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Feels good to be back: Taslima Nasrin returns to Kolkata after nearly 2 decades

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Exiled Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasrin returned to Kolkata on Friday, nearly two decades after she was forced to leave the city following violent protests over her controversial memoir Dwikhandito. Nasrin arrived at the Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport from New Delhi, where she was welcomed by supporters. Greeting those gathered to receive her with folded hands, she said, "I'm feeling very good to be back."

Her visit comes ahead of a public programme in Kolkata on August 1, marking her first public appearance in the city since she left in 2007.

Nasrin was forced to leave Kolkata in November 2007 after violent protests by Islamist groups demanding a ban on Dwikhandito, the Bengali version of her memoir. The unrest prompted the then West Bengal government to move her out of the state. She was later shifted to Delhi under tight security before eventually moving abroad.

Raghav Chadha Breaks Long Silence On NEET Issue, Says His Role "Changed"

New Delhi. (Agency)

He raised everything from airport chai-samosa prices to gig workers' problems very vocally in Parliament. But the young neta went totally silent when thousands of youngsters hit the Delhi streets to protest the NEET paper leak. And the silence did not go unnoticed. It invited loud criticism and social media ridicule by many. Questioned over his "radio silence" on the student protests, BJP MP Raghav Chadha on Thursday answered critics during his intervention in the Rajya Sabha. The former AAP leader-turned-BJP MP, who is known to raise issues related to students, the middle class, education and gig workers, finally broke his silence on the NEET issue.

The young leader, who switched to the BJP from AAP recently, said his role changed after the political switch. "Earlier, when I was in the Opposition, it was my job to raise questions, and I did it honestly. Now I am on the treasury benches, so my role has changed. My responsibility is no longer to ask questions but to provide solutions," he said while speaking during the debate in Rajya Sabha on the new law against paper leaks. Chadha added that he does not need headlines or to "mark attendance" by speaking in front of cameras, but rather wants results.

"Can't Silence Gen Z": Rahul Slams Centre Over FIR On Woman For 'Abusing' PM

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Alleging that the Modi government was trying to silence Gen Z, Gandhi posted that the PM must be "careful" about how he treats students.

Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi has attacked the Centre over a police case against a 25-year-old woman for allegedly using abusive language against Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the Cockroach Janta Party protest at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi.

Alleging that the Modi government was trying to silence Gen Z, Gandhi posted that the PM must be "careful" about how he treats students. "PM Modi and Amit Shah - you cannot threaten Gen Z into silence. First you broke their bones. Now you are filing FIRs and taking down their accounts. You are India's past. Be careful about how you treat India's future," Rahul Gandhi posted on X.

Ruchika Singh has been booked for the objectionable remarks she made at Jantar Mantar on July 23. A complaint was filed on

Wednesday stating that her comments insulted the dignity of the Prime Minister's office and could spread disharmony and disturb public peace. A Zero FIR was registered at the Expressway Police Station



in Noida, which was later transferred to Parliament Street Police Station for further action. The Cockroach Janta Party has also spoken out against the case. CJP

spokesperson Saurav Das said Singh's remarks could be wrong but stressed that this kind of action should not be taken.

"Of course, if there is any language that was used which is derogatory in nature, then the person concerned is free to pursue civil defamation and criminal defamation against the person. However, the use of criminal machinery to go against protesters is highly condemnable and no one should be punished for any objectionable language per se. I'm not saying that the language is right," he said. "I would request everyone from the younger generation to be very careful with their words, and the kind of insults and sentences that you use against people in general. That said, criminal machinery being used is a big no-no. It is completely unacceptable, it should not happen. We would also like to tell the police to maintain calm and not misuse their powers for any political ends," Das added.

No reason to doubt PM: Govt defends Election Commissioner appointment in SC

The government told the Supreme Court there was 'no reason to doubt' the Prime Minister's role in appointing the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners.

Patna. (Agency)

The government has strongly defended the current appointment process for the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and other Election Commissioners by a three-member committee comprising the Prime Minister, a Union Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, telling the Supreme Court that there was "no reason to doubt" the PM's role in the selection process.

The government argued that constitutional courts cannot proceed on the assumption that the executive would act against democratic values. It further added that

questioning the selection committee would



amount to doubting both Parliament's legislative wisdom and the constitutional trust reposed in elected institutions.

"The office of the Prime Minister has a sanctity attached to it," Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told the court. He added, "If his decision is not to be trusted, then why not have a provision that even while selecting his Cabinet he must consult some former judge or outsider?" The submissions were made before a bench of Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice Satish Chandra Sharma, which reserved its order on a batch of petitions challenging the constitutional validity of the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023.

Odisha medical paper leaked on WhatsApp during exam, govt orders probe

According to sources close to the development, the controversy erupted after a complaint alleged that the General Surgery MD/MS question paper for the 2023-26 batch had been shared on a WhatsApp group during the examination.

New Delhi. (Agency)

Amid the nationwide outrage over the NEET paper leak row, the BJP government in Odisha has found itself at the centre of a fresh examination controversy after allegations surfaced that the question paper for the Medical Postgraduate (PG) General Surgery MD/MS examination was circulated on a WhatsApp group while the test was in progress.

The alleged incident, linked to the Odisha University of Health Sciences (OUHS), has triggered an official

investigation into possible examination mobile phones and electronic devices malpractice. Authorities have also



inside examination centres. According to sources close to the development, the controversy erupted after a complaint alleged that the General Surgery MD/MS question paper for the 2023-26 batch had been shared on a WhatsApp group during the examination.

The complaint further claimed that answers to the paper were also circulated from certain WhatsApp numbers while candidates were still writing the examination, raising serious concerns about the integrity and fairness of the evaluation process.

Pakistan indicates PM Modi will be invited to Islamabad for 2027 SCO Summit



New Delhi . (Agency)

Pakistan has confirmed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be invited to the 2027 SCO Summit in Islamabad. The invitation will follow the established procedures of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, ensuring all member states receive invites.

Pakistan on Friday indicated that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be invited to Islamabad for the 2027 Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit, saying all member states, including India, will receive invitations as per the grouping's procedures.

During a media briefing, Pakistan's Foreign Office spokesperson said invitations for the summit would be extended to all SCO heads of state and government, which means India would also be invited as a member of the organisation.

"The invitation is an obligation of the host country and will be issued according to the established SCO protocol," the spokesperson said.

Responding to a separate query on a possible meeting between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Pakistan's Foreign Minister on the sidelines of the ASEAN meetings in Manila, the spokesperson said Islamabad was not aware of any such request from New Delhi.

Shehzad Poonawalla quits politics? Social media activity sparks buzz

New Delhi. (Agency)

BJP leader Shehzad Poonawalla has sparked buzz over quitting politics after updating his X bio to drop the 'National Spokesperson, BJP' designation. Simultaneously, Poonawalla also reposted clips from old interviews in which he talks about considering quitting active politics. The 38-year-old, however, has not explicitly said whether he's decided to quit the BJP and active politics.



On Thursday, he shared a screenshot of his updated X bio that read, "Religion: Islam, Culture: Hindu, Ideology: Bhartiya. Author: GST Ki Yatra ; Lifelong follower of PM Narendra Modi." The caption simply read "My updated bio". The 38-year-old's Instagram profile, however, still shows him as the national spokesperson of the BJP. He retweeted two of his old videos,

one dated July 9 and another June 28, wherein he explained that political contributions need not be made only as electoral representatives. In one of the videos, he said that social service is much bigger than politics. In the same clip, he also revealed how he was ready to quit after the 2025 Lok Sabha polls.

DMK charts solo line in Parliament, skips Opposition walkout on anti-paper leak bill

The DMK's decision to break ranks with the Opposition on key parliamentary strategies has put the spotlight on its evolving role as an independent force in Parliament.

New Delhi. (Agency)

The DMK's conduct in Parliament during the Monsoon Session has highlighted its growing distance from the Congress-led Opposition on a series of contentious issues. The latest instance came in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday, when the party did not join the Congress and other Opposition parties in walking out during voting on the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026.

The move followed protests by Opposition parties over the government's handling of the NEET paper leak and the July 20 police crackdown on student

protesters.

A day earlier, the DMK had also taken a



separate line in the Lok Sabha by becoming the only Opposition party to participate in the discussion on The

Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill. In the Lok Sabha debate on the anti-paper leak bill on Wednesday, DMK MP Dayanidhi Maran criticised the government's handling of examination reforms.

However, he stopped short of directly targeting Union Home Minister Amit Shah over the police action against protesters marching to Parliament, a line strongly taken by the Congress and several other Opposition parties. On Thursday, the DMK again took an independent stand by participating in the discussion on The Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill.

News box

Noida bars goods vehicles from city roads for kanwar yatra till Aug 11

Noida.(Agency)

Traffic police have barred all heavy, medium and light goods vehicles from entering the city from Thursday night until Aug 11 to manage traffic during the kanwar yatra.DCP (traffic) Abhay Kumar Mishra said goods carrier vehicles headed to Ghaziabad, Hapur, Bulandshahar, Muradnagar via Chilla intersection will have to take Noida Expressway and Eastern Peripheral Expressway. Freight vehicles currently take the Sector 62 stretch to reach Ghaziabad. During the yatra, cops said, all goods vehicles will be barred from entering the city.Goods vehicles headed from Delhi-Badarpur border via Okhla Barrage will also have to take the expressways to reach Ghaziabad and other west UP districts.Vehicles travelling from Chilla or DND Flyover via the Maharaja Agrasen Marg elevated road to Ghaziabad and beyond will also be diverted via the two expressways, Mishra said. “All goods vehicles going from Aligarh, Bulandshahar, Sikandrabad via Dadri NH-91 towards Ghaziabad and Delhi will be able to reach their destination by using the EPE. Vehicles heading from Sikandrabad, Kasna via Pari Chowk towards Delhi through Noida Expressway will also be diverted via EPE from Sirsa roundabout,” the DCP said.Goods carrier vehicles travelling towards Ghaziabad via Model Town, Chhijarsi and Taj Highway will also have to take EPE. “Movement of heavy vehicles between Chilla and Okhla Barrage will be completely prohibited,” the DCP said.In Noida, devotees typically move through routes connecting Mayur Vihar, Sector 14 Shani Mandir, Okhla Bird Sanctuary and Kalindi Kunj.

NHAI plans 12km elevated road from Lal Kuan to Dadri

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) will build a 12km elevated road to decongest the GT Road stretch between Lal Kuan and Dadri. The six-lane road, which is to begin near the Delhi-Meerut Expressway and NH-9 junction at Lal Kuan, will bypass the congested four-lane stretch that connects Ghaziabad with Noida and eventually Aligarh via Sikandrabad, Bulandshahr and Khurja. The elevated road will also open up a faster route to Noida Airport for Ghaziabad residents via Eastern Peripheral Expressway. Union road transport and highways minister Nitin Gadkari recently announced the project, after which NHAI initiated the process of preparing a feasibility report. “The proposal to decongest the Lal Kuan stretch has been under consideration for a long time. Following the minister’s announcement, work has begun on the feasibility study,” an NHAI official from the Aligarh division said.The existing 12-kilometre stretch is among the busiest sections of GT Road. Encroachments, roadside commercial activity and illegal parking have narrowed the carriageway at several points. At Lal Kuan, traffic from the Delhi-Meerut Expressway, Sahibabad and Ghaziabad converges before fanning out toward Dadri, Sikandrabad, Bulandshahr and Aligarh, leading to bottlenecks.

Good air days in Gurgaon: Why CPCB data and govt reply in Lok Sabha show a wide gap

Gurgaon.(Agency)

The city saw 220 days when air quality was ‘good’ and just 145 ‘bad’ ones in 2023, according to data tabled by the environment ministry in Parliament in response to a Lok Sabha question. The year after was only marginally worse with 201 good days and 164 bad ones. And 2025 wasn’t had either with 186 ‘good’ days and 149 ‘bad’ ones. Surprised? There’s good reason to be. A closer look at data presented in the House shows these ‘good’ days are not the same as ‘good’ days on the official air quality index. Govt’s answer in Lok Sabha on July 27 clubs readings under three separate categories of the AQI scale — good (AQI 0-50), satisfactory (51-100) and moderate (101-200) — under the single label of ‘good’. Similarly, poor, very poor and severe days are grouped together as ‘bad’ days. As a result, moderate air quality days, which are not officially ‘good’ and can still pose health risks to sensitive groups, got clubbed with genuinely clean air days, which were few and far between.Official Central Pollution Control Board data shows in 2023, the city did not record a single day in the official good AQI category — its 220 ‘good’ were actually 49 satisfactory days and 171 moderate days. The picture barely changed in 2024: of 201 ‘good’ days, only one was officially good, with the rest split between 60 satisfactory and 140 moderate days. The trend continued into 2025, when just nine of 186 ‘good’ were officially good, against 59 satisfactory and 118 moderate days.)

Lamborghini owner held for driving recklessly on Dwarka Expressway changed car colour to dodge cops

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Two days after the arrest of a man for allegedly driving a Lamborghini recklessly on Dwarka Expressway, police on Thursday said the accused had changed the colour of his car to avoid identification.Police said 24-year-old Pranav Manchanda, a resident of Palm Springs Golf Course and managing director of Standard Castings Pvt Ltd, was arrested on Tuesday by a team from Rajendra Park police station after investigators traced the luxury sports car seen in a month-old video that surfaced on social media earlier this month. Police said Manchanda was later granted bail in the case.The clip shows a golden-coloured Lamborghini Huracán Evo

RWD speeding along Dwarka Expressway at night, rapidly accelerating, changing lanes repeatedly and overtaking other vehicles while another moving vehicle filmed the drive. Police said the manner of driving posed a serious risk to other commuters, prompting the department to take suo motu cognisance of the incident. During the investigation, police found that the accused had the car wrapped in a different colour earlier this month, allegedly in an attempt to evade detection after the video was widely circulated on social media. “Despite the modification, investigators were able to establish the identity of both the vehicle and the



driver through technical and other evidence,” a senior police officer said. The officer added that the accused also got the new colour updated in the vehicle’s registration certificate after obtaining permission from the sub-divisional magistrate.An FIR was registered at Rajendra Park police station under sections 184 (dangerous driving) and 189 (racing and trials of speed) of the Motor Vehicles Act,

along with sections 125 (act endangering life or personal safety of others) and 281 (rash driving on a public way) of BNS.The Lamborghini was seized as part of the investigation, police said, adding that they have also found several other videos of the same car on city roads. “We have found some more videos of the car. We are examining them and will take necessary action if required,” a police officer said.According to the company’s website, Standard Castings Pvt Ltd supplies aviation turbine fuel across the country and manufactures special-purpose vehicles, including for the Indian armed forces, besides catering to other industrial sectors.

RWA federation seeks mandatory NOC before property transfers



Noida.(Agency)

Federation of Noida Residents Welfare Associations (FONRWA), representing over 120 RWAs, has appealed to the Noida Authority for the implementation of a directive that requires property owners to obtain a no-objection certificate (NOC) from the

relevant RWA prior to the issuance of a transfer memorandum.“The current system of handing out transfer memos without NOCs creates complications around settling maintenance charges and updating resident records that further affect new owners,” said FONRWA’s president , Yogendra Sharma.The appeal was thereby made

to ensure that all maintenance dues — which are often left pending, creating a financial burden on the RWA — are cleared by the property owner before the said transfer, along with due entry of new owners in the RWA records.According to FONRWA’s secretary-general, KK Jain, in plot-based sectors, approximately 40% of residents fail to pay their membership subscriptions, straining the financial resources of RWAs, which are utilised for maintaining community infrastructure like parks, footpaths, security and sanitation. Comparatively, in apartment- or flat-based accommodation, the non-payment rate is lower, ranging from 15% to 20%.“Making the NOC mandatory will minimise discretion and potentially curb opportunities for corruption and bribery.

Stuntman who died in burial show kept underground to push up collections

Nuh.(Agency)

The 27-year-old stuntman who died after being buried alive in a bizarre “samadhi” show in Nuh’s Khorī village on Monday was allegedly forced to remain underground for nearly three days because the organiser refused to pull him out after collecting just Rs 3,000 in donations, hoping a longer spectacle would draw bigger crowds and higher collections.By the time alarmed villagers sensed something was wrong and dug him out themselves, Deepak was dead. His

family and villagers alleged the organiser kept delaying the finale despite knowing Deepak had already crossed the “safe limit”. The organiser was caught by villagers and handed over to police after the body was recovered. However, he was allowed to go after being detained briefly for questioning as cops waited for the autopsy report.The allegations by Deepak’s family have cast a spotlight on the informal world of travelling stunt troupes, where performers survive on donations collected at village fairs and often push their

bodies to dangerous extremes for meagre earnings. According to an estimate, such groups usually earn Rs 15,000-20,000 for each performance, which can last up to a week.Deepak, a resident of Gaunchi village in Faridabad, was part of a three-to-four-member troupe from the Nat community that travelled from village to village, putting up temporary tents after seeking permission from local leaders or residents. The troupe’s income depended almost entirely on voluntary contributions from spectators.

