July 19 around 2.30 am.

The hacker initially transferred 1 USDT, a cryptocurrency, to another account. Nearly five hours later, USDT 44 million (approximately Rs 378 crore) was moved to six different accounts. The company found that the laptop of its employee Rahul Agarwal was hacked, and Rs 15 lakh was remitted to his account. When questioned, Agarwal claimed he was engaged in a part-time job, the FIR stated, adding the company strictly mandated that he was not allowed to use a laptop for other purposes.

A senior police officer said that Agarwal, a resident of Sanjapur Main Road, was arrested on Sunday. Police are verifying whether Agarwal's laptop was hacked or if he himself masterminded the theft, or if there is a nexus between the arrested accused and others. He has been taken into police custody. The Whitefield CEN police have registered a case under sections 66 (computer related offences), 43 (penalty and compensation for damage to computer, computer system etc), 66(c) (identity theft) and 66(d) (cheating by personation by using computer resource) of Information Technology Act and 303 (theft), 316 (4) (criminal breach of trust), 318 (4) (cheating), 319 (2) (cheating by personation) of BNS.

## Dharmasthala mass burial case: SIT launches helpline as rains hamper probe; radar tech under consideration

MANGALURU. (Agency)

As the Special Investigation Team (SIT) continues exhumation operations in the chilling Dharmasthala mass burial case, it has launched a public helpline urging citizens to come forward with any relevant information. So far, skeletal remains are yet to be recovered from five of the 13 sites identified by a whistleblower, even as inclement weather and hilly terrain pose major challenges to the ongoing search.

In a press communiqué, the SIT said that citizens can contact the team between 10 am and 5 pm at its temporary office at the Inspection Bungalow in Mallikatte, Kadri, Mangaluru. Information can also be shared via WhatsApp on 8277986369,

by telephone at 0824-2005301, or through email at [sitdps@ksp.gov.in](mailto:sitdps@ksp.gov.in). The SIT was formed on July 19, following the registration of a case at Dharmasthala police station on July 4. The complaint is based on shocking revelations by a whistleblower, himself a former sanitation worker, who claimed he was forced to bury multiple victims of alleged rape and murder a decade ago in Dharmasthala village.

So far, no human remains have been found at the five sites excavated. The SIT has faced multiple hurdles, especially due to heavy and continuous rainfall in the forested, hilly terrain close to the Nethravathi river, which has hampered manual digging efforts. Officers said that ground-

penetrating radar (GPR) or mountain radar systems are under consideration to assist the exhumation, though wet soil and interference from rain can degrade signal accuracy. A final decision on using radar technology was expected to be taken Thursday.

"We are using different sets of labourers each day to ensure they get adequate rest. Three to four scattered spots will be dug on Thursday, and if no remains are found, we will take a call on re-recording the whistleblower's statement," said an SIT officer.

SIT chief Pronab Mohanty, who arrived at the exhumation site on Wednesday, will be joining the operation again on Thursday. The SIT is also preparing to dig a crucial spot where the

whistleblower claims he had personally exhumed skeletal remains in the past.

Meanwhile, the legal counsel for Sujatha Bhat said that the complainant-witness had provided specific details about the sites and bodies, and reiterated the need for urgent and thorough investigation into each marked location. The case has drawn wide attention due to the gravity of the allegations, the involvement of multiple bodies, and the span of time that has passed since the alleged crimes.

The SIT has assured that every site identified by the complainant will be documented through mahazar (site inspection reports), and further steps will be taken based on what emerges during the current round of exhumation.

## Flood under control, quick relief to people government's priority: Odisha CM Majhi

**The chief minister said emphasis has been laid on purification of water sources, control diarrhoea and other water-borne diseases.**

BHUBANESWAR. (Agency)

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, who made an aerial survey of Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur and Keonjhar districts on Wednesday, said flood situation is under control and collectors have been directed to submit damage assessment reports at the earliest.

Nearly 30,000 people in 81 villages across eight blocks of three districts have been affected in the recent floods caused by heavy

rains, Majhi said and added that adequate assistance to the impacted population would be extended immediately once the loss reports reach the government.

Addressing mediapersons after making the aerial assessment with Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari and Higher Education Minister Suraj Suryabanshi, the chief minister said Basta, Baliapal, Bhograi and Jaleswar blocks in Balasore, Dhammagar and Bhandaripokhari in Bhadrak and Jajpur and Dasarathpur in Jajpur have been impacted. About 5,869 people have been shifted from the flood-hit zones to safer places. Though there was flood in Keonjhar, it did not have much impact, he said.

Majhi said the flood situation is completely under control as water level in all the rivers including Subarnarekha and Jalaka in

Balasore district is falling. Collectors have been asked to assess the damage and submit report so that assistance can be provided to the affected population immediately. Repair

through 29 free kitchens in the three districts. At least, 10,000 affected people are receiving cooked food on a daily basis. The free kitchens would continue for the next seven days.

The chief minister said emphasis has been laid on purification of water sources, control diarrhoea and other water-borne diseases. Districts have been asked to keep a close watch on the situation.

He also said health department has been asked to stock up anti-venom and other necessary medicines in large quantities to prevent snake bite deaths. Adequate supply of fodder for domestic animals has been made in the affected areas, he added. The state government has deployed 17 ODRAF and 13 fire service teams in Balasore, one NDRF, ODRAF and 13 fire service teams in Bhadrak and one ODRAF and 14 fire service units in Jajpur district.

**UCC panel formation not under statutory powers, cannot intervene: Gujarat high court**

Ahmedabad. (Agency)

The Gujarat High Court dismissed a petition challenging the formation of the state govt's committee for the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) on the grounds of the absence of members from different religious communities. Justice Niral Mehta stated, "The court, by exercising powers under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, cannot direct the state authorities to select members in a particular manner. Any direction and/or order, in that regard, would be said to be unjustified and unwarranted interference in purely administrative affairs of the state authorities, and thereby, this court would not like to go in the area, which is absolutely within the domain of the state govt on its administrative side."

Petitioner Abdul Wahab Sopariwala contended that the five-member panel, headed by retired Supreme Court Justice Ranjana Desai, was formed to examine the need for the UCC and draft the law. However, it does not have any member from Christian, Muslim, Parsi, Sikh, or Jain scholars. He also contended that the committee members do not possess any expertise in the field of personal laws, and some of them are interested parties because of their political appointments to certain positions.

The state govt asserted that the decision was taken by the state govt using its powers flowing from Article 162 of the Constitution. It is an administrative decision, and there is no statutory provision to back the petitioner's demand for direction to the govt for the formation of the committee in a particular manner. The HC stated that there cannot be any judicial review of the administrative decision of the govt taken under Article 162, and since the formation of the committee is not under any statute. It further stated, "By constituting a committee, it cannot be said that prejudice is caused to any class of people when more particularly it is always open for any class of people to make representation espousing their views on the Uniform Civil Code to the committee so constituted."



of damaged roads for restoration of connectivity will be taken up on priority. He said dry and hot cooked food are being provided to people in the flood-affected areas

## Mumbai weather: Humid with rain expected

Mumbai. (Agency)

The data for this weather forecast has been sourced from AQI.in, providing residents with comprehensive information to plan their daily activities and weekly schedules accordingly.

Mumbai is experiencing a wet and humid day on July 31, 2025, with temperatures ranging between 27.1°C and 29.3°C, accompanied by 78% humidity and a 94% chance of rain. The city can expect patchy rainfall throughout the day with total precipitation of 2.55 mm and moderate wind speeds up to 31.7 km/h. The overcast morning sets the tone for the day with a low UV index of 1.9. The scattered rainfall pattern suggests potential heavy showers in the late afternoon, which could impact evening commute times. The humid conditions make the temperature feel warmer than actual readings. Wind speeds of 31.7 km/h provide some air circulation, offering minimal relief from the sticky weather.

### Resident Advisory

Residents are advised to carry umbrellas or raincoats due to unpredictable rain patterns. Light, breathable clothing is recommended to cope with the humidity, and staying hydrated is



essential throughout the day. Indoor activities are suggested as alternatives to outdoor plans. The weather conditions are suitable for visiting museums, watching movies, or spending time in cafes.

### Weekly Weather Outlook

The weather forecast for the upcoming week indicates continued humid conditions with regular rainfall. August 1 will see temperatures between 27.4°C and 29.4°C with increased rainfall of 3.5 mm.

August 2 shows a slight temperature increase ranging from 27.2°C to 29.6°C, with

precipitation rising to 4.31 mm. August 3 maintains similar conditions with expected rainfall of 4.06 mm.

The period from August 4 to 6 will experience consistent temperatures between 27.3°C and 29.9°C. These days will see continued rainfall, though with reduced intensity compared to earlier in the week. August 4 is predicted to have the lightest rainfall of the week, making it potentially more suitable for outdoor activities. However, the overall week remains characterized by wet weather conditions.

### Monsoon Impact and Advisory

The weather pattern aligns with Mumbai's typical monsoon season characteristics. The continuous rainfall may result in localized water accumulation in certain areas, affecting traffic movement across the city.

These weather conditions make it necessary for residents to monitor traffic updates and carefully plan their travel routes. The combination of consistent rain and high humidity levels is expected to persist throughout the week.

The data for this weather report has been sourced from AQI.in, providing accurate forecasting for Mumbai's monsoon conditions.



to their level, it could shrink the general category to a meagre 5% of seats.

"This decision brings clarity," said parent activist Brijesh Sutaria. "It aligns with the central govt's original 2019 framework—no reservation without expanding capacity. It preserves the integrity of merit while staying true to the principle of inclusion. Other states would do well to take note."

Until late Tuesday evening, parents shared legal precedents with govt officials, drawing from the events of 2019.

Back then, when the EWS quota was first proposed for govt medical colleges, it met with resistance—until courts ruled that such a move must be accompanied by a proportional increase in seats. Eventually, a 25% increase in capacity paved the way for its rollout—first at the undergraduate level in June 2019, then at the postgraduate level a year later. Under current rules, EWS students receive 10% reservation in govt colleges. In private institutions, they're eligible for fee waivers—50% for boys and 100% for girls.



## A blueprint for building bridges to last

Bridges are the most important element in a surface transport network. Once built, they are extremely difficult to replace and it becomes challenging even to close them for a few days for essential repair work. A sudden failure disturbs normal life, affects development and causes economic losses. So it's important for the public to be aware of the reasons for their failure and raise voices to prevent them. Bridges have failed across the world for long. In developed countries, such failures are analysed, the studies shared and the lessons recorded to prevent recurrences. In India, the trend has been to form enquiry committees without checking the technical competence of the members and hide the proceedings in confidentiality, keeping the public uninformed. Reports are often allowed to 'disappear' to protect those responsible. The classical case of the Tacoma Narrows bridge failure in the US in 1940 was instantly shared across the world; the video of the failure became standard teaching material for engineering students across the world. The result: there has been no such failure ever and every engineer knows that a lightweight, long-span bridge needs to be checked for aerodynamic stability and model tests have to be done in a laboratory. The failure of the West Gate bridge in Australia in 1970 was similarly explored; the enquiry commission came out with a comprehensive analytical report that became a bible for the makers of design codes across the world. People came to know of the problems with thin-walled box girders made with steel plates that had become the favourite of engineers trying to cut steel consumption. Such failures never recurred.

In our country, the much publicised failure of the Morvi bridge, an unstiffened suspension bridge that tends to wobble with people walking on the deck, was widely circulated by the media. Despite the high casualties, we have not learned the lesson—none of the several unstiffened suspension bridges in the lower Himalayas have been intensively inspected or their rehabilitation initiated, as far as public knowledge indicates.

The spectacular failure of the Majherhat bridge in Kolkata has been all but forgotten. No analytical studies were done and no mandatory notification issued to authorities across the country to ensure that the wearing coat on the bridge deck should not be allowed to go beyond design thickness—a common folly of bridge maintenance teams and widely believed to be the root cause of the failure. We can expect to witness more such failures. Technical knowledge of bridges is globally shared and countries follow identical design norms that are openly shared and updated. Bridges of an earlier era used to be girders put on piers in the form of beams or trusses, supported on bearings put on piers. The need to elongate spans led to the use of arches and bowstring girders, such as for the Sydney Harbour bridge.

