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NATION

Tejashwi Yadav hints at a potential review of Bihar's prohibition law if the INDIA bloc forms government



GAMES

Sunil Gavaskar believes Gill may not have had the final say in selecting the playing XI



Cinema Kubbra Sait opens up on SOS 2, love, friendship

Edit The Nimisha Priya case must serve as a lesson for India



Bharathy Tahiliani empowers survivors of gender violence to lead independent lives. Turn to the Mumbai page to find out how. **SEE P5**

India batters enforce draw

FPJ News Service
MUMBAI

Skipper Shubman Gill, Ravindra Jadeja and Washington Sundar slammed hundreds to help a resilient India save the fourth Test in Manchester on the final day.

Gill cracked 103 while Jadeja and Washington struck fine centuries as well as the visitors finished the day at 425/4 in 143 overs with a lead of 114 runs to deny England a series win and make them wait. The series now moves to The Oval in London, where India will have a chance to level the series while England still give themselves a chance to clinch the Anderson Tendulkar Trophy. **SEE GAMES**

RUMOUR RAMPAGE | Word of electric wire snapping sparks panic

Haridwar temple stampede kills 6

Biswajeet Banerjee
HARIDWAR

A stampede at the Mansa Devi temple in Haridwar, Uttarakhand, on Sunday claimed six lives and left at least 29 others injured after panic broke out among devotees following reports of an overhead electric wire collapsing along the temple path, officials said.

The incident took place around 9 am as thousands of

pilgrims had gathered at the hilltop shrine during the ongoing Shravan pilgrimage, which witnesses a sharp rise in footfall on weekends and festival days. Garhwal Commissioner Vinay Shankar Pandey said the stampede was triggered after devotees began scrambling for safety amid rumours of an electric current passing through a section of the temple pathway. "The situation is now under control,"

Pandey said over the phone from Haridwar. "But the panic led to tragic consequences."

Senior Superintendent of Police Pramendra Singh Doval said that 35 people were rushed to nearby hospitals, where six were declared dead. If the staircase route leading to the temple was not closed half an hour before the stampede, the scale of the tragedy would have been bigger, Haridwar Kotwali in-charge Ritesh Shah said. The de-



ceased were identified as Arush (12), Shakal Dev (18), Vicky (18), Vipin (18), Vakil and Shanti.

▶ **Contd on** | nation
▶ **See also** | nation

Tiebreaker to crown chess queen today

Haridev Pushparaj
MUMBAI

The Nagpur-born **Divya Deshmukh** and veteran Koneru Humpy played out an exhilarating draw in the second classical game of the Women's Chess World Cup final in Batumi, Georgia and thereby pushed the contest to the tie-breaker on Monday.

Both players have already qualified for the prestigious Candidates Tournament to be held next year on account of making it to the final of the World Cup

and with an Indian winner assured here, it will be the first time an Indian woman will be clinching the coveted title.

It was a game of cat and mouse between the experienced Humpy and the prodigious Divya which eventually ended in a draw after 34 moves on the basis of repetition.

Earlier, after 19 moves, all indications were pointing towards a draw when Deshmukh and Humpy exchanged rooks following a trade in the 19th move.

However, in the 21st move of the game, Humpy took a huge



gamble by pulling her queen back to f4 from f5 and refused to go for trading the Queen when Deshmukh had presented her a chance to do the same earlier.

▶ **Contd on** | nation

Tailpiece

Slip-up tags ₹3/yr farmer poorest Indian

Agencies
SATNA

In what felt like a dark joke, a Madhya Pradesh farmer was declared to have an annual income of just ₹3. The income certificate, issued to 45-year-old Ramswaroop of Nayagaon village in Satna district, claimed he earned 25 paise a month.

▶ **Contd on** | nation

Sindoor showdown to set off Parliament fireworks

FPJ News Service
NEW DELHI

After a week of disruption, Parliament's Monsoon Session is set to shift gears as both the ruling NDA and the Opposition prepare for a high-voltage debate on the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack and Operation Sindoor, starting Monday. The issues are expected to trigger intense exchanges in both Houses.

According to sources, Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will lead the charge for the treasury benches. There are also indications that PM Narendra Modi may intervene in the discussion to underscore the government's "robust" stance against terrorism.

▶ **Contd on** | nation



BJP HITS RAHUL WITH PAK BARB: On the eve of the Parliamentary debate, the BJP targeted Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. "He (Gandhi) constantly repeats Pakistan's wornout narrative that India was isolated globally," BJP's IT department head Amit Malviya said in a post on X.

No safe haven for terrorists: Modi

Agencies

GANGAIKONDA CHOLAPURAM

PM Modi on Sunday declared that Operation Sindoor had sent a clear and powerful message to the world about how India would respond if its sovereignty was challenged. Speaking at an event held to honour the legacy of Tamil emperor Rajendra Chola I, he said the cross-border military offensive had instilled a "new self-confidence" across the nation.

"Operation Sindoor has proved that for enemies and terrorists targeting India, there is no safe haven," Modi said.

▶ **Contd on** | nation
▶ **See also** | nation

TCS to cut over 12,000 jobs

Agencies
BENGALURU

India's largest IT services provider Tata Consultancy Services will reduce its workforce by 2% in its 2026 financial year, primarily affecting middle and senior management, the company said on Sunday. The move will eliminate roughly 12,200 jobs from the company's work-

The decision comes as India's largest IT services provider deploys AI and other technologies while entering new markets

force of more than 613,000 as TCS deploys AI and other technologies while entering new markets and contending with an uncertain demand outlook. "This transition is being

planned with due care to ensure there is no impact on service delivery to our clients," the company's statement said.

▶ **Contd on** | nation

MARUTI SUZUKI

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BRAZEN IDENTITY | After verification by the respective district collectors, those found eligible will have their benefits resumed; 2.25 cr women received honorarium in June

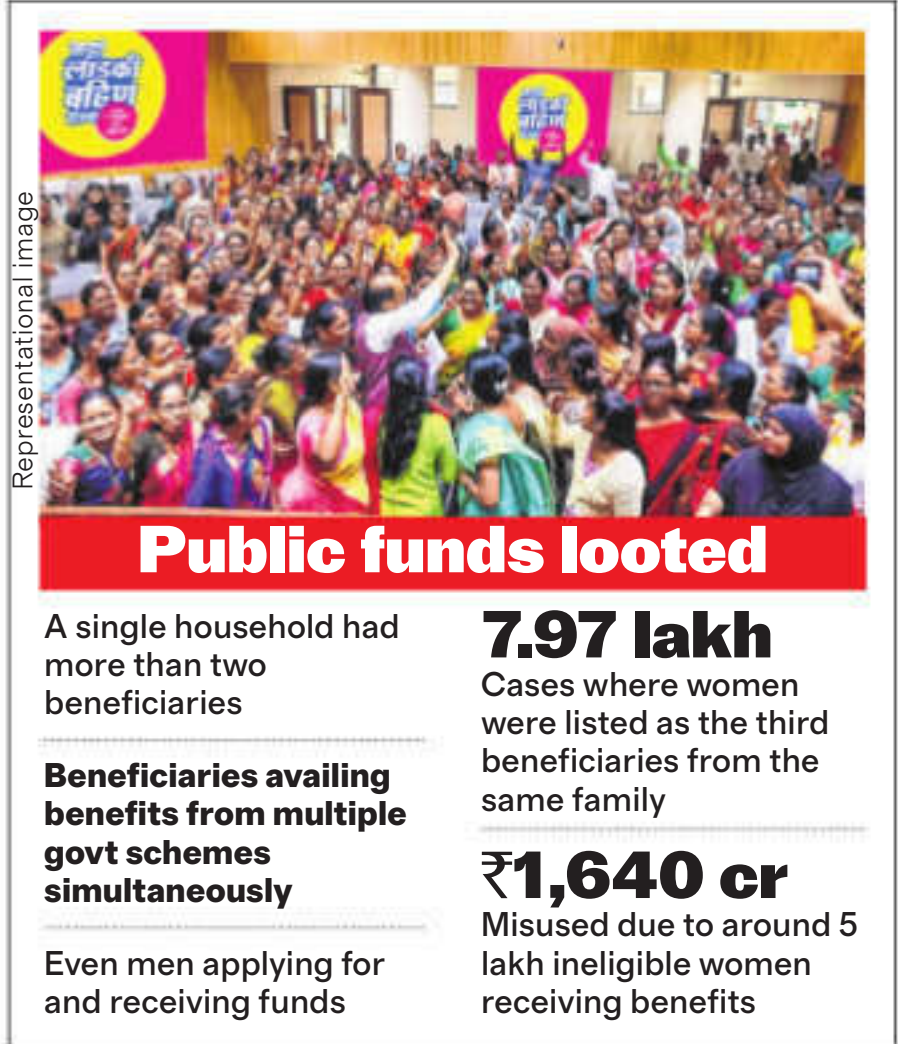
State flags discrepancies, holds Ladki aid to 26 lakh

Kalpesh Mhamunkar
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government has officially released figures on both eligible and ineligible beneficiaries under the 'Ladki Bahin' scheme for the month of June. While nearly 2.25 crore eligible women received their honorarium of Rs1,500 under the scheme, payments to 26.34 lakh beneficiaries were temporarily suspended due to discrepancies.

The women and child development minister Aditi Tatkare posted on Social media site 'X' that her department found several irregularities during verification. These included instances where a single household had more than two beneficiaries, beneficiaries availing benefits from multiple government schemes simultaneously, and shockingly, even men applying for and receiving funds meant exclusively for women.

The information technology department flagged these issues and reported that 26.34 lakh beneficiaries appeared to be ineligible. Consequently, starting June 2025, their benefits have been halted pending further verification by the



respective district collectors. Those found eligible after detailed scrutiny will have their benefits resumed.

In a shocking revelation on Saturday, an audit by the Income Tax Department identified 14,298 men who had fraudulently enrolled in the scheme by misrepresenting their identity. Collectively,

they siphoned off Rs21.44 crore over a period of ten months. Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar emphasised that strict action would be taken and the amount recovered from these ineligible male beneficiaries.

The Ladki Bahin scheme, which provides monthly financial support to women

aged 21-65 from low-income households, played a key role in the Mahayuti alliance's political campaign and electoral success. However, it has also come under fire due to its mounting financial burden on the state.

Currently, the state is disbursing Rs3,700 crore to support 2.41 crore women under the scheme. The department's review found that over the past year, Rs1,640 crore was potentially misused due to around 5 lakh ineligible women receiving benefits. These included women from families owning four-wheelers and others who exceeded the eligible age limit. Additionally, around 7.97 lakh cases were found where women were listed as third beneficiaries from the same family, leading to an added expenditure of Rs1,196 crore.

Pawar reiterated that the government is committed to preventing fraud in welfare schemes. He added that discussions will be held with Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Deputy CM Eknath Shinde to decide on further legal or administrative actions against those who wrongfully availed benefits.

After Sena-BJP tiff, CM urges to avoid turf war

Mumbai: Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Sunday asked his ministers to refrain from a "letter war" and approach him in case of any difficulties.

His remarks came after social justice minister Sanjay Shirsat of the Shiv Sena objecting to minister of state Madhuri Misal of BJP holding a meeting with department officials without informing him.

"Nobody should create this letter war. Ministers should speak among themselves. If they have some difficulties, they should come and tell me,

so that we can resolve them," Fadnavis told reporters in Nagpur.

"After all, the (cabinet) minister and minister of state are part of the same government. All the powers are with the minister. Whatever powers the minister gives to ministers of state are the latter's powers. There is no confusion over this," he said.

"However, it is wrong to assume that the minister of state does not have the power to hold meetings. But if there are policy decisions taken in the meetings, such decisions cannot be taken without con-



sulting the (cabinet) minister. And if they are still taken, they have to be ratified by the minister," Fadnavis said.

Shirsat and Misal are locked in a turf war. After a departmental meeting held by Misal, Shirsat wrote to her, saying she had no authority to either con-

Ministers should speak among themselves. If they have some difficulties, they should come and tell me, so that we can resolve them
—Devendra Fadnavis
Chief Minister

vene the meeting or give directives to the department.

Misal wrote back, saying she was well within her rights.

Misal also sought a clarification from the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) on the powers conferred on her as a junior minister.

Shinde backs Kadam amid bar allegations

Kalpesh Mhamunkar
MUMBAI

Shiv Sena chief and Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has come out strongly in support of minister of state Yogesh Kadam, who has been under political fire over alleged links to a dance bar in Kandivali and illegal sand mining in Dapoli constituency. Shinde condemned the allegations and assured Kadam of full backing from the party.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of the renovated Minatai Thackeray Cultural Centre in Khed taluka, Shinde said, "Yogesh has no need to worry about these accusations. Shiv Sena and I are firmly with him. He is a dedicated worker, and making baseless allegations or demanding resignation is absolutely wrong."

Shinde further added, "Those who themselves are

TMC curbs transport in Yeoor Hills

Thane: The Thane Municipal Corporation (TMC) has issued directives prohibiting the transportation of construction material at the Yeoor Hills, an environmentally sensitive zone here, officials said on Sunday.

The directives were issued after a review meeting chaired by municipal commissioner Saurabh Rao on Friday, they said.

"Yeoor is an environmentally sensitive area. No construction material can be brought into Yeoor without a construction permit issued by the Thane Municipal Corporation's Urban Development Department," an official release said.

Individuals with authorised construction permissions must mandatorily register their details with the forest department's entrance post, including the permit copy, the type of construction material, and information about the transporting vehicles, it said.

During the meeting, Deputy Commissioner Dinesh Tayde informed that out of the 10 turf constructions in Yeoor, eight have already been evicted.

One turf was authorised, and eviction proceedings for the remaining were underway as the deadline expired. A survey of unauthorized commercial constructions was underway, the official said. —PTI

In his letter to Misal, Shirsat said she needed his permission before holding meetings in his department. He also alleged that she was overstepping by giving directions to officers in the department. Shirsat added that all the meetings must be convened by him.

An unfazed Misal responded, saying that as minister of state, she was well within her rights to convene meetings. She said she had not given any directions in the meeting, but added that she could have issued an order if a matter brought before her called for one. —PTI

The accused were remanded in police custody till July 29 by a local court; Khadse calls for a thorough probe

Pune drug party raided; Khadse's son-in-law among seven detained

FPJ News Service
PUNE

Pune Police arrested seven persons after busting a 'drug party' following a raid at an apartment in the upscale Kharadi area early on Sunday and seized narcotics, hookah set ups and liquor, officials said. Among those arrested was **Pranjal Khewalkar (third from left)**, the husband of former Maharashtra minister and NCP (SP) Eknath Khadse's daughter Rohini Khadse. Rohini Khadse currently serves as the state president of the women's wing of the opposition NCP (SP).

The accused were remanded in police custody till July 29 by a local court.

The raid, carried out by the Crime Branch around 3:30am, was based on a tip-off about a rave party, said Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime) Nikhil Pingle at a press conference.

While seeking custody of the accused, the prosecution told the court narcotic substances like cocaine and ganja were seized in the raid.

Custody of the accused was needed to find out the source



and supply details of the contraband, the prosecution said. It also told the court two of the seven persons held have prior criminal records.

The prosecution further said the accused had booked three rooms in the said apartment through a hospitality firm for the period between July 25 and July 27 and police needs to inquire about this.

Reacting to the incident, Eknath Khadse called for a thorough investigation, suggesting that a political motive behind the police action could not be ruled out.

During the raid and subsequent search, police seized 2.7gm of a cocaine-like substance, 70gm of a ganja-like

substance, a hookah pot, various hookah flavours and liquor and beer bottles, he said.

"We have arrested seven individuals, identified as Pranjal Khewalkar, Nikhil Poptani, Sameer Sayyad, Shripad Yadav, Sachin Bhombe, Isha Singh and Prachi Sharma, under relevant sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act," he said.

All the accused were sent for medical examination and their reports are awaited, the official said.

Shiv Sena (UBT) deputy leader Sushma Andhare said the raid is a message for those speaking against the government. **(Inputs from PTI)**



Devotees carry 'Parel Cha Vighnaharta' from a workshop in Parel —Vijay Gohil

BMC appoints agency for eco-friendly Ganeshotsav

Devashri Bhujbal
MUMBAI

With just a month remaining for the state festival Ganeshotsav, the authorities are busy taking steps towards environment-friendly celebrations. For Mumbai, the BMC for the first time has appointed an agency dedicated for public awareness on eco-friendly Ganpati celebrations.