SHO shunted out after probe reveals delay, negligence in rape and murder of Ghaziabad girl

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

The SHO who handled the case of alleged rape and murder of a four-year-old girl was shunted to police lines and a departmental inquiry initiated against him following allegations of negligence and procedural delays in carrying out the probe, UP govt told Supreme Court on Thursday.Additional solicitor-general Aishwarya Bhati informed a bench headed by CJI Surya Kant that Nandgram SHO Umesh Kumar was shunted for failing to act swiftly on the family’s complaint. The court had earlier noted allegations that local police initially harassed the girl’s family instead of registering an FIR. Police submittd that the crime site — an isolated plot overgrown with dense brush — has since been cleared and regular patrolling instituted. “The bushes were cut, dumped garbage was cleared, and anti-social elements were removed. Patrols are conducted regularly now,” a senior officer said. An SIT formed by the apex court corroborated the father’s statement that two private facilities — Khajan Singh Manvi Health Care and St Joseph Hospital — denied emergency care to his child, who died while being shifted to a district govt facility. The court observed prima facie that the hospitals showed “utter negligence” because the girl belonged to a poor family. The incident occurred on March 16, when a neighbour lured the four-year-old girl away with chocolates.

EPE-Yamuna link that’ll reduce airport drive by 30 mins may be ready in Oct

Noida.(Agency)

A cloverleaf interchange linking Eastern Peripheral Expressway (EPE) and Yamuna Expressway is likely to open on Oct 15, improving connectivity to Noida International Airport from Greater Noida, Meerut, Palwal, Kundli and Panipat. Conceived in 2019 to strengthen regional connectivity, the interchange is being built near Jaganpur-Afzalpur village, about 2km from Galgotias University and around 10km from the Yamuna Expressway’s zero point at Pari Chowk. At present, there is no direct connection between EPE and Yamuna Expressway. Once ready, the interchange is expected to shave 15-20 km off the drive to Noida airport for commuters from Greater Noida, Meerut, Palwal, Kundli and Panipat, reducing travel time by roughly 15-25 minutes while bypassing the current detour through Pari Chowk and Kasna. The interchange is also

expected to provide easier access to Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA) sectors and enable smoother travel towards Agra and Mathura. At present, vehicles travelling from the EPE have to exit at the Sirsa interchange near Bir Akbarpur, around 11km away, before joining the Yamuna Expressway. The new cloverleaf will provide a direct connection, allowing traffic to move seamlessly between the two highways without using local roads. Designed with four loops and four ramps, the cloverleaf will enable vehicles to merge between the two expressways at highway speeds, reducing delays and improving traffic flow. So, for example, commuters from Palwal could save around 15-20 minutes, while those from Meerut may save up to 30 minutes. Commuters from Kundli and Panipat are expected to save about 20-25 minutes by avoiding the existing diversion.

The interchange is also expected to ease congestion at key bottlenecks such as Pari Chowk, Kasna and Ghangola village, which currently witness heavy traffic, especially during peak hours.NHAI chairman Santosh Yadav inspected the site on Wednesday along with YEIDA officials and directed contractors to speed up work. Currently, 75% of the project has been completed and over the next two months, contractors are to complete road surfacing, retaining walls, crash barriers, lane markings, signage, street lighting, landscaping and other safety infrastructure before the interchange is opened to traffic, officials said.Yamuna Authority CEO RK Singh said. “We expect the project to be completed by Sept 30, and opened to the public by Oct 15,” he said.Spanning 83 hectares, construction of the cloverleaf interchange was marred by repeated delays due to land acquisition hurdles, farmers’ protests demanding higher compensation and rising construction

costs, the project gathered pace after its foundation stone was laid on Dec 15, 2023.

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Rana calls for revival of willow cultivation to sustain Kashmir's cricket bat industry

SRINAGAR: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, today directed the concerned departments to launch a coordinated drive to revive willow cultivation across Kashmir and expand plantations to ensure a sustainable supply of quality timber for the cricket bat industry. The directions were issued during a high-level review meeting convened to deliberate upon the challenges confronting the willow sector and to formulate a long-term roadmap for its revival and growth. The meeting was attended by Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, J&K, Sarvesh Rai; Chief Conservator of Forests, Kashmir, Irfan Rasool Wani besides senior officers of the Forest Department and other concerned departments. Addressing the meeting, the Minister observed that Kashmir occupies a unique position as the country's only source of the specialised willow wood used for manufacturing cricket bats, making the region the national hub of the cricket bat industry. He said that hundreds of manufacturing units, predominantly located in south Kashmir's Anantnag district, provide direct and indirect employment to thousands of people engaged in willow cultivation, timber trade and bat manufacturing. Rana expressed concern over the declining availability of quality willow timber, describing it as one of the biggest challenges confronting the cricket bat industry. He attributed the shortage to the indiscriminate felling of mature willow trees without adequate replantation, resulting in uncertainty in raw material supply and increased production costs for local manufacturers. "The declining availability of willow timber is a matter of serious concern. Expansion of plantations, introduction of improved willow clones and systematic replantation must become a priority so that the industry continues to flourish without facing any shortages of raw material," Rana asserted. The Minister also noted that the area under willow plantations has witnessed a steady decline, particularly on private lands, owing to changing land-use patterns. He stressed that unless timely corrective measures are taken, the long-term sustainability of the industry could be adversely affected. He called upon the Forest Department to identify suitable low-lying and marshy areas across the Valley for expanding willow plantations, in coordination with the Deputy Commissioners. It was decided that the State Forest Research Institute (SFRI) will introduce improved willow species and clones and ensure the availability of quality planting material to enhance productivity and sustainability. "Our objective is to build a self-sustaining willow cultivation ecosystem through scientific management, quality planting material, identification of new plantation areas and greater farmer participation. This will secure livelihoods while preserving Kashmir's unique position as the country's cricket bat manufacturing hub," asserted the Minister. The Agriculture Department was directed to identify the departmental farms and research blocks for raising quality willow planting material to support large-scale plantation drives. The meeting also deliberated upon scientific management and expansion of government willow plantations, timely disposal of mature and over-mature trees to augment raw material availability, streamlining of the permission system for felling and transportation of willow timber, branding and Geographical Indication (GI) tagging for Kashmir willow bats. Emphasis was also laid on stronger coordination between the Forest, Agriculture, Industries & Commerce, MSME and allied departments to prepare a long-term roadmap for the sector. Rana directed the concerned departments to work in close coordination and submit a time-bound action plan for implementation of the decisions taken. He stressed that revival of willow resources is vital not only for the cricket bat industry but also for the livelihoods of thousands of families dependent on it.

Meeting on Supreme Court directions for child protection and anti-human trafficking
UDHAMPUR: Under the chairpersonship of the Principal District and Sessions Judge Udhampur, a meeting was convened today in the office chamber to discuss implementation of the directions issued by the Supreme Court of India in G Ganesh v. State of Tamil Nadu and Others (SLP (Criminal) No. 11263/2025). The meeting focused on strengthening the institutional framework for addressing missing children, child trafficking, child rescue, restoration, rehabilitation and inter-agency coordination. The action points approved by the Supreme Court were deliberated in detail to ensure effective implementation at the district level. Among those present were representatives of the Anti Human Trafficking Unit, Special Juvenile Police Unit, District Child Protection Unit, Child Welfare Committee and the Department of Women and Child Development. During the deliberations, emphasis was laid on enhancing coordination among all stakeholder departments, ensuring prompt response in cases involving missing and trafficked children, improving rehabilitation mechanisms for victims and adopting a child-centric approach in accordance with the Supreme Court's directions. The Principal District and Sessions Judge directed all departments concerned to implement the approved action points in close collaboration for safeguarding the rights and welfare of children.

3 social media star sisters marry their cameraman; Police question adults over viral ceremony

Chandigarh: The four, Vikas alias Vikku (23), a resident of Shyampur, sisters Devika (18) and Chhavi (19) from Dhoriya village, and their cousin Alka (20) from Meharpur village, appeared in the videos, which were reportedly filmed at a temple on July 15. All four are social media content creators with a sizeable online following. According to police, they were called to Hasanpur police station and asked to produce documents proving they are adults. They were also directed to submit written statements explaining the circumstances surrounding the alleged marriage. Senior Sub-Inspector Amit Kumar said the documents were being verified and that further action would be taken if any legal violation was found. During questioning, the group told police that Vikas had been appearing as the women's "husband" in their social media videos

for the past six months. They claimed they decided to marry after their families began arranging separate marriages for the women. The viral videos triggered criticism from some Hindu organisations and local traders, who alleged the marriage was against Sanatan traditions. However, police said no formal complaint has been received so far. Responding to the criticism, the women told local reporters that they were adults and had married of their own free will. "Raja Dashrath had three wives. We all are adults and happy," they said, while denying that they had insulted any religion. Meanwhile, Chamunda Temple manager Dr Shivcharan Das said renovation work was underway at the temple on the day of the alleged ceremony and that no priest was present. He added that it was being verified who, if anyone, performed the marriage rituals. Wedding ceremony planning Circle Officer Pankaj Kumar Tyagi said police were verifying the ages of all four individuals and that legal action would be taken if any complaint was filed or any violation of law came to light.

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Man's text in family WhatsApp group before shooting woman dead, killing self in Delhi's Burari

New Delhi: The incident took place at 4 pm. The deceased were identified as Shivangini (26), a native of Raebareilly, Uttar Pradesh, employed with NIC and Nikhil, a resident of Pinana village, Sonapat, Haryana. The tragedy unfolded when the deceased's sister Nishangini, a teacher at SDM School, Burari, returned home and found the room locked from inside. After repeated attempts failed, the room was opened with the assistance of the building owner and other residents, following which both deceased were found inside, an official said. As per the preliminary enquiry, Shivangini and Nikhil had been in a relationship for about six months and she had reportedly called Nikhil earlier in the day to end the relationship, allegedly due to his unemployment. The scene of crime revealed two deceased persons, one pistol and two empty cartridge cases inside the room.

The exact nature and location of injuries will be confirmed after examination by the Crime Team and subsequent post-mortem, the cop added. The sister of deceased Nikhil informed police that he had shared a message along with his live location in the family WhatsApp group shortly before the incident. "Shortly before the incident, Nikhil sent a series of WhatsApp messages to his family members, claiming Shivangini's family was unwilling to accept their marriage and that it would be his last message. He also allegedly shared his live location, his mobile phone password and the address of Shivangini's residence with his family," the official mentioned. MobileApps & Add-Ons Prima facie, the circumstances indicate a suspected case of murder followed by a suicide or a suicide pact, which is a part of investigation, the cop added.

PUBLIC NOTICE
NOTICE is hereby given to public at large that my client **Smt. Sonali Aima** is the owner of Land Area measuring 5 Bighas 4 Biswas, bearing Khasra Nos.46/16/1 min West (1-09), 46/25 min (2-02), 76/5 min West (0-14) & 175 min (0-19). Situated in the revenue estate of Village Bijwasan, Tehsil Kapashera, New Delhi by the virtue of Gift Deed dated 03/01/2019 which is registered as doc no. 109, vol no. 9850, pages 191-196, SR-IX. and intend to mortgage the said property with **Aditya Birla Capital Ltd.** If any person(s) has/have any objection(s) or claim(s) with respect to the right, title or interest in the said property may please contact us within 07 days from the date of this notice on the number & address mentioned herein below, failing which my client(s) shall not be held responsible in any manner whatsoever.

PUBLIC NOTICE
NOTICE is hereby given to public at large that my client **Mr. Gopal Bhadrana** is the owner of Residential House of Land measuring 200.00 Sq. Yds., out of Khasra No.430, Situated at Village Salarpur Khadar, Parsana, Tehsil Dabri, Distt:-Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. by the virtue of Gift Deed dated 15.07.2025 which is registered as Doc. No. 6725, Book No.01, Volume No. 14788, on Page No. 73-92 on dated 15.07.2025 SRO-II Noida and intend to mortgage the said property with **Aditya Birla Capital Ltd.** If any person(s) has/have any objection(s) or claim(s) with respect to the right, title or interest in the said property may please contact us within 07 days from the date of this notice on the number & address mentioned herein below, failing which my client(s) shall not be held responsible in any manner whatsoever.

NAME CHANGE
I, Kamlesh, W/O Tilak Raj, R/O House no 373 gali no 1 than singh nagar anand parbat 110005 have changed my name to Kamlesh Singh for all future purposes.

NAME CHANGE
I Mangal legally wife of Army no - JC 462510X, RANK - SUB, NAME - KUMATHE YUVRAJ TUKARAM, Presently Residing, AT - CHINCHNER NIMB, POST- CHINCHNER NIMB, TEH - SATARA, DIST - SATARA, STATE - MAHARASHTRA PIN 415001 have changed my name from MANGAL to MANGAL YUVARAJ KUMATHE for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 31/07/2026 before Notary Delhi.

NAME CHANGE
I, KUMATHE TUKARAM RAMU legally father of Army no - JC 462510X, RANK - SUB, NAME - KUMATHE YUVRAJ TUKARAM, Presently Residing, AT - CHINCHNER NIMB, POST- CHINCHNER NIMB, TEH - SATARA, DIST - SATARA, STATE - MAHARASHTRA PIN - 415001 have changed my name from KUMATHE TUKARAM RAMU to TUKARAM RAMU KUMATHE for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 31/07/2026 before Notary Delhi.

NAME CHANGE
I, PUTDABAI legally mother of Army no - JC 462510X, RANK - SUB, NAME - KUMATHE YUVRAJ TUKARAM, Presently Residing, AT - CHINCHNER NIMB, POST- CHINCHNER NIMB, TEH - SATARA, DIST - SATARA, STATE - MAHARASHTRA PIN - 415001 have changed my name from PUTDABAI to PUTALABAI TUKARAM KUMATHE for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 31/07/2026 before Notary Delhi.

Lost and Found
I, Vineet Jain S/O Late shri vijay pal Jain R/O house no 11, Ground Floor, Gujrawala Town, Delhi have Lost / Misplaced Original Conveyance Deed related to property no B4/72 Ashok Vihar phase 2 Delhi. If anybody found please contact on 9899567001 my complaint is register police station Ashokvihar LR NO 292076/2026.

Public Notice
I, Meenu Biala Joshi and Meenu Joshi, w/o Vinod Kumar Joshi, D/o Late Sh. Bhaskar Rao Biala, R/O 38 Vivekananda Puri Near Sarai Rohilla Police Station Delhi 110007 is one and same person.

NAME CHANGE
I, hitherto known as SAPNA W/O MOHD AHMED KHAN D/O MD NISHAR, R/O H NO-21-A, VISHWAKARMA PARK, NEAR URDU PRIMARY SCHOOL, LAXMI NAGAR, DELHI-110092 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as NAHID FATIMA. I have changed only my name not my religion. It is certified that I have complied with other legal requirements in this connection.

NAME CHANGE
I, No.15677304F Rank-HAV Name-PALKAR DEEPAK VISHVANATH legal father of AMBIKA residing at VPO-KOREGAON, MALI GALI, TEHSIL-KOREGAON, DIST-SATARA, MAHARASHTRA-415001, have changed my minor daughter's name from AMBIKA to AMBIKA DEEPAK PALKAR for all future purposes vide affidavit dated 31/07/2026 before Notary Public, Delhi.

NAME CHANGE
I, TANVEE daughter of No.-15677304F Rank-HAV Name-PALKAR DEEPAK VISHVANATH residing at VPO-KOREGAON, MALI GALI, TEHSIL-KOREGAON, DIST-SATARA, MAHARASHTRA-415001, have changed my name from TANVEE to TANVEE DEEPAK PALKAR for all future purposes vide Affidavit dated 31/07/2026 before Notary Public, Delhi.

NAME & DATE OF BIRTH CHANGE
I, MATADEEN SINGH Father of JC-474232F Rank-NB/SUB Name-SHANKAR SINGH RATHORE Residing at-VPO-THIKARIYA KHURD, PS-MAHAROT, TEHSIL-NAWA, DIST-NAGUR, RAJASTHAN-341509, have changed my name from MATADEEN SINGH to MATADEEN SINGH RATHORE for all future purposes, in my son's service record my date of birth wrongly mentioned as 01/07/1959 instead of my correct date of birth as 01/11/1961, Vide Affidavit dated 31/07/2026 before Notary Public Delhi

NAME & DATE OF BIRTH CHANGE
I, ANAD KANWAR mother of JC-474232F Rank-NB/SUB Name-SHANKAR SINGH RATHORE Residing at-VPO-THIKARIYA KHURD, PS-MAHAROT, TEHSIL-NAWA, DIST-NAGUR, RAJASTHAN-341509, have changed my name from ANAD KANWAR to ANAND KANWAR for all future purposes, in my son's service record my date of birth wrongly mentioned as 01/07/1963 instead of my correct date of birth as 01/01/1965, vide Affidavit dated 31/07/2026 before Notary Public, Delhi.