With a thrust on sustainability after the Second World War, the choice moved to bridges supported by cables. Across the world, cable-stayed bridges (Signature bridge in Delhi) and extra-dosed bridges (Nivedita Setu in Kolkata) have become popular. With these changes in technology, engineering knowledge needs upgrading. There have been widely-circulated reports of distress observed on cables across the world; for example, a bridge in Genoa named after its fabled Italian designer Riccardo Morandi had a spectacular failure due to corrosion of cables. For understanding the reasons for bridge failures, one has to first recognise the various types of failure. There are failures that happen after years of operation, sometimes due to inadequate maintenance. They can also result from adopting a technology without a proper appreciation of long-term deterioration not accounted for in the design. Cable-supported bridges come under this category, as there is inadequate understanding of the deterioration of cables that are subjected to constant exposure to rain, sun and frost; the protective layer on cables by epoxy chemicals and UV-protected sheathings are yet to reach perfection.

## The impression that Delhi is reaching out to Beijing under external pressures must be allayed

THERE has been a flurry of high-level visits from India to China, and a recurrent theme in the Chinese social media is that a "beleaguered" India is desperate to mend fences with its northern neighbour. The recent visit of External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar to Beijing was interpreted as a tactical retreat by India driven by economic and strategic compulsions, such as US tariffs, NATO's threats of secondary sanctions over Russian oil and India's need for rare-earth magnets and other essential supplies from China. The impression that India is reaching out to China under external pressures must be allayed, because it is never helpful to engage with China from a position of weakness, real or perceived. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, the EAM and National Security Adviser Ajit Doval travelled to China for meetings of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, ahead of its summit in Tianjin, but all three visits had significant bilateral components. Jaishankar met Vice President Han Zheng, Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Minister of the International Department of the Communist Party of China Liu Jianchao in Beijing on July 14. The EAM was quoted as telling Wang Yi that "we have made good progress in the past nine months for the normalisation of our bilateral relations". Some stability has indeed been restored in India-China relations since Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with President Xi Jinping in Kazan, Russia, on October 23, 2024. However, it is less clear that there has been steady progress towards normalisation of ties.

During the prolonged military standoff in eastern Ladakh, the EAM conveyed a consistent message that the state of India-China borders will determine the state of relations. In his statement in Parliament in early December last year, he reiterated this linkage between maintenance of peace in border areas and normalisation of relations, emphasised the imperative of de-escalation following disengagement of troops and underlined that India would pursue "bilateral engagement in a calibrated manner, keeping our national security interests first and foremost". As the EAM reminded Wang Yi, the process of de-escalation along the borders has not yet commenced. Both sides continue to maintain

troops in abnormally high numbers in forbidding terrain and this situation is likely to persist for the sixth consecutive winter. There has been no movement towards the resumption of patrolling by Indian troops and grazing by herdsmen in the so-called "buffer zones" (described by the EAM in Parliament as "steps of a temporary and limited nature"). The objective of restoration of status quo ante as of April 2020 that the Chief of Army Staff had publicly advocated, is no longer being reiterated. In other words, the Chinese have retained incremental gains made by them in eastern Ladakh, consistent with their playbook of "grey zone operations", though we don't have visibility on the



extent of "salami-slicing".

Moreover, while there has been some progress towards the resumption of "people-centric" contacts, including the pilgrimage to Kailash-Mansarovar, marking the 75th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations, easing of visas and agreement to restore direct flights, all these steps, except the pilgrimage, were part of the Chinese wish list conveyed in Track-II conversations even before disengagement was completed last year. There is little evidence of China being inclined to address any of the structural challenges in the relationship. Indeed, some of the old concerns have acquired sharper, more ominous overtones. Three important developments must be taken note of. First, China has started construction of a cascade of five massive hydropower plants on the Yarlung Tsangpo river in Tibet on July 19 without

considering interests of the lower riparian nation, India. China undertaking this mega-project, thrice the size of the largest hydropower project in the world (Three Gorges), barely 30 km from the place the river enters Arunachal Pradesh has serious downstream implications for India—in terms of impact on water flows in the lean season, the danger of flooding, risk of major disasters linked to massive construction in a highly seismic and unstable zone and effects on the livelihood of residents and biodiversity. The government of India has not commented publicly on the launch of the project. Second, the Chinese assistance to Pakistan after the Pahalgam attack and during the four-day India-Pakistan military operations (May 7-10) included not only diplomatic support and amplification of Pakistan's propaganda, but an unprecedented level of battlefield collusion. The significant role of Chinese military hardware, provision of ISR (intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) data, deployment of BeiDou satellite navigation system and China's advisory inputs amounted to the emergence of an extended theatre, where China's ability to provide real-time support to Pakistan without explicit military engagement allows it to play a long strategic game. However, there is no public confirmation of New Delhi's concerns being conveyed to Beijing. Third, the Chinese have systematically deployed tools of economic coercion against India, including denial of supplies of rare-earth magnets, specialised fertilisers and tunnel-boring machines, Chinese electric vehicle companies being directed not to transfer technology to India or undertake fabrication of major components in India, and Foxconn being asked to withdraw several hundred Chinese technicians from its factories in India. These issues were reportedly raised by the EAM with Wang Yi.

We must acknowledge that the geopolitical context of India-China relations has changed to our disadvantage. The US policies towards both India and China have become unpredictable since Donald Trump returned to the White House. Compared to his first term, during which the US shifted to defining China as a "strategic competitor", the second Trump administration's strategy is far less coherent. Trump's pursuit of a "beautiful deal" with China prioritises short-term economic gains over strategic clarity.

## India, Maldives hedge bets pragmatically amid Trumpian uncertainty

**India's first responder approach during times of humanitarian distress is a spearhead of its diplomatic outreach in its neighbourhood and beyond**

From capturing power on an 'India Out' plank two years ago to describing India as the closest and most trusted partner now, Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu's geopolitical pendulum has swung sharply to replace partisanship with pragmatism. Having realised that his Chinese fixation had not quite contributed to the economic easing he was hoping for, Muizzu slowly warmed up to India, inviting Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the country's 60th Independence Day celebrations on July 26.

For his part, Modi signalled the reset in ties with a ₹4,850-crore line of credit for Maldives and a new framework for expanding cooperation in trade, defence, infrastructure and digital connectivity. The financial aid is in Indian rupees, the first such rupee-denominated line of credit to the Maldives, and is expected to be spent on several infrastructure projects. The two sides also signed an amended agreement on reducing Maldives' annual debt repayment obligations by as much as 40 percent. The relief



came at a time when Maldives is grappling with a dollar squeeze. Muizzu thanked India for being the first responder in crises and extending 'pivotal' help in dealing with economic challenges and liquidity crunch. The nations also exchanged drafts for a free trade agreement

that they expect to conclude quickly. Maldives already has an FTA with China. India's first responder approach during times of humanitarian distress is a spearhead of its diplomatic outreach in its neighbourhood and beyond. As recently as last week, it offered to airlift students singed by an aircraft crash into a Dhaka school for advanced treatment in India. Over the years, India has also contributed resources to prevent or mitigate regional and international crises as a first responder. Pragmatically choosing not to put all his eggs in one basket, Modi met the entire gamut of political leadership in Maldives, including opposition leaders. For, the Trumpian world order is anything but predictable. Global leaders are struggling to deal with the Tughlaqian tariffs that are expected to kick in on August 1; the bending of facts to suit one man's whims, which, among other things, re-hyphenated India with Pakistan; and the callous insensitivity to the Gaza genocide. Being nimble-footed in diplomacy is the only way to deal with the resultant churn.

## The systemic surgery smaller firms need

**Though they have pushed overall manufacturing growth, production-linked incentives help large companies more than smaller ones. For sustainable growth, grassroots innovation and better job creation, smaller enterprises need to be boosted. But the support they need is specific to their challenges**

India's manufacturing sector appears to be on the cusp of a revival. According to this week's print of the Index of Industrial Production, manufacturing grew by a promising 3.9 percent in June. Fifteen of the 23 industry groups under the second level of industrial classification posted positive annual growth in June 2025. The Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme has been credited for much of this revival. In July, minister of state for commerce and industry Jitin Prasada informed the Lok Sabha that PLI schemes, with an outlay of ₹1.97 lakh crore across 14 sectors, had attracted ₹1.76 lakh crore in investments by March. These resulted in production increases exceeding 16.5 lakh crore and generated over 12 lakh jobs.

Electronics—especially mobile phone manufacturing—and pharmaceuticals have emerged as consistent success stories. The PLI scheme helped India move from being a net importer of bulk drugs (₹1,930 crore in 2021-22) to a net exporter (₹2,280 crore in 2024-25). This targeted strategy, aimed at fostering global champions and reducing import dependence, has undeniably positioned India as a serious manufacturing contender. Yet, a critical question lingers: in helping industrial giants, are we overlooking the micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSME)—the silent-but-vital engine of inclusive growth? PLIs are designed to attract large-scale investments in high-tech industries with thresholds largely suited to established players. While their growth is vital for competitiveness and innovation, the benefits don't always reach the broader MSME ecosystem. This risks creating a dual economy—gleaming high-tech manufacturing hubs alongside a struggling MSME sector, much like the skyscrapers and slums of Mumbai. MSMEs are not mere ancillary units. They form the bedrock of India's

economic fabric. As per data up to July 2024, MSMEs contributed above 30 percent of India's gross value added. They are crucial to India's trade ambitions, accounting for 45.79 percent of India's exports in May 2024, with MSME exports surging from ₹3.95 lakh crore in 2020-21 to an impressive ₹12.39 lakh crore in 2024-25. Crucially, they remain the nation's foremost job creators after agriculture, employing an estimated 203.9 million people as of July 2024. Their reach extends deeply into semi-urban and rural areas, providing livelihoods and fostering decentralised economic development. Despite this undeniable power, MSMEs continue to grapple with fundamental systemic challenges that the current manufacturing push, with its PLI focus, is not adequately addressing. Lack of access to affordable credit is the most pressing issue. A Niti Aayog report in May highlighted a persistent credit gap estimated at ₹80 lakh crore, often filled by informal sources with exorbitant interest rates of 30-60 percent. A more recent SIDBI report pointed out that this reliance on informal credit sources disproportionately affects micro enterprises, with 12 percent of them (compared to 3 percent and 2 percent for small and medium enterprises) forced to such usury. Only 16 percent of total credit disbursed in 2024-25 went to micro firms, despite them constituting over 95 percent of the registered MSMEs. This imbalance starves them of the working capital and investment. Beyond credit, MSMEs face a number of hurdles. Technological lag: A significant 84 percent of digitally 'hesitant' MSMEs struggle to see clear value

in technology investments, and 56 percent cite a lack of technical skills for modern solutions. This hinders their ability to upgrade processes and compete effectively.

Regulatory burden: The complexity of compliance with tax laws, labour regulations and licences disproportionately burden smaller units.

Delayed payments: Large entities often exploit



procedural loopholes to delay payments to MSMEs, severely impacting their cash flow and financial health—a persistent problem the government is trying to address, for instance, with the new Online Dispute Resolution Portal. Skilled labour shortage: The National Skill Development Corporation estimates nearly 47 percent of MSME workers require reskilling or upskilling. Yet, investment in structured training programmes remains low. A truly holistic

manufacturing strategy for India must look beyond PLI and actively empower MSMEs. This means a multi-pronged approach. Deepening financial inclusion: expanding collateral-free loan schemes like Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises—recently revamped with the loan ceiling doubled to ₹10 crore—and ensuring their effective penetration to micro and women-led enterprises.

Accelerating technology adoption: Providing targeted subsidies and handholding for MSMEs to embrace digital tools, automation and sustainable technologies.

Simplifying regulatory frameworks: Continuously reviewing and simplifying compliance procedures to ease the burden on small businesses. Strengthening supply chain linkages: Mandating and enforcing timely payments from large corporations to MSMEs and fostering stronger, more equitable linkages, perhaps through incentives for large PLI beneficiaries to source significantly from MSMEs.