"The agency will focus on soft publications, like social media posts, appointment ambassadors, newspaper ads and other sources of media only for encouragement on celebrating festivals in an environment-friendly way as much as possible. It will work for upcoming Ganpati festival, Navratri and Maghi Ganesh festival as well," an official from BMC PR department said.

The Bombay High court

last week ruled that manufacture and sale of Plaster of Paris (POP) is allowed, however, immersion of idols below six feet has to be only in artificial ponds installed by the civic bodies. POP idols above six feet can be immersed in the natural water bodies (sea, rivers and lakes). The state government said that the remains of the POP idols will be retrieved from the sea the very next day and a committee will ensure scientific disposal of the materials.

Accordingly, to ensure scientific disposal of the remains of the POP Ganpati idols, the environment department of the BMC had floated tenders to appoint a consultant to guide on environment-friendly immersion, however, failed to get any response. "Following, this the solid waste management (SWM)

department will continue to retrieve, transport and dispose off the materials the next day of the visarjan and will also appoint a consultant for guidance," an official from the department said.

Activist Rohit Joshi, who had filed the PIL to ban the usage of POP idols, said, "The government has not clarified how it will ensure scientific disposal of POP idols as well as water from the artificial ponds. There are no answers on surveillance and accountability."

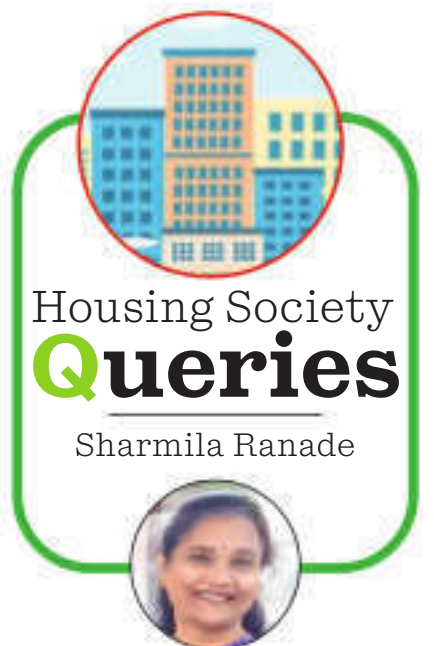
However, the Ganpati mandals have welcomed the move by authorities. "This is the step towards environment-friendly celebrations. It will take time but we welcomed that the BMC has started taking it seriously," said Naresh Dahibhakar, president of Brihanmumbai Sarvajnik Ganpati mandal Samiti.

‘Apex society can impose 10% NOC for no occupancy’

One of our society members gifted his flat to his youngest son, who unfortunately passed away within a month of the transfer. The managing committee then transferred the flat to the son's wife based on her application. Now, the father claims he had inserted a clause in his will requiring the son to pay Rs25 lakh each to his brother and sister. However, no such clause exists in the registered gift deed. The father has informed us that he is moving court to revoke the gift. What should be our stand as the managing committee?

P K Rane, Kandivali

The society acted correctly in transferring the flat to the son based on a registered gift deed. A will only takes effect upon the death of the testator and has no legal standing while the person is alive. Therefore, any clause in the father's will related to the son paying his siblings has no bearing on the gift deed. However, upon the son's death, the flat should have ideally been transferred to his legal heirs. In this case, the society transferred the flat to the son's wife without any nomination in her favour or documentation such as a succession certificate or probate, as required under Section 154B-24 of the Maharashtra Cooperative Societies (MCS) Act. This transfer may need justification if challenged. In the event of litigation, the society must await and comply with the court's final order. The father's chances of revoking



a legally executed gift deed on such grounds may be slim.

We are a 32-member society forming part of a larger complex with 33 buildings, each having its own managing committee. The apex society handles broader services like roads, gardens, and security. Each flat pays a monthly share toward these services. Our society also levies a 10% non-occupancy charge (NOC) on our own service charges. Can we also levy NOC on the apex society's charges?

Manisha Arora, Ghatkopar

Bye-law 66 of the model bye-laws outlines the components of service charges, which include contributions toward the apex society or housing federation. Your society collects these on behalf of the apex body. If a member does not occupy their flat, the society can charge 10% NOC on its own service charges. However, applying this 10% on apex society charges would only be valid if the apex society's general body specifically decides and

documents that such a levy is permitted. In absence of such a resolution, your society should restrict the NOC levy to your own service charges.

Our building is undergoing redevelopment. I have agreed to purchase an additional area from the developer. He is now asking for 30% of the cost at the time of signing the Permanent Alternate Accommodation Agreement (PAAA). Is this permissible?

Saurabh Singh, Sion

In redevelopment projects, the developer typically allows members to purchase up to 10% additional area over their entitlement. The terms of payment should be laid out in the society-approved redevelopment proposal. If you're buying more than the approved limit, it becomes a separate negotiation between you and the developer. Importantly, under RERA regulations, the developer cannot demand more than 10% of the agreement value before executing and registering the agreement. So, a 30% advance at the time of PAAA signing would be legally incorrect unless the agreement is being registered simultaneously. To protect your interests, ensure all payments and terms are clearly recorded in a registered agreement.

The questions are answered by Sharmila Ranade, a legal expert associated with Mumbai Grahak Panchayat. The questions, in brief, may be sent to fpjchs@gmail.com

Kalpesh Mhamunkar
MUMBAI

Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) chief Raj Thackeray made a surprise visit to Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray's residence Matoshree on Sunday to wish him on his 65th birthday. The visit, which was not anticipated by even close aides of Uddhav Thackeray, has revived speculation about a possible alliance between the two estranged Thackeray cousins.

Sources revealed that the decision to visit Matoshree was taken by Raj on Sunday morning itself. Raj contacted Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut to inform him of his intention to



Thousands of Shiv Sainiks gathered at Matoshree on Sunday to greet Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray on his birthday —Vijay Gohil

personally wish Uddhav. Raut promptly relayed the message to Uddhav, who prepared to receive his cousin.

REDVPT ROW | Contentious project involves 28,156.32 sq m, including 7,724.61 sq m drying space; dhobis lay claim to latter

Inspect disputed Dhobi Ghat area, orders HC

Urvi Mahajani
MUMBAI

In a dispute involving the historic Dhobi Ghat in south Mumbai and a slum redevelopment project, the Bombay High Court has directed to conduct a joint inspection, along with the petitioners and the respondents, of the temporary site allocated to dhobis or washermen for drying clothes.

The disputed development project, located on land belonging to the proposed Shree Saibaba Nagar SRA CHS, involves an area of 28,156.32 sq m; of which 7,724.61 sq m is the non-slum portion historically reserved for drying clothes – which is now the point of contention. As per the petition, the land has been used by washermen and rassi (rope) holders since the 19th century.

A bench of Justices Girish Kulkarni and Arif Doctor, on July 21, observed that complete and correct information must be placed before the court before proceeding further in the case. “We accordingly request the learned prothonotary and senior master of this court to appoint a court officer, who



IN BRIEF

- 1 The SRA and developer amalgamated the drying space into the project area without consent of dhobis, allege petitioners
- 2 They claim of 730 dhobis, only 264 of them have given consent
- 3 Rest of the names presented by developer were either forged or fictitious, assert petitioners
- 4 Dhobis and rassi (rope) holders using land since the 19th century, they argue

shall conduct a joint inspection of the temporary site made available to the petitioners,” the bench said. The officer has been asked to assess the hygiene, suitability and functionality of the temporary site for drying clothes and to submit a report by the next hearing on August 4.

The petition, filed by washermen Anil Kanojia and Lalji Kanojia, has sought directions against the Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) and developer Resonant Realtors Projects Pvt Ltd (formerly Omkar Realtors) for allegedly amalgamating 7,724.61 sq m of land reserved for drying clothes into a slum redevelopment scheme without proper consent.

They have alleged that the developer merged the reserved drying area, historically used by 730 dhobis, into a larger SRA project without demarcating equivalent open land for them, as required. Of 730 dhobis, only 264 of them have given consent, while the rest of the names presented by the developer were either forged or fictitious, the plea alleged.

The petitioners, who are tenants of the BMC and possess licences to use the space, contended that the reserved land cannot be developed under Development Control Regulations 33(10), a provision meant for slum redevelopment, as it is neither a slum area nor unoccupied.

They have sought several reliefs, including exclusion of the drying area from the developer’s letter of intent, demarcation of equivalent open land adjacent to the stone platforms used for washing and compensation for temporary alternate accommodation. The dhobis have also requested the court to restrain the developer from evicting them from the interim premises until the matter is decided.



Climax for Naaz cinema, not yet?

The Naaz cinema building at Lamington Road was the centre of Bollywood once upon a time. Several film financiers, exhibitors and producers had their offices in the multi-storied building next to Imperial and Super cinemas. Crores of rupees changed hands in a secure environment.

Over the years, producers like BR Chopra, Yash Chopra, etc opened offices in Juhu and other western suburbs to be closer to their bungalows. The Covid led to the shutdown of the Naaz building, among others. Even after the virus exited, film folks never reopened their Naaz offices.

Noted film critic Amod Mehra, who is known for calling a spade a spade and his huge integrity, has now appealed to them to come back to Naaz, which was where hundreds of hit and not-so-hit films were incubated. Mehra still enjoys enormous respect in the industry and I won’t be surprised if Naaz is abuzz again.



Throwing caution to the wind

In the police’s absence, visitors seen entering sea near Girgaon Chowpatty during high tides –Vijay Gohil

Where love was once in the air

Talking of Naaz, there is another Naaz which was famous in the not so distant past. I am talking of Cafe Naaz perched atop Malabar Hill among the rain trees. It was an open air cafe hugely popular with cootchiecooing couples. You could hug and kiss your girl bindass without anyone batting an eyelid.

There was nothing great about the food which comprised samosas, sandwiches, ice cream sodas and chai. However, the USP was

the sweeping view of the Arabian Sea underneath and, of course, the privacy. You could sit for hours holding the hands of your beau without the waiter asking you to ‘khali karo’ the table.

Long ago the place shut down for no particular reason. The breaking news, courtesy my colleague, Devashri, is that the BMC has invited bids for running a restaurant where once Cafe Naaz stood like a sentinel witnessing hearts bloom.

A new sweet spot

Most unobtrusively, a chain of shops retailing good quality sweets and far-san have entered Mumbai’s foodscape. I am talking about ‘Aavarya’ which has 13 air-conditioned outlets across the city and suburbs. The range and quality is consistently amazing, the prices wallet-friendly and the service quite efficient.

You have plain dhoklas, tiranga dhoklas, cheese dhoklas, idadas, khandvis, jalebis, fadas, moong chaklis, chorafali khakras, mobile masala khakras, pedas, rasmalais, Kolhapuri chivdas, etc. They are all made at a central kitchen at Mahape and transported fresh to the outlets. The secret of success is stringent quality control at every stage. Check out!

TAILPIECE

Why did the tomato blush? Well, it saw the salad dressing!
(Compiled by S Balakrishnan)

Builder duo booked for encroaching upon govt land

Directors Sameer Nagda, Darshan Dhami and project manager Ashish, among other staff, named in FIR

Avadhut Kharade
MUMBAI

The Pant Nagar police have booked two directors and employees of Aryaman Developers for allegedly encroaching upon over 5,000 sq m of government land in Ghatkopar East, which is a part of a state-approved slum redevelopment and infrastructure project. Notably, the firm is carrying out a separate SRA project near the said plot.

Directors Sameer Nagda and Darshan Dhami, and project manager Ashish, among other staffers have been named in the FIR. They have been charged for unauthorised construction on land earmarked for the Ramabai Ambekar Nagar and Kamaraj Nagar redevelopment projects, and the proposed Eastern Express Highway-Thane connector project.

The complaint was lodged by Dattatraya Patil, 57, an executive engineer at the Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA). He said that a redevelopment plan span-

CASE DETAILS

Aryaman Developers allegedly encroached upon over 5,000 sq m of government land in Ghatkopar East

The plot is a part of a state-approved slum redevelopment and infrastructure project

Notably, the firm is carrying out a separate SRA project near the said plot

ning approximately 80 acres, including the aforementioned land, was officially approved on September 21, 2023.

A joint partnership agreement between the SRA and MMRDA was signed on February 27, 2024, outlining the development of survey numbers 194B (part), 194A (part) and 195 (part), which includes relocation and compensation for over 16,400 slum dwellers.

In the first phase, 4,053 structures were cleared and Rs137 crore in rental compensation was disbursed. The

vacated land was then fenced and reserved for future development under MMRDA’s supervision. Patil, serving as the nodal officer for both MMRDA and SRA, was overseeing this process.

Adjacent to this government land, Aryaman Developers is carrying out a SRA project for the rehabilitation of slum residents under the Sant Namdev CHS. The developer allegedly encroached upon a parallel stretch (survey no 194B), where SRA had already completed evictions.

On July 26, SRA assistant engineer Amol Salunkhe informed Patil that the accused, accompanied by 150 workers, 30 bouncers and four JCB machines, were erecting a compound wall, which encroached upon the said land. Patil said that he conducted a field inspection and that he found the allegation to be true.

A case has been filed under relevant sections of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the Maharashtra Regional and Town Planning Act and the Maharashtra Police Act.

Bizman Lakdawala accuses nephew of trespass, assault



Megha Kuchik
MUMBAI

The Mahabaleshwar police have booked Azan Anis Jethwa, nephew of businessman Feroz Yusuf Lakdawala, 48, for allegedly trespassing into Lakdawala’s Mahabaleshwar bungalow and assaulting the caretaker.

Lakdawala, owner of Empire Audio Center Pvt Ltd and several cinema halls and film studios in Mumbai, alleged that Jethwa, his sister Reshma Bilal Sheikh’s son, forcibly entered his property ‘Meghan’ on July 23. Spread across one acre in Belmont Society, the bungalow has been under the care of Sher Bahadur Kikataru for over 23 years.

According to the FIR, Lakdawala was at his Bandra

residence on July 23 when he received a call from his 23-year-old son around 9pm, informing him that Jethwa had broken into the bungalow. When Sher Bahadur confronted Jethwa, the latter reportedly claimed the property belonged to his mother and then allegedly assaulted the caretaker, issued death threats and vandalised the interior—smashing a cupboard and scattering belongings.

Speaking to The Free Press Journal, Lakdawala said, “Jethwa damaged several household items, broke open my cupboard where I kept watches, clothes, speakers and other valuables. He left the place in shambles. I want strict action taken and intend to teach him a lesson.” Efforts to contact Jethwa were unsuccessful.

Rising sex assault on children: Why pedophiles are undeterred

Megha Kuchik
MUMBAI

VOICES OF CONCERN

● Law is robust and child-friendly on paper, but most systems are not. Also, the elite in India can get away more easily with anything, isn’t it?
Uma Subramanian, activist

● Sometimes, gender bias also comes into play. At times, if the victim is a boy, it’s thought what could have happened to him? Such response from adults results in lifelong trauma.
Lisha Chedda, psychologist

In a worrying trend, the city is seeing a rise in the cases of sexual assault on minors or students by teachers, which portend a serious social ill.

The details of the offences filed recently are horrifying: A private tutor, 44, from Malad allegedly repeatedly sexually abused a seven-year-old girl, who was his student, since August 2024. The abhorrent crime came to fore after the parents noticed behavioural changes in their daughter.

On June 25, a 50-year-old teacher from a reputed coaching class in Bhayandar was nabbed for allegedly repeatedly exploiting a 17-year-old BA student. On July 3, a 40-year-old female teacher from a prestigious Mahim school was arrested for allegedly sexually abusing her 16-year-old student for several months at various places, including luxury hotels.

On July 9, a karate instructor, 22, was arrested for sexually abusing a 12-year-old girl. In November 2024, Amit Dubey, 50, a school teacher from Nalasopara was accused of raping a 14-year-old student.