NAME CHANGE
I, PUNAM legally wife of Army no - 2810163P, Rank - HAV, Name - HAJARE BHAGWAN ATMARAM, Presently Residing, AT - ADGAON, Post- KOKALGAON, Teh - WASHIM, Dist - WASHIM, State-MAHARASHTRA Pin-444505 have changed my name from PUNAM to PUNAM BHAGWAN HAJARE for all future purposes. Vide affidavit dated 30/07/2026 before Notary Delhi.

NAME CHANGE
I, Geeta Verma, holder of the passport number (C9587812), resident of B-8, Sunder Apartment, Sector-14, Rohini, Delhi-110085, have corrected the spelling of my spouse's name from (Sanjay Kumar Verma) to (Sanjay Kumar Verma) vide affidavit dated 31.07.2026 sworn before Notary Public Delhi. Both names refer to the same person.

NAME CHANGE
I, Ronak, S/O Janardan Ram, R/O 139/11, Gali No 1, Dayanand Nagar, Bahadurgarh, Jhajar, Haryana- 124507 have changed my name to Ronak Sachdeva for all future purposes.

NAME CHANGE
I, Rahul Kumar jaisawal s/o rajesh kumar jaisawal, R/O room no. 10 ram awadh niwas near ,matehswari bhavan Janta market subhash road mumbai, bhandup west, mumbai suburban , maharashtra 400078 I have changed my name to rahul jaiswal

NAME CHANGE
I, sunil kumar s/o jagdish lal Juneja R/O 446, sainik vihar, pitampura ,north west delhi,110034 I have changed my name to sunil kumar Juneja

NAME CHANGE
I, Vivek Agarwal, S/O Ajay Agarwal, R/O C-1087, Near Mother Dairy, Sushant Lok- 1, Galleria, DLF-IV, Gurgaon, Haryana- 122009 have changed my minor daughter's name from Kaina Agarwal to Kainah Agarwal for all future purposes.

NAME CHANGE
I, Tarun Kumar, S/O ASHOK KUMAR YADAV, R/O T-108,B/5, NEW PALA VIHAR PHASE-1, SECTOR-109, GURGAON, HARYANA-122017, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO TARUN KUMAR YADAV FOR ALL FUTURE PURPOSES

NAME CHANGE
I, MOHD ATRU KHAN, S/O SULE KHAN, R/O H.NO-262,VPO BISRU, TEHSIL PUHANA, NUH MEWAT, HARYANA-122508, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO ATRU KHAN FOR ALL FUTURE PURPOSES

NAME CHANGE
I, Tariya D/O Mohd. Zulqar R/O I-55, Murad Road, Balla House Jamia Nagar Okhla, New Delhi-110025 Have Changed My Name to Tariya Zulqar for All Future Purposes.

NAME CHANGE
I, Mohd ATRU KHAN, S/O SULE KHAN, R/O H.NO-262,VPO BISRU, TEHSIL PUHANA, NUH MEWAT, HARYANA-122508, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO ATRU KHAN FOR ALL FUTURE PURPOSES

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NEWS BOX

Why Spain's Tiny Enclave Of Ceuta Is At The Centre Of Europe's Migration Crisis

World.(Agency)

Spain has deployed troops to its North African enclave of Ceuta after thousands of migrants entered the territory from neighbouring Morocco on Thursday.Many swam around border barriers while others crossed through or over the border fence. At least 15 people died after drowning while attempting to reach the Spanish enclave, BBC reported.The situation is absolute chaos," Rachid Sbihi, head of an association representing Spain's Civil Guard officers in Ceuta, told The Associated Press.

He said thousands of migrants had crossed the border and that the frontier had "totally collapsed."What is Ceuta?Ceuta is a small Spanish territory located on the northern coast of Africa and shares a land border with Morocco. Although it is in Africa and shares a border with Morocco, it is part of Spain and the European Union (EU). Since Ceuta is part of Spain and the European Union, reaching the city means entering EU territory.Along with Melilla, another Spanish territory on Morocco's Mediterranean coast, Ceuta forms Europe's only land borders with Africa. Why is Ceuta a flashpoint in Europe's migration crisis?

Ceuta has become one of the flashpoints in Europe's migration crisis because thousands of migrants try to reach the territory every year. Many travel from Africa and other countries to Spain for better job opportunities and living conditions or to flee violence and poverty in their home countries.

Indian Man Sets World Record With 86 Underwater Push-Ups On A Single Breath

world.(Agency)

An Indian yoga teacher has achieved another remarkable milestone by using his breathing skills and physical strength to set a new underwater world record. After training for two years, he completed 86 underwater push-ups on a single breath, earning his third underwater record, reported Guinness World Records.

Kamal Kaloi, 38, combined his knowledge of calisthenics with breath-holding endurance to claim the record for the most underwater push-ups with a single breath (male). He completed the challenge in October last year in Ninh Binh, Nam Dinh, Vietnam, where he now lives.To complete the attempt, Kamal dived to the bottom of a swimming pool, got into position and performed as many push-ups as possible before returning to the surface for another breath.Kamal had earlier set the record for the most consecutive yoga positions performed underwater by completing 21 poses in 2020.He said that he had a passion to do something different from the beginning. Whenever he saw someone who had made a record or achieved something similar, he was always inspired by them. He added that after making his first world record in underwater yoga, he realised his strength and decided to challenge himself further.In the same year, Kamal also set the record for the most air rings blown underwater with 72. However, that record has since been surpassed by Amelia de los Rios of the USA, who achieved 81.

14-Year-Old Saves Man Swept Away By River Using Rope During Family Vacation In US

world.(Agency)

A 14-year-old boy in Montana is being praised after he used a rope to rescue a man from a fast-moving river during a family camping trip. His quick actions helped bring the man to safety before emergency responders arrived, reported People.Jory Thomas was camping with his family near Greycliff, about 70 miles west of Billings, during the Fourth of July weekend.

On July 5, he heard people shouting for help from the nearby Yellowstone River.A raft and a paddleboard struck a bridge pillar, throwing four people into the river. Three managed to reach the shore, but one man was swept downstream while holding onto a cooler.Jory said the river current was very fast and the man was moving quickly. He added that the only thing he could focus on was helping the man get out of the water because he did not want to see anyone drown in front of him.The teenager emptied his pockets, grabbed his lariat, a thick rope used as a rodeo lasso, and ran along the riverbank until he reached the man's position. He then threw the rope toward the man.Jory said he luckily caught the man on the first try.He slowly pulled the man through the chest-deep water until first responders arrived and took over the rescue.

Seattle police chief resigns under pressure from mayor over response to festival shooting

SEATTLE.(Agency)

Seattle's police chief resigned Thursday amid criticism that the city was slow to release key information about a fatal shootout at a food festival last weekend. Mayor Katie Wilson's announcement followed hours of speculation about whether Police Chief Shon Barnes would step down, as some of his supporters said he had rebuffed Wilson's request to resign.Wilson said she was appointing Deputy Chief Andre Sayles, a law enforcement veteran with more than two decades of experience, as interim chief.Barnes told The Seattle Times earlier Thursday that whether he remained as chief was "up to the mayor." He said he was off for the day and spending time with family.In a written statement, the mayor said she was grateful for Barnes' service. The

statement included comments in which Barnes called it an honor to have served the city."I hope this transition gives the city and this department the opportunity to return full focus to what matters most, addressing youth gun violence and preventing more tragedies," Barnes said.Barnes was out of town at a law enforcement conference when gunfire erupted last weekend at the Bite of Seattle, an annual three-day festival that draws hundreds of food and retail vendors and performers. Three people, including one suspect, were killed, and four people were wounded. One of the injured was a 2-year-old boy.

Dozens of officers were at the event, and at least one saw a 15-year-old suspect firing into a crowd and quickly persuaded him to surrender, according to court documents. Police are still searching for at least one other

person.While Wilson credited the quick police response with potentially saving lives, she acknowledged that the



city was slow to communicate in the aftermath.After an initial social media post announcing the shooting, it took nearly five hours for police to provide any additional information to the public, including whether there was any ongoing threat. The city also failed

to send out any notifications through its emergency alert system. In the meantime Wilson announced that two people had been taken into custody, a statement she later retracted.

Assistant Seattle Police Chief Tyrone Davis finally provided an update around 11 p.m. Sunday during a news conference that was also attended by the mayor, Gov. Bob Ferguson and U.S. Rep. Pramila Jayapal.."What I did not fully understand in that moment was how little information had reached the public or the press since the incident began at 6 p.m.," Wilson said in a video statement Thursday. "Had I known that, I would have pushed for an immediate briefing, rather than waiting for a press conference to be organized."

US sanctions India, China, Russia entities over alleged support to Iran's Mahan Air, IRGC

world.(Agency)

The United States on Thursday imposed sanctions on six entities and individuals, including India-based Skiez Travels and Logistics Private Limited, accusing them of supporting Iranian airline Mahan Air and, by extension, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).The US Department of the Treasury said the sanctioned entities acted as general sales agents (GSAs) for Mahan Air, which Washington alleges has long assisted the IRGC by transporting personnel, facilitating military training, and aiding the movement of unmanned aerial vehicle systems and weapons."Those who provide financial services,

logistics, or commercial support to the IRGC or Mahan Air are helping sustain a terrorist enterprise," Secretary of the Treasury Scott Bessent said in a statement.Bessent said the Department of Treasury will continue to identify them, expose them, and cut them off from the US financial system.According t the reasury Department, Skiez Travels and Logistics Private Limited, which has offices in Srinagar and Delhi, has represented Mahan Air as its general sales agent since 2020.

The sanctions also target China-based Shanghai Wings International Logistics Co, Russia-based Air Cargo Pro Limited, China-based Shanghai Elite International Travel Co, and Tang Xin, the managing director of

Shanghai Wings.The Treasury alleged that Shanghai Wings coordinated the transport of electronics from China to Iran, while Tang Xin also serves as executive director and a 50 per cent owner of Shanghai Elite, another GSA for Mahan Air in China.In a eparate action, the Treasury Department designated DadeNegar Startup Studio, describing it as an IRGC-affiliated front company accused of supporting Iranian military targeting operations through an online platform.The department alleged that DadeNegar solicited information on the locations of American and Israeli equipment to support Iranian military targeting and, in coordination with the IRGC, received strike requests for US targets in West Asia.

Here's why new fronts seem to be opening up across the Middle East

ANKARA.(Agency)

Houthi rebels in Yemen said they attacked Saudi oil facilities. The Saudis blamed militias in Iraq and joined the United States in bombing them. Iran fired missiles at Jordan. Drones set ships ablaze in Egypt. But it's not actually as complicated as it sounds, and it's all related to the broader war between the United States and Iran, currently focused on the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran supports armed groups across the Middle East that allow it to project power far beyond its borders. The U.S. has thousands of troops based in allied Arab countries that have been targets of Iran's retaliation.Here's a look at why so many fronts seem to be heating up at once.A struggle over

the straitThe epicenter of the latest violence is the Strait of Hormuz, an elbow-shaped passage running



between Iran and Oman that carried a fifth of the world's traded oil and gas before the war.Iran says it controls the waterway and has attacked ships attempting to use an alternative route overseen by the U.S. military along the coast of Oman.The U.S. hasstruck Iran in

response, saying the strait should be open to all international traffic, as it was before the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran on Feb. 28. When the U.S. strikes Iran, Iran retaliates by firing missiles and drones against Arab countries hosting U.S. forces, like Jordan and Kuwait.The exchanges of ire in recent weeks led to the collapse of an interim agreement aimed at winding down the war. That has deepened mistrust on both sides. At this point, Iran appears to be more interested in cementing its control over the strait than in making a deal with the U.S. to lift international sanctions.

Yemen's Houthis are wading in The Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen, who stayed on the sidelines during the initial phase of the war.

10 climbers led by a renowned Nepalese mountaineer are missing on a Pakistan peak

ISLAMABAD.(Agency)

Ten international climbers led by a renowned Nepal-born mountaineer were missing after an avalanche struck Broad Peak, one of the world's highest mountains in northern Pakistan.The Alpine Club of Pakistan received initial reports that the avalanche struck the team led by Nirmal Purja and the climbers have been out of communication since then, club Vice President Karrar Haidri said in a statement late Thursday.The expedition includes five Nepalese climbers, Pakistani mountaineer Sohail Sakhi of Hunza, Omani climber Nathira, American climber Mallory Geis, a Chinese climber identified as Wang, and another foreign climber, Haidri said.The club's presient, Maj. Gen. Irfan



Arshad, and its senior leaders were in contact with government officials to facilitate an immediate search-and-rescue operation.The club said every effort was being made to mobilize helicopters and other rescue resources quickly, subject to weather and operational conditions.Nirmal Purja, whom the club identified by a second name, Nims Dai, is a Nepal-born British citizen who scaled the world's 14 highest peaks in 189 days in 2019, holding a record for the fastest climb until a Norwegian woman and her Nepali Sherpa guide set a new record in 2023. Purja's climbs were made into a popular Netflix documentary, "14 Peaks: Nothing is Impossible.

Trump announces a deal for Hamas to disarm in Gaza, but many hurdles and uncertainty remain

The war in Gaza began after the Hamas-led attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killed around 1,200 people and saw 251 taken hostage.

WASHINGTON.(Agency)

President Donald Trump said Thursday that a deal has been reached for Hamas to disarm and Israel to withdraw its forces from Gaza, but many hurdles, conditions and long timelines remained to wind down the war in the Palestinian territory. Neither Hamas nor Israel gave immediate indication that they had agreed.The White House announcement comes nine months

after a U.S.-brokered ceasefire was signed. Negotiations between Israel and Hamas had largely deadlocked over the implementation of its second phase, including the disarmament of Hamas and the reconstruction of Gaza."The agreement will be carried out in carefully structured phases," Trump said on social media. "As disarmament is completed, Israeli forces will withdraw, and the International Stabilization Force will work with a new Palestinian police force to take responsibility for Gaza being safe for its residents and its neighbors.

"Trump's 20-point ceasefire plan calls on the Iran-backed militant group to surrender its weapons and destroy its vast network of tunnels. It also



envisions Israeli forces withdrawing from Gaza, the arrival of a new technocratic Palestinian government, deployment of an international security force and the rebuilding of the battered Palestinian enclave after more than two years of war.But Hamas had insisted on implementing the first phase before moving to discuss its weapons. The group's founding charter calls for

armed resistance against Israel, and it has been reluctant to give up an arsenal, including rockets, anti-tank missiles and explosives, that lies at the heart of its identity.Hamas announced earlier this month that it had dissolved its government in Gaza and was preparing to transfer power to a technical committee backed by the United Nations as part of the ceasefire deal.U.S. and Board of Peace officials, describing the deal to reporters on condition of anonymity under guidelines set by the White House, gave an extremely optimistic assessment of the agreement that laid out a scenario very similar to the one described by Trump and his top aides when the Board of Peace, an international body established by Trump to oversee the ceasefire in Gaza, was first formed.

Gujarat Confidential: Remembering Sant Ravidas

Ahmedabad.(Agency)

AS PART of the BJP's nation-wide celebration of the 650th birth anniversary of Sant Ravidas under Samrasta Sankalp Abhiyan, the party's state unit has planned a series of programmes for the next six months in the state. BJP General Secretary Ajay Brahmhatt announced the party



programmes to be organised as part of the celebrations in Gujarat. A team of the Gujarat BJP has gone to Uttar Pradesh to collect soil from Sir Govardhanpur, the birthplace of Sant Ravidas, in a kalash (urn). The party will carry out a Kalash Yatra from Ambaji from August 1 that will pass through six districts and reach Jagannath temple in Jamalpur area of Ahmedabad on August 3. Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel and Gujarat BJP president Jagdish Vishwakarma are expected to join the yatra at Jagannath Temple. In the second phase, the party will organise Kalash Yatra in all the districts, municipal corporations and villages of Gujarat.

Maha: Aspiring woman cricketer dies by suicide; VCA faces selection row

Nagpur.(Agency)

A 17-year-old aspiring woman cricketer from Nagpur allegedly died by suicide after reportedly becoming distressed over not being selected in the Vidarbha Cricket Association's (VCA) Under-19 team, police said on Friday.