Investing in targeted skill development: Customising skilling programmes to meet the specific needs of MSME clusters and apprenticeships to build a job-ready workforce. For a truly resilient and inclusive 'Make in India' vision, we must ensure that the roar of large factories is not the only sound we hear. The vibrant hum of thriving micro and small enterprises must echo equally loudly. Only then can India's manufacturing prowess translate into widespread prosperity and sustainable growth.

# Gurgaon's realty market set for a shift, circle rates to go up

**Gurgaon.(Agency)**

Property prices in the city are set to rise sharply as the district administration has proposed increasing circle rates in the range of 8-77% in residential areas and up to 145% for agricultural land. Circle rate is the minimum cost below which land or property cannot be sold. Unlike market rates, which depend on demand and supply, circle rates are legally binding. The proposed increase in upscale areas like DLF I-V, South City, Suncity, Sushant Lok and Golf Course Road is 10-20%. For flats in DLF Aalias, The Magnolias and Camellias along Golf Course Road — where condominiums are sold upwards of Rs 100 crore — the planned hike is 10%. This translates to Rs 39,325 per sqft, from the existing Rs 35,750/sqft.

A realtor who deals in properties near Golf Course Road, Yash Handa, said on Wednesday that the circle rates of flats in premium housing societies were still not

at par with market rates. "Circle rates should be increased as per market increase. While group housing societies like Aalias, Magnolias and Camellias range above Rs 55,000, their circle rates are 30% to 60% lower. Even at The Crest luxury apartments, the circle rate of Rs 18,866 per sqft after revision is a lot less than Rs 50,000/sqft market rate," Handa said. The district administration has proposed steeper hikes — up to 62% — for properties in new sectors along the Dwarka Expressway. Circle rates of residential plots here could go up from Rs 40,000 per square yard to Rs 65,000 per square yard. The maximum hike for residential plots has been proposed in Gurgaon Gaon, which could see costs go up from Rs 25,300 per square yard to Rs 45,000 per square yard, an increase of 77%. Agricultural land may see the steepest hike. Circle rate in Baighera has been proposed to go up 145%, from Rs

crore per acre to Rs 5 crore per acre, and in Sirhail, by 108%, from Rs 2.39 crore per acre to Rs 5 crore per acre. The latest



proposal, for which people can file objections by July 31, needs to be approved by the state govt. If given the nod, new rates could come into effect in around a month. The district administration's move comes after the Haryana govt in March this year rejected the revenue department's attempt to increase circle rates in Gurgaon. Realtors

had said at the time that the govt's decision to keep circle rates stable was supposed to "boost buyer confidence" and promote "broader participation" by homebuyers. Circle rates were last increased in Dec 2024 by 10-30%.

Ankit Kansal, managing director of 360 Realtors, said increasing rates was not "very prudent or judicious", considering property prices in the city were already high and out of reach for most buyers. "Authorities should relook into the issue. The decision to revise circle rates by around 10-77% can result in a further increase in market rates. Already, property prices are soaring. Many parts of Gurgaon have become out of reach for middle-income buyers. An average 2BHK in the city starts at Rs 2-3 crore. Any further hike will lead to spiraling of costs," said Kansal. Nitin Mishra, an IT professional in the city, echoed a similar view.

## 4 fire at trader's car in extortion bid, arrested in Faridabad

**Gurgaon.(Agency)**

Four men, allegedly involved in firing at a shopkeeper's car and demanding Rs 5 lakh in extortion, were arrested on Tuesday from Ballabgarh. Those arrested include Devendra (36), Bunty (28), Monu (23), and Uday (20), all residents of Ballabgarh. According to Faridabad police, Mayank, a resident of Arya Nagar, had filed a complaint at the Agrasen Chowk police post, stating that after returning home on the night of July 27, he heard gunshots and found a bullet hole in the driver's side window of his car. Soon after, his brother received a WhatsApp message from Devendra alias Kalu, demanding Rs 5 lakh and threatening to kill them if the money wasn't paid. A case was registered at the Ballabgarh City police station under relevant sections related to extortion and the Arms Act. "Acting on technical surveillance, the Sector 30 Crime Branch team arrested the accused from Tirkha Colony. During questioning, it was revealed that the four had reached the complainant's home in a Fronx car and fired at his vehicle," a police spokesperson said. Police said Bunty fired the shot, Devendra supplied the weapon, Monu owned the Fronx car, and Uday assisted the others. The vehicle used in the crime has been recovered. All four were produced in court and sent to a four-day police remand. Devendra has 10 past cases, including under the Arms Act and for assault, and was released from jail earlier this year. "Background checks on the others are underway," an officer said. "The case is under investigation. We are also examining whether the accused are linked to any other criminal activities in the region," the officer added.

## Gunshots fired at Faridabad house over old rivalry

**Gurgaon. (Agency)**

Two individuals fired multiple gunshots at a house in Tilpat village, Faridabad, around midnight on Tuesday, over a longstanding rivalry. Palla police have booked Nitin Rohatkiya along with an unidentified person for the incident. According to police, Rohatkiya and his accomplices arrived at the house intending to kill or intimidate Om Prakash. He had a confrontation with Prakash. The incident was captured on CCTV footage installed near the location. In the video, the two men, Rohatkiya in a black T-shirt and his accomplice in yellow attire, were seen patrolling the victim's street. They initially stopped near the house, moved ahead, but returned to discharge their firearms. After spotting Prakash and an initial malfunction of the firearms, the accused in yellow attire fired multiple shots, none of which struck the target. The accused subsequently fled the scene. Neighbours, alerted by the gunshots, gathered and reported to the police, sharing the CCTV footage with the police. Crime branch and forensic teams arrived at the location and recovered two bullet shells. Speaking to the media, Prakash stated that Rohatkiya was involved in several such crimes in the area and criticised the police for insufficient action against him. "He has over two dozen criminal cases and was jailed four times but he is roaming freely," he said. A neighbour, Jai Bhagwan Sharma, expressed serious concerns about residents' safety in the area. "We were sleeping while my father watched the suspects through the CCTV. After they fired, he raised an alarm following which we got out of the house but the accused escaped. This is not his first such act. We all are concerned about our safety in such a lawless situation," he said. Sub inspector Yashpal, Faridabad police spokesperson, stated that the accused were booked under Section 109 of BNS for attempted murder and under relevant sections of the Arms Act. He added that the exact motive behind the firing would be determined after the accused are apprehended.

## Key accused who beat up worker after hanging him upside down held in Gurgaon

**Gurgaon. (Agency)**

Almost two months after an earthmover operator was assaulted at the basement of an under-construction building, the main accused was arrested on Wednesday.

Forty-nine-year-old Yogendra Bhati, a resident of Greater Noida (UP), was nabbed by the crime branch team of Sector 10. "Yogendra is the contractor of a construction site at ILD Greens Society, from where a theft was committed by the victim, and it was upon Yogendra's direction that he, along with his associates,



assaulted the earthmover operator," police spokesperson Sandeep Kumar (ASI) said. Police said the accused will be presented before the court in the case that took place on June 10 or 11. The victim, a resident of Rajasthan, was allegedly caught stealing power cables from the society campus in June. A video of the assault recently uploaded on social media showed him crying and pleading for mercy while being thrashed by the assailants with sticks — he was hung upside down. Although no formal complaint was filed, police took suo motu cognizance of the video and arrested four security guards employed at the society in Sector 37C on Tuesday.

Those arrested included Pushpendra (gunman, 39) from Madhya Pradesh, Krishan Kumar (security guard, 19), Ajit Singh (security supervisor, 38) from Haryana and Amit Kumar (security supervisor, 39) from Punjab.

A case was registered against the guards under sections 115 (voluntarily causing hurt), 127(2) (wrongful confinement), 3(5) (act done by several persons) and 351(2) (criminal intimidation) of the BNS at Sector 10 police station.

## Delay in shifting of power substation holds up key Hero Honda Chowk link

**Gurgaon. (Agency)**

GMDA CEO Shyamal Misra has asked officials to expedite utility shifting work that's holding up the upgrade of the 2.2km stretch between Hero Honda Chowk and Umang Bharadwaj Chowk. Chairing a review meeting on Wednesday, Misra directed HVPNL officials to submit an estimated cost of relocation of an electrical sub-station within the project alignment. Under the project, NHAI will widen the 2.2km stretch into a six-lane corridor along with a service road and a flyover at Umang Bharadwaj Chowk.

The land was handed over to HVPNL in May this year. However, the power distribution agency is yet to submit the estimate for shifting the 66kV power substation to NHAI, delaying the redevelopment project. NHAI officials said work on relocating drainage and HVPNL's transmission line has already begun, and the shifting of water supply

and sewage lines will be taken up soon. "We are aiming to complete the utility shifting within the next six months," said an NHAI official. "However, the substation must be shifted early so that we can start civil construction by March next year without further delays," the official added. During the meeting, NHAI officials said Dakshin Haryana Bijli Vitran Nigam (DHBVN) already submitted the estimate of Rs 4.8 crores for shifting high-tension (HT) power lines, one of the key hurdles in the renovation plan. T

he highway authority is also awaiting a court decision on the removal of a shop that's obstructing around 30 metres of the stretch on the proposed alignment. The next hearing on the matter has been scheduled on Oct 20, but NHAI has now moved a petition for an early hearing. "We have already filed a petition seeking early disposal of the matter related to the

removal of the structure obstructing around 30 metres of the stretch," an NHAI official said. Another challenge flagged is the presence of the Hinglaj Ashram on the alignment. Officials said a duty magistrate has now been appointed to oversee proceedings related to the removal of this roadblock.

The 2.2 km road stretch is a critical link between Hero Honda Chowk and Umang Bharadwaj Chowk, connecting key residential and industrial zones. Commuters have faced congestion and pothole-ridden roads due to the lack of upgrading. Approved in 2017, as part of a broader plan to upgrade the 5.6 km stretch between Hero Honda Chowk and Dwarka Expressway, over the years, the revamp project faced repeated delays due to indecision on the design and modality, casting a shadow on the upgradation of this key stretch linking the Delhi-Gurgaon Expressway to the Dwarka Expressway.

## Times Square-inspired makeover for a section of Sector 18 market

**Noida .(Agency)**

A 170m stretch in front of Tikona Park in Sector 18 market has been revamped into a pedestrian-friendly urban space inspired by Times Square, the most famous slice of New York. The area now features tensile shade kiosks, greenery, sculptures, and wooden seating, among other features. The project, which was constructed in six months at a cost of Rs 4.7 crore, also boasts a large digital screen installed at the stretch. "We aimed to create a safe and vibrant public space that enhances the overall shopping and recreational experience in this high-footfall commercial area. The design was prepared by Earth Worth Design Lab, and the work was carried out under the supervision of Work Circle 2. The project is ready, and people can come and visit this spot," said Vijay Rawal, deputy general manager (Civil), Noida Authority. The redesigned stretch includes 16 modern tensile shades under which kiosks will be placed, offering

an organised space for local businesses to operate out of. The anti-skid tiles ensure secure movement for pedestrians. The road was also integrated into a dedicated pedestrian zone. The area has been beautified with greenery, four sculptures, some artistically designed pillars, as well as seven seating arrangements. The outdoor digital screen measures 34 feet four inches in length and eight feet two inches in width, and will be used for cultural performances, public announcements, an evening screenings, official said. The project also has 78 retractable bollards at entry points, ensuring pedestrian-only access and better crowd control. Additionally, lighting fixtures have been installed to keep the area well-lit in the evening. SK Jain, president of Sector 18 market traders' association, said that the initiative is good for the area's beautification.

"Last year we met the Noida Authority CEO and requested to develop this road as Times Square. They considered our request and accordingly developed this stretch. The Sector 18 market has nearly 1000 shops, and it records high footfall in Noida. With this initiative, the market will further see a rise in footfall, and Noida will also boast of smart and sustainable infrastructure.



distributed their charas not only in Himachal Pradesh and nearby states but also in the Gurgaon district of Haryana, according to the police. "Nepalese drug syndicates also smuggle the charas cultivated in their country in Himachal Pradesh and then that is sold here too, citing it to be Malana cream. Both Himachal and Nepal are the major source of charas here," a police officer said.