Uma Subramanian, co-founder and director RATI Foundation and child’s rights

activist, said that the cases are not increasing, instead they are now coming to light more frequently. “Schools often scrutinise peons, drivers and caretakers for character verification, but fail to check the backgrounds of teachers. This reflects a class and caste bias,” she underlined.

Highlighting the usual practice of institutes trying to suppress such matters, which bring infamy, Subramanian said, “While every school has a child protection policy, most parents remain unaware of it.”

Pointing to the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, which is meant

for the protection of kids, she added, “Many cases go unreported because the legal process is traumatic. Filing an FIR takes up to 10 hours, medical examinations could span over days and frequent police station visits are required.”

Delving deeper into the mindset of pedophiles, psychologist Lisha Chedda explained the concept of grooming. “What happens is that they (abusers) spend time with the child, gain trust, build rapport and then abuse them. Two things severely impact the child mentally – their trust is broken and they are left terrified.”

Chedda continued, “First of all, no one immediately believes the child. People keep questioning why the child didn’t scream or run away. However, studies show that most child victims freeze as they are extremely scared,” said Chedda.

In a similar vein, Advocate Persis Sidhva argued that parents need to be aware of the POCSO Act. “The courts generally take these cases seriously. The Act mandates strict punishments, especially when teachers are the accused.” In most cases, schools either lack commitment or frequently side with the accused to protect the institution’s reputation, Sidhva added.

‘DRUG MAFIA’ ABDUCTION CASE

Notorious criminal among 2 more held

Poonam Apraj
MUMBAI

In another breakthrough in the abduction case of alleged drug trafficker Sajid Electricwala, the crime branch unit 5 has arrested two key suspects, Deepak Nandkishor Sharma and Nitin Rokde, taking the count of arrested accused to 12. Sharma, 32, was nabbed from Vadodara while Rokde was caught from Panvel.

According to the official sources, Sharma, a history-sheeter, had met ‘conspirator’ Sarwar Khan in Thane jail. The former was entrusted with hiding the pistol used during the abduction. The weapon, a loaded five-round pistol, was used by Khan to threaten Electricwala. Khan is said to be a close aide of Anwar Babu Sheikh, the brother of fugitive underworld figure Chhota Shakeel.

Sharma allegedly transported and concealed the firearm – which has been

‘Abductor’ of drug mafia linked to D-company

Poonam Apraj
MUMBAI

Probing the abduction of Electricwala and his associate Shabbir Siddiqui, the crime branch has found that Sarwar Khan, 43, who is said to be the key mastermind, has deep connections with the Dawoodi Bohra gang. He is also said to be a close associate of Anwar Babu Sheikh, the younger brother of fugitive gangster Chhota Shakeel. Khan’s aide Bahadur Kikataru has also cases in his

recovered – in Gujarat. Further probe revealed that he and Rokde had stayed at a farmhouse in Neral, where Electricwala was held. After changing locations, the pistol was handed over to Sharma for safekeeping.

Booked in nine cases spanning several states, he, like Khan, came into contact with Electricwala in Thane jail.

According to the officials, Khan had given Rs50 lakh to Electricwala after their release from jail, instructing him to establish a drug manufacturing unit. When he failed to deliver, Khan allegedly orchestrated the abduction to recover the funds.

2025

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62-yr-old man loses ₹2cr in trading scam

Somendra Sharma

MUMBAI

A 63-year-old Thane resident lost over ₹2 crore in an elaborate online share trading fraud. The retired man was lured into the scam via a WhatsApp link on April 9, leading him to a group discussing stock investments. Convinced by fake profit testimonials, he downloaded a bogus trading app and made 21 online transactions totaling Rs2.02 crore between April 9 and May 19. The fraudsters meticulously built trust, showcasing fabricated successes to ensnare the unsuspecting victim. Though the app displayed fabricated earnings, withdrawal requests were denied. When he attempted to retrieve his funds, scammers demanded a 10% "short-term capital gain tax." Subsequently, they ceased all communication. Realizing he was defrauded, the victim reported the incident to Thane police, who have registered a case under the IT Act, including sections 66C and 66D. Further investigations are ongoing.

Senior citizens lose ₹83 lakh in fraud

Somendra Sharma

MUMBAI

Police are searching for a 51-year-old man accused of orchestrating a fraudulent investment scheme, swindling investors out of Rs83 lakh by promising 24% annual returns. A 72-year-old Airoli resident, the complainant, was introduced to the fraudster through a friend. The accused claimed to run an investment company in Naupada, Thane, offering 30% returns. Initially, the complainant and his acquaintances received principal and interest, validating the scheme in his eyes. He and his family then invested Rs73 lakh from 2023 to March 2024. However, upon maturity, the company cited insufficient funds. Post-dated cheques bounced, and the complainant discovered other investors were also unpaid. Another friend lost Rs10 lakh. Realising the deception, the complainant filed a police report. A case has been registered under sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and other relevant laws.

SCAN AND STRIDE | QR code will help combat counterfeiting, verify artisan identity, and enhance consumer trust

Kolhapuri chappals get QR code for authenticity

Kolhapur: From the dusty workshops of Kolhapur to the glitzy runways of the world, the Kolhapuri chappal is stealing the show. The GI-tagged handmade leather sandals, known for their intricate craftsmanship, now feature QR codes to combat counterfeiting, highlight artisan identity, and boost consumer trust, according to the Leather Industries Development Corporation of Maharashtra (LIDCOM).

Recently, artisans raised concerns when Italian luxury brand Prada showcased footwear resembling Kolhapuri chappals in its men's 2026 fashion show, alleging a violation of GI rights. Prada acknowledged the sandals were "inspired" by Indian handcrafted footwear but clarified they are still in the design stage and not confirmed for commercial production. A team from Prada



visited Kolhapur earlier this month to engage with artisans and study the local manufacturing process.

Dating back to the 12th century, Kolhapuri chappals have been crafted primarily in Maharashtra's Kolhapur, Sangli, and Solapur districts. Made from naturally tanned leather with handwoven

straps, their distinctive design has been preserved through generations. In the early 20th century, Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj promoted the chappal as a symbol of self-reliance and Swadeshi pride, elevating it from a humble village slipper to a respected cottage industry.

In 2019, the Maharashtra

and Karnataka governments jointly secured a GI tag, reserving manufacturing and marketing rights for artisans in designated districts under international trade rules like the TRIPS agreement. The certification mandates hand-made production using traditional techniques and natural leather, prohibiting synthetic materials or mechanized processes. LIDCOM's QR-coded certification provides buyers with details such as the artisan's name, production location, craft techniques, raw materials, and GI certification status. "This initiative boosts consumer trust and strengthens the market position of traditional craftsmen," said LIDCOM Managing Director Prerna Deshbhatar.

"Kolhapuri chappals are not just fashion accessories—they embody traditional skill, identity, and the dignity of artisan communities." — Prerna Deshbhatar

—PTI

Three fishermen missing after boat capsizes off Alibag coast

Raina Assainar

NAVI MUMBAI

A fishing boat with eight fishermen from Karanja in Uran capsized near Khandaeri Fort off the Alibag coast on Saturday morning. While five fishermen managed to swim to safety and were later hospitalised with minor injuries, three remain missing, prompting an extensive search operation by local authorities.

The boat, named Tuljai and owned by Manohar Ganpat Koli of Uran-Karanja, had ventured into the sea illegally for fishing, despite the monsoon ban imposed by the Fisheries Department until August 31, said a police officer from Uran police station. It departed from Karanja port at around 7 am. By approximately 8.30 am, it capsized due to rough sea conditions and strong waves between the Korlai and Khandaeri forts.

Following the incident, the Fisheries Department and police were informed, and search operations were



immediately launched. The rescued fishermen were identified as Hemant Baliram Gawand (45) from Avare, Uran; Sandeep Tukaram Koli, 38, and Roshan Bhagwan Koli, 39, both from Karanja, Uran; Shankar Hira Bhoir, 64, and Krishna Ram Bhoir, 55, both from Apata, Panvel. All five were brought ashore and admitted to Alibag Civil Hospital for treatment.

The missing individuals have been identified as Naresh Ram Shelar, Dheeraj Koli from Kasavala Pada in Uran, and Mukesh Yashwant Patil.

Search and rescue efforts are ongoing, with the Raigad

police deploying drones to locate the missing fishermen along the coastline. "The three men who went missing were in the cabin of the boat at the time of capsizing. After the five men swam to safety, the locals alerted and that is how we came to know of the incident. The incident happened around more than six nautical miles from the shore," assistant police inspector Somnath Lande from Mandwa police station said.

In another incident, a 22-year-old worker from Uttar Pradesh drowned after a fishing boat carrying 10 fishermen overturned near Mora Jetty on Saturday night.

2 more held by CBI in ₹3.81cr cyber crime case

Somendra Sharma

MUMBAI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested two more persons for their alleged involvement in a cybercrime wherein an amount of Rs. 3.81 crore was received in a mule account in a single day, agency officials informed on Sunday.

Those arrested have been identified as mule account holder Sudhir Palande and middleman Yash Thakur. Earlier on July 13, CBI arrested one Shaurya Singh from Nagpur.

The CBI Mumbai, acting on specific source information and after verification, registered a case against a mule account holder, unknown cyber fraudsters, unknown bank officials and unknown others for committing a cybercrime and receiving Rs. 3.81 crore in the said mule account in a single day on July 2 from various cyber victims.

"After receiving credits in the said account, the money was further transferred to more than hundred mule accounts opened pan-India. The money from cyber fraud was further transferred to thousands of accounts before reaching actual cyber fraudsters," said a CBI official.

During the investigation, CBI unearthed the entire conspiracy of opening of said mule accounts by the bankers and the middlemen without proper KYC norms or customer due diligence or initial risk assessment. The guidelines issued vide the RBI Master circular and certain internal guidelines issued by the bank were violated.

During the searches, the CBI seized several incriminating documents and digital evidence, mobile phones, iPad, bank account opening documents, transaction details, KYC documents, etc.

Nikunj Jhaveri, founder and chairman, Systems Plus Group of Companies, shares, "Kshamata's work has been truly transformative, bringing significant change not only in the lives of survivors of gender-based violence but also in those of women at risk. Over the years, I have witnessed several rescued women go through remarkable journeys—from healing and self-acceptance to rebuilding their lives and ultimately achieving independence. Their livelihoods have empowered not just themselves, but also those around them, creating a ripple effect across their communities."

The NGO aims to break the cycle of exploitation and enable adolescent girls and women any other programme—be it skill-building or employment—can have real impact. Economic empowerment is the next step, which forms the core of its reintegration strategy. "It becomes the anchor around which a new life is built," she said. But economic independence is not as simple as securing a job. Many women need to be prepared for the world of work, starting with basic literacy, financial and digital skills, and vocational training. "Kshamata supports women in exploring their own aspirations—whether that means formal employment, micro-enterprises, or home-based self-employment—and helps them choose a path that suits their goals," she added.

The final pillar is social reintegration—helping women reclaim their place in society with confidence and dignity. "Many survivors of violence feel stigmatised, isolated, and fearful of judgment," shared Tahiliani. Without a sense of belonging, they risk falling back into cycles of vulnerability and re-exploitation. The NGO addresses this by building independent living skills:

Mom arrested for killing 3 daughters due to fin woes

NK Gupta

THANE

In connection with the death of three minor girls due to suspected food poisoning in Shahapur, police have arrested their mother, Sandhya Sandeep Bhare. She was taken into custody late Saturday night and produced in Shahapur court on Sunday, which remanded her to police custody for five days.

The accused has been identified as Sandhya Sandeep Bhare, a resident of Shahapur in Thane district. She lived with her husband, Sandeep Bhare, and their three daughters — Kavya, 10, Divya, 8, and Gargi, 5. Sandhya had been married to Sandeep for the past ten years. However, due to marital disputes, including allegations of alcohol abuse, she separated from him in 2023 and moved with the children to her maternal home in Talepada, Asnoli village, Shahapur. They had not legally divorced.

According to police officials, relatives grew suspicious

IN BRIEF

1 The deceased girls are Kavya, 10, Divya, 8, & Gargi 5

2 She allegedly mixed an antiseptic liquid (poison) into rice and pulses during lunch on July 20.

3 An FIR has now been filed under Section 103(1) of the BNS following her confession

about Sandhya's involvement in the deaths and alerted the authorities. A team led by Nitin Khairnar, Police Inspector, Woman Inspector Mohini Kapile, and PSI Rameshwar Talekar reached the village to question her. During interrogation, Sandhya allegedly confessed to poisoning her daughters, citing extreme frustration in life and financial hardship. She said she was struggling to bear the expenses of raising three children alone.

Police said that on July 20, she allegedly mixed an antiseptic liquid (a form of poison) into rice and pulses during lunch. Initially, a case of accidental death was registered, but following her confession, an FIR was filed under Section 103(1) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

Sandhya worked at a logistics company in Shahapur, earning around Rs12,000 per month. Her husband, Sandeep Bhare, is an autorickshaw driver.

The police said that the viscera samples of the deceased have been preserved and will be sent to a forensic lab to identify the specific poison used.

Following the meal on July 20, the children began vomiting and were rushed to the Shahapur Primary Health Centre. One of the girls, in critical condition, was referred to SMBT Hospital in Ghoti, Nashik, while the other two were sent to Nair Hospital in Mumbai. Tragically, Kavya and Gargi died on July 24, and Divya succumbed on Friday.



Iconic fountain
Workers giving final touches to the coconut-shaped water fountain installation at Bandra Bandstand as part of the beautification project – Vijay Gohil

Wife commits suicide, man, mother booked for abetment

Megha Kuchik

MUMBAI

The Samta Nagar police booked Babu Katre, 48, sub-registrar of the MHADA, and his mother for allegedly abetting suicide. Babu Katre's wife, Renu Katre, 44, allegedly died by suicide by hanging herself at their house in Kandivali East on July 26. The next day, the police registered a case based on a complaint filed by Renu Katre's brother.

According to the FIR, Renu Katre married Babu Katre in 2003, and the couple had two teenage sons. Renu was living with his family at Lokhandwala, Kandivali East. After the marriage, her mother-in-law, Vilam alias Yamabai Katre, allegedly harassed her mentally and made her do excessive household work. Renu had informed her father, who lives in Sangli. Following this, her father gave her eight tolas of gold bangles.

Her husband frequently harassed her both mentally and physically and allegedly pressured her to bring money from her parents. Her father

When her father was diagnosed with cancer, Babu allegedly did not allow her to visit him

had already given her Rs12 lakh in 2023 and Rs10 lakh in 2024.

Babu Katre would often belittle her and claim that she didn't deserve to live with someone of his status. Her brother alleged that Katre earned Rs 20 to 25 lakh per month through illegal means in addition to his salary. Renu had repeatedly requested him not to use illegal money for their children's education, which also led to frequent altercations between them.

When her father was diagnosed with cancer, Babu allegedly did not allow her to visit him. However, Renu went to Pune against his wishes. Upon her return, her husband allegedly beat her with a stick for meeting her father without his permission.

Fed up with constant harassment, both families had

agreed to hold a meeting on July 27 to resolve the matter. However, her husband reportedly refused to attend, which left Renu deeply upset.

On July 26, at around 8.30am, she called her brother in tears and told him that her husband was treating her badly. He had thrown away the tiffin she had prepared. She told her brother that her husband would never change, and he did not want her any more. Her brother had advised her several times to come live with her parents, but she did not agree for the sake of her sons.

Later that day, around 4.40 pm, she called a family doctor, again crying, and said that her husband refused to attend the meeting and would never treat her well. She abruptly disconnected the call. The doctor then informed her father. Her parents and brother tried calling her repeatedly, but she did not respond. Eventually, her maternal family rushed to Mumbai and discovered that she had allegedly hanged herself in the hall of the flat with a nylon rope.

Kshamata: Empowering survivors of gender violence

Pooja Patel

Less than two decades ago, Bharathy Tahiliani, a young social worker, was working with women in a Thane brothel on health and HIV issues. When a woman sought her help to escape, Tahiliani stepped in. That life-changing moment inspired her to start Kshamata, supporting women survivors of exploitation and violence.