The deceased, identified as Aditi Moreshwar Choukhande, was originally from Akola and had been living with her mother in Nagpur for the past two years while pursuing her cricket career.

The incident came to light at around 5:30 a.m. on Thursday near the Jain temple in Laxmi Nagar under the jurisdiction of Bajaj Nagar Police.

Aditi came under stress after failing to secure a place in the Under-19 team despite an impressive performance in the state-level Under-15 cricket tournament. According to police, Aditi was found hanging at her residence in Laxmi Nagar on Thursday morning. She trained at a local cricket academy with the dream of playing at the highest level. A suicide note recovered from the spot reportedly mentioned her disappointment over not being selected in the VCA's selection process.

Railway board revises self-declaration form for all future recruitment medical exams

Panchkula.(Agency)

Aspiring railway employees must now complete an updated medical self-declaration form before sitting for recruitment medical exams.

The Railway Board has refreshed the format outlined in the Indian Railway Medical Manual, making this new form mandatory for all upcoming recruitment medical checks.

The Railway Board introduced the revised declaration after closely examining the collection of medical declarations for recruitment candidates. The update also introduces new guidelines for LASIK eye surgery and reflects changes to the recruitment process for Assistant Loco Pilots under CEN No. 01/2026.

With the new declaration, candidates must share their medical history before the required examination. The form asks if they have faced illnesses like heart or lung disease, asthma, tuberculosis, epilepsy, or mental illness, or if they have had long-term treatment, hospital stays, head injuries, or eye surgeries such as LASIK.

Long after these UP mafia dons were killed, their wives remain absconding

Lucknow.(Agency)

Last week, the Uttar Pradesh Police lodged a fresh criminal case against Afsha Ansari, the wife of mafia lord-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari. He died in Banda jail in March 2024; she has been “absconding” since then.

In that, Afsha has company. The wives of two other known mafia dons of the state are also wanted by the UP Police since the death of their husbands, and have eluded the authorities for even longer. Atiq Ahmed and younger brother Ashraf were gunned down in April 2023 while in police custody and on live TV. Apart from their wives Shaista Parveen and Zainab Fatima, respectively, police have been looking for the brothers’ elder sister Ayesha Noori since then.

All four women, who are between the ages of 50 and 60, remain missing despite police announcing cash rewards for information on their whereabouts,

including Rs 50,000 each for Shaista and Afsha, and Rs 25,000 each in the case of Zainab and Ayesha. All four are accused essentially of playing a “conspiratorial” role in the offences carried out by the late mafia dons. Police say they are making every effort



issued in her name. She faces five other cases, including one under the UP Gangsters and Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act, Ghazipur Superintendent of Police Iraj Raja said, adding her properties have been attached under the Act.

Shaista, Zainab and Noori are wanted for alleged roles in a murder conspiracy. Shaista and Zainab were based in Prayagraj when they went missing while Ayesha was living in Meerut. Afsha is a native of Ghazipur district. The Ghazipur SP said: “Afsha remains a wanted fugitive and police teams are conducting raids to trace her.” Sources in the UP Police said that after they received intelligence suggesting Afsha could attempt to flee the country, they approached Central agencies, including the CBI and Immigration Department, for lookout notices against her.

Surat Flood-hit powerloom unit owners seek property tax waiver for 2 years

Surat.(Agency)

A group of powerloom unit owners in Surat on Thursday handed over a memorandum to Mayor Mayaben Mavani and Municipal Commissioner M Nagarajan demanding that property tax bills for 2026-27 and 2027-28 be waived off. They claimed that the industry has twice faced major losses this month, as creek water and rainwater entered their units and damaged machinery, under-processed fabrics and other raw material. The memorandum was submitted by the Uma Industrial Society in the Dunbhal area.

Uma industrial society (Powerloom weaving society) president Mahendrabhai Patel and local traders have alleged in the memorandum that for the past four to five years, industries in the Dumbhal area have been facing frequent, severe floods, due to which the unit owners face financial losses.

In the memorandum, they said that in the severe floods that occurred on July 7 and July 8, 2026, almost all the plots of the society were waterlogged. “...the expensive



machinery, raw and finished goods, electrical equipment, important office documents and furniture kept in the factories were completely damaged,” it said. The memorandum adds, “Due to the floods on July 7 and 8, each plot holder has suffered

a direct financial loss of Rs 10 lakh to Rs 15 lakh, or more. The unit owners were just starting their units when a second spell of rain and creek floods were witnessed on July 22 and 23, and the units were again submerged. This has added fuel to the fire incurred by the unit owners. Over 2 to 2.5 feet of water. For the past 25 days, a majority of the units in the area have been closed. The unit owners who are reeling under heavy debt are facing critical situations. It is an extra burden to pay property tax.” Another powerloom unit owner, Bhavik Patel, said, “A powerloom unit owner does business with less margin, managing the labour expenses and high electricity bills, apart from other expenses. Our industrial estate has witnessed creek floods twice this month, and it has become almost impossible for us to overcome such heavy loss. We have requested a waiver of the property tax bills for the next two years.

Leave of all officials cancelled; 24×7 control rooms in each affected district: Gujarat Government

Ahmedabad.(Agency)

LEAVE of all officials in the 13 rain-affected districts of Gujarat has been cancelled with immediate effect, with one Class I officer deployed round-the-clock for supervision while 24×7 control rooms remain operational in each district, officials said on Thursday.

The decisions were taken in a review meeting on Thursday – in view of heavy rain alert – at the State Emergency Operation Centre (SEOC) in Gandhinagar under the chairmanship of Additional Chief Secretary for Revenue Department Jayanti Ravi to ensure that the administrative machinery remains fully prepared and alert.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a

forecast of heavy to extremely heavy rainfall from July 31 to August 2, issuing a high alert for 13 districts – Surat, Vadodara, Ahmedabad, Bhavnagar, Bharuch, Anand, Narmada, Tapi, Dang, Chhota Udepur, Panchmahal, Dahod, the



Mahisagar and surrounding areas.

During the meeting, held through video-conference, Jayanti Ravi reviewed the prevailing situation and disaster management preparedness with senior officials from all potentially-affected districts.

She directed Collectors and senior officials of Surat, Vadodara, Ahmedabad, Bhavnagar, Bharuch, Anand, Narmada, Tapi, Dang, Chhota Udepur, Panchmahal, Dahod, and Mahisagar that leave of all officials in the affected districts be cancelled with immediate effect.

“She also instructed that 24×7 control rooms should remain operational in every district and that one Class – I officer be deployed round the clock for supervision. Officials were directed to immediately deploy NDRF and SDRF teams wherever required for disaster management in low-lying and vulnerable areas. In case of an extremely critical situation, defence forces (Air Force, Army and Navy) have been kept on standby for relief and rescue operations,” a government release said.

Temple trust and district administration take prompt action regarding 'Sugam Darshan' system issue at Mata Chintpurni temple

Una.(Agency)

The Temple Trust and the district administration have initiated a multi-level inquiry following reports of potential irregularities in the 'Sugam Darshan' (expedited viewing) system at the Mata Shri Chintpurni Temple.

Acting on the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Jatini Lal, an FIR was immediately lodged. Additionally, the Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) of Una has been appointed as the investigating officer to conduct a comprehensive administrative probe and ensure necessary procedural and administrative reforms for the future; the ADC is to submit a report within seven days. All concerned officials, including the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) of Amb, will provide the necessary cooperation for the investigation.

In a press release, Paras Agarwal, Assistant Commissioner of the Maata Chintpurni Temple Trust and SDM of Amb, stated that steps are being taken to further strengthen the technical security and transparency of the 'Sugam Darshan' system. According to the press release, the Deputy Commissioner was apprised of the matter as soon as the potential irregularity came to the Trust's notice on July 19. An FIR was lodged immediately upon his instructions. To ensure transparency, the staff previously operating the 'Sugam Darshan' system were replaced with new personnel. Simultaneously, the Temple Trust constituted a three-member preliminary inquiry committee to investigate the matter.

During the preliminary technical inquiry, software transactions from July 19 were analysed. The investigation revealed that

while only 23 actual transactions had taken place that day, the system displayed 88 transactions. Prima facie, it is suspected that the additional entries resulted from the potential misuse of software login IDs and passwords (software credentials) by an unauthorised person.

However, the Trust clarified that a final conclusion regarding this matter would be drawn only after receiving the detailed technical inquiry report and the findings of the inquiry committee.

The press release states that the 'Sugam Darshan' system, launched in 2023, aims to provide a convenient and organised darshan (viewing of the deity) experience for devotees—particularly the elderly, women, children, and persons with disabilities. Service charges amounting to over ₹12 crore have been collected through this system so far; these funds

are being utilised to develop facilities for devotees and for public welfare and social assistance initiatives. The Trust has clarified that the fee charged for the 'Sugam Darshan' pass is not a donation or offering to the temple but rather a prescribed service charge for providing the facility.

Separate, transparent, and systematic accounts are maintained for donations and offerings received at the temple, and these are distinct from the service charge. Necessary correspondence is underway with the Himachal Pradesh State Electronics Development Corporation Limited to further strengthen and enhance the transparency of the 'Sugam Darshan' system's technical security, ensuring its future operation is even more secure, reliable, and transparent.

The police are investigating the matter based on the FIR.

Maha: Seven killed, several feared trapped in Bhiwandi building collapse

Mumbai.(Agency)

At least seven people were killed and three others injured after a four-storey residential building collapsed in Bhiwandi town of the neighbouring Thane district late on Thursday night.

Several people are still feared trapped under the debris, officials said on Friday.

The incident took place around 2330 hrs at Kohinoor Apartment in Gangaramwadi, Bhandari Compound, when a portion of the building's B-Wing suddenly collapsed. Officials said rescue teams have recovered seven bodies so far, while three injured persons were pulled out from the rubble and admitted to a nearby hospital. Their condition is reported to be stable. According to officials, six to seven people are still believed to be trapped under the debris. Search and rescue operations are continuing.

The building had 48 rooms, with 12 rooms on each floor. Civic officials said it had been declared unsafe under the C-1 category, which requires immediate evacuation and demolition. Initial reports suggest that some people had entered the vacant building to carry out repair work when the structure collapsed. Fire brigade personnel, police, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), disaster management teams and civic officials rushed to the spot and launched a rescue operation. Excavators and other heavy machinery have also been deployed to remove the debris.

Bhiwandi-Nizampur Municipal Corporation Fire Officer Vijay Jadhav said rescue teams were making all efforts to locate those trapped.

Monsoon rainfall expected in Haryana and Punjab until August 4, IMD issues warning for heavy showers and strong winds

Panchkula.(Agency)

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecasts continued monsoon activity across north-west India, with steady rainfall, thunderstorms, lightning, and strong winds expected in Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, and Punjab until August 4.

According to the IMD's All India Weather Summary and Forecast Bulletin issued Friday morning, a depression over east Vidarbha and west-central Chhattisgarh has moved west and is now centred over central Vidarbha and south Madhya Pradesh as of 5:30 a.m.

The system is expected to continue moving west-northwest across Vidarbha and south Madhya Pradesh over the next 24 hours, maintaining active monsoon conditions in much of the country.

The IMD forecasts widespread rainfall with thunderstorms, lightning, and gusty winds of 30-40 kmph, reaching up to 50 kmph, in Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, and Punjab from July 31 to August 4. The IMD also predicts isolated heavy rainfall in Haryana, Chandigarh, and Delhi from July 31 to August 3.

As all powers fail them, Gulf States turn to self help

What is the ultimate objective, if there ever was one, behind the most pervasive use of US air power since 1991’s Operation Desert Storm and 2003’s erroneously-labelled Operation Iraqi Freedom that Iran had to endure recently? Was the purpose of Operation Epic Fury the comprehensive disarmament of Iran, the decapitation of its clerical regime, or the establishment of a new maritime order in the waters of West Asia?

If the answer to any of the above is affirmative, then what remains of the undergirding of the region’s security architecture that has existed since January 23, 1980, when President Jimmy Carter told the US Congress that any outside power’s attempt to seize control of the Persian Gulf would be repelled “by any means necessary, including military force”?

The security guarantor has itself turned aggressor again. The Carter doctrine, now ostensibly buried by the Trump administration, demanded its own institutional architecture. By January 1983, the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force, first conceived in March 1980, had evolved into the US Central Command. Around it accreted the hub-and-spoke lattice of security alliances that persist to this day. It consists of more than 50,000 personnel stationed across at least 19 locations. Eight of them are permanent bases in Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt and the UAE.

Commencing with the US intervention in Lebanon in July 1958, the underlying assumption of the Carter doctrine also was that forward deployed American power projection capability would deter adversaries and provide reassurance to its regional allies. The US-Israeli offensive operations, which began on February 28, was overwhelming by every conventional metric. The opening salvo assassinated the Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and dozens of key government functionaries, while hundreds of attacks were sequentially carried out across 26 of Iran’s 31 provinces.

It would be trite to emphasise how unprecedented it is for any nation that, in June 2025, had been virtually stripped of its air defences to survive such an onslaught. Nevertheless, it did so with aplomb. The Israel-US strategy of regime decapitation was based on the erroneous premise that if critical personnel are neutralised, the Iranian security establishment would readily disintegrate, especially given the massive street protests between late December 2025 and February 2026 that were brutally squelched by the regime, killing over 30,000 people. Instead, the Assembly of Experts elected Mojtaba Khamenei as Supreme Leader within days of his father’s assassination. It is evidence that succession planning had long preceded the conflict. What emerged was not a vacuum, but a harder dispensation in which the writ of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps now runs more pervasively than it did on February 27.

The flawed strategy of coercive regime change instead produced regime consolidation. The military account is even more illuminating. Iran launched an estimated 8,000 missiles and drones. At least 16 American military installations across the region sustained damage, with several suffering disruptions severe enough to impair their operational effectiveness. The Combined Air Operations Center at Al Udeid in Qatar, the nerve centre of the coalition’s air campaign, was heavily damaged along with the AN/TPY-2 radar system valued at about half a billion dollars, with analysts attributing part of Iran’s improved targeting capability to intelligence derived from the Chinese TEE-01B satellite it reportedly acquired in 2024. Most consequential of all, Iran concluded the war retaining as much as 70 percent of its ballistic missile inventory, while much of its underground missile infrastructure remained largely intact as American intelligence seemed to have grossly underestimated the extent of Iran’s missile stockpiles.

Charge of the youth brigade

The young generation has moved to a zone beyond Hindu/Muslim tropes

WHAT began with the Chief Justice of India’s words about people struggling to survive Naya Bharat, grew into an extraordinary protest by a new generation of Indians — and ended with the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan — has touched people in all corners of the country in ways that will become apparent only in the coming months, perhaps even over the years. But some conclusions are inescapable. First, the aura of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has somewhat faded, and he seems less invincible than just two weeks ago. Even though his Instagram account has gathered followers by leaps and bounds since his midnight selfie reel last week, the fact remains that the BJP’s “strong government” reputation has taken a knock, and that Pradhan had to be sacrificed to protect the Prime Minister’s image from further damage.

The use of an AK-47 by a police officer on protesters in Patna and the firing of "anti-riot guns" loaded with pellet rounds in Delhi — three persons were injured by the pellets, one of them in his eye — has evoked country-wide horror at the government’s resort to such tactics against unarmed and largely peaceful protesters. But even that did not deter the protesters. For a generation that grew up in the “era of Modi” and knew little, and cared even less, about previous governments, the language used both in irreverent social media posts as well as during the month-long agitation at Jantar Mantar Ground Zero was unnervingly direct and fearless. Shocked as the government is at the “ashleelta”, or unparliamentary language, of the students, fact is, it is the ruling party’s troll armies that have normalised such language in the last 12 years against critics. Presstitutes, anyone? And remember how a BJP MP was let off lightly after a communal slur against a fellow parliamentarian in the House? A government that made an example of Disha Ravi, and continues to keep Umar Khalid in jail without a trial, has swiftly agreed to withdraw cases against protesters across the country, after a statement by the CJP that it would return to the streets if this promise — a condition for the withdrawal of the Jantar Mantar dharna — was not kept. It shows how rattled the government was, and how urgently it wanted to bring this episode to a close. Second, GenZ has shown that unlike its



media, or narrated in interviews, indicated that they had no time for the casual anti-Muslim bigotry that runs rampant across parts of North India; or for the intrusive ideological demands that the ruling party has often made on their personal relationships and food habits. For them, this government has simply failed to secure their future. They are worried not just about NEET, but about ever being able to find gainful employment and the general direction their lives are taking. WorldNews SectionIn interviews or in their own social media posts, several of those who attended the protests or wanted to express solidarity long-distance confessed that their parents had voted for the BJP, but that did not deter them from making common cause with those at Jantar Mantar. Many such parents accompanied their children to the site and to the July 20 march. Neha Bora, an articulate leader of AISA (All India Students’ Association), said in an interview that her parents did not agree with her political views and voted for a party that she was opposed to. Asked if that was the BJP, she nodded.