Police also discovered that ganja in Gurgaon is being smuggled from Najafgarh's Tuda Mandi and the Samalkha slum area near the Kapashera border in Delhi. While police seized 1.84 tonnes of cannabis last year, 372.5 kg of cannabis has been recovered up to June this year. This year, police have recovered 194 gm of heroin in the first six months, compared to 0.615 kg seized last year by Gurgaon police.

Additionally, police have recovered 524 gm of opium in the first half of the year, up from 1.643 kg seized last year.

Police also recovered 0.532 kg of smack last year and seized 419 gm of smack up to June this year. Furthermore, 13.598 kg of poppy husk was recovered last year, compared to 3.739 kg of poppy recovered this year till June. Police also recovered 309 gm of MDMA this year.

## Drug peddlers take KMP away, Sohna-Tauru roads most for bulk supply: Police report

**Gurgaon .(Agency)**

Gurgaon: Drug peddlers are taking the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal Expressway (KMP) and Sohna-Tauru roads the most to transport bulk quantities of drugs to the city, according to a police report.

A police officer said, "Where bulk quantities are concerned, ganja is being trafficked from the Nepal-Bihar border, West Bengal, Odisha and Jharkhand.

In Odisha, ganja is being trafficked from Mohana in Gajapati (Odisha).

A police officer said, "In case of bulk deliveries, smugglers often use KMP or Sohna-Tauru road — connecting Gurgaon-Nuh districts — and thus we stay alert. We have already arrested more drug peddlers this year as compared to last year." According to a police report, the city police arrested 375 drug peddlers last year in a total of 278 cases while 380 drug peddlers have been nabbed in the first six months of this year across 163 cases — highlighting the rampant drug supply in the area. Meanwhile, according to the police, synthetic drugs (heroin) are primarily being supplied by Africans in Gurgaon and the NCR region. The police reported that many such smugglers are residing in Delhi. A police officer said, "We recently

arrested several Africans who were staying or operating from Delhi and supplying drugs to corporates, clubs and party places in Gurgaon and NCR. They are operating through the dark net and are following the directions of their handlers in Nigeria."

Key drug routes

Gurgaon police have identified key routes for drug supply within the city.

According to the police probe, sulfa/charas is being supplied from Himachal Pradesh

and Nepal. Most of the charas in Himachal is sourced from Malana (HP) and Kasol (HP's Kullu district). In the previous year, police recovered 52.043 kg of charas/sulfa, whereas 3.9 kg of contraband was recovered up to June this year. Sources indicate that cannabis crops remain available in Himachal despite significant efforts by the state police to destroy them in large quantities. Charas is derived from cannabis (ganja) plants. It was noted that Nepalese suppliers



# SC finds driver who suddenly braked on highway primarily liable for 2017 accident, enhances compensation to victim

**The Supreme Court enhanced the compensation payable to S Mohammed Hakkim, who was a third-year Engineering student in Coimbatore at the time of the accident.**

**Agency New Delhi.**

The Supreme Court said Tuesday that those driving on highways should give warning signals to vehicles behind them if they intend to stop midway, while holding a car driver, who had not done so, guilty of contributory negligence, which led to a motorcyclist losing his left leg in a road accident in Tamil Nadu in 2017.

A bench of Justices Sudhanshu Dhulia and Aravind Kumar made the remarks while enhancing the compensation payable to S Mohammed Hakkim, who was a third-year Engineering student in Coimbatore at the time of the accident. The accident happened on January 7, 2017, when Hakkim was riding on a motorcycle with his friend on the pillion. A car that was ahead of them suddenly applied the brakes, and Hakkim's motorcycle crashed into the car and fell towards the right side

of the road. A bus drove over him, and his left leg had to be amputated during treatment.

The top court held that Hakkim had a role in the accident by not maintaining the necessary distance, but held that the "root cause of the accident is the sudden brakes applied by the car driver."

"The car insurer has taken the stand that the appellant had hit the moving car from behind and thus, the car driver is not liable. On the other hand, the car driver admitted in his evidence that he had suddenly applied the brakes as his wife was pregnant and she had a vomiting sensation. In our view, the concurrent finding that the appellant was definitely negligent in not maintaining a sufficient distance from the vehicle moving ahead



and driving the motorcycle without a valid license is correct," the SC said in its judgment.

"But at the same time, it cannot be ignored that the root cause of the accident is the sudden brakes applied by the car driver.

The explanation given by the car driver for suddenly stopping his car in the middle of a highway is not a reasonable explanation from any angle. On a highway, high speed of vehicles is expected, and if a driver intends to stop his vehicle, he has a responsibility to give a warning or signal to other vehicles moving behind on the road. In the present case, there is nothing on record to suggest that the car driver had taken any such precaution," the court said.

**Liability for negligence**

The Motor Accident Claims Tribunal (MACT) fixed the compensation at Rs 91.62 lakh, but reduced it to Rs 73.29 lakh after attributing 20 per cent contributory negligence to Hakkim. MACT ordered the insurer of the bus to pay the amount, while exonerating the car insurer of all liabilities.

**I'm a victim of mentally ill people: Col Purohit after acquittal in Malegaon case**

**Agency New Delhi.**

Lt Colonel Prasad Purohit, one of the key accused in the 2008 Malegaon blast case, was acquitted by a special court on Wednesday. Reacting to the verdict, he said, "I am a soldier who loves this country unconditionally... The country is always supreme, its foundation must be strong."

Purohit, addressing the court emotionally, described his ordeal: "I am a victim of mentally ill people." He added that "some people misused our power, we had to bear it," and concluded his statement with a firm "Jai Hind."

Delivering the judgment, Special Judge A K Lahoti criticised the prosecution for investigative lapses. The court observed that "mere suspicion cannot take the place of real proof" and emphasised that in the absence of concrete evidence, the accused must be given the benefit of doubt.

The court's ruling brought attention to the prosecution's inability to present compelling evidence, particularly regarding the alleged involvement of the Abhimav Bharat group. The charges, filed under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and various sections of the Indian Penal Code, failed to withstand judicial scrutiny.

The court said unequivocally that "the overall evidence does not inspire confidence in the court to convict the accused. There is no reliable and cogent evidence to warrant conviction."

The 2008 Malegaon blast, which took place during Ramzan, had initially been blamed on right-wing extremists. However, the court's verdict has now shifted the focus to the effectiveness of investigative processes in terror-related cases and the critical role of proof in delivering justice.

**Para regiment's Lt Gen Pushpendra Singh to take over as Army vice chief**



**Agency New Delhi.**

Lieutenant General Pushpendra Singh, an officer of the Indian Army's Parachute Regiment, has been appointed as the Vice Chief of Army Staff (VCOAS), effective from August 1. His appointment marks a significant milestone in his illustrious career, spanning over 35 years of dedicated service to the Indian Army.

Lt. General Pushpendra Singh will be succeeding Lt General N.S. Raja Subramani, who assumed the office of VCOAS on July 1 last year. This appointment is a testament to Lt General Singh's exceptional leadership abilities and his continued commitment to serving the Indian Army.

Commissioned into the 4 Para Special Forces in 1987, Singh has had a remarkable career, participating in numerous operations, including Pawan, Meghdoot, Rakshak, and Orchid.

His foreign combat exposure includes serving in United Nations Peacekeeping Missions in Lebanon and Sri Lanka.

Singh has held various leadership roles throughout his career, including serving as the General Officer Commanding of the Rising Star Corps since April 2022. His service has been recognised with the Ati Vishisht Seva Medal and the Sena Medal, which he has been awarded twice. An alumnus of the Indian Military Academy, Singh's educational background has played a significant role in shaping his leadership skills and strategic thinking.

## Mystery of African Mahogany G20 sapling at Delhi's Nehru Park solved - it's a substitute

**Locals claimed that the boundary wall, built in the 1960s and stretching over 250 metres, collapsed following continuous rainfall.**

**Agency New Delhi.**

The tree currently standing at the site marked for Nigeria in the G20 ceremonial plantation spot at Delhi's Nehru Park is a substitute sapling — and not the original African Mahogany — government sources told The Indian Express. According to sources, the original sapling, gifted by Nigeria during India's G20 presidency in 2023, failed after being planted. Following this, sources said, the Jamun, a common Indian species, was temporarily planted to maintain the aesthetics of the ceremonial zone. Sources added that a replacement African Mahogany sapling has now been sourced and is expected to arrive in the national capital shortly. It will be planted at the

designated site, replacing the current one.

The clarification comes days after a post on social media platform X, by citizen-led handle DelhiTrees,



flagged the tree labelled as African Mahogany as resembling a Jamun. The post received over 28 lakh views, prompting questions about how the mismatch occurred and whether due diligence was carried out. On July 31 had reported that officials in the New

Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), which facilitated logistics for the plantation event, said that confirmation of plant species would require expert verification and that they had referred the matter to the Ministry of External Affairs, which had coordinated the drive. The ceremonial plantation, which took place in September 2023, involved planting live saplings received as gifts from G20 member countries and invited international organisations. As per government sources, some of these plants were sent to India by participating countries, while others were locally procured in mutual consultation. The selection of species was made with expert guidance to increase the survivability of saplings in Indian conditions.

## JNU Students' Union protests against food-based segregation in hostel, slams 'divisive measure' of ABVP

**Agency New Delhi.**

A row erupted at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) after allegations of food-based segregation surfaced at the Mahi-Mandavi Hostel, prompting a sharp reaction from the students' union and a denial from the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP).

On Wednesday, the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) issued a public statement condemning what it termed a "disturbing incident of food-based segregation," claiming that vegetarian and non-vegetarian students were asked to sit separately in the hostel mess. The statement described the move as a "divisive measure", and accused the ABVP of attempting to



"saffronise" the campus. JNUSU called the incident a violation of hostel norms, and part of a "larger effort by ABVP to saffronise the campus and disrupt its inclusive culture."

"JNU celebrates plurality, diversity, and democratic coexistence. We strongly reject this politics of division and hate.

No food policing! No hate! JNU is for everyone!" the statement, signed by JNUSU President Nitish Kumar, Vice-President Manisha, and General Secretary Munthea Fatima, read.

JNUSU said the hostel's senior warden met with its members, and expressed complete surprise about the incident. "He categorically stated that no such divisive measure had been brought to his knowledge prior to our report," the union said, adding that the warden assured them of an inquiry into the matter.

According to JNUSU, the warden will investigate whether the mess secretaries, mess manager, or hostel president were involved in enforcing the alleged segregation.

## 'Went from Ghaziabad to Allahabad to Delhi courts. Now?' asks victim's father after SC verdict on Nithari killings

**Agency New Delhi.**

When one walks through Sector 31 in Noida, it's hard to miss the hushed murmurs over a deserted house. Etched in the minds of every resident, the address, D5, is a grim reminder of horror and injustice. Even a kilometre away, in A block, when one asks for directions to the house of the accused in the Nithari killings, a surprised response follows. "Arre! D5 jana hai (You want to go to D5)?" asks a man, before he shows the way.

Behind the rugged walls — where once stood a white bungalow where Moninder Singh Pandher lived with his domestic help Surendra Koli — thick, unruly vines narrate the story of rot, and not growth.

For families like that of Jhabbu Lal — who lost his 10-year-old daughter Jyoti — it is not just a dilapidated house, which was sealed by the police in 2006 after the horror of serial killings emerged, but an open wound. The Supreme Court on Wednesday dismissed 14 appeals challenging the acquittal of Koli in the 2006 serial killings.

"Whatever happened was very wrong,"

says Jhabbu Lal, sitting outside the rented shanty he and his wife now occupy in a gated part of the village.

Jyoti, his 10-year-old daughter, who used to iron clothes with her parents just across D5, was one of the 19 victims, whose remains were recovered from the backyard of the house of the accused. Neither he nor his wife can read, but they have heard about the verdict after he received calls from reporters.

"What's the use of these verdicts if nothing changes? We went from Ghaziabad to Allahabad to Delhi courts. And now? He walks free," says Lal. He recalls how they exchanged pleasantries with "Pandher Sahab" as he passed by. "Sometimes blood-stained clothes were found in the pile that Koli would hand over to us for ironing. Once, he said the garment might have got stained while buying chicken," he adds. "If he wasn't guilty, why was he in jail all these years? Why were we running to courts for 18 years?" Lal's voice breaks.