At the heart of Kshamata's work is a clear mission: to break the cycle of exploitation and enable adolescent girls and women from difficult backgrounds—including survivors of trafficking and gender-based violence—to lead lives of dignity, confidence, self-reliance, and freedom. "The organisation focuses on long-term, transformative support, recognising that true empowerment takes time. Through sustained programmes that equip and empower, Kshamata works closely with women to rebuild their lives on their own terms," says Tahiliani, founder and managing trustee of Kshamata.

The first step in Kshamata's approach to reintegration is what the organisation calls personal restoration—a process rooted in trauma-informed care. "Exploitation affects the mind as much as the body," says the Thane resident, emphasising the urgent need for emotional and psychological healing. The NGO offers individual counselling, life skills sessions, and expressive therapies such as art-based and dance movement therapy to help women

ANGELS OF MUMBAI
Presented by adani



ANGEL: BHARATHY TAHILIANI, founder and managing trustee, Kshamata



ENDORSER: NIKUNJ JHAVERI, founder and chairman, Systems Plus Group of Companies

Kshamata's work has been truly transformative, bringing significant change not only in the lives of survivors of gender-based violence but also in those of women at risk. Over the years, I have witnessed several rescued women go through remarkable journeys—from healing and self-acceptance to rebuilding their lives and ultimately achieving independence. Their livelihoods have empowered not just themselves, but also those around them, creating a ripple effect across their communities.

process trauma and rebuild emotional resilience. This inner foundation, she explains, is essential before



The NGO aims to break the cycle of exploitation and enable adolescent girls and women

any other programme—be it skill-building or employment—can have real impact.

Economic empowerment is the next step, which forms the core of its reintegration strategy. "It becomes the anchor around which a new life is built," she said. But economic independence is not as simple as securing a job. Many women need to be prepared for the world of work, starting with basic literacy, financial and digital skills, and vocational training. "Kshamata supports women in exploring their own aspirations—whether that means formal employment, micro-enterprises, or home-based self-employment—and helps them choose a path that suits their goals," she added.

The final pillar is social reintegration—helping women reclaim their place in society with confidence and dignity. "Many survivors of violence feel stigmatised, isolated, and fearful of judgment," shared Tahiliani. Without a sense of belonging, they risk falling back into cycles of vulnerability and re-exploitation. The NGO addresses this by building independent living skills:

Scan the code to watch the video. If you know any heroes, write to us at angels@fpj.co.in.

16-year-old electrocuted; owner booked

Megha Parmar
PALGHAR

A 16-year-old boy, identified as Krishna, tragically died on July 22, after being electrocuted at Excel Enterprises in Vasai. The Vasai police have filed an FIR against the company's owner, William Joseph Dias, for alleged negligence in the incident.

The complaint, lodged by Krishna's father, states that his son visited Excel Enterprises around 4.15pm on the day of the incident. Although Krishna was not officially employed there, the owner, William Dias, allegedly instructed him to climb a ladder and perform electrical work. While carrying out the task, Krishna reportedly came into contact with a live wire and died instantly.

Krishna's father accused the company of failing to implement basic safety measures and the owner of irresponsibly assigning a dangerous task to a minor.

Following an initial inquiry into the accidental death, the police registered a criminal case on July 26. Dias has been charged under Section 106(1) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, and relevant sections of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.

Thar stolen from banker's home in Wadala

Poonam Apraj
MUMBAI

A senior bank manager has reported the theft of her Mahindra Thar SUV, which went missing from outside her residential building in Wadala, while she was on official duty in Goa, according to a complaint filed at Matunga police station.

The complainant, Trupti Nandalal Sumani, 46, is currently posted as a Manager with the State Bank of India in Panaji and resides on Sewri-Wadala Road.

Sumani stated that she purchased the black Mahindra Thar for personal use on December 31, 2021, and typically parked it outside her building. Before leaving for Goa on July 7, 2025, she entrusted a known associate, Shankar Aidola, with washing the vehicle weekly. On July 25, upon returning to Mumbai, Sumani learned from Aidola that when he went to wash the SUV at around 9am on July 15, it was missing. He had tried contacting her immediately but was unable to reach her.

ROAD HAZARDS | First fatal crash due to crater highlights dangers of poor road maintenance in Andheri East

Pothole tragedy claims scooterist's life on JVLR

Megha Kuchik
MUMBAI

A 59-year-old man, Lalu Kamble, died in a tragic accident on Jogeshwari-Vikhroli Link Road (JVLR) in Andheri East on July 26, marking the first fatal pothole-related incident reported this year. Kamble, riding a scooter towards Vikhroli, lost control after hitting a pothole, leading to a collision with a dumper truck driven by 25-year-old Sajid Shaikh. The Powai police arrested Shaikh, charging him with reckless driving.

According to the FIR, Kamble, a resident of Shere-e-Punjab Society on Mahakali Gufa Road, Andheri East, worked as a small-scale construction contractor. The accident occurred at 2.25pm behind the NTPC junction on JVLR.

Kamble's scooter hit a deep pothole, causing it to slow down abruptly. The dumper truck following him collided with the scooter, throwing Kamble off the vehicle. Bystanders alerted the police, who rushed him to Rajawadi Hospital in Ghatkopar East, where he was declared dead



on arrival at 3.05pm due to severe head injuries.

A police officer noted two large potholes at the accident site. Kamble, riding an Activa, underestimated the depth of one pothole, which caused his scooter to falter. The dumper driver, unable to react in time, crashed into him. Shaikh, a resident of Shivaji Nagar in Govandi, remained at the scene and was not found to be intoxicated.

He was detained by patrolling officers and charged under Sections 106(1) (causing death by rash or negligent act not amounting to culpable homicide) and 281 (rash driving or riding on a public way) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

Vijay Kamble, the 32-year-old son of the deceased, recounted receiving a call from his father's friend, Rajan Maknikar, urging him to rush to Rajawadi Hospital. Upon

IN BRIEF

- 1 The accident occurred when Kamble's scooter hit a pothole, causing him to lose control and collide with a dumper truck
- 2 The dumper driver, Sajid Shaikh, was arrested and charged with reckless driving
- 3 The police noted two large potholes at the accident site
- 4 Kamble's family demands strict action against poor road maintenance

arrival, Vijay learned of his father's death. Lalu Kamble, who was en route to Sakinaka for a laptop repair, is survived by his wife, two sons, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren. Vijay, employed at Kotak Mahindra Bank providing Aadhaar services, expressed the family's grief and demanded strict action against poor road maintenance. His brother, Rajesh, works as a peon at Anthony School in Byculla.

Potholes turn Bhiwandi's roads into a nightmare



NK Gupta
THANE

Commuters on the Bhiwandi-Wada Road, a critical artery connecting Thane, Mumbai, and Gujarat, face daily risks due to numerous potholes that have emerged following persistent rainfall. Several stretches of asphalt in Bhiwandi have deteriorated, creating deep craters that pose significant safety hazards.

The deplorable road conditions have caused frequent traffic congestion and injuries among motorists, including chronic back pain for daily commuters. A few months ago, local MLA Shantaram More from the Shiv Sena (Shinde faction), along with his team, took the initiative to manually fill potholes with stones—an effort that garnered significant attention on social media.

In one notable incident, a major traffic jam lasting nearly three hours occurred in Borpada village after a heavy vehicle overturned due to the poor road conditions.

"We have been facing these problems for years, but no concrete solution has come forward," said a frustrated commuter.

A businessman who operates a medical shop in Kawad village shared his ordeal: "I left my home in Bhiwandi for work but had to endure a bumpy ride over countless large and small potholes. Authorities have paid no attention to fixing this stretch. I often suffer back pain after riding through these roads."

Commuters frequently endure hours-long delays due to accidents or mechanical failures of heavy vehicles navigating the damaged road. They have also voiced frustration over the road concretisation work, which has been delayed for over a year.

Despite numerous protests by villagers and political parties decrying the poor road conditions and substandard concrete work, authorities have made little progress in addressing the issue.

Recently, Shramajivi Sanghatana and hundreds of villagers from Wada, Thane,

Two companies are managing repairs: Eagle Company (Rs777 crore contract for Shelar-to-Manor stretch, excluding patchwork) and Jijau Company (Rs45 crore for patchwork in Shelar, Borpada, and Ambadi), with work orders issued in 2024

and Palghar staged simultaneous road blockades at 12 key locations. Protesters labeled the pothole-ridden roads "death traps," particularly during the monsoon season, and demanded immediate repairs to the Bhiwandi-Wada and Bhiwandi-Vasai routes.

More than a dozen villages, including Angaon, Parvili, Kudus, Dugad Phata, Borpada, Kawad, Nandi Thane, Lamaj, Mahapoli, Chhava, Bhara, Ambadi, and Shelar, line the Bhiwandi-Wada Road. Dattu Gite, a PWD officer from Thane, told the FPI, "We have issued orders to the contractor to fill the potholes immediately."

Food officers plan protest against sudden suspensions

Associations decry unverified allegations, demand justice

FPJ Political Bureau
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra State Food Officers' Welfare Association, affiliated with the Maharashtra State Gazetted Officers' Federation, has written to the Chief Minister, two Deputy Chief Ministers, and the Food and Drug Administration Minister, raising concerns over the recent suspension of officers without due process.

In its letter, the association strongly objected to the suspension of the Joint Commissioner (Food) of Nashik Division, the Assistant Commissioner (Food) of Nandurbar, and a Food Safety Officer. It stated that the action was taken merely through an announcement in the legislative assembly without giving the accused officers an opportunity to present their side.

The association argued

that the actions of the concerned officers were legally valid and within the scope of existing laws. "There is no legal provision to seal a food outlet solely on grounds of poor-quality food. The law permits license suspension only if the food business operator fails to respond within the stipulated time. Yet, suspensions were announced in the legislature, including that of a Food Safety Officer against whom no official declaration had been made," the letter stated.

The association emphasised that none of the suspended officers were found guilty of serious violations, dereliction of duty, financial irregularities, or criminal offenses. "They were suspended based solely on unverified allegations, which has created a sense of deep resentment and insecurity among food officers across the state," it noted.

It warned that such arbitrary actions could embolden anti-social elements to blackmail or threaten food officers, adversely affecting their mental health and administrative work. "In the absence of adequate laboratory infrastructure, limited manpower, and insufficient resources, food officers are still performing their duties with honesty and integrity. This move has severely demoralised officers and tarnished the administration's image among the public," the letter added.

The association demanded the immediate withdrawal of what it called an "unjust" suspension and sought a firm assurance from the government that no such unilateral actions would be taken in the future. It warned that failure to resolve the issue would result in a statewide pen-down protest on Monday, August 4, 2025.

School guard held for assault

Megha Parmar
PALGHAR

A 53-year-old security guard employed at a reputed educational institute in Virar (West) was arrested on Sunday for allegedly sexually assaulting two Class X students. The arrest followed a complaint lodged by a senior official of the school-cum-junior college at the Arnala Coastal police station. The complaint states that at the incident occurred in the third week of June, after school hours. The accused allegedly lured the two boys, aged 15 and 17, into the school canteen kitchen, where the assault took place.

The police tracked down and apprehended the suspect. He has been charged under relevant sections of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act and with sexual harassment. The accused was produced in court and remanded to police custody.

City breathes easy as heavy rains ease, yellow alert lifted

FPJ News Service
MUMBAI

After enduring intense rainfall for over a week, Mumbai and its metropolitan regions can expect a brief respite from heavy downpours starting this week. Until Sunday, July 27, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) had issued a Yellow Alert for heavy rainfall in isolated areas of Mumbai, Thane, and Palghar.

However, from Monday onward, no weather alerts have been issued. These districts will likely experience light to moderate rainfall as

LAKE LEVELS
Total capacity of seven lakes: 1,447,363 million litres
Stock as of July 27 morning: 1,298,282 million litres (89.70%)

part of normal monsoon activity. According to the local weather forecast for Mumbai city and its suburbs for the next 48 hours, skies will remain generally cloudy with moderate rain spells. Maximum and minimum temperatures are expected to hover around 31°C and 26°C,

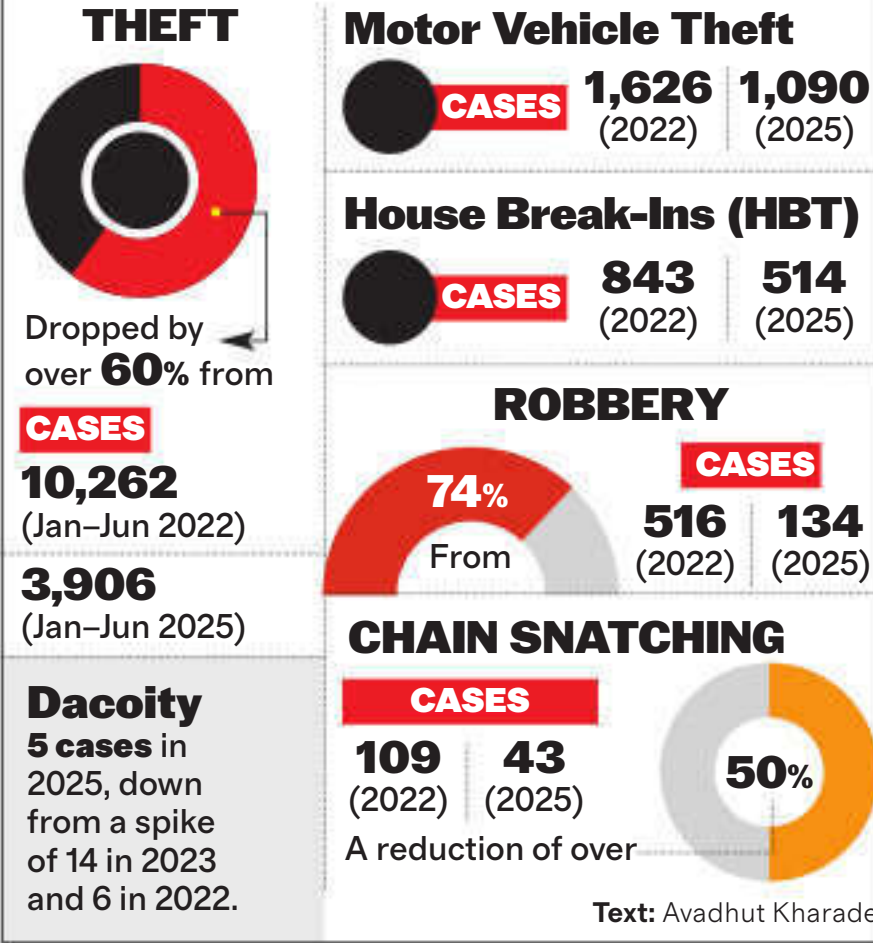
respectively. However, some districts in Maharashtra, including Raigad, Ratnagiri, the ghats of Pune and Satara, and Vidarbha regions such as Nagpur, Akola, Amravati, Bhandara, and Chandrapur, remain under a Yellow Alert for heavy rainfall.

Heavy rainfall in the catchment areas has also boosted water levels in the seven lakes supplying Mumbai, reaching 89.70% of their total capacity. On the same day last year, the lakes were at 71.95% capacity, and in 2023, they stood at just 61.58%.

From theft to robbery: City sees sharp decline



Mumbai has experienced a significant decline in crime rates over the past four years, with police data from January to June (2022–2025) showing a sharp drop in offences like theft, robbery, house break-ins, motor vehicle theft, chain snatching, and dacoity. The Mumbai police credit this success to enhanced patrolling, advanced technology like CCTV analytics, and strong community coordination.



Gaothans safe from slum survey

Manoj Ramakrishnan
MUMBAI

After opposition to the slum biometric survey from residents of Mumbai's gaothans and kolivadas, the Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) clarified that the survey is meant only for slums. Residents of the gaothans and kolivadas, many of which predate the establishment of Mumbai, have been opposing slum surveys in the localities, claiming that the areas have a distinct character and cannot be classified as slums.

There are over 180 such settlements inside Mumbai and residents have been demanding demarcation of the localities to distinguish them from surrounding slums. Residents do not want a slum tag for the areas because the categorisation will restrict redevelopment rights and force them to accept the limited rehabilitation rights available to slums.

Residents of Chimbai village, Bandra, and Kurla Christian Village had protested after they received notices for survey in February and March. In a public notice issued last week, the SRA's Brihanmumbai Biometric Survey Cell clarified that the survey will only cover slums. The notice also said that slum

localities will be notified by a public notice before the survey.