Supreme Court needs to walk the talk on protestors' rights

It’s a moment to acknowledge that the application of disproportionate force against a spontaneous democratic expression cannot be condoned

The Supreme Court struck the right note on Tuesday by ordering the release of all detained underage protesters without criminal history and proposing an independent enquiry into the violence wreaked at student agitations across the country. As MPs in Parliament demanded accountability for and action against the police excesses committed on protesters, the top court noted such cases in the BJP-ruled states of Delhi, Maharashtra, Bihar, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal, and the Congress-ruled Kerala. Charges of the forces using pellet guns, rubber bullets, electric batons and nail-studded lathis were put on record. It’s a moment to acknowledge that the application of disproportionate force against a spontaneous democratic expression cannot be condoned. Undue coercive action can push the people back on the streets—something no government would want. The Centre and states should learn from the fact that every time the heavy hand of police came down,



the protesters came back in larger numbers, with a longer list of complaints against government ineptitude. Consider also the dark irony that while students were braving police action to demand a better education system, fresh allegations of leaked questions and mass cheating emerged from four states in July alone. At stake were the recruitment of 154 food and

Children of some BJP leaders were posting messages of solidarity with the protesters, embarrassing their parents. Moreover, the Delhi Police’s cruel violence on the young protesters, many of them with parents who swore by the BJP, has made more apparent the shifting challenge from a demographic that the party once took for granted — a shift already visible with the shock that accompanied the ‘chanda chori’ from the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. Third, GenZ clearly has eyes on the country’s institutions and seems keenly aware about the role it is playing in its refurbishment. They have turned Chief Justice of India Surya Kant’s dismissive language about them — “cockroaches” and “parasites...had no employment and fail to get into the profession... and attack the system” — from a satirical meme to a weapon of mass mobilisation. The CJI has been forced to backpedal on his own remarks. After he declined to watch a video of how the protests unfolded, stating that the court’s time should not be “wasted”, he castigated Delhi Police yesterday, saying that excesses against protests cannot be justified under any circumstances. Fourth, several mainstream TV channels, which have not stood up to professional scrutiny for upholding their independence, discovered they were not welcome at the protest site — it is true, too, that in a few cases the protesters have inexcusably used violence against some reporters of these channels, including not allowing some of them even near the Jantar Mantar site. On the whole, “godhi media”, a Hindi phrase that indicates a visceral contempt for parts of the media that have refused to remain objective, has passed into the lexicon — it should show the media the mirror.

Finally, a word about Tamil Nadu. Even though several metros nationwide held sympathy marches with the Delhi students, Tamil Nadu’s GenZ has remained strangely untouched. Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay, who was elected four months ago, is the first Indian politician to benefit from what was plainly a GenZ protest vote against established political elites. But he has seemed lost for words and disconnected from what was happening in Delhi. For days, the CM made no statement on the Delhi protests, even though it was about something that has been at the core of a Centre-state struggle for several years.

Between codes and gender justice

➡To implement the new labour codes’ provisions aimed at ensuring the safety and comfort of women employees, the institutions watching over them need to be prepared. Inspectors need to undergo behavioural training in dealing with the norms. Otherwise, like past recommendations, these would remain on paper

On November 21, 2025, the government of India announced the implementation of four labour codes—on wages, industrial relations, social security, and safety and working conditions. Among other aspects, the new codes deserve to be analysed in the context of improving women’s labour force participation. While India has historically grappled with low female workforce participation and persistent gender gaps, recent years have seen a positive shift. As per the Periodic Labour Force Survey, female labour force participation has increased to 41.7 percent in 2023-24 from 23.3 percent in 2017-18. However, the quality of employment has remained a challenge with self-employment increasing among women to 67.4 percent.

The challenge before policy makers is not just about the number of jobs to be created for women, but also the quality of jobs that respond to their aspirations, dignity and occupational mobility. It implies that several fundamental labour rights of women at work must be protected and promoted through formal, documented and fair employment relations. The codes make an impressive start with the introduction of new features like mandatory appointment letters, universally-assured wages, flexible work timings, increased wage, safety and health for all workers, universal social security, updated threshold level for statutory compliances and others. Now, these provisions need to be analysed to assess how far they contribute in promoting institutionalisation of gender justice and equality at the workplace.

The four codes collectively lay out a legal ecosystem where not only effective representation of women is protected but also their skill, competency and role are duly recognised. Representation and participation of

women at micro structures like bipartite works and grievance redress committees to national and regional advisory bodies are carefully crafted. Though the codes allow representation of women at these forums, that in the negotiating councils envisaged under the industrial relations code is equally important and can be considered while implementing the code. For example, mandatory appointment letters now include a ‘service record’ for women workers where their social security number, skill category, date of appointment and applicable wages are legal obligations for the employers to mention. Such provisions will also contribute in ensuring upward mobility for women.

The codes have also introduced night shifts for women, which can be a game-changer in expanding female participation. The provisions like pick-and-drop service, camera surveillance, dedicated telephone numbers for emergency, prevention of sexual harassment are crucial for women’s safety at the workplace.

Additionally, the Social Security (Central) Rules, 2026 mandate a register of women employees in Form XXII to be maintained by the employer. This register will cover all information pertaining to maternity entitlement and other employment details of the women employed. It is very crucial for protection of maternity rights of women (permanent or outsourced) as this right has remained most frequently violated with several women facing job loss when they had claimed it. Are we ready for enforcement?

No doubt, the codes have ushered in a new era of workplace governance from the gender perspective.



employment. Several documents like the report by the Committee on the Status of Women (1974), National Perspective Plan for Women (1988-2000) and the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001) had noted that any growth is impossible without addressing these challenges. However, an important question arises: to what extent is our labour governance system prepared to address gender-specific concerns? If our enforcement mechanism is not re-aligned with these

goals, all these statutory transformations shall remain only on paper. The codes alter the premise of the labour inspectorate and commissionerate system into one of ‘educator and enabler’ as well. The onus to implement these laws hinges upon employers as well labour authorities. The codes introduce the concept of ‘inspector cum facilitator’ who have a larger role to play including awareness and sensitisation apart from routine role of inspection. This role is most crucial when the inspector examines the register of women employees or the occupational safety plan for women and transgenders.

To implement these laws effectively, the inspectorate needs to undergo behavioural and attitude change in dealing with gender-sensitive provisions enshrined under the codes. It implies not only an administrative tweak, rather demands a huge structural and philosophical realignment within the labour governance system itself. The new codes see women not merely as ‘productive labour’, but as future leaders. They must be implemented with the spirit of protecting the well-being of women workers, rather than limiting their purview to protect conditions. While state governments are in the process of finalising their rules, it is important to revisit the provisions while keeping in view the ethos of the Constitution. This is the moment for coordinated action between government, industry, civil society and other stakeholders to undertake the joint responsibility of ensuring effective implementation of the codes in an inclusive, transparent and gender-responsive manner.

Mizoram Assembly's Monsoon Session to begin on August 25

Aizawl. (Agency)

The Monsoon Session of the ninth Mizoram Legislative Assembly will commence on August 25, following its formal summons by Governor Gen. Vijay Kumar Singh (Retd.), according to an official notification issued on Thursday.

The notification, signed by Assembly Secretary Zothansanga Ralte, said the Governor had ordered the convening of the seventh session of the present Assembly on Tuesday, August 25, 2026.

Assembly Secretariat officials said the Business Advisory Committee (BAC), chaired by Speaker Lalbiakzama and comprising representatives of all political parties in the House, will meet shortly to finalise the duration of the session and prepare its detailed schedule.

The number of sitting days is expected to depend largely on the volume of government business, including new legislation and amendment bills proposed for introduction during the session.

The 40-member Assembly is currently dominated by the ruling Zoram People's Movement (ZPM), which holds 27 seats. The Mizo National Front (MNF) is the principal opposition with 10 legislators, while the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has two members and the Congress has one.

Jharkhand Congress issues show-cause notice to ex-minister KN Tripathi

Ranchi. (Agency)

The Jharkhand Pradesh Congress Committee on Thursday issued a show-cause notice to former minister and senior party leader K N Tripathi over his public remarks on Chief Minister Hemant Soren and the Mahagathbandhan government.

State Congress president Keshav Mahato Kamlesh sought Tripathi's explanation within seven days, stating that his remarks on law and order, police and the Home Department at a press conference in Palamu on July 28 were not in line with the party's policy and the collective responsibility of the ruling alliance.

State Congress media in-charge Rakesh Sinha said the party believed in democratic debate but public statements that affected organisational discipline and the unity of the Mahagathbandhan were unacceptable. He said differences, if any, should be raised on the party's internal forums instead of public platforms, adding that further action would be taken in accordance with the party constitution after examining Tripathi's reply. The Congress reiterated that organisational discipline and the unity of the Mahagathbandhan were paramount and said indiscipline would not be encouraged at any level.

Jharkhand: AJSU Party stages Lok Bhavan march over education issues

Ranchi. (Agency)

The All Jharkhand Students union (AJSU) Party on Thursday organised a Lok Bhavan march in Ranchi, demanding reforms in the state's education and recruitment system and a CBI probe into alleged irregularities in JPSC and JSSC examinations.

The march began from Jaipal Singh Munda Stadium and proceeded towards Lok Bhavan. Earlier, an AJSU Party delegation led by former MLA Lambodar Mahto met Governor Santosh Kumar Gangwar and submitted a memorandum highlighting issues concerning students and recruitment.

The party demanded a time-bound resolution of alleged irregularities in the Jharkhand Public Service Commission (JPSC) and Jharkhand Staff Selection Commission (JSSC) examinations, a CBI probe into the examination process, an ED inquiry into alleged illegal financial transactions, regular publication of the examination calendar, timely recruitment and prompt disbursement of scholarships.

AJSU Party appealed to students, youth and citizens to support its campaign for a transparent examination system and stronger education governance.

'Hope Jantar Mantar students don't spend 2 years rebuilding like I did': Shambhu pellet survivor

After losing an eye during the 2024 farmers' protest at Shambhu, 24-year-old Davinder Singh says the physical wounds healed long ago, but the trauma still defines his life.

Chandigarh. (Agency)

When images of students injured by pellet guns during the recent protest at Delhi's Jantar Mantar flashed across television screens and social media, 24-year-old Davinder Singh Bhangu Shekhupuria did not have to imagine what they were about to endure.

He has been living that reality for more than two years. Davinder lost his left eye after being hit by a pellet during the farmers' protest at the Shambhu border on February 13, 2024. The injury ended his studies, altered his future and, he says, left emotional scars that remain far deeper than the physical wound. "I hope these students don't have to spend the

next two years rebuilding their lives the way I have," Davinder told The Indian Express. "I know exactly what lies ahead for them." The small farmer from Shekhupur village in Patiala's Ghanaur, who owns less than five acres of land, was 22 when security personnel fired pellets to stop farmers marching towards Delhi. One pellet struck his left eye. He was rushed to Government Medical College and Hospital, Sector 32, Chandigarh, where doctors told him the eye could not be saved.

More than two years later, Davinder says the loss continues to shape every aspect of his life. "I have only

single-eye vision now. It is a huge problem. I have to suffer because of the



pellet injuries that the security forces of my own country used to deter me," he said. The physical injury was only the

beginning. "The doctor's declaration was a bolt out of the blue. The injury changed the course of my life. I wanted to study, but I could not complete it. I still get panic attacks. Sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night shivering. I feel pressure where my left eye was whenever I work in the fields. I cannot bear the sunlight. It has affected my nerves too. I am still on medication," he said. Davinder had completed his graduation and was pursuing an MA in Sociology at Punjabi University, Patiala, when the injury derailed his plans. He never returned to complete the course.

Court dismisses second bail plea of Hyderabad man arrested for circulating 'misleading' video linked to PM Modi

Chandigarh. (Agency)

A Chandigarh court has dismissed the second regular bail application of a Hyderabad-based man, who was arrested in connection with a case registered over allegedly circulating a fake and misleading video linked to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on social media.

The case pertains to an FIR registered on April 19 at Sector 26 police station under various provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and the Information Technology Act. Seeking bail, Hassan Mohiduddin Siddiqui, 44, through his counsel, argued that he had



completed with the chargesheet already filed. The defence also submitted that the prosecution case was based on documentary and technical evidence,

leaving no scope for tampering with the investigation. It further contended that similarly worded social media posts by others had not resulted in coercive action.

Opposing the plea, the prosecution submitted that technical investigation linked the social media account and the mobile number used for the post to the accused. It argued that the material shared was "provocative, objectionable and capable of inciting communal disharmony and disturbing peace and order", and contended that further aspects of the case were yet to be unearthed while other accused were yet to be arrested.

'No substantial change in case's circumstances': Second bail plea of ex-PU professor accused of wife's murder also rejected

Chandigarh. (Agency)

The Chandigarh district court on Thursday dismissed the second regular bail application of former Panjab University (PU) professor Bharat Bhushan Goyal, who is accused of murdering his wife, holding that the examination of the prosecution's first witness and filing of the chargesheet did not constitute a "substantial change in the circumstances" to justify his release.

Additional Sessions Judge Dr Harpreet Kaur observed that Bharat Bhushan's earlier bail application had already been dismissed on merits and that the grounds raised in the second plea were insufficient for reconsideration. "The present second regular bail application has been filed by the applicant solely on the ground that challan has been presented and the material witness... has been examined. The same cannot be treated as substantial change in the circumstances of the case,"

the court said.

Referring to the Supreme Court's judgment in Virupakshappa Gouda and another versus State of Karnataka, the court further observed, "Filing of chargesheet does not in any manner lessen the allegations made by the prosecution. Rather the filing of the chargesheet establishes that after due investigation, the investigating agency having found material has placed the chargesheet for the trial of the accused".

"At the stage of consideration of bail application, the court is not expected to undertake a meticulous examination of the evidence or record finding on its admissibility or evidentiary value as the same are matters to be determined during trial," the court said. Holding that there was "no material change" in the circumstances of the case after the dismissal of first bail application coupled with the seriousness of the allegations, nature of the offence, and the stage of

proceeding, the court said it did not find "any justifiable ground" to enlarge the accused on regular bail.

According to the prosecution, the FIR was initially registered on the complaint of Bharat Bhushan himself, who claimed that unknown persons had entered his PU residence on the intervening night of November 3-4, 2021, and murdered his wife, Seema, after tying her hands, legs and mouth. During investigation, however, the Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL) reportedly found that the iron mesh door had been cut from inside the house. The prosecution further relied on a Brain Electrical Oscillation Signature (BEOS) profiling report, following which the PU professor was arrested on December 8, 2025.

Seeking bail, counsel for Bharat Bhushan, submitted that the accused had been falsely implicated and that circumstances had changed after the dismissal of his first bail plea.

AAP retains Bilothi seat in Netrang Taluka panchayat

The AAP candidate contested the election in the absence of the party's well-known face Chaitar Vasava (MLA from Dediypada) and AAP's Bharuch unit chief, Piyush Patel, who is presently in judicial custody in Bharuch in connection with a criminal case over a "quarrel".

Surat. (Agency)

THE AAM Aadmi Party (AAP) has retained the Bilothi seat in Netrang Taluka panchayat of Bharuch district, as its candidate, Praveen Vasava, won by 806 votes defeating BJP and Congress candidates as the results were declared on Thursday.

The AAP candidate contested the election in the absence of the party's well-known face Chaitar Vasava (MLA from Dediypada) and AAP's Bharuch unit chief, Piyush Patel, who is presently in judicial custody in Bharuch in connection with a criminal case over a "quarrel".

The BJP had roped in five MLAs and sitting MP Mansukh Vasava in the campaign, but the move did not bring much benefit to the party. The BJP is ruling the Netrang Taluka Panchayat (TP) seat, with the support of a lone Congress candidate.

The AAP candidate from the Bilothi seat in Netrang TP, Gunvant Vasava (62), defeated the BJP and Congress and won by a margin of 798 votes. Gunvant and other winning candidates were purportedly



taken to a private resort in Shahada taluka in Maharashtra amid concerns that the BJP may try to reach out to them.

On May 2, Gunvant Vasava accidentally fell on the bathroom floor in the resort and suffered a brain haemorrhage. He was shifted to a private hospital in Surat,

where he was declared dead on May 6.

The by-election to the Bilothi seat took place on July 28, under tight police security. It saw a direct contest between the AAP's Praveen Vasava, BJP candidate

Kantil Vasava and Congress's Ranjeet Vasava. As the results were announced on Thursday, the AAP's Praveen Vasava got 2,371 votes, defeating BJP candidate Kantil Vasava who got 1,565 votes and Congress candidate Ranjeet Vasava got 160 votes. A total of 41 votes went to NOTA.