Residents, who lived in the area in 2006 still carry memories in fragments. "At that time, there was nothing here, no market... barely any houses. Only that bungalow stood tall," said Bham Singh, a former

resident who now lives in Bulandshahr but was visiting his ancestral home nearby.

"Back then, when children started disappearing, no one suspected anything. But when the news broke, it felt like the earth slipped from under our feet." A new market has now come up around D5 now with small businesses and

apartments creeping up on either side. But the house, or what remains of it, is avoided. "People say that if you pass by that house late at night, you can hear the sound of girls screaming," Bham adds.

At night, they say, one can hear the screams.

Shyam Singh, who moved into a house directly facing D5 in 2015, said he heard of the case from afar. "I was in Varanasi when the news came. The whole country was shaken. But what's to remember? Good deeds should be remembered, not the crimes of monsters." Even as the slum from where Lal's family operated their ironing stall has since dismantled, their new home, a tin-roofed structure tucked behind high walls of now a more developed sector, is just close enough to D5 for the memories to remain inescapable. "There used to be protests. Candle marches. Journalists everywhere. Where are they now?" Lal asks. "We had nothing, and still we fought. And now we're told there's no evidence."



the Indian Police Service. He started his career as an assistant commissioner of police in Central District before moving to Arunachal Pradesh as a superintendent of police in 1992.

Singh quickly moved up the ranks and was subsequently made the director general of police of Arunachal Pradesh in 2018, before moving on to become the DGP of Mizoram in 2019.

After his terms as DGP, Singh was assigned as special commissioner of police (Law and Order), Northern Range in 2022. During his tenure as special commissioner, his wife, Sushi Singh, was also part of the Police Family Welfare Society. They have two daughters, who are both based in the US.

From St Stephen's to IPS

Singh, a batchmate of Arora, graduated with Physics honours from St Stephen's College in 1986, after which he joined

about those who lost their lives in the line of duty.

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## NEWS BOX

**Intense ENG vs IND series will help sell more Ashes tickets: Cricket Australia CEO**

**New Delhi. (Agency)**

Cricket Australia Chief Executive Officer Todd Greenberg feels that the intense and aggressive tone of the ongoing England vs India series will help sell more tickets for the upcoming Ashes 2025 series. The ongoing Anderson-Tendulkar Trophy has seen several flashpoints with players of both teams being involved in verbal jibes right from the Lord's Test. Things went up a notch during the Manchester Test when Ravindra Jadeja and Washington Sundar decided not to shake the hand of Ben Stokes and settle for an early draw. India coach Gautam Gambhir's spat with the Oval pitch curator has also added to the drama ahead of the final Test. Greenberg has no complaints and said that it was been a great watch from a neutral fan's perspective. "It's great, isn't it? It's great cricket (India vs England series for Anderson-Tendulkar Trophy) to watch as a fan," said Greenberg. The Ashes 2025-26 series will begin in November and Greenberg is hoping to go past the 837,879 gross fans



footfall during the Border-Gavaskar Trophy 2024-25. The BGT was the highest-attended Test campaign in Australian history outside of the Ashes. Greenberg also said that he enjoys the way England are playing their cricket and is eager to see them play on Australian shores.

"Everyone will have their opinion when our English friends arrive I'm sure, and we're looking forward to that very much. I love the way they're playing their cricket and I can't wait to see them test themselves on our shores," said Greenberg. The Cricket Australia CEO said that the pre-ticket sales of the Ashes has already doubled those of the Border-Gavaskar series. It's great cricket to watch leading into them coming here on this Ashes trip. It will sell more tickets for us. We like to think that's talkability," said Greenberg. The opening day tickets for the five Ashes Tests across Perth, Brisbane, Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney are now sold out, according to the estimate CA. The ticket allocations for first, second and third days at the Gabba, Adelaide Oval and SCG have also been exhausted.

## Divya Deshmukh gets grand reception after World Cup win, credits family for triumph

**New Delhi. (Agency)**

Grandmaster Divya Deshmukh received a grand welcome at her hometown of Nagpur as she returned after winning the Women's World Cup on Wednesday, July 30. Divya was delighted to see the response from the people in Nagpur as many turned up to greet the young chess sensation. Divya created history when she defeated compatriot Koneru Humpy in the final of the Women's Chess World Cup in Batumi, Georgia to become the first Indian to win the title. The 19-year-old defeated Humpy in the tie-breaker after the classical games ended in a draw. Divya had entered the tournament as an underdog, aiming to secure a GM-norm, but came home with the Grandmaster title.



She also secured her spot in the Candidates tournament. "I am feeling very happy that so many people have come to felicitate me, and chess is getting the recognition," said Deshmukh. When asked about her win, Divya paid tribute to her parents, family and her first coach Rahul Joshi, who sadly passed away in 2020. "My parents have played the biggest role in my career. Without them I would not have reached here. Credit to my family, my parents, my sister, and my first coach, Rahul Joshi sir. He always wanted me to become the Grandmaster, and this is for him," said Divya.

"My mother and father had a bigger role to play but definitely my whole family, my sister Arya Deshmukh, my grandmother, grandfather... I don't think whatever I will say will be enough (for my parents)." Divya also reserved special praise for GM Abhijit Kunte, saying that he is her lucky charm.

"Abhijit sir is lucky for me. Wherever he has been with me, I have won the trophy," she said. Divya opened up about her future plans and said that she will take rest in August and compete in the Grand Swiss next.

# Brad Haddin slams England for Manchester Day 5 drama: I liked what India did

**Former Australia wicketkeeper**

**Brad Haddin has taken a swipe at England for their conduct during the closing stages of the fourth Test in Manchester, accusing Ben Stokes' side of attempting to call off the match prematurely once a win was no longer possible.**

**New Delhi. (Agency)**

Former Australia wicketkeeper-batter Brad Haddin has criticised England's approach on the final day of the fourth Test at Old Trafford, accusing Ben Stokes' side of wanting to call off the match once it became clear they could no longer win. Haddin praised India's determination to bat through the day, saying they had "earned the right" to continue and allow their players to reach personal milestones. Indian batters Ravindra Jadeja and Washington Sundar turned down

England captain Ben Stokes' offer to call off the fourth Test and settle for a draw before the start of the final hour of play. According to the rules, both captains can agree to shake hands and conclude the match as a draw if they believe a result is no longer possible.

However, having battled hard to secure a draw, Jadeja and Washington-unbeaten on 89 and 80 respectively- flatly refused Stokes' proposal after he approached the umpire. The decision reportedly left the England skipper visibly frustrated. With both batters nearing personal milestones and having played pivotal roles in saving the match, they chose to continue batting and exercise their right to see the day out. Speaking on LiSTNR Sport's YouTube channel, Haddin backed India's decision to play on and lauded the grit shown by Shubman Gill, KL Rahul, Washington Sundar, and Ravindra Jadeja. "It's interesting at the end of that Test match because India were two for none. So England are up and



about. They thought they were going to win the Test. And that was an unbelievable partnership. Gill once again, KL Rahul was outstanding. And as the game went on, and India showed tremendous fight, unbelievable, the application they showed to bat," Haddin said. After Rahul's early dismissal on Day Five, Gill held firm, reaching a magnificent century. He was supported first by Sundar, and then by

Jadeja, as India shifted the momentum and ensured the match would end in a draw. As both Sundar and Jadeja neared their hundreds, England appeared to lose interest, prompting calls to end the contest before its natural conclusion. "Then, all of a sudden, it got to a situation where England said they can't win, so let's stop the game. So everything's got to stop because England are done playing. I like what India did, mate, they earned the right to stay out there as long as they need to. They had the right to get a hundred. And just because it didn't go England's way and they didn't

get the answer that they wanted, all of a sudden, they're not happy," he added. Eventually, both Jadeja and Sundar brought up their centuries before the match was officially drawn. Haddin's remarks add to the growing criticism of England's conduct late in the Test, contrasting it with India's resolve and willingness to fight till the very end.

## Ruben Amorim remains coy on Manchester United transfer plans, Benjamin Sesko links

**Manchester United manager Ruben Amorim remained coy about potential transfer activity and links to Benjamin Sesko following his side's dominant 4-1 win over Bournemouth in the Premier League Summer Series.**

**New Delhi. (Agency)**

Manchester United manager Ruben Amorim refused to be drawn into transfer speculation following his side's commanding 4-1 win over Bournemouth in the Premier League Summer Series. With rumours intensifying around a possible move for Benjamin Sesko and ongoing chatter surrounding Rasmus Hojlund's future, Amorim opted to remain diplomatic and focused on the players at his disposal. Speaking after the match, Amorim said: "I don't know what is going to happen until the market is closed. I'm really happy with the players that we had last season. They are

improving. We look like a different team today. Let's continue with that." While his comments stopped short of confirming or denying United's involvement in the transfer market, the Portuguese coach made it clear he is content with the current squad's progress. Hojlund, who has been linked



with a move away this summer, opened the scoring in the eighth minute with a composed finish from a Patrick Dorgu cross. It was a goal that underlined his growing confidence - and perhaps served as a timely reminder of his value amid the club's rumoured interest in Sesko. Amorim, while addressing the speculation surrounding Hojlund, appeared to advocate

patience with the Danish forward. "The important thing is Rasmus is scoring goals," he said. "I don't know what will happen until the market is closed. The important thing is the strikers here are working really well, are improving, are helping the team." It was the second time on the night Amorim used near-identical language when pressed on the club's interest in Sesko - a clear signal of his intention to deflect such questions and avoid fuelling the speculation. Despite heavy rain at Soldier Field in Chicago, United produced one of their most complete performances of pre-season. Goals from Hjlund, Dorgu, Amad Diallo and substitute Ethan Williams capped off an emphatic win that extended United's unbeaten run this summer. Dorgu, in particular, impressed with a goal and an assist, while Diallo continued to build on his promising form. Bruno Fernandes operated in a deeper role, and his understanding with Diallo drew praise from the manager. "I think it was really important - the connection with Amad. The ability to control the ball inside and outside, to maintain possession.

## Wicketkeeping first: Dhruv Jurel reacts to MS Dhoni meme ahead of Oval Test

**New Delhi. (Agency)**

Dhruv Jurel has been a part of India's series against England, but not in the way you would expect him to. In the last two Tests, Jurel has kept wickets as he came in as an injury substitute for Rishabh Pant but he hasn't got a chance to bat so far. This meant that a lot of memes on social media, with the most famous one being related to the scene from MS Dhoni: The Movie. This is the scene where a young Dhoni tells his coach he wants to bat but is shunned and told to keep first. Jurel said that he found that meme the funniest of the ones he saw on social media. You know that scene from the MS Dhoni movie, where he says, 'I want to bat and the teacher replies, 'No, do wicketkeeping' and the kid replies, 'No, I like batting' and the response is 'No, you'll have to do keeping.' That part was really funny," said Jurel. Jurel will now finally get to bat in the Oval Test as he will replace the injured Rishabh Pant for the match. The 24-year-old said that overcoming



## BCCI go back to the start ahead of fifth IND vs ENG Test - 'Let's go!'

**New Delhi. (Agency)**

Ahead of the fifth Test between India and England, BCCI have posted a motivational video featuring coach Gautam Gambhir and visuals of the Indian team in practice at The Oval. India go into the contest with a chance to level the series 2-2, earning a series draw just like they did in 2021-22.

In the video, the BCCI used Gambhir's words at the very start of the series as he tried to motivate the young squad, a team that is in transition after the retirements of veterans R Ashwin, Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli.

"All I want to say is there are two ways of looking at this tour: One is that we are without our three most experienced players or we got this phenomenal opportunity to do something special for the country because there is no bigger honour. Let's go,"



he had said.

Going into the contest, England and India are set to field significantly altered teams for the decisive Test at The Oval starting Thursday, with England captain Ben Stokes ruled out due to a shoulder injury and India facing uncertainty over Jasprit Bumrah's availability. England have made four changes to their side following the drawn

fourth Test at Old Trafford. Spin-bowling all-rounder Jacob Bethell will make his first Test appearance of 2025 in place of Stokes. Stokes' absence is a major setback for England as he recently became the fourth English cricketer to score a century and take five wickets in the same Test at Old Trafford. He is also the series' leading wicket-taker with 17 wickets at 25.23.