After the public notice, community groups have asked residents of the gaothans to be vigilant. "Should you observe or receive a notice indicating that any survey teams are conducting biometric data collection in any gaothan or kolivada, please report it immediately. Include details such as the names, photos, and agency credentials of the officials involved to us," said Godfrey Pimenta of the Watchdog Foundation.

The SRA is conducting a biometric survey of all slums located in the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation area under instructions from the state Chief Minister, Deputy Chief Minister and housing minister. The deadline to complete the survey of around 800,000 slum units is December 31, 2025.

The government said that the survey will ensure that the rights of the slum dwellers are protected in redevelopment projects and ensure that new encroachers do not claim benefits of SRA schemes. The public notice has also clarified that the survey is being conducted by the SRA without the involvement of developers or private organisations.

CCPA initiates class action suit



Q. From your last week's column I noted that Consumer Commissions can entertain Class Action complaints which are different from Joint or Group Action complaints. I understand that even the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) can entertain Class Action complaints. Is it true? If so, then what is the difference between the Class Action complaint before the CCPA and Consumer Commissions? In which matters CCPA can entertain Class Action Complaints?

— Mangala Gadgil, Andheri (West)

A. It is true that the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) can also entertain Class Action complaints. However, there is some important difference between the Class Action complaints to be entertained or initiated by CCPA and the Class Action com-

plaints to be filed before Consumer Commissions. CCPA is empowered under Sec 17 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 (CPA) to entertain class action complaints. This provision reads as under: "Complaints to authorities: A complaint relating to violation of consumer rights or unfair trade practice or false or misleading advertisements, which are prejudicial to the interest of consumers as a class, may be forwarded either in writing or in electronic mode, to any of the authorities, namely, the District Collector or the Commissioner of regional office or the Central Authority." Careful reading of this provision will show that (a) there is no mention that the Complaint has to be made by "the consumer" or any consumer association. It means that even any person, who is not the consumer, can make a complaint to the CCPA. In such case he acts more as an informer. (b) Complaint has to be in relation to violation of consumer rights or unfair trade practice or false or misleading advertisements and nothing beyond that, (c) it should be prejudicial to the interest of "consumers as a class". From this it becomes clear that CCPA can handle complaints only of class action, in the sense where any act or omission of the party impacts consumers "as a class". It is also signifi-

cant to note that no fee is payable when one makes a complaint to the CCPA whereas in Consumer Commissions, fee is payable while filing the Complaint beyond a threshold of Rs 5 lakhs. Further, it is important to note that the CCPA is not required to give any public notice to all affected consumers under Order 1, Rule 8 of the Civil Procedure Code unlike the one required in Consumer Commissions. In class action proceedings by CCPA, the focus is more on the party who is accused of violating consumer rights or adopting unfair trade practice or making false/misleading advertisements. If the allegation of complaint is established, the CCPA is empowered to penalize the erring party besides, of course, providing necessary reliefs to concerned consumers like refund of price, recall / replacement of product etc. Most importantly, CCPA has also powers to initiate action on its own (suo motu). In the class action complaints before any Consumer Commission, the complaint is subject to the permission by the concerned Consumer Commission. Further, the procedure under Order 1, Rule 8 including public notice has to be followed by the Complainant. This gives right to other consumers who are affected with such complaint, to intervene in

the matter and file their say. The decision in such class action complaint is binding on consumers involved in the matter even if they are not before the Consumer Commission after the Public Notice. In Consumer Commission the onus of proving the case lies squarely on the complainant / consumers whereas in case of complaints before the CCPA, the onus is not on the complainant. The CCPA is mandated to investigate the complaint and establish the case against the party. For this purpose, CCPA is assisted by an Investigation wing which has powers to conduct inquiry, investigation and call for records / documents for inspection etc. It is the CCPA and not the Complainant which has to establish its case after proper investigation and after hearing the party against whom the complaint is made. Thus, to summarize, CCPA can deal with complaints only where interest of consumers "as a class" is involved and that when there is either a violation of consumer right or adoption of unfair trade practice or there is a false or misleading ads.

(Advocate Shirish V Deshpande is chairman, Mumbai Grahak Panchayat. Queries can be sent to him on email: shirish50@yahoo.com)

PCMC's teams get ready for monsoon

Staff Reporter
PIMPRI

The Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) Fire Department has made extensive preparations to handle any disaster situations that may arise during the monsoon season. Special flood control teams have been deployed in each ward, with the primary responsibility of providing immediate assistance during floods, relocating affected citizens to safe locations, and conducting rescue operations as needed. The PCMC Fire Department claimed it has ensured that all necessary equipment is available to facilitate these operations. This includes 10 inflatable rubber boats (IRB), 200 life jackets, 44 life rings, 59 rescue ropes, 10 hooks, 13 portable pumps, as well as water tenders, quick response vehicles, firefighting motorcycles, 48 working fire engines, wireless sets, walkie-talkies, megaphones, and torches.

The PCMC has also identified areas prone to water ingress and has intensified patrolling in those regions. The disaster management teams consist of trained personnel who monitor flood-affected areas, water levels, water flow speed, and zones where water accumulation occurs. These teams possess a strong understanding of the local terrain and are trained in both swimming and rescue operations. The Fire Department has emphasised that in the event of a flood or emergency, citizens should not panic or fall for rumours, and should instead seek help directly from the PCMC.

BILLBOARD MENACE | During monsoons, the threat of flex banners and hoardings collapsing looms over the residents

Illegal flex boards deface Pune despite complaints

Indu Bhagat
PUNE

Despite repeated complaints from residents, illegal flex boards and hoardings continue to be displayed across several neighbourhoods in Pune, drawing criticism over civic inaction and public safety risks, particularly during the monsoon. In Sahakarnagar, residents allege that their concerns are being ignored by the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC). “Illegal flex boards have been put up all over Sahakarnagar, and despite lodging a direct complaint with the zonal officer, no action has been taken yet,” Pranav Unde, a resident, told The Free Press Journal (FPJ).

“The concerned officials claim that these flex boards have been installed by people from Ambegaon, and several names are being mentioned. What’s more troubling is that these flex boards feature ruling party candidates. Interestingly, in Kasba Peth, a respected leader from the same ruling party has ensured the area is completely flex-free. And pictures of them can be seen all over the flex,” Unde added. Echoing similar concerns, Mohan Tavhare from Viman Nagar told the FPJ that illegal flex and hoardings have also mushroomed in the area.

“Near Datta Mandir in Viman Nagar, illegal flex and hoarding have come up. Despite repeated complaints,



“In the areas near the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Statue and Kothrud Gaothan, these hoardings can be seen all over, and during monsoons, they are likely to fall and can take a life.”

— Manjusha Sawant
Resident, Kothrud

“What’s more troubling is that these flex boards feature ruling party candidates. Interestingly, in Kasba Peth, a respected leader from the same ruling party has ensured the area is completely flex-free.”

—Pranav Unde
Resident, Sahakarnagar

the civic authorities are turning a blind eye to our issues. The greetings of birthdays and anniversaries can be seen on these banners, and this not only makes the entire area look shabby, but also poses a threat to the commuters and walkers. As during monsoons, we have witnessed many incidents of boards falling,” Tavhare highlighted.

Residents are particularly worried about the safety hazards posed by these structures during heavy rains and storms. “Illegal hoarding can be seen all over the city,

Kothrud area is no different from facing these issues. In the areas near the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Statue and Kothrud Gaothan, these hoardings can be seen all over, and during monsoons, they are likely to fall and can take a life,” Manjusha Sawant, a resident of Kothrud, told the FPJ. “A few weeks ago, a small banner fell over a dog sitting on the footpath. Luckily, the dog received only minor injuries. Strict action is needed by the authorities, and a constant check is needed to maintain law and order in this

regard,” Sawant added.

A resident from Sahakarnagar, speaking to the FPJ on condition of anonymity, questioned the silence of the civic body and political leaders. “People are spending money to get their photos printed on these hoardings. They are mostly politicians, and they talk about saving the environment, but they are turning the beautiful city ugly. Is PMC allowing law violators to act freely? You can’t call it a Smart City while allowing such defacement of public spaces. The PMC administration and the ruling party must answer for this,” the resident said.

Unde also urged the civic body to take decisive action. “PMC must take strict action against those putting up illegal flex boards and impose fines. Otherwise, public trust in PMC will erode, and its Smart City claims will lose credibility,” he said. According to civic officials, PMC recently identified 88 unauthorised hoardings across four regional offices and has removed 24 of them. The Municipal Commissioner has directed all regional offices to immediately take down such hoardings and submit a detailed report.

“The crackdown is already happening and is expected to continue as the civic body intensifies its scrutiny of illegal hoardings and strengthens internal checks to prevent further violations,” a PMC official had told the FPJ.

Ajit Pawar inspects Hinjawadi civic issues



Agencies
PUNE

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar conducted an early morning visit to the Hinjawadi IT park area on Saturday to review ongoing efforts to address pressing civic issues such as traffic congestion and waterlogging. Following the inspection, he chaired a high-level meeting with senior officials to assess progress and chart the way forward.

Speaking after the review, Pawar said, “People in the area were facing numerous difficulties. Taking cognisance of the situation, the Chief Minister had directed that weekly site visits and meetings be conducted involving all responsible authorities.”

He noted that residents had been struggling since the first monsoon rains this year and

The Deputy Chief Minister emphasised the importance of inclusive coordination between government agencies and local representatives

that several challenges had since been resolved due to coordinated efforts. “Local residents have acknowledged the improvement. To achieve this, we had to make some tough decisions. While our intention is never to cause inconvenience, resolving issues like traffic congestion and waterlogging requires action against illegal constructions and encroachments, and we are taking necessary steps.”

Pawar emphasised the importance of inclusive coordination between government agencies and local representatives. “Our approach is inclusive. We’re involving everyone to ensure sustain-

able solutions,” he said.

He also announced plans to conduct a similar visit to Chakan next week. “Finding a permanent solution to traffic and related civic problems in various parts of Pimpri-Chinchwad is our top priority,” he asserted.

Earlier in the day, the Deputy CM paid homage to the soldiers who laid down their lives during the Kargil War. “Today is Kargil Vijay Diwas. We all remember the bravery of our armed forces during that war. I offer my heartfelt tributes to the martyrs and extend best wishes to all citizens on this day of national pride,” he said.

(ANI inputs)

Sule demands wine shop’s removal

Staff Reporter
PUNE

NCP-SP’s working president and Baramati MP Supriya Sule on Saturday wrote a letter to Pune District Collector Jitendra Dudi and urged him to remove the wine shop near Pawar Public School in Hinjawadi.

Taking to X (formerly Twitter), Sule wrote in Marathi, “A wine shop and bar has been started near ‘Pawar Public School’ in ‘Megapolis Serenity Commercial Space’ in Hinjawadi. It is not known what criteria were used to give permission to this wine shop near the school. The rules clearly state that there should not be a wine shop near schools, temples, etc. This wine shop is adversely affecting the safety of school students and the educational environment.”

“Parents, local residents, school administration, and I have made representations from time to time that this wine shop and bar should be closed. This wine shop is not appropriate to be in the school premises. In this regard, I request the District Collector, Pune, to please take action to close this wine shop and bar immediately,” she added.

Meanwhile, Sule also sought Maharashtra Agriculture Minister Manikrao Kokate’s resignation and asserted “everyone in Parliament” was asking about the “card-playing” incident



The wine shop in question is reportedly in the vicinity of Pawar Public School in Hinjawadi

involving him.

“This (rummy video) and several other incidents have defamed Maharashtra at the national level. Everyone in Parliament was asking about this ‘card-playing’ matter. Kokate should have immediately stepped down on moral grounds, but these people have to be told to resign. Unless there is intervention from Delhi, no one resigns,” Sule said.

Kokate is under fire for allegedly playing a game of rummy on his mobile phone while the Monsoon session of the state legislature was in progress, though he has claimed he was swiping out an advertisement for the game to access something on the internet.

(PTI inputs)

Customs seizes marijuana worth ₹10.5 cr, arrest one

Ankit Shukla
PUNE

Pune Customs at Pune International Airport intercepted a passenger arriving from Bangkok and seized 10.47 kg of narcotic drugs (hydroponic weed) worth Rs10.5 crore. The accused passenger has been identified as Abhinav Amarnath Yadav.

According to the officials, Yadav had arrived in Pune on an IndiGo flight 6E-1096 on July 24. Acting on suspicious behaviour, customs officials stopped him and conducted a thorough inspection. Customs officers caught Yadav red-handed, carrying 10.47 kg of



narcotic drugs, purported to be hydroponic weed (a high-grade form of marijuana), which he had hidden with him.

Speaking to The Free Press Journal, Sunny Soni, Superintendent of Pune Customs (Airport), said, “The seized narcotics are top-grade marijuana, which are valued at approximately Rs10.5 crore in the illegal market. The accused was arrested and produced before the magistrate, who remanded him to judicial custody. The matter is under investigation, and soon other involved people will be arrested. The background of the accused will be clear sooner; it is part of the investigation.” A case has been registered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985.

MP Kulkarni receives Sansad Ratna

Staff Reporter
PUNE

Rajya Sabha MP Medha Kulkarni has been conferred with the Sansad Ratna Award for her performance in the Parliament. Instituted by the Prime Point Foundation, the award recognises Members of Parliament for their outstanding contribution to parliamentary proceedings.

The felicitation ceremony was held at Maharashtra Sadan in New Delhi, where Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Kiren Rijiju presented the award, which includes a citation, a



memento, and a traditional shawl. The event was attended by National Commission for Backward Classes Chairman Hansraj Ahir, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Law and Justice Arjun

Ram Meghwal, and MP Shirrang Barne, among others.

Now in its 15th edition, the Sansad Ratna Awards honoured 17 MPs this year for their parliamentary excel-

lence. Kulkarni, a first-time Rajya Sabha member, was recognised for her active and impactful participation, consistently raising key issues of national interest and public welfare.

She has addressed several critical subjects in Parliament, including women’s health, rural development, education, social justice, and matters concerning the Waqf Board. In a recent session, she expressed concern over the rising incidence of cancer among women in rural India and urged the government to implement preventive measures.

Southern Command commemorates victory

Staff Reporter
PUNE

The Kargil Vijay Diwas—marking the 26th anniversary of India’s historic victory in the Kargil War—has been celebrated with great pride and patriotic fervour by the Indian Army’s Southern Command. This significant milestone stands as a powerful reminder of the undying courage, valour, and supreme sacrifice of the Indian Army’s soldiers, who etched an immortal chapter in the annals of national history. The commemoration

began with a solemn wreath-laying ceremony held at the Southern Command War Memorial, where Lieutenant General Dhiraj Seth, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Southern Command, paid tribute to the fallen heroes. In the presence of serving officers, soldiers, and veterans from Pune Military Station, the ceremony honoured the memory of those who laid down their lives to uphold the sovereignty of the nation during the 1999 conflict.

On the occasion, a ‘Weapon and Equipment

Display’ was organised by Shivneri Brigade at Fergusson College, Pune, under the aegis of Southern Command. As part of the Army’s ‘Know Your Army’ outreach initiative, the event showcased an impressive array of cutting-edge weapon systems, advanced and specialised battlefield technologies, offering citizens—especially the youth—a unique window into the might and modernisation of the Indian Army.

The display underlined the Army’s transformation into a Future-Ready, Tech-Enabled

Force, aligned with its vision for the ‘Decade of Transformation’, focusing on indigenisation, capability enhancement, and multidomain operational preparedness.

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from the faculty and students of Fergusson College, along with cadets of the 2 Maharashtra Battalion NCC.

Both events highlighted the Indian Army’s strong commitment to honouring its heroes, educating future generations, and protecting India’s sovereignty.