The Netrang TP election, on 16 seats, was held in May. After the results were declared, AAP won eight seats, followed by BJP with seven, and Congress won a single seat, with its candidate Naynaben Prajapati winning the Netrang-2 seat.

After Gunvant Vasava's death, the BJP and AAP had an equal number of winning

candidates – seven each. The BJP leaders reached out to Congress candidate Naynaben Prajapati and got her support to retain power in Netrang TP. She was made vice-president of Netrang TP by BJP.

The election was contested in the absence of Chaitar Vasava, who is presently in jail, while AAP Bharuch district president Piyush Patel is also in jail, in a criminal case over allegedly assaulting a person in Jhagadiya taluka. With the victory of Praveen Vasava, out of 16 seats in Netrang TP, BJP (with the support of Congress) and AAP had a tie, as each had 8 candidates.

Netrang Taluka president Anil Vasava said, "This victory shows that the public is with AAP and their support towards Chaitar Vasava, a well-known face in Bharuch and Narmada district. Public had poured their love in terms of votes to our candidate Praveen Vasava. Now our future step would be we will convene a meeting with our party top leaders and later decide."

Father pulled, almost lynched: Kin of Delhi cops injured at student protest speak out

Family members of Delhi Police personnel injured during the CJP-led agitation urged the public to stop vilifying police personnel over the force's actions during the protest.

Delhi. (Agency)

Families of Delhi Police personnel injured during the recent student protest in Delhi claimed on Friday that police officers were subjected to sustained violence during the agitation, saying their ordeal had received little public attention despite the injuries suffered by many personnel.

Addressing a press conference in New Delhi, the families screened videos showing attacks on police personnel and alleged that anti-social elements had infiltrated the protest. Citing the serious injuries sustained by several officers, many of whom they said are still undergoing treatment, the families called for justice for injured police personnel as well.

The families argued that their suffering had been overshadowed by allegations of police

excesses against students and urged the public to stop vilifying police personnel over the force's actions during the agitation, led by Cockroach Janta Party (CJP).

'MY FATHER WAS ALMOST LYNCHED'

The daughter of a Sub Inspector with Delhi Police, who was injured during the protest, claimed that her father was "almost lynched", claiming the attack left him unconscious and has deeply traumatised the family. The Delhi University student said her father was deployed on the frontline near the barricades, trying to maintain order during the agitation. She recalled that when his colleagues brought him home later that night, his uniform was soaked in blood.

"My father was at the main protest site. He was on the frontline, near the barricades. Every night when he came home, he would tell us that

it no longer looked like a student protest and that many anti-social elements had joined it," she said. Narrating the alleged attack on July 25, she said, "My father was dragged by a rowdy mob and was almost lynched near the stage at Jantar Mantar. This happened at around 2 pm. He remained unconscious at RML Hospital for about four hours".

"Around 10 pm that night, my father's colleagues brought him home and his uniform was completely soaked in blood. Seeing him like that was extremely painful for us. That night was one of the most difficult nights our family has ever



faced," she added. Questioning the public narrative surrounding the violence, she alleged that attacks on police

personnel had not received adequate attention.

"When I opened social media, I saw my own father being portrayed as a criminal. Then I learnt that the same people who attacked him had gone to the Supreme Court. We also have equal rights. We also deserve justice," she said.

The daughter added that the officer was earlier a Marine Commando before joining the Delhi Police and "had never spoken negatively about students despite the attack."

"Even after almost being lynched, he has never said anything against students. He was simply injured while performing his duty," she added.

Eye on 800 TPD waste management, MCD signs deal with Oil India to set up CBG plants

New Delhi. (Agency)

To convert 800 tonnes per day (TPD) of wet waste into biogas and organic fertilizers, the Municipal Corporation Delhi (MCD) and the Oil India Limited (OIL) on Thursday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in the presence of the Delhi CM Rekha Gupta and Mayor Pravesh Wahi for the establishment of two Bio-Methanation based Compressed Bio-Gas (CBG) plants, officials said.

According to an official statement, two Bio-CBG plants with a combined processing capacity of 800 TPD will be established in the first phase. A 500 TPD plant will be developed on 10 acres of land at Tehkhand, while a 300 TPD plant will be set up on 7 acres at Okhla, an official said. These facilities will scientifically process segregated organic waste to produce CBG and organic fertilizer, contributing to cleaner and more sustainable waste management, the official added.

Speaking at the occasion, Gupta said, "Delhi, being the national capital, represents the aspirations of the entire country, and therefore addressing its civic challenges requires coordinated efforts by the Central Government, the Delhi Government, local bodies, public sector enterprises, the private sector and civil society."

She added, "Delhi generates nearly 13,500 metric tonnes of solid waste every day, while the existing processing capacity remains inadequate, leading to the accumulation of landfill mountains over the years. The two CBG plants with a combined capacity of 800 TPD will provide a sustainable solution by converting wet waste into biogas and organic fertilizer, benefiting the environment, promoting clean energy, and supporting the agricultural sector."

Umar Khalid's fresh bail plea: High Court seeks Delhi police's response in UAPA case

New Delhi. (Agency)

The Delhi High Court on Friday sought the response of Delhi Police on activist Umar Khalid's fresh bail plea in the alleged 'larger conspiracy' case linked to the February 2020 Delhi riots.

A bench of Justices Prathiba M Singh and Vikas Mahajan issued notice to the city police and directed it to file its reply within two weeks.

Appearing for Khalid, his counsel said this was the activist's third bail application since his arrest and also sought interim bail. The bench posted the matter for hearing on August 27, when the bail plea of co-accused Sharjeel Imam is also scheduled to be heard.

Additional Solicitor General S V Raju, representing Delhi Police, said Imam's bail plea had also been rejected by the same trial court order and requested that both matters be heard together. Khalid has challenged a July 4 trial court order rejecting his bail application. The trial court had said it had "no option but to follow" the Supreme Court's January 5 order and, therefore, could neither entertain the plea nor grant him the relief.

Khalid was arrested in September 2020 under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) on allegations that he was one of the masterminds behind the February 2020 riots in north-east Delhi, which left 53 people dead and over 700 injured. The violence broke out during protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019, and the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC).

3,000 products, 2 floors: IKEA opens second store in Delhi

New Delhi. (Agency)

"Can I sit on it?" asked a woman in her late 60s, half a question, half a request, pointing towards the sample bed at the newly opened IKEA store at DLF Avenue, Saket, on Thursday.

The IKEA salesperson replied without missing a beat, "Of course, ma'am. This is a hands-on store. You can try it out without any problems."

She sat. She bounced, just a little. And something in her shoulders relaxed — the particular relief of a person who has just confirmed a thing is as good as it looks.

The newly opened store can be accessed from the first floor of the mall, where it is beside the Cinepolis



theatre while the main entrance of the store is opposite to the South entrance of the mall. This is India's fourth and Delhi's second city format store, tucked into 30,000 square feet storage, workspaces, dining sets, kitchens, study room, bedrooms, wardrobes, a children's section, and tucked at the far end, smelling faintly of cinnamon and grilled meat the Swedish Café.

Why Saket?

The choice of Saket as the location for the store wasn't incidental. "What makes each store unique is how it reflects the everyday life, needs and dreams of the many people in that neighbourhood," Adosh Sharma, IKEA India's Country Commercial Manager, said of the decision.

9 died in March 18 blaze: Bronto Skylift failed, crew not trained — magisterial inquiry report on Palam fire

New Delhi. (Agency)

Bronto Skylift (hydraulic crane) of the Delhi Fire Services (DFS) failed during the rescue operation after its boom became entangled in overhead cables and banners, no backup high-reach rescue equipment was available and firefighters had to rely on a manual ladder that could not reach the third floor balcony – these are the major findings of a magisterial inquiry into the March 18 fire in a four-story building in Palam that killed nine people, including three children, The Indian Express has learnt. The report was submitted by District Magistrate (South West) Mekala Chaitanya

Prasad to the Home department last month. The file is now proposed to be placed before the Lieutenant Governor for consideration, officials



said. "The Bronto Skylift (BS-III) failed at the scene – most likely due to cables/wires/banners entangled in its boom and no effective second line of defence (an alternative tall ladder) was immediately available... a

manual ladder could not reach the third-floor balcony," the report said. The inquiry also found that the crew assigned to operate the skylift had never received formal training from the authorised dealer since the machine was procured in 2006. "They learned informally from predecessors," the report said.

It added that maintenance logs of the skylift shows no prior faults were reported despite it being used in operations at IGI Airport, Tilak Nagar and Palam during incidents of fire.

Further, the report highlighted several lapses by the MCD and other agencies, which resulted in the tragedy.

Only Indians have Indian passport: Govt answer amid citizenship document debate

Amid a continuing debate over what officially proves Indian citizenship, the Centre told Parliament that only Indian citizens are eligible for an Indian passport. However, it stopped short of declaring the passport conclusive proof of citizenship, describing it instead as a travel document issued after due verification.

New Delhi. (Agency)

Amid an ongoing debate over which government-issued documents constitute proof of Indian citizenship, the Centre on Thursday told Parliament that only Indian citizens are eligible to be issued an Indian passport. At the same time, it reiterated that a passport is a travel document issued to regulate the departure of Indian citizens from the country, without stating whether it constitutes conclusive proof of citizenship. In a written reply to questions raised by Rajya Sabha MP Shri Abdul Wahab, Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh said an Indian passport is issued by the Government of India under the Passports Act, 1967, after due verification through an established

process. Wahab had sought clarification on whether an Indian passport constitutes conclusive proof of citizenship, the eligibility criteria for passport issuance, the impact of acquiring foreign citizenship on Indian nationality, the process by which foreign nationals acquiring Indian citizenship become eligible for a passport, and whether the government planned to review the citizenship and passport framework. The government, however, did not provide a direct yes-or-no answer on whether an Indian passport is conclusive proof of citizenship. "An Indian passport is issued as per the Passports Act, 1967 by the Government of India to regulate the departure from India of citizens of India. It is issued after due verification laid out by an

established process," Singh said in his written reply.

The response marks another instance where the government has avoided



explicitly declaring an Indian passport as conclusive proof of citizenship. Instead, it reiterated that passports are travel documents issued under the Passports Act to regulate the departure of Indian citizens from the country after

due verification of an applicant's eligibility.

CENTRE SAYS ONLY INDIAN CITIZENS CAN BE ISSUED WITH INDIAN PASSPORTS

The minister also clarified that India does not recognise dual citizenship, citing Articles 9 and 11 of the Constitution along with Section 9 of the Citizenship Act, 1955.

"The provisions of Article 9 and 11 of the Constitution of India read with Section 9 of the Citizenship Act, 1955 do not allow dual citizenship," Singh said. For context, under the Citizenship Act, 1955, an Indian citizen who voluntarily acquires the citizenship of another country ceases to be an Indian citizen.

NEWS BOX

Team sport? What knee injury taught Tejaswin Shankar about culture in Indian athletics

Kolkata. (Agency)

Even with an agonising patellar tendon injury threatening to end his Commonwealth Games campaign, Tejaswin Shankar refuses to go down without a fight. Sitting firmly in second place in the decathlon standings halfway through the competition, the Indian star remains in prime contention for a medal, all because he refused to give up. After pulling out of the men's high jump final, a teary-eyed Tejaswin had indicated that his CWG campaign might be over, but that turned out to be far from true on Thursday, July 30, when he came out and participated in 5 events of decathlon.It was not a singular effort. First came the



doctors, who treated him and got him fit enough to even take the field. Yet, the decathlon start was ominous: Tejaswin clocked 10.96s in the 100m sprint, finishing last among all athletes.What could have served as the ultimate nail in the coffin for an athlete's mind failed to break Tejaswin. He simply could not give up.And thankfully he did not have to fight alone.Over the two days leading up to the event, as he spent endless hours with doctors and endured sleepless nights rehabbing his knee, almost every Indian athlete in the contingent came to him to check on his health. They were busy preparing for their own events, but whenever they crossed paths with Tejaswin, they made sure to ask how he was feeling."Well, to be honest with you, there's not one single athlete out there who did not check on me. Everybody in the team, I mean, this probably makes me feel like it's not an athletics or a track and field team, but it's a team sport event because literally every single one of the athletes checked on me."

2026 CWG: PhD aspirant Seema Kaliramna clinches discus bronze after three successive fouls

Glasgow. (Agency)

India's Seema Kaliramna overcame three successive fouls to clinch the bronze medal in the women's discus throw with a best effort of 58.65m at the Commonwealth Games on Thursday. Fellow Indian Nidhi Rani finished fourth.Seema endured a nervy finish, fouling her fourth, fifth and sixth attempts, but her third-round effort proved enough to hold on to bronze. Cameroon's Monie Nora Atim had one final chance to snatch the bronze but failed to produce the required distance, managing only 11.18m on her last attempt, allowing Seema to finish on the podium ahead of Nidhi.Jamaica's



Samantha Hall won the gold with a Games-leading throw of 61.66m, while Canada's Julia Tunks took silver with 60.67m.The 27-year-old Seema made a successful return to competition following motherhood and won gold at the 2025 National Games. She is also pursuing a PhD. Nidhi opened India's campaign with a throw of 53.19m but was immediately overtaken by Nigeria's Obiageri Pamela Amaechi (53.68m) and Uganda's Monie Nora Atim (55.37m).Seema, meanwhile, began with a foul after sending her discus into the net. Tunks then moved to the top with an opening effort of 58.21m before Hall seized the lead with 59.27m. Nidhi responded with a strong second-round throw of 55.67m to climb to third, but Seema soon leapfrogged her compatriot by launching the discus to 57.32m in the second round.

Javelin final preview: Neeraj vs doubt, a world-class field and Glasgow weather

—CWG 2026 javelin final preview:

Neeraj Chopra walks into Glasgow with doubts trailing him and an Olympic-level field waiting. Tonight, in the cold and the wind, he will find out how much of his prime is still left.

Glasgow. (Agency)

The Commonwealth Games final resembles an Olympic podium relocated to Glasgow. Four Olympic medallists. One, Rumesh Pathirage, who looks a lock to join that club at the next Olympics. Among this star-studded field stands Neeraj Chopra and his two compatriots.Neeraj couldn't have asked for a better field to prove he is still the man to beat. And he couldn't have asked

for a better venue to prove he remains one of the masters of tackling foul conditions.After the lows of an injury-marred eighth-place finish at last year's World Championships, and after parting ways with the legendary Jan Zelezny, Neeraj chose a reset. He brought back his first coach, Jai Chaudhary, the man who put a javelin in his hand at Panipat's Shivaji Stadium years before the medals started arriving, into a coaching set-up he now runs entirely on his own terms. He began the season in Doha after a lengthy injury layoff with a commendable fourth-place finish.DOUBTING NEERAJ? Yes, the numbers are there and making headlines, as they always do with Neeraj. For once, they aren't the records he breaks at will. These are numbers that have planted seeds of doubt: whether he is past his prime. At the World Championships last year, Neeraj finished



outside the podium in a competitive event for the first time in 2,566 days. In Glasgow on Thursday, he managed a best

throw of just 79.61m, the first time he hasn't cleared 80m in a competition in eight years, ending a streak stretching back 58 competitions. But at this juncture of his career, with Neeraj working out what still works for a body that is no longer 25, the two-time Olympic medallist knows exactly what he is doing. At no point can anyone tell he is doubting himself, and that is the quiet greatness of one of India's greatest athletes.Having trained extensively with his new, old team, Neeraj timed his return well in Doha. His presence at these Commonwealth Games is itself a small surprise, given how many expected him to plan his season carefully around the Asian Games and the newly minted Ultimate World Athletics Championships later this year. But knowing Neeraj, he was never going to resist a world-class field with the added pull of a medal for the country.

After Europe, Asia and South America rise up against FIFA

New Delhi. (Agency)

FIFA's plan to bring private investors into the commercial heart of world football is facing growing resistance, with Europe, Asia and North and Central America now united in their concerns over a proposal that could fundamentally alter the way the game's biggest competitions are run. The backlash has come from three of FIFA's six continental confederations, with UEFA taking the strongest stand so far by unanimously rejecting the proposal and threatening a boycott of FIFA competitions if the plan is not abandoned. The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has also expressed "great concern and disappointment" over the lack of



consultation, while CONCACAF has questioned the due process surrounding the plan. **WHAT IS FIFA'S NEW WORLD CUP PLAN?** At the centre of the storm is FIFA Forward Enterprise (FFE), a proposed new FIFA-owned subsidiary that would bring the governing body's commercial and event operations under one structure. FIFA says FFE could be valued at \$20 billion and raise up to \$4.2 billion by selling minority, non-controlling stakes to external investors. FIFA insists it would retain control over the enterprise and all football governance, competition and sporting decisions.But for the confederations, the problem is not simply the money. It is how the proposal has been brought to the table.