"I am obviously disappointed to not be able to finish the series. Bowling was ruled out as soon as we got the scan results," Stokes told reporters on Wednesday. England's pace attack will see Josh Tongue, Gus Atkinson, and Jamie Overton joining the team, while Jofra Archer and Brydon Carse are rested. Liam Dawson has been dropped, leaving England without a specialist spinner.

## ENG vs IND: Aakash Chopra slams England's spin bowling choices for Oval Test

**KITTS. (Agency)**

Cricketer-turned-commentator Aakash Chopra has raised eyebrows over England's decision to go into the final Test of the Anderson-Tendulkar Trophy without a specialist spinner. The decider, set to begin on Thursday, July 31, at The Oval, will settle a closely contested series between India and England. Speaking on his YouTube channel, Chopra questioned England's curious selection strategy, highlighting the contrast with India, who are expected to field two or even three spinners. In stark contrast, the hosts have opted for an XI devoid of a frontline spinner, instead banking on part-time options like Joe Root, Jacob Bethell, and Harry Brook- whom the England camp themselves had jokingly dismissed as a "ghatiya" (terrible) bowler. "If you call him fifth, we'll also call him right-arm fifth,"

Chopra said bluntly, referring to Harry Brook's part-time off-spin. The young batter has bowled just eight overs in the series, gone wicketless, and conceded 55 runs-hardly a threat to a strong Indian batting line-up. Jacob Bethell, a left-arm spinner, is also known more for his batting, while Joe Root, despite his experience, has struggled with the ball, picking up only two wickets at an average of 114.50 from 52.1 overs.

"You said he's a terrible bowler, not us-and now you expect him to play a serious role in a Test match?" Chopra added, mocking what he called confusion within the English camp regarding Brook's role. Beyond the spin conundrum, England's pace unit has undergone a complete overhaul. Ben Stokes, nursing a knee injury, has been ruled out, while Jofra Archer, Liam Dawson, and Brydon Carse are also unavailable. In their



place, England have brought in Jamie Overton, Josh Tongue, Gus Atkinson, and Jacob Bethell. Why didn't Ben Stokes use his best bowlers when the mandatory overs began in the last match? That's when you

needed your strike bowlers, but you held them back," Chopra questioned, pointing to questionable decisions in the previous Test. Chris Woakes is the only survivor from the original pace attack, but his series returns-10 wickets at an average of over 52-have been underwhelming, and his batting hasn't provided much value either.

Josh Tongue's inclusion offers some hope, having taken 11 wickets in two Tests at an average of 33.63. Atkinson and Overton, both playing their first match of the series, bring raw pace and bounce, but lack match rhythm and recent red-ball exposure.

England have changed almost everything for the final match. They're entering a crucial Test with an inexperienced attack and no specialist spinner. It's a bold gamble-let's see if it pays off," Chopra concluded, calling the selection "puzzling".

Textile, IT, auto, pharma stocks trade lower as US announces 25% tariff plus penalty on India

New Delhi.(Agency)

Textile, IT, auto and pharma stocks were trading lower on Thursday after US President Donald Trump announced the imposition of a 25 per cent tariff on all goods coming from India starting August 1, plus an unspecified penalty for buying Russian crude oil and military equipment. Among textile-related stocks, Welspun Living tanked 5.27 per cent, Vardhaman Textiles declined 3.27 per cent, Arvind Ltd fell by 3.16 per cent and Alok Industries dropped 2.82 per cent on the BSE. From the IT pack, shares of Hexaware Technologies quoted 1.92 per cent down, Wipro traded 1.44 per cent lower, Infosys dropped 1.34 per cent, Tata Consultancy Services dipped 1.19 per cent, HCL Technologies (1.06 per cent) and Tech Mahindra (0.88 per cent). Tracking weak trend in these stocks, the BSE IT index declined 1.29 per cent to 34,577.71. Among pharma stocks, Jubilant Pharmova dropped 3.15 per cent, Ipeca Lab slipped 3.28 per cent, Lupin (2.63 per cent), RPG Life Sciences (2.56 per cent), Dr Reddys Lab (1.55 per cent), Cipla (1.43 per cent) and Sun Pharma (0.81 per cent). Shares of Maruti Suzuki India, Bajaj Auto, Ashok Leyland, Tata Motors, Mahindra & Mahindra and TVS Motor Company were also quoting lower.

The BSE auto index dipped 0.72 per cent to 52,708.33. In the equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex traded 574.64 points down at 80,906.60, and the 50-share NSE Nifty tumbled 173.50 points to 24,678.85.

The announcement is being seen as a pressure tactic to get New Delhi to agree to demands made by the US, which has, in recent days, got favourable trade deals with major partners like Japan, the UK and the European Union. The penalty was announced as India has made large purchases of oil and military equipment from Russia. India is the first country to face a penalty for Russian imports.

**US slaps 50% tariff on copper imports: White house order to hit semi-finished products; India to see limited impact**

New Delhi.(Agency)

The United States has imposed a substantial 50 per cent tariff on semi-finished copper and copper-based imports from August 1, with reportedly limited consequences for India's American exports in this sector.

According to a July 30 White House executive order, copper imports into the United States are at levels that could compromise US national security. "All imports of semi-finished copper products and intensive copper derivative products...shall be subject to a 50 per cent tariff. This tariff shall be effective with respect to goods entered for consumption, or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption, on or after 12:01 a.m. eastern daylight time on August 1, 2025, and shall continue in effect, unless such action is expressly reduced, modified, or terminated," it said.

India's copper product exports to the US in FY2025, valued at \$360 million, comprising plates, tubes, and other semi-finished items, will become costlier, according to PTI report. Think tank GTRI further noted that the uniform application of tariffs to all countries, including Japan and EU allies, establishes equality amongst global suppliers. "India is unlikely to face any specific disadvantage compared to others," said GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava, quoted by PTI. "Moreover, the impact on India's copper trade is limited," he added.

**India's Formal Hiring Remains Stable As Demand For Remote Work Rises: Report**

Kolkata.(Agency)

New Delhi: Job creation across India's formal sector remained stable in June, with job postings rising modestly by 0.6 per cent, building on strong gains in May, a report said on Thursday. Despite a 4.8 per cent decline year-on-year, job postings are still 80 per cent above pre-pandemic levels, underscoring the resilience of formal hiring activity. Indeed Hiring Lab said in a report. According to the report, despite efforts by some employers to return to office routines, remote work continues to attract job seeker interest. In June, 8.7 per cent of job postings included keywords like "work from home" or "hybrid work" in their job descriptions. This has increased by 1 percentage point over the past year but remains well below its peak of 11.3 per cent in 2020, the report stated. Remote work remains appealing due to long commutes in urban areas, increased access to urban or global jobs from rural regions, and improved digital infrastructure, which was fast-tracked by the global pandemic. "Every month, the Indian workforce gradually transitions towards more formal work arrangements," said Callam Pickering, Indeed's APAC Senior Economist. As the nation transitions, job creation across the formal sector will outpace overall employment growth nationwide, a trend we've consistently seen over the past few years, he added. Job postings rose in nearly all major occupational categories over the past three months. "Gains were largest in agriculture and forestry, up 59 per cent, followed by veterinary (over 44 per cent), therapy (36 per cent), and beauty and wellness (34 per cent)," the report stated.

# Behind the delayed US-India trade deal: A standoff over farms

**At the centre of the friction is a long-standing issue that has repeatedly stalled negotiations between the two countries: agriculture.**

New Delhi.(Agency)

When US President Donald Trump's administration announced a 25% tariff on Indian exports effective August 1, it added fresh strain to an already complicated trade relationship. At the centre of the friction is a long-standing issue that has repeatedly stalled negotiations between the two countries: agriculture. Despite pressure from Washington, India has consistently kept its farm sector out of bounds for American agricultural imports. The reasons are rooted not just in economics but also in

the realities of rural livelihoods and domestic political priorities. Agriculture remains a cornerstone of the Indian economy. A majority of India's workforce is engaged in farming and allied activities, most of them in rural or semi-urban regions. In 2022-23, agriculture and allied sectors contributed 18.4% to India's Gross Value Added (GVA). For millions of Indian households, crop income is both a livelihood and a buffer against economic uncertainty—making it a politically sensitive space with little margin for compromise. Across multiple rounds of trade talks, Indian negotiators have consistently maintained that protecting the farm sector is a non-negotiable priority. The entry of cheaper imports from countries like the United States—where farms are larger, mechanised, and heavily subsidised—could destabilise domestic crop prices and put smaller landholders at significant risk.

Indian farms are typically much smaller in size, often family-run and reliant on

traditional practices. A sudden drop in prices caused by an influx of imports could have wide-reaching effects on rural incomes and consumption. However, the



access—arguing that existing barriers are unfair and out of step with global trade norms. But Indian resistance has remained firm, especially in the face of mounting political pressure from domestic stakeholders. Farmers' unions and rural advocacy groups have long warned that any opening of the farm sector would erode income security and leave producers vulnerable to global price shocks. This sentiment cuts across party lines, making it difficult for any government to shift its position significantly without political cost.

Besides agricultural goods, the US is also pushing for greater access in sectors like ethanol, alcoholic beverages, automobiles, medical equipment, and digital services. But agriculture remains the most contentious issue—one where public opinion and economic policy converge most sharply. India's reluctance to reduce tariffs on staples like wheat, corn, soybeans, and dairy has remained unchanged despite repeated US overtures.

## CA explains how avoiding a Rs 5,000 splurge every month can make you a crorepati

**WASHINGTON.(Agency)**

Most young professionals work hard, chase deadlines, and earn well. But sadly, their money just rests in a savings account, barely growing. CA Nitin Kaushik reminded young earners on X, "You're Not Broke. You're Just Wearing Your Retirement Fund. Dear Young Professionals, Let's get real. You work 10 hours a day. But your money? It chills in a savings account earning peanuts."

### ONE SHIRT LESS, ONE FUTURE SECURED

Kaushik's idea is simple. He adds, "Skip buying 1 Zara shirt a month (Rs 5K). Instead, invest Rs 5,000/month via SIP in a decent equity mutual fund. Let compounding hustle for 30 years." Let's break it down. Invest Rs 5,000 every month for 30 years. With an average return of 12% per year, you could end up with a retirement corpus of Rs 5.5 to Rs 6 crore. Yes, just by



pausing one impulse purchase every month. "It's not about being frugal. It's about being future-rich," he added.

### MAKE MONEY WORK HARDER THAN YOU

The formula isn't complex, it's just consistency and time. This isn't about cutting out all joys in life. It's about small, smart shifts in spending habits. Many young earners live for the moment, buying clothes, gadgets, or eating out, thinking they'll save "later." But "later" becomes never. Kaushik's message is a wake-up call. He says, "Don't just work for money. Make

money work harder than you do." By simply redirecting a part of what you already spend, without taking on any extra burden, one can grow wealth that supports you decades down the line.

### A SIMPLE PLAN, NOT ROCKER SCIENCE

One doesn't need a finance degree or big salary to begin. What you need is consistency. A SIP of Rs 5,000 may not seem like much now, but over time, compounding turns it into a powerful tool. The best part? You don't have to give up everything. Just one skipped swipe on a card each month can build your future. So next time you're about to splurge on something you don't truly need, pause and think: is this item more valuable than a peaceful, financially secure retirement? Kaushik's advice might just be the one that sticks with you. "A few skipped swipes today = Crores tomorrow."