Southern Command/X

Cops deny gangrape angle in Lonavala

Staff Reporter
PUNE

Pune Rural Police have clarified that there was no gang rape in the Lonavala case, as initially reported. There is only one accused, who has since been arrested. Initial reports suggested that a young woman was abducted and gang-raped in Lonavala late Friday night. However, Pune Rural Superintendent of Police Sandip Singh Gill stated that the woman voluntarily sat in the accused’s car. “The accused has claimed

the act was consensual,” Gill said, adding that earlier reports of the woman being thrown on the roadside were incorrect. According to police, the woman had interacted with the accused after a fight with her boyfriend. The police registered a case and launched an investigation, managing to arrest the accused within 12 hours. Gill told The Free Press Journal that CCTV footage and further questioning of the complainant led investigators to conclude that only one person was involved.

Briefs

CSN
Woman dies by suicide

Parveen Amimoddin Shaikh (45) died by suicide by consuming poison in Patelnagar in Naregaon on July 20. The victim lived with her family. It's alleged that her husband, Ami-moddin, and son, Azim, used to beat her. On the fateful day, she quarrelled with her husband and son. She called her brother, Jama Khan, to negotiate. However, after Khan returned, she consumed poison. A case has been registered against the husband and the son.

CSN
Trader assaulted

A trader was severely beaten with an iron rod over a dispute. The incident occurred in Pandharpur on July 23. According to the complaint lodged by trader Irfan Pathan, he has a shop named Star Juice Centre in Pandharpur. On the upper floor, Mujeeb Bagwan also runs a juice centre. As Bagwan threw garbage in front of Pathan's shop, the latter objected. However, Bagwan severely beat Pathan with an iron rod. A case has been registered with the Waluj MIDC police station.

CSN
Rain creates havoc

In Ladsavangi, farms experienced erosion due to heavy rain, as nullahs, lakes, and rivers overflowed. The soil in Donwada, Khamkheda, Anjandoh, Naigavhan, Hatmali, Adgaon Sarak, Lingdari, Lad-savangi, Sayyedpur, Aurangpura and nearby areas in the Ladsavangi area has eroded. Water filled the farms, and the farmers incurred heavy crop losses.

SILT-FREE DAM, SILT-FILLED FARM | Officials, individuals felicitated for commendable work in water conservation

Water preservation key to tackle drought: Papalkar

Manish Gajbhiye
CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR

“The Silt-Free Dam, Silt-Filled Farm scheme is crucial in addressing drought. This farmer-centric initiative benefits various sections of society. Water preservation is the need of the hour and vital for future generations,” said Divisional Commissioner Jitendra Papalkar at a workshop on the Gal Mukht Dharan, Gal Yukt Shivar scheme organised by Prerna Foundation at MIT College on Sunday.

District Collector Dilip Swami, Chief Minister's Special Executive Officer Atul Waze, foundation president Dhiraj Mahajan, Bhausaheb Mate, Bhupendra Mujumdar, Rishikesh Deshpande, several farmers and representatives of various organisations attended the event.

Water Resources Officer Vijay Kamble, Deputy Engineer Manish Niranjani, Anil Mungikar, environment expert Nitin Doiphode, and other individuals who have done commendable work in



water conservation in the district were felicitated on the occasion.

Papalkar further stated that water conservation is essential for mitigating drought conditions. “If self-help groups take part in implementing the scheme, farmers will benefit significantly. Proper documentation of the scheme's implementation is underway, and this will also help improve soil fertility,” he said.

District Collector Swami added, “Depositing silt in farms enhances soil fertility, allowing for the cultivation of more nutritious

crops. Awareness about this among farmers is necessary.”

Atul Waze highlighted the collective efforts behind the initiative. “The administration, self-help groups, and farmers have effectively implemented the scheme. As a result, agricultural output can increase, contributing to the country's self-sufficiency in food production,” he said.

Rishikesh Deshpande delivered the introductory speech, Rajesh Lohekar conducted the proceedings, and Dhiraj Mahajan proposed a vote of thanks.

If self-help groups take part in implementing the scheme, farmers will benefit significantly.

—Jitendra Papalkar, Divisional Commissioner

Depositing silt in farms enhances soil fertility, allowing for the cultivation of more nutritious crops. Awareness about this among farmers is necessary.

—Dilip Swami, District Collector

District honours martyrs on Kargil Vijay Diwas

Manish Gajbhiye
CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR

“The government is committed to implementing development projects. A Kargil War-themed garden is being developed in the city, and another garden based on Operation Sindoor will be established soon,” said OBC Welfare Minister Atul Save during a programme held on the occasion of Kargil Vijay Diwas at Kargil Smriti Van, Garkheda, on Saturday.

Martyrs of the Kargil War were paid tribute and ex-servicemen were felicitated at the event. A T-55 Army tank was also unveiled for public viewing by Save. The programme saw the participation of more than 2,400 students, teachers, ex-servicemen, martyrs' widows, and residents.

A photo gallery showcasing the valour of ex-servicemen from Marathwada during the Kargil War was displayed at the venue, said organising committee chairman Pankaj Bharsakhle. Five disabled war veterans—Subhash Jadhav, Dattatray Jadhav, Ramdas Bansod, Bhausaheb Shinde and Ramesh Salve—were felicitated on the occasion. Ex-servicemen Captain Surendra Surve, Wing Commander TR Jadhav, Colonel Katkar, Colonel Sonawane and Commander Anil Save were also honoured.

The Kargil Smriti Van Committee also felicitated Minister Save for his efforts in securing funds worth several crores for the development of the memorial garden.

Speaking at the event, Municipal Commissioner and

Administrator G Sreekanth said a dumping ground in Garkheda was successfully transformed into a beautiful garden, which has become a source of pride for both the administration and residents.

Chairman Bharsakhle added that the Kargil garden will inspire future generations and help them remember the sacrifices of the armed forces. “The garden is a tribute to patriotism that will endure across generations,” he said.

Patriotic songs were presented by Pramod and Swaraj Sarkate. Amrut Birhade conducted the proceedings. Former deputy mayor Rajendra Janjal, Pandit Kendre, Govind Kendre, Jagdish Chavan, Arjun Gaware, Sudam Salunke, Gajanan Pimple, Jaswantsingh Rajput and other dignitaries were present.



Police bust sex racket in Karmad

Manish Gajbhiye
CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR

In a joint operation, the Karmad rural police and the Anti-Human Trafficking Cell (AHTC) busted a sex racket being run from Hotel Dinesh in Hasnabad, Karmad. Six Bangladeshi women and one local woman, who were allegedly forced into the flesh trade, were rescued.

The police arrested hotel owner Rajesh Bhausaheb Magare (26), a resident of Badnapur, Jalna, and manager Sagar

Ganesh Salunke (27), a resident of Chikalthana, in connection with the case. Items worth Rs95,890 were seized from the accused.

According to officials, AHTC API Sarla Gadekar received a tip-off about the illegal activity at the hotel. It was revealed that the accused had taken advantage of the women's poverty and illiteracy to push them into the sex trade for personal gain.

Acting on the information and under the guidance of Superintendent of Police Vinay-

kumar Rathod, a raid was conducted on July 21. A dummy customer was sent into the hotel, where he negotiated a deal for Rs500. After being taken to a room on the first floor, a woman was sent to him. The customer then alerted the police team stationed nearby, leading to the immediate arrest of the owner and manager.

The operation was carried out under the supervision of SP Rathod, Additional SP Annapurna Singh and Sub-Divisional Police Officer Puja Nagare.

Govt approves 500 beds for dist hospital

FPJ News Network
NANDED

The state government has approved a proposal to increase the number of beds at Shri Guru Gobind Singh Government Memorial District Hospital in Nanded from 300 to 500. A formal letter regarding the sanction was issued by the Joint Director of the Public Health Department, Sunita Golahit.

Rajia Sabha MP Ajit Gopchade played a key role in get-

ting the proposal sanctioned. He had been following up with the state and Union governments for several days, stressing the urgent need to expand bed capacity in the district hospital. Gopchade also highlighted the necessity of establishing a super-speciality hospital in the city and recently submitted a proposal in this regard to Union Health Minister JP Nadda.

“Nanded is the land of Guru Gobind Singh. The Takht Sachkhand Shri Huzur Sahib is one

of the most important pilgrimage centres for Sikhs. Devotees from far and wide visit the city every year. Nanded is well-connected by rail, road and air, and therefore, it is essential that the district is equipped with quality healthcare facilities,” Gopchade said.

He pointed out that the city has only one medical college and hospital—Dr Shankarrao Chavan Government Medical College and Hospital—located around 10km from the city centre. “In emergencies, pa-

tients face severe inconvenience. The rural population and visiting devotees also struggle to access quality medical care,” he added.

Given these challenges, a proposal to expand the district hospital's bed capacity was submitted, alongside a demand for a super-speciality hospital. The proposed facility will include advanced departments for cancer, trauma, kidney, liver and heart transplants, along with MRI, CT scan and ICU services.

154 trees to be axed

Prashant Nikale
NASHIK

As part of preparations for the upcoming Simhastha Kumbh Mela, the Nashik Municipal Corporation (NMC) has proposed cutting down 154 trees to facilitate the construction of a sewage treatment plant at Agartakali. The proposal, submitted by the Parks and Tree Authority Department, is open to public objections and suggestions. In total, the department has moved to fell 159 trees, including five additional ones not directly linked to the project. Officials have assured that compensatory plantation will be carried out to replace the felled trees.

Contradiction amid tree plantation drive

The proposal has drawn scrutiny as it coincides with a large-scale tree plantation initiative under the state government's Green Maharashtra, Prosperous Maharashtra campaign. Under this, NMC has been tasked with planting 1 lakh trees, while its own Parks Department has pledged an additional 24,480 saplings—amounting to a total of nearly 1.5 lakh. However, environmentalists have pointed out a contradiction between the plantation efforts and ongoing tree felling for civic projects.

Earlier phases also saw tree felling

This is not the first time the civic body has axed trees for infrastructure projects. In the first phase of the Gangapur direct water supply project, 83 trees were cut between Shanishwar Mandir Chowk and the Krishi Nagar jogging track. Another 60 trees are set to be felled between Shankar Patil Chowk and Motiwala College in the second phase, followed by 55 in the third. The latest proposal to cut 154 trees for the sewage plant at Survey No. 372/2 in Agartakali will be reviewed by the Tree Authority Committee after taking into account feedback from residents.

TAX FRAUD | Nearly ₹4-5 crore seized; software engineer arrested; pistol, cartridges recovered

Raid busts GST evasion racket

Prashant Nikale/Agencies
NASHIK

The Pune unit of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Intelligence Department on Saturday busted a massive tax evasion racket in Nashik, arresting a software engineer for allegedly defrauding the exchequer of crores of rupees through an online gaming app. During a raid at his residence in Deolali village, officers seized cash suspected to be worth Rs4 crore to Rs5 crore, an unlicensed pistol, and six live cartridges.

The accused, identified as Shrikant Prasad Parhe, was detained and interrogated for over eight hours before his arrest. The operation, based on confidential inputs received by the Pune GST team, has triggered widespread attention in the city due to the scale and nature of the fraud.

According to officials, Parhe had been running an online gaming business and was al-



legedly generating fake invoices to avoid paying GST. His firm, which claimed to provide various information technology (IT) services, issued bogus certificates and manipulated financial records to conceal revenue.

During the search, cash was found hidden in two large trunks inside his Kapleshwar Building residence. Apart from the cash, a pistol and cartridges were recovered, prompting the police to register a separate case under the Arms Act.

The GST department also

confiscated computers, digital storage devices, and documents related to the business operations. A case of cheating and GST fraud has been filed, and further investigation is underway to trace the extent of the financial trail and identify possible accomplices.

The seizure has once again highlighted the growing misuse of app-based businesses for financial crimes. Nashik Police and the GST Intelligence Bureau are jointly probing the nexus involved in the tax evasion.

Dist to get 15 soil testing labs

Prashant Nikale
NASHIK

As many as 15 village-level soil testing laboratories will be established in Nashik district under the Soil Health and Fertility Programme for 2025–26, implemented through the National Agricultural Development Scheme, District Superintendent Agriculture Officer Ravindra Mane informed on Saturday.

The initiative aims to tackle the deteriorating soil texture caused by excessive use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides, and to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change on land and crop productivity. According to Mane, soil testing has shown encouraging results in recent years, leading to its wider adoption by farmers. The new laboratories will also offer employment opportunities to 10th-pass youth with basic scientific and computer knowledge.

Govt grant and lab capacity

The Government will provide a grant of Rs1.50 lakh for setting up each lab, which will have an annual soil testing capacity of 3,000 samples.

No roads: Students wade through streams

Prashant Nikale
NASHIK

Despite government claims of transforming tribal lives through education and welfare schemes, the ground reality in Khairewadi village of Igatpuri taluka paints a starkly different picture. Students and residents continue to risk their lives daily due to the absence of basic road infrastructure, trudging through streams, riverbeds and knee-deep mud during the monsoon to access education and healthcare.

Sitaram Gawandha of the Shramjeevi Sanghatana has criticised the government and elected representatives for turning a blind eye to the plight of tribals in the Igatpuri-Trimbak belt. “Crores are being spent in the name of development, but our children are walking through rivers to attend school,” he said, accusing public figures of ignoring urgent rural needs.

The villagers of Khairewadi, under Chinchalekhare, are forced to cross four riverbeds to reach the main road. The lack of access has



turned life-threatening, particularly during the rains. A recent video of a sick woman being carried on a doli through a flooded river went viral, but it failed to prompt any government action. “MLA Hiranman Khoskar performed water puja at Bham and Bhavli dams, but couldn't travel just 8km to visit our village and witness our suffering,” Gawandha alleged.

Two years ago, then District Collector Jalaj Sharma and Tehsildar Parameshwar Kasul visited the village and promised road development. Though a road was reportedly sanctioned, no construction has begun. Meanwhile, students continue to miss school, and patients are being denied timely medical aid, leading



to tragic consequences.

“The country may have gained independence, but our tribal communities are still denied the freedom to meet even their basic needs,” Gawandha said, demanding answers for the continued neglect and suffering.



Cattle cause congestion

Cattle take over the Mumbai-Agra Highway near Vilholi-Wadiwhare Shivar, making it difficult for traffic to move with ease. Commuters have expressed dissatisfaction over the issue. Photo: Tejal Ghorpade

Briefs

Savings deposit rates of some public sector banks hits historic low

Savings deposit rates of some public sector banks are prevailing at a historical low, since their de-regulation in 2011, according to the latest bulletin of the Reserve Bank. The weighted average domestic term deposit rates for fresh deposits has declined significantly for both PSBs and private sector banks. Currently, the savings deposit rates of some PSBs are prevailing at a historical low, since their de-regulation in 2011. In October, 2011, the RBI had deregulated the savings bank deposit interest rate, and allowed banks to determine the interest rate at their own. The rates on small savings schemes were kept unchanged by the government during the ongoing September quarter. The prevailing rates on these instruments are higher than the formula-based rates by 33-118 bps. It further said in response to the 100-bps reduction in the policy repo rate since February 2025, banks have adjusted their repo-linked external benchmark-based lending rates downward by 100 bps and marginal cost of funds-based lending rate by 10 bps. Consequently, the weighted average lending rates on fresh and outstanding rupee loans of commercial banks declined 26 bps (domestic banks - 24 bps) and 18 bps (domestic banks - 16 bps), respectively, during February-May 2025.

Mcap of 6 most valued firms slumps by ₹2.22 lakh cr

The combined market valuation of 6 of the top-10 most valued firms diminished by Rs 2.22 lakh crore last week, with Reliance Industries taking the biggest hit, in-line with a bearish trend in equities. Last week, the BSE benchmark gauge declined by 294.64 points or 0.36%. From the top-10 pack, Reliance Industries, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Infosys, Bajaj Finance, Hindustan Unilever and Life Insurance Corporation of India suffered a combined erosion of Rs 2,22,193.17 crore from their market valuation. HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank and State Bank of India made gains in their valuation. The valuation of Reliance Industries tumbled Rs 1,14,687.7 crore to Rs 18,83,855.52 crore, the most among the top-10 firms. Infosys faced an erosion of Rs 29,474.56 crore to Rs 6,29,621.56 crore from its market capitalisation (mcap).