European nations vow FIFA World Cup boycott over Infantino private equity plan as opposition spreads

Infantino's secret project was revealed Tuesday to spin off its commercial operations in a new \$20 billion subsidiary called FIFA Forward Enterprise (FFE) 20% owned by private investors.

GENEVA. (Agency)

European nations agreed Thursday to boycott the World Cup and all other FIFA competitions to protest Gianni Infantino's plan to sell stakes in soccer's biggest tournament to private equity investors. The North American soccer body rejected his plan later the same day."UEFA and its national associations will not participate in FIFA

opening two sets. National record holders Praveen Chithravel and Selva



Prabhu secured their places in the triple jump final.However, there was disappointment in athletics as Parul Chaudhary, Animesh Kujur and Vishal TK failed to impress. The cycling contingent also had a day to forget. **LOVEPREET CAPS OFF FINE**

WRESTLING CAMPAIGN

Lovepreet delivered the finest performance of his career, rewriting the Commonwealth Games record with a 176kg snatch before finishing with an overall lift of 388kg (176kg+212kg). The Indian finished just a kilogram shy of New Zealand's David Andrew Liti, who claimed gold with a total of 389kg.The Punjab weightlifter appeared to be in complete control after opening up a 10kg advantage following the snatch. However, Liti mounted a stunning comeback in the clean and jerk, smashing the Games record with a final lift of 223kg. Lovepreet, needing 217kg to reclaim top spot, produced a brave attempt but was unable to complete the lift.

competitions," the European soccer body said after an urgent online



meeting of its 55 member nations.The next scheduled FIFA tournament is within weeks in Europe — the Women's Under-20 World Cup hosted by Poland from Sept. 5 — and the four British federations comprise FIFA's only bidder to host the 2035 Women's World Cup. That decision is due Nov. 23.

"Some things are simply too important to sell," UEFA said in a statement. "The FIFA World Cup belongs to football. It always will. And so long as Europe has a voice, it will never be for sale." The strategy meeting was called to counter FIFA President Infantino's offer of \$20 million to each of FIFA's 211 global members that has to be accepted by mid-September. Later Thursday, the 41-member Confederation of North, Central American and Caribbean Association Football (CONCACAF) met and announced it rejected Infantino's plan.In a statement, CONCACAF said members "expressed deep concerns about the lack of due process surrounding the proposal, the artificially short deadline imposed.

Indian hockey jersey: Captain Harmanpreet doubles down on change to saffron colour

India captain Harmanpreet Singh and former goalkeeper PR Sreejesh backed Hockey India's new saffron jersey despite criticism from former players. The federation maintained the colour change was made to improve visibility on blue hockey turfs.

New Delhi. (Agency)

India captain Harmanpreet Singh and former goalkeeper PR Sreejesh have thrown their weight behind Hockey India's decision to introduce a saffron jersey ahead of the 2026 Asian Games, despite criticism from former players

and fans. The colour change has sparked a debate over whether India should move away from its iconic blue kit, which has long been associated with the national hockey team.The controversy erupted after Hockey India unveiled the new jersey earlier this week, replacing the traditional blue with saffron as the team's primary playing colour. Speaking during a media interaction on Thursday, Harmanpreet said the players were comfortable with the new kit, while Sreejesh urged people to respect the federation's decision if it was made in consultation with the squad."We just played a training match with the orange jersey. I think the new jersey looks good," Harmanpreet said, dismissing the criticism surrounding the change.

Sreejesh, meanwhile, acknowledged that he never faced visibility issues during his playing career but felt player



feedback should remain central to such decisions.We played in different colours in 2014, but there were no issues then. It all depends on the choice of the federation and the players," the former India goalkeeper said.The jersey change

drew sharp reactions from several former internationals after Hockey India announced the switch. Ex-India captain Viren Rasquinha called the move "embarrassing", questioning why the team had abandoned blue, while Ajit Pal Singh also wondered why a successful colour identity needed to be changed. In response, Hockey India clarified that the decision was driven by technical requirements rather than aesthetics or symbolism. **VISIBILITY BEHIND THE CHANGE** Explaining the move, Hockey India said the blue jersey often blended with the blue artificial turf now used in international hockey, making it harder for players to spot teammates during matches.

Rupee rises 20 paise to 95.30 against US dollar in early trade

MUMBAI. (Agency)

The rupee maintained its upward trajectory, rising 20 paise to 95.30 against the US dollar in early trade on Friday, tracking foreign capital inflows and a decline in global crude oil prices. However, a stronger greenback capped sharper gains in the local unit, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 95.40 before rising further to 95.30, up 20 paise from its previous close. Rising for the fifth straight session, the rupee surged 26 paise to close at 95.50 against the US dollar on Thursday."The rupee is likely to continue to move back & forth in today's session, gain some strength against US dollar due to modest pullback in oil prices, while expectations of continued intervention from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) keeps it supported," Aamir Makda, Commodity & Currency Analyst, Technical Research, Choice Broking.Meanwhile, the US and Iran each fired barrages of missiles on Thursday, as the pattern of back-and-forth strikes took hold again and hope dimmed for any quick resolution.After a brief respite, the risk of a return to all-out war emerged once more, with the fighting threatening to engulf even more countries. Jordan said on Thursday it intercepted Iranian missiles for the second consecutive day, while Kuwait said a strike in the northern part of the country killed one person.The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading up 0.35 per cent at 100.21.Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, were trading sharply down by 0.98 per cent at USD 88.16 per barrel.

Big credit demand shift from asset ownership to consumption: Report

MUMBAI. (Agency)

Indicating the rising indebtedness of households, credit demand in India has been moving away from asset ownership to consumption-driven loans, data released by credit bureau Transunion CIBIL on Thursday showed.As of March 2026, consumption is the largest sector for loans at 51%, up from 34% in March 2017. India's overall retail loan size is estimated at over Rs 170 lakh crore.According to RBI data, formal loan systems saw a significant surge in FY26, marking a revival in borrowing demand. Net incremental credit expanded by `44.6 lakh crore to `311 lakh crore. Of this, bank credit constituted `212 lakh crore and non-bank credit `99 lakh crore. According to the latest report, vehicle loans among credit-active borrowers make up for the second largest category of credit at 18%. The share of new-to-credit borrowers has gone down to 13% in FY26 from 32% in FY17. This indicates that the credit universe is maturing, with lenders concentrating on existing customers rather than first-time borrowers. The report shows that credit behaviour among borrowers has changed dramatically, especially since the Covid pandemic, with credit moving from asset ownership such as homes towards consumption (consumer durables) and entrepreneurship.

Apple posts strongest June quarter as India growth gathers pace

New Delhi. (Agency)

Apple has reported a record June quarter in India, helped by stronger demand for the iPhone, Mac computers and its growing services business. The company said India was among several markets where revenue reached a new high during the three months ended June 27, 2026.The India update came as Apple announced global quarterly revenue of \$109.4 billion, up 16 per cent from the same period last year. Diluted earnings per share rose 29 per cent to \$2.02. The results included a favourable impact from tariff refunds, which added about two percentage points to gross margin and \$0.11 to earnings per share.Apple records growth across emerging marketsApple CEO Tim Cook said the company achieved June quarter revenue records across every geographic segment."We were pleased to see strength across the board with June quarter records in the U.S., Latin America, Western Europe, India, China mainland, Japan, and Southeast Asia," Cook said.He added, "We also achieved June quarter revenue records in both developed and emerging markets and saw double-digit growth in most emerging markets."

Bajaj Finance shares hit record high, rally 7% post Q1 results: Should you buy?

New Delhi. (Agency)

Shares of Bajaj Finance surged nearly 7% to hit a record high of Rs 1,127 on Friday after the non-banking financial company (NBFC) reported better-than-expected June quarter earnings, prompting several brokerages to raise their target prices and express confidence in the lender's growth outlook.The stock rose as much as 6.7% during early trade to Rs 1,124.50, making it one of the top gainers on the Nifty 50. The rally has extended the stock's recent gains, with Bajaj Finance rising 8.6% over the past five trading sessions, nearly 12% over the last month and more than 24% over the past six months, according to market data shared above.The rally came after the company reported first-quarter

results on Thursday that beat Street expectations across most key parameters. **WHAT DROVE THE BAJAJ FINANCE STOCK?** Bajaj Finance reported a 27% year-on-year rise in consolidated net profit to Rs 5,986 crore for the quarter ended June 2026, beating analysts' estimates.The lender's net interest income (NII) rose 23% to Rs 12,571 crore. While this was slightly below some analyst estimates, the quarter was supported by improving asset quality and resilient profitability. Gross non-performing assets (GNPA) improved to 0.96% from 1.03% in the previous quarter, while net NPA declined to 0.39% from 0.50%, signalling better asset quality.

Bajaj Finance beat estimates across key metrics, encouraging investors to push the stock to an all-time high.



BROKERAGES RAISE TARGET PRICES

The strong quarterly performance and upbeat management commentary prompted at least five brokerages to revise their target prices higher.CLSA retained its "Outperform" rating and increased its target price to Rs 1,300,

calling Bajaj Finance the "Iron Man" of the NBFC sector. The brokerage said profit after tax exceeded estimates due to stronger-than-expected operating performance and lower credit costs. It also highlighted the sharp improvement in asset quality as the standout feature of the quarter.HSBC maintained its "Buy" rating and raised its target price to Rs 1,270 after describing the June-quarter performance as exceptionally strong across key operating metrics. It also upgraded its earnings estimates for FY27-FY29, citing better growth prospects and improving asset quality. Nomura also reiterated its "Buy" rating with a target price of Rs 1,140, saying earnings exceeded expectations because of healthy operating performance and robust asset quality.

KOSPI surges 18%: Why investors are betting big on South Korea's stock market

New Delhi. (Agency)

South Korea's stock market staged a remarkable comeback on Friday, with the KOSPI index surging more than 18% after three straight days of heavy losses. The sharp rise put the benchmark index on track for its biggest single-day percentage gain on record.At the time of writing, the KOSPI was up 18.27% at 6,615.60, putting it on track for its biggest single-day percentage gain on record.So, what fuelled this dramatic rally? Here are the three key reasons. **AI AND CHIP STOCKS BOUNCED BACK** The biggest driver of Friday's rally was the strong rebound in artificial intelligence (AI) and semiconductor

stocks.SK Hynix and Samsung Electronics jumped more than 23% each, while Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. (TSMC) gained



around 10%. These companies were the biggest contributors to the rise in the MSCI Asia Pacific equities indexThe rebound came after investors returned to AI-linked stocks following a sharp three-day

sell-off.

STRONG RALLY IN US TECHNOLOGY STOCKS

The positive mood in Asia followed a strong overnight session on Wall Street.US chip stocks recorded their biggest one-day gain in more than a year, boosting confidence across global markets. Nasdaq 100 futures also pointed to further gains after the technology-heavy index ended a six-day losing streak.Investor sentiment received another boost after Amazon reported strong earnings, sending its shares up 9.5% in after-hours trading. Apple, however, fell more than 6% after warning that supply shortages could affect its sales outlook.

Oil companies are expected to reap big profits because of US-Iran conflict

NEW YORK. (Agency)

Analysts are expecting major oil companies to report raking in large spring profits while fighting between Iran and the US impeded petroleum shipments and consumers around the world paid more for fuel and confronted shortages.The conflict, now in its sixth month, halted most shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow waterway that previously served as a delivery route for a fifth of the world's oil and natural gas. With global supplies constrained, prices for Brent crude, the international standard, soared from about \$70 to above \$100 a barrel for much of March, April and May, and at one point reached \$126.

That likely resulted in elevated profits for some of the biggest publicly traded oil companies as they sold their goods for higher prices. American oil and gas giants Exxon Mobil and Chevron announce their second-quarter earnings on Friday.The money oil companies accrued between the beginning of April and the end of June could receive extra scrutiny this year. Gasoline, diesel and jet fuel prices climbed during that period, increasing costs for drivers and airline passengers. Supplies ran low in some countries, leading to sporadic fuel rationing in Australia and government office closures in Nepal and Sri Lanka.Six of Europe's largest oil companies posted first-quarter profits of \$22

billion altogether, a total which was 43% higher than the same time last year, according to Global Witness, a nonprofit organization that investigates environmental problems."There are constituencies around the world who are having a very good crisis, and the oil producers are one of them," said Patrick Galey, fossil fuels lead at Global Witness. "When you compare that to the hundreds of millions of people who are struggling with rolling blackouts, with electricity curbs, rationing, waiting in line for food queues, or the disruption to fertilizers and the potential impact that that has on food prices, we don't think that it's a justifiable price for the rest of the world to be paying."

PwC joins KPMG, EY and Deloitte in Big Four's AI troubles

PwC Middle East has come under scrutiny after an investigation found fabricated citations, broken links and doubtful references in its research reports. The findings deepen concerns over how major consulting firms are checking AI-generated material before publication.

New Delhi. (Agency)

PwC has become the latest member of the Big Four consulting firms to come under scrutiny over the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in its research reports after an investigation found fabricated citations, broken links and references to studies that appear not to exist. According to a report by the Financial Times, researchers at AI detection platform GPTZero examined four thought leadership reports published by PwC Middle East over the past two years and found multiple instances of AI-generated "hallucinations".The reports covered subjects ranging from corporate strategy for "agentic" AI and government public services to electric

vehicle market forecasts in the Middle East.The investigation found that several citations in the reports were flawed. One report referred to a study on air quality in Riyadh that appears to have been completely fabricated, with no trace of the paper in the cited journal or under the listed authors. Another report included multiple footnotes that led to broken webpages or articles that contained no evidence supporting the claims they were cited for.Researchers also flagged a report that cited a teenage blogger on Medium with around 280 followers to back what was described as a real-world AI success story involving JPMorgan. According to the Financial Times, the initiative actually took place in 2017—years before ChatGPT was launched.In another example, the same claim relating to traffic accidents was repeated three times across two pages, but each instance cited a different source. Investigators also found that the URL of one

cybersecurity report citation contained the tracking parameter "utm_source=chatgpt.com", suggesting that the source material had been surfaced through ChatGPT. Responding to the findings, PwC



Middle East told the Financial Times that it "takes the accuracy of our published research seriously" and is updating a limited number of supporting citations across the affected reports.

PWC JOINS OTHER BIG FOUR FIRMS CAUGHT IN AI ERRORS

PwC is not the first Big Four firm to face questions over AI-generated content.Earlier this year, KPMG

withdrew its global report titled "Redefining Excellence in the Age of Agentic AI" after companies and organisations named in the report complained that several of the case studies and achievements attributed to them had been fabricated. According to the Financial Times, the report contained false claims and bogus case studies generated using AI.EY Canada also removed a report on loyalty rewards programmes from its website after researchers identified AI hallucinations, inaccurate citations and references to studies that did not exist. The firm later said it was reviewing the circumstances that led to the report's publication.Deloitte, too, came under scrutiny after preparing a healthcare report for the Canadian government that reportedly contained multiple factual errors believed to have been generated by AI tools, according to earlier media reports cited by the Financial Times.

Sonam Kapoor

Pens Romantic Birthday Note For Hubby Anand Ahuja: 'Thank You For Being My Safest Place'



Bollywood fashion diva Sonam Kapoor has penned a note for her husband Anand Ahuja on his birthday and said that she loves him more than he'll ever know. Sonam shared a string of images from their relationship journey, starting from their dating days to getting married and becoming parents.

"Dear Anand, Thank you for being my safest place, my biggest supporter, my favourite travel companion, my sounding board, my reality check. Happy Birthday to my favourite human. I'd choose you in every lifetime. I love you more than you'll ever know," she wrote as the caption.

Sonam married businessman Anand Ahuja in a grand wedding ceremony in May 2018, after being in a relationship for several years.

The couple welcomed their first child, a baby boy, whom they named Vayu, in August 2022. They welcomed their second baby boy, whom they have named Rudralokh Kapoor Ahuja, in March 2026.

On the acting front, the actress was last seen in the film Blind in 2023. The crime thriller was directed by Shome Makhija. It also stars Purab Kohli, Vinay Pathak and Lillete Dubey in supporting roles. Blind, a remake of the 2011 Korean film of the same name, centres around a blind police officer in search of a serial killer.

Sonam was lined up to headline the film adaptation of Anuja Chauhan's novel "Battle for Bittora," but the project has remained stalled for years. Produced by her sister Rhea Kapoor, the film was envisioned as a blend of romance and politics.

Sonam began her career as an assistant director on filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali's 2005 film Black. She made her acting debut in Bhansali's romantic drama Saawariya in 2007. After facing a string of failures, she tasted success for the first time in 2013 with Raanjhanaa.