## Who are the 6 Indian firms sanctioned by the US and what's at stake

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

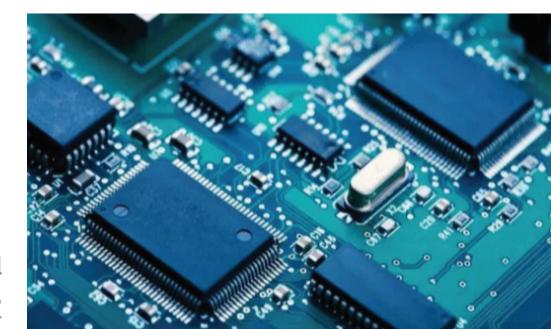
Barely a day after President Donald Trump's sweeping 25% tariff on Indian exports, the US government struck again, this time with targeted sanctions on six Indian firms for allegedly importing petrochemicals from Iran. The designations, part of a broader crackdown on what Washington calls "illicit shipping networks," hit a clutch of small and mid-sized players that collectively moved tens of millions of dollars' worth of Iranian-origin chemicals between January 2024 and January 2025. So, who are these firms? What do they do? And how badly will the sanctions hurt their businesses? THE SANCTIONED SIX The six named companies—Alchemical Solutions Pvt Ltd, Global Industrial Chemicals Ltd, Jupiter Dye Chem Pvt Ltd, Ramniklal S Gosalia & Company, Persistent Petrochem Pvt Ltd, and Kanchan Polymers—span a cross-section of India's chemical trading



backbone. None of them are publicly listed or widely known outside industry circles, but several are embedded within supply chains critical to pharmaceuticals, plastics,

These include high-demand industrial compounds like methanol, toluene, and polyethylene. Industry insiders describe Alchemical as a key aggregator and distributor serving smaller chemical processors and intermediate manufacturers across western India.

While it has minimal direct exposure to US markets, the size of its international operations means the sanctions could choke off access to shipping lines, insurers, and dollar transactions—severely impacting its liquidity. Global Industrial Chemicals Ltd: A relative newcomer, incorporated in 2023, Global Industrial Chemicals is based in Gujarat and reportedly imported \$51 million worth of Iranian methanol and related products. Its rise was rapid, catering primarily to the plastics and coatings sector. Given its heavy reliance on maritime routes and overseas sourcing.



said. It was, however, not clear if the 25 per cent duty will be imposed in addition to the existing 10 per cent baseline tariff. The 10 per cent tariff, which currently applies to most Indian goods barring a few, was announced by Trump on all countries on April 2.

Also, the exact quantum of the penalty is unclear. Smartphones, especially the iPhone, are the biggest component of electronics exports from India to the US.

Trump has been openly calling out Apple to stop expanding iPhone production in India. The tariff of 25 per cent announced by Trump is expected to hit Apple's plans to expand iPhone manufacturing in India as well as export of other electronics to the US, according to analysts.

"Today's sudden announcement of 25 per cent tariffs on exports from India to US will certainly hit Apple's plan of making India as a large export hub for iPhone exports to US," IDC India, South Asia & ANZ, Associate vice president for devices research, Navkendar Singh said.

## Trump's 25% tariffs: These stocks and sectors are in the firing line

**Both the main indices on Dalal Street fell sharply in early trade, and despite recovering by noon, the mood remains tense after Washington's move threatened to upend trade flows across key sectors.**

**CHENNAI.(Agency)**

Benchmark stock market indices were under pressure on July 31, reeling from a double whammy overnight: a sweeping 25% US tariff on Indian exports and fresh diplomatic strain over New Delhi's ties with Moscow. Both the main indices on Dalal Street fell sharply in early trade, and despite recovering by noon, the mood remains tense after Washington's move threatened to upend trade flows across key sectors. Announced late July 30 by President Donald Trump, the tariff

package—set to take effect August 1—targets a wide swath of Indian goods, from auto parts and electronics to textiles and solar modules. The sanctions coincide with veiled US warnings linked to India's oil purchases from Iran and arms deals with Russia, signalling that economic friction may soon bleed into geopolitics.

Export-heavy stocks bore the immediate brunt, with analysts warning of sustained volatility and a shift in portfolio strategies.

"Export-oriented stocks can underperform in the near term," said Vaqarjaved Khan, CFA and Senior Fundamental Analyst at Angel One. "Investor sentiment is expected to remain cautious." Here's how the blow is playing out across key sectors:

### AUTO AND AUTO COMPONENTS

No sector wears the bullet quite like autos. US dealerships represent a major chunk of revenue for Indian auto component manufacturers, many of whom run just-in-time exports to Detroit and beyond. The impact on

margins and volumes is expected to be swift. Stocks across the value chain—from engine part makers to tier-two suppliers—saw early selling pressure. India's electronics and solar



manufacturing boom—largely driven by US demand—is now staring down evaporating price power. "Companies with predominantly US-focused exports are expected to underperform," Khan warned. Those without a diversified base or alternate geographies will be forced to recalibrate strategies quickly, or risk prolonged underperformance.

### TEXTILES, GEMS, AND JEWELLERY

From Surat's polishing hubs to Tirupur's garment lines, the fallout is severe. "US orders are expected to contract or face pricing pressures," Khan said, adding that competition from Bangladesh and Vietnam may eat further into India's traditional dominance. For family-run export houses, the sudden price distortion is likely to ripple through working capital and cash flows. STEEL AND METALS

While not directly targeted, the sector wasn't spared. Sentiment-driven dips hit most metal counters, with niche exposures like graphite electrodes under particular stress. Analysts say long-term impact may be muted, but near-term volatility will persist—especially if tit-for-tat responses escalate globally.

### PHARMA

Pharmaceutical stocks stood out for their relative calm. "The sector remains largely exempt from the new tariffs," said Mayank Jain, Market Analyst at ShareMarket. But the reprieve may not last.

# Mrunal Thakur

Gets A Surprise On Dacoit Sets, Celebrates Birthday With Adivi Sesh



Actress Mrunal Thakur will be turning 33 years old on August 1. Before her birthday, the diva was surprised with a pre-birthday celebration on the set of her forthcoming romantic drama "Dacoit", co-starring Adivi Sesh.

The makers, Annapurna Studios, took to their X handle and posted a video of the celebration. The clip opened with Mrunal entering the set, with everyone waiting for her with a big "Surprise". Later, an elated Mrunal cuts the cake and lovingly feeds it to the team, including her co-star Sesh. We could also see her dancing a little as everyone sang "Happy Birthday" for her. Sharing the video, the makers wrote, "A pre-birthday bash for the charming @mrunal0801 planned by team #Dacoit on the sets. A super surprise for the birthday girl #DACOIT IN CINEMAS WORLDWIDE ON DECEMBER 25th #DacoitFromDec25th."

Meanwhile, talking about his next, Sesh called "Dacoit" a two-hero film. "From the beginning, Dacoit never felt like a film with one protagonist. It's a story of two layered characters, both fighting their own battles, both central to the world we're building. I've always believed that stories thrive when ego takes a backseat — and in Mrunal, I've found a co-actor who shares that belief."

Shedding light on his dynamic with co-star Mrunal, he went on to say, "There's an honesty in the way she works — a rawness and truth that mirrors how I approach my own performances. We're both outsiders in this industry, and that shared sense of having earned our place brings a kind of unspoken understanding between us." Sesh revealed that both he and Mrunal are the kind of actors who will do whatever it takes for a film. "That kind of commitment can't be faked — it's felt. And that's why Dacoit feels like a two-hero film. We're not here to outshine each other; we're here to build something meaningful together. It's about mutual trust, and pushing each other to be better every day on set," he concluded.



## Manushi Chhillar

Looked Like This After Too Much Hairspray

Manushi Chhillar has been making headlines, not just on-screen with her upcoming film Maalik, but also off-screen, with her fashion game. During Maalik's promotion, the former Miss World has been channelling her inner diva as she paired her stunning sarees with iconic sunglasses.

### Manushi Chhillar Pairs Her Sarees With Sunglasses

In one of her promotional looks, Manushi was seen donning an intricately embroidered off-white saree featuring heavy sequins and thread work. Her blouse, equally ornate, featured a matching pattern and short sleeves adorned with crystal drops. Further, her sheer pallu added a delicate and ethereal touch to her ensemble. The model-turned-actress accessorises her look with a bold emerald and pearl choker necklace, adding a pop of colour to her neutral look. She finishes off her look with statement sunglasses, highlighting a touch of modernity to her traditional look.

### Manushi Chhillar Keeps Her Sunglasses Constant

In another promotional event, Manushi was seen wearing a soft pastel floral saree with a sheer and airy texture. The entire saree featured delicate floral prints in peach, pink, and yellow hues. Her blouse matched the floral motif designs, offering a contemporary cut that balances the traditional silhouettes. She accessorised her look with a minimal yet stunning teal choker, adding a contrast to her overall pastel look. She took

her outfit to another level by sporting a pair of stylish black sunglasses, giving the traditional look a contemporary flair.

### Manushi Chhillar Glows in Retro Glam

On another look, she channelled an ethereal look in a graceful pastel ensemble. She was draped in a delicate blush pink saree featuring a light and flowy texture. The intricate floral embroidery along the border in white threadwork added a romantic touch to the overall minimalist look. She kept the look clean, adding pearl drop earrings and a minimal ring, radiating just the right amount of sparkle. Her cat-eye



sunglasses stole the show, injecting a modern yet slightly retro edge to the otherwise minimal traditional outfit.

### Manushi Chhillar's Recent Project

Manushi Chhillar was recently seen playing the female lead in Maalik. Directed by Pulkit, this action thriller was set in 1980s Ahmedabad. The film follows a man's rise through the ranks of the criminal underworld. Combining social issues and intense action, the film takes turns when he faces tough choices and dangers on his way. Besides Manushi Chhillar, the film stars Rajkumar Rao in the lead role.

Kiara Advani, Hrithik Roshan's Sizzling Chemistry In War 2 Song Teaser Stuns Fans: 'Hottest'



Kiara Advani and Hrithik Roshan are setting fire on social media once again. Why? The makers of War 2 have announced that the first song of the film, titled Aavan Jaavan, will be released on Thursday, July 31st. They dropped a teaser of the romantic song featuring superstars Hrithik and Kiara. In the teaser, the two stars were seen getting intimate as they spent some quality time together. In one of the scenes in the teaser, Hrithik was also seen holding Kiara by her waist as she looked stunning in yellow and white shorts with a matching off-shoulder top. Soon after the teaser was released, several social media users reacted to it and praised Hrithik and Kiara's sizzling chemistry. "The vibe. The chemistry. Get ready to groove on #AavanJaavan. Song drops tomorrow!" one of the fans wrote. "I'm so so 'OVERWHELMED AND HAPPY' watching my two of the most favourites #HrithikRoshan and #KiaraAdvani romancing each other in such a soulful melody!" added another.

Previously, Kiara Advani's hot look from the War 2 trailer had also set social media on fire. The actress, who recently embraced motherhood, was seen confidently walking in a glamorous bikini, flaunting her toned figure.

Directed by Ayan Mukerji, War 2 is the highly anticipated sequel to the 2019 blockbuster War, and the sixth installment in Yash Raj Films' ambitious Spy Universe – home to Pathaan and Tiger 3. The film marks a major milestone for the franchise. War 2 is not just a standalone action spectacle. It's also a strategic setup for the next chapter in the YRF Spy Universe – Alpha, starring Alia Bhatt. While rumours suggest Alia might make a brief appearance in War 2, there has been no official confirmation on the cameo.

**Bigg Boss 18 Star Shrutika Arjun Gave THIS Special Gift To Birthday Boy Arjun Raaj**



Shrutika Arjun, who captured hearts with her lively and pleasant personality on Bigg Boss 18, continues to flourish. While on the reality show, the actress was often seen expressing her love for her husband, Arjun Raaj. In the latest, Shrutika surprised her husband, Arjun Raaj, with an extravagant birthday present: a vintage Rolex watch. The gift reflected her love and appreciation for her husband, making his special day even more unforgettable.

### Shrutika Arjun's Special Birthday Gift

In a recent paparazzi video, Arjun mentioned that he was 'speechless' after receiving the gift. He added that he was not wearing it at the moment, and Shrutika immediately quipped, saying she had



asked him to wear it. But Arjun denied, saying it might get scratched. Moreover, in the video, Shrutika was also seen complaining that he came late and she was waiting. Arjun jokingly added that he does not understand Hindi well, but could figure out that she was complaining.

### Shrutika Arjun's Acting Career

Before Bigg Boss 18, Shrutika Arjun won the Tamil culinary comedy show Cook with Comali 3. She not only exhibited her cooking skills, but she also won the audience's hearts with her funny personality. Earlier, she shared how she turned off successful movies in the South during a key period in her life. She shared, "I did receive a couple of acting offers from the South. The movies did really well. I was called in for auditions, but I had decided that acting wasn't my focus at the time. I was transitioning from school to college and had made up my mind. I chose not to pursue those offers, but I have no regrets. I believe everything happens for a reason."