German carmakers set for €10bn cash flow hit

Germany's top three carmakers are set to have more than €10bn wiped off from their cash flows this year as US tariff costs add pressure to an industry already battling sluggish volumes and an influx of Chinese electric vehicles, Kana Inagaki of Financial Times reports. The car industry has been one of the hardest hit by Donald Trump's trade war after the US president imposed 5% tariffs on imports of foreign-made vehicles. Analysts expect carmakers' cash flows generated from their automotive business to be squeezed. They are likely to fall from €9.4bn last year to €3bn at Mercedes-Benz; from €7.1bn to €3.5bn at Volkswagen; and €4.8bn to €4.4bn for BMW, according to data from Visible Alpha.

THE PARADOX | Lower primary, higher secondary mkt valuations in focus; Foreign Institutional Investors sell securities worth ₹1.20 lakh crore from Jan-July CY25

AUG 1 TARIFF DEADLINE LOOMS: ARE WE BUILDING CASTLES IN THE AIR?

FPJ News Service
MUMBAI

Investors will keep a close watch on key US data such as GDP and jobs this week, which will influence the Fed's interest rate decision, with the Indian and global markets expecting the Fed to maintain the status quo.

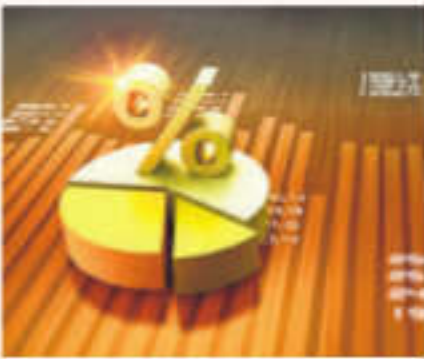
The finalization of the US-Japan and India-UK trade agreements marked a key step in easing global trade barriers. A resolution of the US-India mini trade deal by 1 August could further allay investor concerns.

"The India-UK CETA was a tariff war escape, and had created great hope among Indian investors to a certain extent. Many see a light at the end of

the tunnel, especially after several rounds of negotiations," analysts said.

"Percentage of tariff matters the most. A potential CETA with US is one of the toughest exams for India, especially to agree with the percentage of tariff. A full FTA with US will be one of the toughest exams for India. However, whether it will happen or delay is anyone's guess. Are we building castles in the air?" intelligent investors ask.

A delegation from the US will visit New Delhi in the second half of next month for the next round of negotiations for the proposed trade deal. Both sides had concluded the last round of negotiations on Jul 18. Thinks tanks have



Govt think tank NITI Aayog indicated that US tariffs on competitors are higher than India's in 22 out of the top 30 products India exports to the US

repeatedly reminded that India should tread carefully, taking a cue from the experiences of countries like

Vietnam and Japan.

"Subpar aggregate earnings performance is likely to challenge the sustainability of current premium valuations across benchmark indices, and we expect a consolidation in the near term," said Vinod Nair, head of research, Geojit Investments. Domestically, the expectation for further rate cuts is rising on the back of a benign inflationary trend, which will stimulate growth. The ECB has paused monetary policy easing cycles amid concerns over global inflationary pressures from potential tariff implementations. The market will also monitor the possibility of an interim trade deal with the US by Aug 1.

"FPI selling which began in early July accelerated during

the month. The FPI strategy was to sell at every rise in the market. Sustained DII and retail buying enabled FII selling at every rise. Data for this month, up to 25th July, shows a net FPI sell figure of Rs 20,262 crore. But data for the primary market shows FPIs buying for Rs 13,760 crore.

For CY 2025, so far, the total FPI sell figure stands at Rs 1,20,150 crore. The consistent buying by FPIs in the primary market is in contrast to the selling through the exchanges. This trend holds true for the CY2025 also. Lower valuations in the primary market and higher valuations in the secondary market explains this paradox," Dr VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments.

Maharashtra-based counterfeit currency 'syndicates' detected

Cyber intelligence firm CloudSEK has detected counterfeit currency syndicates based out of Maharashtra operating via social media platforms, the company said in a report.

The report said that the earlier such syndicates were confined to the dark web and under-

ground print shops and claimed that such syndicates were now operating in broad daylight through social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram. Sourajeet Majumder, a security researcher at CloudSEK, said the firm has reported about the syndicate to the law enforce-

ment agencies with details of the cyber criminals along with their phone numbers, GPS location and supporting digital evidence.

The counterfeit currency network was flourishing openly on social media platforms. CloudSEK's STRIKE team has

not only quantified the spread—Rs 17.5 crore worth of fake Indian currency in just six months—but also attributed key individuals behind the operation using facial recognition, GPS data, and digital forensics," the report said.

CloudSEK is one of the cyber

intelligence service providers to India cyber security watchdog CERT-In. Researchers found over 4,500 posts promoting counterfeit currency, more than 750 accounts and pages facilitating the sale and around 410 unique phone numbers linked to sellers.

—PTI

'Canara Bank to sell excess priority sect loans

PTI
NEW DELHI

State-owned Canara Bank plans to sell its excess priority sector loans in the ongoing quarter to compensate for the stress on margins due to moderation in interest rates.

During the quarter ended June 2025, the bank earned Rs 1,248 crore as commission by selling priority sector loans.

Despite sale in the first quarter, the total priority debt stands at 45.63 per cent as against regulatory requirement of 40 per cent of the total loan, Canara Bank MD and CEO K Satyanarayana Raju told PTI.

"We have a cushion under priority sector space. There is demand in the market and we may take advantage of the Priority Sector Lending Certificate (PSLC) sale during the current quarter itself," he said.

Asked about impact of mod-

eration in interest rates, Raju said, main concern for the ongoing financial year would be Net Interest Margin (NIM) and the guidance of 2.75 per cent seems difficult at the current juncture due to 100 basis point rate cut by the RBI so far this year and expectation of another one as inflation has come down below 3%.

Whether the rate cut happens in August or October policy, one has to wait and watch, he said, adding, therefore pressure would be there in the current quarter as well and slight improvement can be witnessed in the third and fourth quarters.

Besides, he said, stake sale in two subsidiaries would provide some comfort during the year. The bank is aiming for listing of one of its subsidiaries in the current quarter and another in the next quarter, depending on the regulatory approval, he said.

—IANS

ED raids conclude at Reliance Power, Infra; 'no business impact', firms say

Reliance Power and Reliance Infrastructure, two listed companies formerly led by Anil Ambani, on Sunday confirmed that the recent search operations conducted by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) have officially concluded.

Both companies issued formal statements to the stock exchanges, stating that they fully cooperated with the ED and will continue to do so. The ED had carried out searches on July 24 across more than 35 locations in Mumbai and Delhi as part of its ongoing investigation under the PMLA. In their statements, Comapnies clarified that these ED actions have had no impact on their business operations, financial performance, or stakeholders. "Both companies are independent and do not have any business or financial connections with RCom or RHFL.

—IANS

Consortium seeks CCI nod to acquire 32% stake in VIP Ind

PTI
NEW DELHI

A clutch of investors led by Multiples Equity have sought approval from the fair trade regulator CCI to acquire a 32% stake in luggage and travel accessories maker VIP Industries.

The move came after Dilip Piramal and Family -- promoters of VIP Industries -- announced last week that they will sell up to 32 per cent of their stake in the company, to Multiples Equity, an alternate asset management company.

Multiples consortium consists of Multiples Private Equity Fund IV (MPEF), Multiples Private Equity Gift Fund IV (MPGF), Samvibhag Securities, Caratlane founder Mithun Padam Sacheti, his brother Siddhartha Sacheti and Profitex Shares and Securities will acquire stakes in VIP Industries. "The proposed combination relates to acquisition of

VIP Industries is facing stiff competition from rivals and its market share is gradually reducing. It owns brands such as Aristocrat, VIP, Carlton, Skybags, and Caprese had over 50% market share in the branded luggage market in FY24

shareholding by the acquirers(MPEF, MPGF, Samvibhag Securities, Mithun and Siddhartha Sacheti) in the target VIP Industries," according to a notice filed with the Competition Commission of India (CCI).

Multiples is an alternate asset management company. It focuses on core sectors of financial services, pharma & health-

care, consumer and technology, and Samvibhag Securities is a portfolio company of ace investor Akash Bhanshali.

In a notice to CCI, the consortium said that the "proposed combination will not lead to any change in the competitive dynamics, let alone cause any appreciable adverse effect on competition in India, consistent with the previous decisional practice of the... Competition Commission of India, delineation of a relevant market can be left open".

On July 13, VIP Industries Ltd and Multiples Equity jointly announced that Dilip Piramal and Family have entered into a definitive agreement with the consortium to sell up to 32% stake in the company.

Assuming full acceptance of the open offer, the total consideration payable by Multiples will be Rs 1,437.78 crore. As of June 2025, the promoter and promoter entities owned a 51.73% shareholding in VIP Industries.

Clients are reportedly highly focused on cost and efficiency, reflecting ongoing caution influenced by the macroeconomic setting

"However, we remain positive on medium-to-long-term outlook, as technology debt is very high for enterprises, which will warrant revival in spending as macro improves," Nuvama saidpost-Infosys' results, that concluded the Q1 earnings season for Tier-1 IT services firms. TCS' revenue rose 1.3% year-on-year to Rs 63,437 crore, while bottomline improved 5.9% to Rs 12,760 cr.

TCS MD & CEO Krithivasan said the company is experiencing a "demand contraction" due to the continued uncertainties on the macroeconomic and geopolitical fronts, and added that he does not see a double-digit revenue growth in FY26. He explained the delays in decision-making experienced in the preceding quarter have "intensified", and hoped for the discretionary spends--a prime mover of revenue growths for IT companies--would return once the uncertainties ebb.

UK firms can offer telecom, construction services without local office

PTI
NEW DELHI

Companies from the UK will be able to offer services in sectors such as telecom, and construction in India without setting up a local presence, under the CETA signed between the two countries.

The British firms will be treated on par with Indian firms. It may take about a year for items implementation as the free trade pact needs approval from the British Parliament.

"UK companies can now provide telecom, construction, and related services in India without establishing a local presence, enjoying full national treatment, meaning they will be treated on par with Indian firms," the commerce ministry said.

Services is a key chapter in the agreement as both countries are strong in different kinds of services. India enjoys a trade surplus of around \$6.6 billion with the UK. The country's services exports stood at \$19.8 billion and imports at \$13.2 billion.

In the agreement, the UK has provided a comprehensive and deep market access in 137 sub-sectors to Indian firms. On the Indian side, commitments have been extended in 108 sub-sectors, granting UK firms access to domains like accounting, auditing, financial services (with FDI capped at 74 per cent FDI allowed), environmental services, and auxiliary air transport services, it said.

DoT issues ₹7,800-crore demand notice to Tata Comm over AGR dues

PTI
NEW DELHI

The Department of Telecom has issued a "show-cause-cum-demand notice" of about Rs 7,800 crore to Tata Communications over adjusted gross revenue dues, according to an official note by the company.

The demand has been raised by the Department of Telecom (DoT) for adjusted gross revenue (AGR) from 2005-06 till 2023-24, as per

the note. "As at June 30, 2025, the company has received 'Show Cause-cum Demand Notices' from Department of Telecommunications of India aggregating to Rs 7,827.55 crore for financial years ranging from FY 2005-06 to FY 2023-24, which have been revised over a period of time," Tata Communications Managing Director AS Lakshminarayan said.

He said the demand notices include Rs 276.68 crore towards disallowance of

deductions claimed by the company on payment basis for the financial year (FY) 2010-11 under ISP (internet service provider) licence and FY07 and FY10 under NLD (national long distance) licence.

Tata Communications has existing appeals relating to its ILD (International Long Distance), NLD, and ISP licences that were filed in the past and are pending at the Supreme Court and telecom tribunal TDSAT.

IndiGo to add more int'l destinations

IndiGo will continue to add more overseas destinations with A321 XLRs set to join the fleet this fiscal year and aims to increase its international capacity share to 40 per cent by 2030. The airline plans to explore new opportunities in the maintenance, repair and overhaul space, according to its annual report for 2024-25. It has been flying for over 18 years, has a domestic market share of 64.5%, operates around 2,200 flights daily with more than 430 planes.

—PTI

Vietnamese EV maker VinFast opens first showroom in India

ANI
NEW DELHI

Vietnamese EV maker VinFast inaugurated its first showroom in India, in Surat, Gujarat ahead of its plant inauguration. This inauguration marks a significant milestone in the company's retail journey in the country.

The outlet serves as the brand's physical touchpoint in India, underscoring VinFast's long-term commitment to establishing a strong, customer-centric electric mobil-

ity ecosystem.

The dealership, 'VinFast Surat,' is promoted by Chandan Car, a leading name in India's automotive retail sector. VinFast Auto India, the Indian subsidiary, made this announcement in a statement on Sunday. Located in Piplod in Surat, the dealership will serve as a one-stop destination for VinFast's prospective buyers. Spread out on 3,000 Sq.Ft. the facility will offer product experiences, vehicle purchase journeys, and after-sales support.

NGEL to develop RE, battery energy storage projects in Bihar

PTI
NEW DELHI

VState-owned NTPC Green Energy has plans to set up renewable energy and battery energy storage projects in Bihar, a move which will increase the company's portfolio and presence in the clean energy space.

The company has signed an MoU with Bihar State Power Generation Company to take forward its plans. The MoU with BSPGCL aims for development of Battery Energy Storage Projects and Renewable Energy Project for decarbonisation and energy transition in Bihar, NTPC

Green Energy said in a statement on Saturday. The agreement was signed between Sarit Maheswari, CEO, and Abdesht Kumar Singh, Director Technical, in the presence of Minister of Energy, Planning & Development of Government of Bihar Bijendra Prasad Yadav and other senior officials from the state government. NGEL is an umbrella company for the green business initiatives of NTPC and it undertakes projects through organic and inorganic routes and aims to be the flag-bearer of NTPC's green energy journey to achieve the ambitious target of 60 giga-watt (GW) by FY32.

RBI MPC member sees no challenges in economy growing over 6.5% in FY26

PTI
NEW DELHI

Indian economy is growing at a robust pace and will not face any challenge in achieving a growth rate upwards of 6.5% in the current financial year, RBI Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) member Nagesh Kumar said on Sunday.

Kumar, in an interview with PTI Videos, further said that Indian economy, among all economies, continues to remain a bright spot for the world.

"Actually, more than a third of global economies are under the debt crisis... The industrialised economies are facing a lot of pressure and high inflation and the slowdown of economic growth," he said. But

because Indian economy is more driven by domestic consumption and domestic investment, less by export or trade, Kumar said India continues to grow very robustly. "I do not see any challenges in Indian economy achieving upwards of 6.5% kind of growth in the current year and the following year.

And, you know, hopefully this kind of growth momentum will continue for coming years, but also be over time strengthened to 7 -7.5%. The Indian economy is estimated to have grown at 6.5 per cent in the previous fiscal year. As per the Reserve Bank of India's projections, the country's economy will expand at the same rate in the current fiscal

year as well. Responding to a question on inflation, Kumar said current rate of CPI inflation is around 2% and this is largely a result of the policy adopted by the MPC or RBI, and now it has come down to within the target range. Asked if there is a room for the RBI for further rate cuts, he said, "It will depend on all different macro numbers, not just inflation numbers. If inflation comes down to 2% in one month then it does not mean that it will stay there." The RBI has cut the key rates by 1 percentage point this year, and official data pointing to headline inflation cooling to 2.1% in June against the 4% target has led to expectations of further easing.

Gold likely to remain in consolidation phase

Gold prices are expected to witness further consolidation in the coming week as investors brace for a slew of events, ranging from central bank meetings, including the US Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting's outcome, to global trade negotiations, analysts said.

Traders will also closely watch macroeconomic data, including Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) inflation numbers, employment data from the US, manufacturing PMI numbers from across regions and developments related to the August 1 trade deal deadline. August 1 marks the end of the suspension period of Trump tariffs

imposed on dozens of countries, including India.

Pranav Mer, vice president, EBG-Commodity & Currency Research, JM Financial Services, said, "Gold prices may see some consolidation in the week ahead as the focus will be on the outcome of trade negotiations between the US-Euro zone and the US-China along the policy meeting of the US Federal Reserve and Bank of Japan, both of them expected to keep interest rates on hold.

"However, their official commentary will be closely watched," Mer said, adding that the Fed remains under pressure to cut interest rates, and the Bank of Japan is being tracked for potential hikes."