She was then seen in commercially successful films with supporting roles in the biopics Bhaag Milkha Bhaag, Sanju, Prem Ratan Dhan Payo, Neerja Bhanot and Veere Di Wedding.



CJP Protest: Shobhaa De Calls Salman Khan's 'It's Done, Bro' Post To Sonam Wangchuk 'Cringe', Slams Bollywood



Author and columnist Shobhaa De has spoken about Bollywood's take on the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP)-led protests and mocked Salman Khan's social media post for Sonam Wangchuk during his hunger strike. De took a dig at Salman's viral "It's done, bro" line and dismissed it as cringe.

Shobhaa De expressed her views in her piece published in ThePrint. The author, while calling out the industry's response to the protest, said that the biggest stars appeared out of touch with Gen Z and failed to understand the sentiment behind the youth-led movement. She called out Bollywood stars, especially Kangana Ranaut, Hema Malini, and Anupam Kher's remarks on the Gen Z of the country.

The columnist took a dig at Salman's comment specifically and said, "Ditto with Salman Khan. Calling Sonam Wangchuk 'Bro' and offering him a home-cooked meal from the Khan kitchen to break his fast attracted widespread derision, not praise... Maybe Salman thought he was being 'cool'. But Gen Z rewrote the definition of 'cool'. And this cringe message was anything but."

She further wrote, "Bollywood has never looked this 'uncool'. This irrelevant. Especially those stars who jumped in with inane ChatGPT-scripted posts once they had apparently received the green signal from their political patrons.

The very stars whose box-office fortunes depend on Young India suddenly woke up, only to be met with mockery. Senior Auntie and Uncle stars such as Hema Malini and Anupam Kher added insult to injury, while Kangana Ranaut, just this side of 'Auntie' status, lost the few Gen Z fans she still possessed with her tasteless remarks. I call them 'Generation Gutter'... The thing to understand is this: Gen Z does not need celebrity endorsements or heroes.

It's the reverse. Celebrities need Gen Z. This is a generation that marches, sings, and dances to its own unique beat."

Kirti Kulhari Duped Of Rs 2.4 Lakh In Cyber Fraud, Registers Complaint With Mumbai Police



Bollywood actress-producer Kirti Kulhari, who was last seen in the streaming series 'Shekhar Home', has fallen prey to cyber fraud. Unidentified cyber criminals gained unauthorised access to his mobile phone and credit card and duped him of Rs 2,43,852 in just a few minutes.

A case has been registered with the Amboli police station on the basis of the complaint filed by the actress. As per the FIR, actress Kirti Kulhari, who lives in the Versova area and supports her family through acting and film production, was at the Cinopolis theatre near Fun Republic Mall in the Andheri West area of Mumbai when she received an alert message on her mobile number about spending \$2,525 on Aeromexico airline from the bank's credit card.

When she saw the message of an unknown and suspicious foreign transaction, the actress without wasting any time contacted the toll-free helpline number of the bank. After the investigation, the bank officials said that four different major transactions were made from his credit card without permission, after which the card was immediately blocked as a security measure.

The actress said in her statement to the police that the password of her credit card was completely confidential, which she did not share with anyone.

It is suspected that her phone and card were hacked through some digital malware or spyware; considering the seriousness of the case, the Amboli police have registered a case against unknown accused.

The Cyber Cell team is looking for the accused on the basis of bank reference numbers and digital footprints. Earlier, the actress had announced the completion of the shoot of her first feature film as a producer, marking a significant milestone in her career. Sharing the update on Instagram, the actress said life has taught her that there is a "right time for everything", as she reflected on the emotional journey behind the project.

Priyanka Chopra

And Nick Jonas Enjoy Movie Night With Mahesh Babu Amid Varanasi Shoot



Priyanka Chopra landed in Hyderabad with her hubby Nick Jonas and their daughter Malti Marie a few days ago for the shoot of SS Rajamouli's upcoming film 'Varanasi'. On Wednesday, the actress took a break from work to enjoy a relaxed movie night with Nick Jonas and her Varanasi co-star Mahesh Babu.

A photo that's now making the rounds on social media shows the trio smiling for the camera at Hyderabad's AMB Cinemas, which is co-owned by Mahesh Babu. Meanwhile, paparazzi videos from last night showed Priyanka and Nick's daughter, Malti Marie, and Mahesh Babu and Namrata Shirodkar's son, Gautam Ghattamaneni, accompanying them. However, they did not feature in the viral photo.

Priyanka Chopra, Nick Jonas And Mahesh Babu Spotted At AMB Cinemas In Hyderabad

The picture, shared by AMB Cinemas on Instagram, shows Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas posing with Mahesh Babu. The actress looked stunning in a breezy white full-length dress, while Nick rocked a white shirt with black shorts and matching sneakers. Mahesh Babu kept it casual in an all-black outfit.

"A truly star-studded evening at AMB Cinemas. The Globe Trotter Superstar @urstrulymahesh, Desi Girl Mandakini @priyankachopra and @nickjonas graced us with their presence for a

memorable movie night. It was a pleasure hosting you all. See you again soon," read the caption of the post.

Fans React

With the Varanasi schedule keeping Priyanka and Mahesh Babu busy, the Hyderabad outing offered a rare off-duty moment. Fans couldn't stop gushing over them. "MB & Nick in one frame," commented one fan, while another one



wrote, "A Perfect Frame Of Talented Artists."

When Will Varanasi Shoot Wrap Up?

While a major portion of the film has already been shot, only a few smaller interconnecting scenes remain. Earlier, SS Rajamouli had shared that the team is hopeful of wrapping up filming by September or October this year. Varanasi is scheduled for worldwide theatrical release on 7 April, 2027.

What's Next for Priyanka Chopra After Varanasi?

Meanwhile, apart from Varanasi, Priyanka is also set to star in the survival thriller 'Reset', opposite Orlando Bloom. Helmed by Matt Smukler, it will head into production in August.

When life in a metro is taking over your existence too swiftly and your heart strongly desires to escape to a timeless zone for some peaceful self-realisation moments far from the deafening, tainted and fast city life—don't you just wish to time travel to a peaceful world? We don't have a time machine, but we are blessed to have Matheran, which is India's lowest hill station positioned 800 m above sea level in Western Ghats in the Indian state of Maharashtra (90 km from Mumbai). The peculiar thing about this place is its pollution free environment as no motor vehicle is permitted inside the town, making it Asia's only automobile free hill station. Fresh air, picturesque beauty and enchanting landscapes make it a serene place. Most of the tourists unwind themselves during a day trip or a weekend trip, but those who love nature won't mind spending an entire week here.

What to see
There are many places to visit in Matheran, such as Sunset Point, Sunrise Point, Louisa Point, Echo Point and Honeymoon Point. Also popular are Charlotte Lake, King George Point, One Tree Hill Point, Alexander Point and Panorama Point that compel you to appreciate nature even more. Hand-pulled rickshaws and horses are used as modes of transportation inside the town. One man quoted INR 600 (negotiable) for a horse for 3 hours for around 10-15 sightseeing points. We thought of not doing things in a hurry and hence decided to walk on foot so that we can closely interact with the place. Horses are a good option if you are in Matheran just for a day or you want to visit some place too far with a steep hike. Mainly old people are seen availing the facility of hand-pulled rickshaws.

How to reach
Mumbai is the nearest metro city to Matheran. You can take a local train till Neral (don't get confused with Nerul—another station in Mumbai—as the two are very far from each other). After reaching Neral, you can either opt for a toy train or a shared taxi to reach Matheran. Both these options cost almost the same (INR 70), but with a trade-off between an enjoyable experience and time. Toy train takes almost 2.5 hours while halting at various small stations. It provides a closer view of varying landscapes on one side and mountains on the other. On the other hand, taxi takes a maximum of 20 minutes to reach the town. I enjoyed the experience of toy train while going to Matheran, and decided to save time by taking taxi while heading back to Mumbai. A compulsory tax of INR 50 is levied on every visitor, and it has to be paid while entering the town.

Panorama Point

Panorama Point is the most exciting and the farthest viewpoint in Matheran. It is almost 7.5 km away from the marketplace. Taking a horse is probably the best. Another option is to take a toy train from the marketplace to the next station, but you will be required to walk at least 2 km. Horse ride takes 45-60 minutes to transport you from your hotel to this fairyland. The path is little bit rocky and hence, your back might start hurting after a while, but it's an unforgettable odyssey—you go through the forest hearing singing birds, breeze and horse's clip-clop, while having occasional glimpses of varying landscapes. The views from Panorama Point are incredibly stunning and beyond my words.

This point offers a 360-degree view of Matheran and surrounding areas. You can also spot Sunset Point from here. Being remotely located, this point is even more secluded than Honeymoon Point. You can lie down in the lap of nature and thank god for introducing you to this heaven on earth. This place is also a good picnic spot and a photographer's paradise. One can click multiple panora

Top 10 places to visit in

Matheran



mic pictures here without any intervention. Spend some time admiring some mesmerising views, while inhaling fresh air that is a rarity in cities. Panorama Point also serves as a good sunrise and sunset point. People often trek to this place from their hotel at dawn to see the sunrise. Don't forget to carry your Matheran's entry ticket along as you'll re-enter the town after returning from Panorama Point.

Collapse

Alexander Point

Alexander Point is almost 1.5 km from the marketplace (a 20-minute walk), and is easy to reach in terms of distance, navigation and slope. It's a very pleasant walk from one's hotel to this point as you walk through woods, on a very narrow path over red soil, interacting with green trees. The peak offers good views of other points of the region and the valley below. I will call this point as a bigger version of Sunrise Point (Khandala Point) because it gives the same view as Sunrise Point, but comparatively has ample space. No doubt that it is more crowded as compared to other places because it's quite close to the toy train station. Alexander Point has some snack stalls that serve fresh juice, soda and Maharashtrian snacks to satiate your hunger. During the peak season, there is zip-lining option available from here to Rambaug Point, costing INR 350-500 per head. I am very cautious about the safety measures taken by adventure sports organisers. I saw a few Europeans doing it and they told me that Matheran's zip-lining is quite safe as compared to a few popular tourist destinations in Europe.

One Tree Hill Point

One Tree Hill Point is almost 4 km away from the marketplace, taking around an hour to walk up to this place. It's better to take a horse or a hand-pulled rickshaw. This point is named as One Tree Hill Point because a tree stands right on the top of the peak, and there is no other vegetation around except some grass. This beauty is at its best in the monsoon season. Some other tourist group told us that this is the southernmost tip of Matheran. The view from this peak is really spectacular as

you can see Karjat, Mumbai-Pune highway, Panvel city, Chowk village and a few other vantage points of Matheran. To get the best view of this peak, walk all the way to the edge and then only you'll be able to notice that why this point is called One Tree Hill. There is a trekking path from Ambewadi to One Tree Hill Point, which is pretty easy and can be done by beginners also. It takes almost 3.5 hours to climb up and 2.5 hours to descend. I'll advise to avoid this trek during monsoons or hire a guide.

King George Point

King George Point is almost 2.7 km (a 40-minute walk) from the marketplace. It takes around 10 minutes to walk here from Charlotte Lake. Many people say that it's a sin to go to Matheran and come back without visiting this vantage point. The sight from this peak is really majestic as it offers a picturesque view of the lake and waterfalls, and a large valley surrounded by three hills. The view is mesmerising and nature lovers can definitely sit here for hours. People prefer to come here in groups in the evening, take a walk, watch the sunset and enjoy baked corn with a cup of ginger tea. Sounds amazing, isn't it!

Charlotte Lake

Charlotte Lake is almost 2.5 km away from the marketplace, which is approximately a 35-minute walk. Although the walk is a bit tiring, the breathtaking view and cold breeze take away all the fatigue. There is a little waterfall near the lake which is a treat for the eyes during monsoons. During other seasons, either it is dry or the water is too less. Clear lake water, green backdrop and flawless waterfall look amazing. For a moment, you would certainly think of owning a house at a place that would offer such view. Lake area has got amazing birdlife and we got to know this when we met some passionate bird photographers here. Some people also like to visit Pisarnath Temple, which is situated to the left of the lake. You should stay here to watch the sunset because it looks stunning when the red-golden light reflects on the water. Locals told us that this lake supplies drinking water to Matheran and hence, swimming, fishing and boating are strictly prohibited. Any activity that tends to contaminate the lake water is banned. Nonetheless, it is a good picnic spot; just make sure that you

don't leave any wrapper or garbage behind. It can be quite a hike while going back to your hotel, so if you are tired, take a horse or hand-pulled rickshaw.

Honeymoon Point

Honeymoon Point is very tranquil and offers a wonderful view of Matheran's splendid mountains. From here, one can see Prabal Fort, various valleys accommodating civilisations and a beautiful sky that changes colours at dusk. The view of mountains from Honeymoon Point is such that you would call them 'Indian Grand Canyon'. There is no factual explanation as to why this point has been named Honeymoon Point. I brainstormed and came up with a few reasons. One hypothesis says that this place is a little secluded because you actually need to



cross some bushes to reach here. Second is that it offers a romantic view. Both facts are good enough to name this peak as Honeymoon Point. My group spent perfect 30 minutes of mindfulness hearing nothing but the sound of air and leaves, which left us rejuvenated. It was like meditation. Not many people visit this point, so you spend undisturbed moments lying down and gazing at the sky while talking to your partner.

Some people even enjoy picnicking here. Make sure that you carry your trash with you and dispose off in a dustbin. This point is very close to Louisa Point and Echo Point; and similar to them, it is a very good subject to be captured through lens as it is rarely crowded. Hence, it gives the freedom to amateur photographers to experiment with different angles and lenses to capture a variety of pictures and improve their skill.

Echo Point

Echo Point lies in the vicinity of Louisa Point, which can be seen from here. As the name suggests, you hear your screams and yells echo at this peak. High-pitched kids are a common sight here. We even saw adults going crazy to hear their voice back. We got to know about it when a group of almost 20 screaming people captured my attention. Funny, isn't it? The vantage point offers the best view of the Western Ghats and is very crowded during daytime. So, it's advisable to visit here early in the morning. One of the best experiences we had here was crossing the valley by zip-lining. Mostly, zip-lining is offered by some local tour operators during the peak tourist season. There are a few stalls here that offer a variety of local food like vada pav and kandha poha, along with bottled water and soda. So, it's good to relax here for a while and admire nature in its full glory.

Louisa Point

Louisa Point is almost 1.5 km away from the marketplace and will take around 20 minutes to reach here on foot. If it's a clear sunny day, this place will offer you breathtaking views that will compel you to settle down here for a moment. This is a unique point in Matheran as it offers two different picturesque views. From one point, you can see the sky touching the mountains and a civilisation located far in a valley. If you visit during monsoon, you'll also be captivated by waterfalls. Another view is of Lake Charlotte that looks like a diamond necklace when seen from here. Louisa Point also offers a clear view of Prabal Fort. All these different views are intriguing and one can spend hours gazing at them. We sat there, soaked in the beauty of the place and relishing moments of silence.

This place is known as a photographer's paradise in Matheran because it offers panoramic views of mountains, peaks, valleys, lake and waterfalls. In most of the travel portals, blogs and magazines, Matheran has been represented by using Louisa Point's pictures. During the peak season, photo points are a little crowded and sometimes you need to be patient for your view to be 'people free', but all your waiting time is worth those beautiful, dreamy and wallpaper pictures. Some people also stay at Louisa Point to watch the sunset.

Sunrise Point

Sunrise Point, also known as Khandala Point, is located alongside the marketplace. This place is serene in the morning as very few people are able to make it to the sunrise. Sitting here quietly works wonders as you hear the chirping of birds, sound of breeze striking against trees and music composed by tree leaves. Our ancestors used to say that when you see a rising sun, it gives you tremendous energy. Sun rising above glorious mountains with golden reddish sky forming the backdrop unquestionably make for a beautiful sight and give you positive energy. I did yoga at sunrise for 20 minutes and definitely felt very energetic that day as compared to other days where I follow a different lifestyle. It's 5-15 minutes' walk from the marketplace, depending on the location of your hotel. Ask some local person or the receptionist of your hotel about sunrise time for the next day, before you go to bed at night. Sunrise time mentioned on the internet can be wrong sometimes and you obviously don't want to miss this sight. Videos recorded at sunrise are just perfect and can be used in any of your travel videos. I ended up with a shaky sunrise video because my view was obstructed by other photo enthusiasts and hands started trembling after a couple of minutes. So, I recommend taking your tripod along, if you intend to record the sunrise. While heading back to your hotel after seeing the sunrise, I would propose to indulge your taste buds in lip-smacking breakfast that has kandha poha and jalebi.