Though the roles she turned down ultimately became hits, Shrutika Arjun was firm in her decision, noting that her priority at the time was her studies.

Shrutika Arjun also acted in the popular Malayalam film Swapnam Kondu Thulabharam in 2003. She played Ammu and starred alongside renowned artists Suresh Gopi and Kunchako Boban.

# Mumbai to get India's first Lighthouse tourist destination

He wanted to examine whether we could make the lighthouse into a tourist destination and asked if the Times of India would support the initiative. So we agreed to meet at 6 am at the Gateway of India and took a 40-minute boat ride to the island. Throughout the way, we could not help but marvel at the fact that our sea looked as beautiful as any other part of the world, but it was just that we had not seen its potential, as a country, to exploit it for tourism.

I was excited with the possibility of we Indians also getting an experience in our country that we otherwise, only see as tourists in other

countries. Months after our visiting the island, the Ministry of Tourism has finally given its consent to the Ministry of Shipping and jointly, they have started to develop three lighthouses, that they have identified, into tourist destinations — Kanhoji Angre in Mumbai, the Dolphin's Nose in Vishakhapatnam and Mahabalipuram lighthouse

about 40 kms south of Chennai. The first to be launched would be, of course, the one in Mumbai. We bring you excerpts of our exclusive conversation with the two ministers:

**Dr K. Chiranjeevi, union Minister of state for tourism**

**Have you visited any of the international lighthouses?**

Once as a brand ambassador of a beverage brand, I was

posed to shoot an ad in South Africa in

a lighthouse. But I couldn't make it

due to my tight schedule, but thanks to the graphics the ad

showed me in the lighthouse and it looked fantastic. Now,

once these lighthouses are

built, Milind and I can

actually stand on the

lighthouse and give a

shot.

**Are you enjoying being a minister as much as you enjoyed being an actor?**

I enjoyed being an actor in the 30 years of my film career. After that, I think venturing into politics is a way to give back. I used to do some philanthropic work but with the political platform, I can contribute in a bigger way. On the lighter side, as an actor, your acting hours are limited but as a minister, it is unlimited. I remember when the Prime Minister appointed me, he said, 'We have rightfully chosen you as a tourism minister as you have enormous experience and you have gone all over the world as an actor, so you know how to enhance, uplift and encourage our tourism sector. You can be a brand ambassador for your ministry.' Our three big constraints for building tourism are connectivity, hygiene and the safety and security of our tourist places. Many countries find it difficult to get a visa and would like us to give them a visa on arrival. When I went to Spain, the tourism minister told me a lot of people want to come to India as they love Bollywood, but they don't have direct flights and find it difficult to get visas on arrival, that is currently offered to only citizens of nine countries. I am in talks with the home ministry to extend it to about 40 countries.

**Your favourite holiday destination?**

Internationally, I love going to Switzerland. I went there many times for my shooting and I loved the Alps, the tranquility, cleanliness, the greenery and the warmth of the people there. In India, there are lots of places that I love, but my favourite is Kashmir. Till the terrorism problem happened, for almost a decade, every summer I would be shooting there. I also like Goa, as it is happening and is lively and affordable. My family would always join me in the summer holidays when I shot in Kashmir.

A few months back, my family members went to Jammu and Kashmir for a holiday. I had planned to go but could not. They said they missed me as they got nostalgic remembering the times and places where they jumped, slid and sledged as kids. Just hearing this from them made me so happy.

**Do you miss being a part of the film industry?**

If Charan (Ram Charan) was not there, I would have missed it. But I have no regrets since he took over and I feel connected to films through him. He is hard-working and focused and I am happy that he is no longer the brat that he was as a child.

**Milind Deora, Minister of state for shipping**

**What excited you to develop these lighthouses?**

Our ministry runs 180 lighthouses along the coastline of India. They are important navigational tools for ships, but I realised that they can become important tourist destinations. And of the three we have identified, India's first will be developed just off the coast of Mumbai. It's a unique lighthouse and you have to sail to the island that makes it attractive for tourists. It's a historical island with a fort built around it by Kanhoji Angre. We feel that the partnership with the ministry of tourism should have happened a long time ago. But, better late than never.

These are beautiful assets waiting to be exploited for tourism. When I studied in Boston, I saw that the entire east coast of America has a number of lighthouses. It adds a full maritime experience and Europe and US do it naturally and very well. If we can recreate that in India, we can attract a lot of tourists both from India and abroad. Mumbai is one of the best coastal cities and this is the most underutilised asset we have. We live in Mumbai, but don't even know what it is like to go to the sea. People around the world appreciate it, look after it well and even exploit it as a government. To me, it is exciting, personally and professionally.

**Your favourite holiday destination?**

Andaman and Nicobar Islands. It's just by default that I have become minister of shipping, but I love the sea, I love swimming and diving.



## Rediscovering the wonders of Pune



University of Pune

**History:** The main building of the University of Pune was made in 1864. During the British Raj, it was the official residence of the governor of Bombay and post-independence, the building was restored for academic and official purposes.

**Inspired by Prince Albert Osborne's house on the Isle of Wight, it was built at a cost of around 1,75,000 Sterling Pound, which was nearly six times the amount raised by the sale of the previous Governor's residence.**

**To see:** A little ahead of the building is a small pond, with a stone prison right in the middle of it. During the British era, crocodiles were kept in the pond that surrounded the prisoners in their cells. The University can be visited between 8 am-6 pm with prior permission.

### Parvati

**History:** Located at a height of 2,100 feet above sea level, Parvati is one of the highest points in the city and gives an excellent panoramic bird's eye view of Pune. The Parvati houses a temple complex and one needs to climb and a total of 103 steps to reach the top. The main temple was built by Shrimant Nana Saheb Peshwa in 1749 and was visited by the Prince of Wales, Albert Edward, during his visit to India in 1875. Apart from its historical importance, it is also a hot favourite among fitness enthusiasts, who come here daily for their morning and evening walks.

**To see:** Other than the temple, the complex also has a museum housing artefacts from the Peshwa period. The Parvati gates are open for the general public from 5.00 am to 8.00 pm.

Its cobble streets, beautiful monuments, streets filled with music and art and charming old square make it a wonderful option for an enchanting history rich getaway.

### How to get there

#### By Air

All leading airlines fly from Delhi, Bangalore and Mumbai to Krakow, via Frankfurt, Moscow, Berlin or several other destinations in Europe. It also has a direct connection to several European cities and would make a good base for exploring the rest of the continent.

#### By Bus

Buses and trams make it easy to travel around Krakow, though you can happily walk for large parts of the city. You can buy tickets at ticket machines or on board. Keep change handy. For ease of travel, pick up the Krakow Tourist Card that gives you free travel on buses and trams. It comes in 60zl and 80zl denomination with two or three day validity. [http://www.krakow.pl/english/6243,artykul,krakow\\_tourist\\_card.html](http://www.krakow.pl/english/6243,artykul,krakow_tourist_card.html)

#### Where to stay

There are enough stay options in Krakow. You can choose from star hotels to boutique hotels, apartments and hostels. I stayed at the Sheraton, which gives a wonderful view of the river and castle. For apartments, check out [www.apartmencracow.com](http://www.apartmencracow.com). For dorm accommodations, try The Secret Garden Hostel ([www.thesecretgarden.pl](http://www.thesecretgarden.pl)). You'll also find well known chains like Novotel and Radisson and Ibis.

#### Food

There are lots of options. Try a traditional Polish Milk Bar or a traditional brewery for the authentic local experience. If you can afford it, try a restaurant called Wierzynek. It's been around since 1364 (really) and hosted royal banquets!

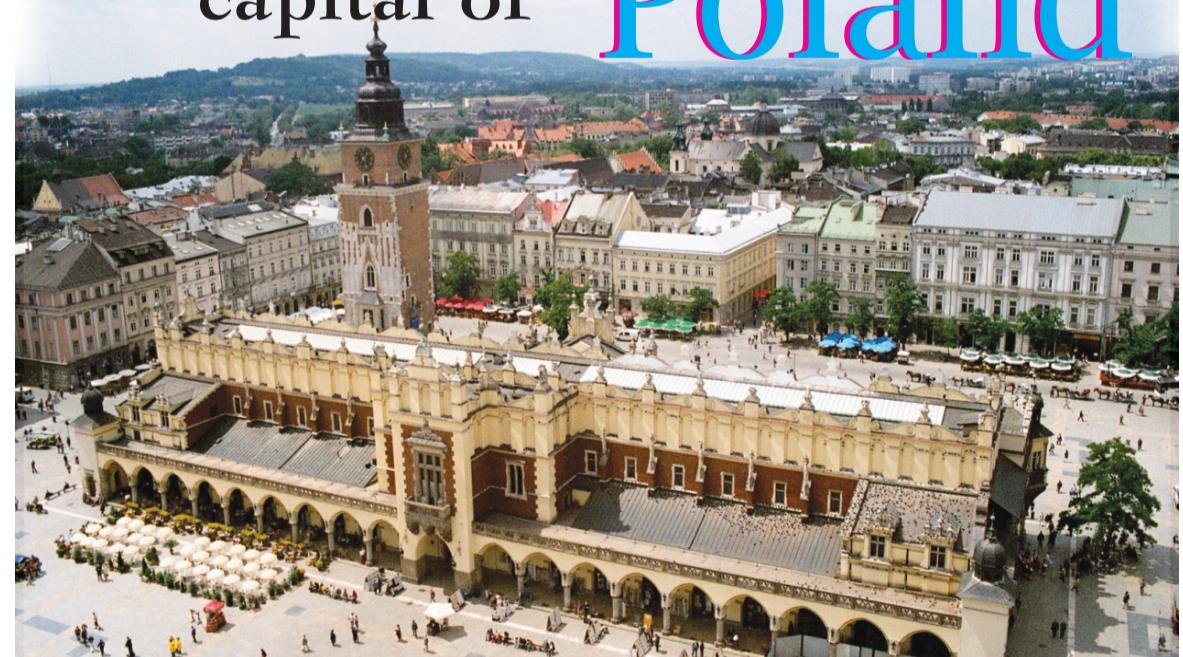
#### Places of Interest

Plenty! Though it saw the worst of Nazis, Krakow was fortunate to not be completely destroyed during WWII. The Old Town is a historic location, as is Kazimierz (former Jewish Quarter). Old Town must visits include the majestic Wawel Castle, Cloth Hall (a merchant's market since the middle ages), St Mary's Basilica and the Town Hall Tower.

The Royal castle on Wawel Hill includes a Cathedral as well, apart from other treasures inside its fortified walls.

Kazimierz has a sad history as Jews were persecuted here by the Nazis during World War II. A large number of Jews were saved by the businessman

## Krakow: Cultural capital of Poland



Krakow is the cultural capital of Poland. Its history goes back to the 4th century. It is considered one of the most beautiful cities of Eastern Europe and is on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Oskar Schindler, made famous in the movie Schindler's List. You can now visit Schindler's Enamelware Factory in Kazimierz. Kazimierz is also home to several churches, synagogues and museums and makes for a good walking tour.

Wieliczka Salt Mines: Built in the 13th century, these were one of the oldest salt mines still in operation until 2007. You can see statues, chapels and other things crafted out of rock salt.

Krakow offers some interesting tours. One is a cycling tour of the city (<http://www.cooltourcompany.com/>).

The other is a communist tour of Krakow as it was a European communist hub. Try [http://www.crazyguides.com/krakow\\_tours/](http://www.crazyguides.com/krakow_tours/). They take you in a cool communist era vehicle called Trabant, making it complete. You can also do a tour of the Jewish

quarter and some of these are free!

More than the sights, the best experience in Krakow is to park yourself in the old town square, in one of the many open air restaurants and hear music being played and take in the general joie de vivre.

Visit Planty Park and play chess on one of the available boards. You can also catch festivals, fireworks and other events by the river.

#### Closure Line

Though not on top of the regular Indian travel list, Krakow is a wonderful getaway that is rich both in history and the relaxed yet lively experience it offers. Make this part of your Europe itinerary and you won't regret it.