—PTI

corporate gallery

Increase in frequency of Passenger trains between Silchar and Maishashan



N. F. Railway has decided to increase the frequency of two pairs of passenger trains which operates between Silchar

and Maishashan. These include train no. 55662/55661 & 55686/55685 (Silchar – Maishashan – Silchar) passenger which frequency have been increased from present two days in a week to six days in a week. The decision by N. F. Railway to increase the frequency of these passenger trains will bring several key benefits to the people of this locality and its adjacent areas. The frequent service will ensure better daily or near-daily access between Silchar and Maishashan, which is especially beneficial for regular commuters, traders, students and office-goers. This increased train services will aid movement of small traders, agricultural produce and daily goods, thereby stimulating local economies and markets.

RPF of NFR recovered Ganja worth more than Rs 3.67 crore



The Railway Protection Force (RPF) of N. F. Railway continued its intensive crackdown against the transshipment of contraband items through railways from 17th till 24th of July, 2025. During this period, RPF

teams carried out operations at Agartala, Katihar, Bagdogra, Rangapara North, Lumding and Guwahati railway stations and trains. As a result of the sustained efforts, approximately 168.67 kgs of Ganja valued at around Rs. 16.83 lakhs were recovered and two individuals were apprehended in connection with the seizure. Additionally, 475 bottles of liquor worth Rs. 1.05 lakhs were confiscated, leading to the arrest of five persons. In separate actions during the same period, RPF personnel also apprehended seven individuals involved in the theft of passenger belongings and successfully recovered six stolen mobile phones, one laptop and cash worth Rs. 1.19 lakhs from them.

ICSI-WIRC, in collaboration with the NSDL organises session for ICSI students

ICSI-WIRC, in collaboration with the National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL), organized an insightful session on the topic “Role of Depository in Financial Services Industry” exclusively for the students of ICSI. The session aimed at enhancing understanding of the capital markets infrastructure and its regulatory ecosystem. Senior officials from NSDL conducted the session and elaborated on the critical role depositories play in the Indian financial system. The discussion encompassed:

- Investor Protection Mechanisms adopted by depositories to ensure safety and transparency in securities holding and transactions.

NFR Conducts Health Check-up Camps and Food Safety Training in July



As part of its continuous efforts to promote the health and well-being of railway personnel and ensure food safety standards across its jurisdiction, the Medical Department of Northeast Frontier Railway

(NFR) undertook several key initiatives during the month of July 2025. A series of health check-up camps were successfully conducted at multiple locations including the Railway Protection Force Barrack, Principal Chief Security Commissioner/HQ and NFR Headquarter at Maligaon over the past two weeks. These camps were aimed at monitoring and improving the health status of staff. A total of 220 Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel and 200 other railway staff underwent comprehensive health check-ups during these camps. In another significant initiative, a Food Safety Training and Certification (FOSTAC) program, under the guidance of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), was organized at Dimapur Railway Station. The training was conducted in collaboration with the Dimapur State Food Safety Authority. The program focused on sensitizing and training food vendors, food handlers, and food business operators operating at the station on hygiene practices and safety protocols mandated by FSSAI.

Jammu & Kashmir Witnesses Rapid Upgradation of Rail Tracks and Coaches



Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Railway Link project with Chenab and Anji bridges on 06th June 2025. It is a historic milestone in establishing connectivity between the Kashmir valley and Jammu.

Vande Bharat Express train between Katra and Srinagar has become an important mode of transportation on this route. Track maintenance: Over and above the new train services, opening of this line has made a fundamental change in the ability to maintain rail tracks in Kashmir valley. The railway link has enabled movement of track maintenance machines to the Kashmir valley. Maintenance is now being done with modern machines, unlike manual maintenance earlier. This is leading to significant improvement in track quality. Increased deployment of track machines: To strengthen track maintenance activities in the Kashmir valley, the deployment of machines has been augmented. A Tamping Machine has been deployed since early June, 2025. This machine packs the stone chips under the tracks to ensure proper alignment and stability of the tracks. It has so far tamped approximately 88 km of track in the valley. This has improved the ballast cushion and will make the ride smooth.

whispersinthecorridors

Dr Suresh Mehrotra



» Usha Rangnani is Deputy Director, BPR&D

Mrs Usha Rangnani has been appointed as Deputy Director (DIG), Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) on deputation basis. She is a 2011 batch IPS officer of AGMUT cadre.



» Ms Prachi Pandey gets additional charge of Commissioner, KVS

Ms Prachi Pandey, Joint Secretary, School Education has been assigned an additional charge of Commissioner, Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS). She is a 2001 batch IA & AS officer.



» CEC defends special intensive revision in Bihar

CEC Gyanesh Kumar has made it clear that the ECI cannot allow dead voters to be on the voter list. Even EPICs and foreigners will have no place in the revised voters list. According to CEC, a sacrosanct voter list is the foundation of a successful democracy.

» Ashok Kumar selected as Director (Fin), NSC

Ashok Kumar, GM, SJVN Limited, has been selected for the post of Director (Finance), National Seeds Corporation Limited (NSC) at a Public Enterprises Selection Board (PESB) meeting held on July 25. As many as nine persons were interviewed for the same.

» Four JAG officers of CLC shifted

Four JAG officers of Central Labour Service (CLC) have been shifted. Biswa Bhushan Prusty has been posted to Dy. CLC (C), Hyderabad, while D Srinivasulu was shifted to WC (C), Hyderabad and Shubhra J Mazumdar was moved to WC (C), Guwahati. Besides, Roopa Bharat was posted to LWC (C), CPWD (DCEC), IP BHawan, New Delhi.

» 16 members of Indian Administrative Service confirmed in IAS

As many as 16 members of the Indian Administrative Service of 2022 batch have been confirmed in the IAS. The Haryana cadre officers confirmed in the Service include: Utsav Anand, Anjali Shrotriya, Ankit Kumar Chouksey, Arpit Sangal, Jyoti, Rahul and Shashvat Sangwan. Similarly, Angeline Renita R, Hemant Kumar, Vidyamari Sridhar and Uppuluri Chaitanya of Manipur cadre were confirmed in IAS. Besides, Vishal Dhakad and Kartikeya Jaiswal of MP cadre, Shubham Shukla of Karnataka cadre, Arjit Mahajan of Assam-Meghalaya and Kishlay Kushwaha of Bihar cadre have been confirmed in the IAS.

» ITS officer repatriated from DDA

Manish Kumar Singh has been repatriated from DDA and reported back to his parent DoT HQ. He is a JAG level ITS officer.

» Dinesh Patnaik to be India's High Commissioner to Canada

Dinesh Patnaik is Likely to Be Appointed India's New High Commissioner to Canada. He is a 1990 batch IFS officer.



» EPIC issue, raised by TMC, costs heavy for INDI alliance ?

It was the TMC who first raised the EPIC issue, related to duplicate voter's ID numbers, which has now become a headache for the INDI bloc in Bihar. On TMC's complaint, ECI took the issue seriously and started a special intensive revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls in poll-bound Bihar. Now the INDIA alliance is opposing the ECI move and behind the curtain, cursing the TMC for raising the unnecessary issue which is going against their interest.



» 35 officers of CLS get new postings after promotion to JAG

As many as 35 Senior Time Scale (STS) officers of Central Labour Services (CLS) have been promoted to Junior Administrative Grade (JAG) of CLS and given new postings. Vishal K Khare has been posted to Dy. CLC (C), Kanpur, while Rakesh Gaur was moved to WC (C), Dehradun and Sachin Kumar is shifted to Dy. CLC (C), Patna. Similarly, Ratan Lal Saha has been posted to WC (C), Ahmedabad; Naveen Vaidya to WC (C), Jabalpur; Shubhra Goel to Dy. CLC (C), Dehradun; Rahul Tyagi to LWC (C), DRDO HQ, New Delhi; Resmi V to Dy. CLC (C), Cochin; Bidhan Chandra Nayak to Dy. CLC (C), Raipur; Bhanu S Rathore to Dy. CLC (C), Ahmedabad; Chiranjeev Saikia to Dy. CLC (C), Bhubaneswar; K J Mohanty to WC (C), Raipur; Dr Srinu Dara to Dy. CLC (C), Chennai; Sunil Kumar Sahu to Dy. CLC (C), HQ, New Delhi; Washimul Haq to Dy. CLC (C), Jabalpur; Kshitij Jain to Dy. CLC (C), Kolkata; Mrinmoy Thakur to LWC (C), COD, Agra; Ankur Dalal to Dy. CLC (C), HQ, New Delhi; Ashok Perumulla to LWC (C), GTRE, DRDO, Bangalore; Barun Kumar Jha to WC (C), Patna; Hemant Tirkey to LWC (C), DGQA HQ, New Delhi; Md. Razi Alam Khan to WC (C), Jammu; Om Prakash Singh to LWC (C), Naval HQ, New Delhi; V T Thomas to WC (C), Cannore; Subapriyadarshini Muthupadni to Dy. CLC (C), Nagpur; Madhavan to WC (C), Nagpur; S H Sayyed to Dir (Trg.), CLC (C) HQ, New Delhi; Manikandan N to WC (C), Tirunveli; K C Sahu to Dy. CLC (C), Asansol; S K Nayak to Dy. CLC (C) HQ, New Delhi; Rajiv Ranjan to WC (C), Chandigarh; R K Meeha to LWC (C), Army HQ, New Delhi, Kada A Sebastian to WC (C), Bangalore and Shammi J Tigga was posted to WC (C), Kolkata following promotion to JAG.

» R V N Vishweshwar is Director (Fin), HCL

R V N Vishweshwar, ED, IOCL, has been appointed as Director (Finance), Hindustan Copper Limited (HCL).

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Briefs

LUCKNOW
7-yr-old boy electrocuted

A seven-year-old boy, Fahad, was tragically electrocuted in Lucknow after touching an exposed transformer while retrieving a cricket ball. The incident on Sunday morning ignited public outrage, with residents blaming the electricity department for negligence. They claim the transformer's protective gate had been broken for two years, and despite numerous complaints, no repairs were made. Locals reported that 14 animals had previously died from electrocution at the same spot. The power was not cut off until residents intervened, and no electricity officials responded. This tragedy amplifies scrutiny on the Uttar Pradesh electricity department, especially after the Energy Minister recently warned officials about ignoring distress calls. Residents are demanding accountability for Fahad's preventable death.

- Biswajeet Banerjee

NEW DELHI
'Dhankhar alone knows'

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge stated he has no information on the true reason for Jagdeep Dhankhar's resignation as Vice President, suggesting it's a matter between Dhankhar and PM Modi. Kharge noted that as Rajya Sabha chief, Dhankhar consistently sided with government, often denying Opposition opportunities to raise crucial issues. He questioned why Dhankhar, who "always took the government's side," would resign, especially given speculations about his pro-farmer stance.

KOCHI
Save Bharat's identity: RSS

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat said that 'Bharat' should not be translated, asserting that doing so would diminish its unique identity and global respect. Speaking at an education conference in Kochi, he stated, "Bharat must remain Bharat." Bhagwat stressed the importance of India becoming a strong economic and global power, not for dominance, but to aid world. He also highlighted that 'Bharatiya' education should foster self-reliance, sacrifice, and community spirit to encompass societal environments.

SRINAGAR
'Bid to disrupt J&K peace'

Union Minister Kiren Rijiju stated that while Jammu and Kashmir's people desire progress, "fringe elements" from outside India are attempting to disrupt peace and progress. Speaking at Kashmir University, Rijiju stressed that a strong India requires a strong Jammu and Kashmir. He urged politicians to set aside differences for national interest to resist external negative influences.

Power crisis deepens in UP despite Yogi's warnings

Biswajeet Banerjee
LUCKNOW

Despite stern warnings from Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and open disapproval from Energy Minister A K Sharma, Uttar Pradesh's power crisis continues unabated. On paper, electricity is in surplus, and demand is relatively low. Yet, the reality across the state paints a very different picture—widespread outages, hours-long blackouts, and growing public frustration.

As per official figures, around 2,065 MW worth of power generation units are currently offline due to "low demand" and "technical rea-

sons." This includes major units in Obra, Harduaganj, and Panki in the public sector, and four units in Tanda (440 MW) in the private sector—shut until the end of July or early August. However, rural areas are reeling under power cuts of up to 14 hours, receiving barely 10 hours of electricity a day.

Urban areas are faring only slightly better. In cities like Lucknow, power tripping has become routine—with 8–10 instances daily. The government claims 24x7 supply in cities and 18.5 hours in villages, but in reality, there's an average shortfall of 6 to 8 hours, often explained away as "local faults."



Senior officials in the energy department admit that despite meeting the rosters on paper, supply disruptions are rampant due to aging infrastructure and poor manpower. "Lines are 20–30 km long and severely dilapi-

dated. A minor fault can take hours to detect—sometimes requiring pole-to-pole inspection," an official said.

Manpower is another bottleneck. In many areas, one junior engineer oversees two to three substations. There are too few linemen, and nearly 20,000 contractual workers were recently laid off, crippling the ground-level monitoring system.

"Even if an insulator bursts in one part of a village, it could take hours to locate it due to vast stretches and lack of real-time monitoring," said a technical expert, suggesting the need for DPM (Distribution Point Monitoring) boxes every 3–5 km, as used in Delhi.

Management failure, say consumers

Avadhesh Kumar Verma, Chairman of the Vidyut Upbhokta Parishad, calls it a management failure. "Breakdowns during monsoon are natural, but the system should have been prepared. Feeder-level monitoring needs to be strengthened. End the roster system and ensure 24-hour supply, so even during faults, consumers get at least 15–18 hours of power."

Electricity available but...

"Electricity is available, yet not reaching people. That's sheer mismanagement. Material and machines exist in power corporations, but there's no manpower. Petrolemen posts for breakdown monitoring have been abolished. Line staff are minimal. That's why the monitoring system has collapsed." Shailendra Dubey, Chairman of the All India Power Engineers Federation

Govt's response: Feeder-level fixes coming

In response to the crisis, Power Corporation Chairman Dr. Ashish Kumar Goel said that corrective work is underway under the RDSS (Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme). "We are fixing wires, transformers and feeder lines. Once complete, the impact will be visible. Consumers must also ensure timely bill payments so improvement work can proceed at pace and reach everyone," Goel said.

The state has over 3.5 crore electricity consumers. On June 10, it achieved a peak supply of 32,000 MW—a record. Current daily demand is around 23,566 MW. Still, power sector struggles to provide uninterrupted service, not due to lack of electricity, but due to lack of planning, maintenance, and accountability.

BATTLE OF BALLOT | Election Commission says enumeration forms of 91.69 per cent of voters in Bihar have been received

SIR tally hits 7.24 cr

Dheeraj Kumar
PATNA

The Election Commission of India (ECI) announced that a significant 91.69% of Bihar's 7.89 crore registered voters, totaling over 7.24 crore individuals, submitted their enumeration forms during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) phase, conducted from June 24 to July 25.

The ECI attributed this success to the collaborative efforts of Bihar's Chief Electoral Officer, district election officials, and Booth Level Officers (BLOs) across 77,895 polling stations.

The active participation of political parties also played a crucial role, with a 16% increase in Booth Level Agents (BLAs) appointed by parties. Notably, the Congress more than doubled its BLAs, while the CPI(M) and CPI(ML) saw increases exceeding 1000% and 500% respectively, highlighting broader engagement in the process.

Recognising Bihar's substantial migrant population, the ECI implemented nationwide advertisements and coordinated with State CEOs to facilitate outreach. This resulted in nearly 29 lakh digital interactions, including over 16 lakh online form submissions and 13 lakh physically submitted forms. To target urban electors, special camps were held in all 5,683 wards across 261 local bodies.



RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav with party's Bihar unit chief Mangani Lal Mandal at a public rally in Patna on Sunday

May review booze ban if INDIA bloc comes to power: Tejashwi

Dheeraj Kumar
PATNA

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav hinted at a potential review of Bihar's prohibition law if the INDIA bloc forms the next government.

Implemented in 2016 when Tejashwi was Deputy CM, the law saw some relaxations in 2018. He emphasised that the law, being questioned, necessitates public and official dis-

cussions before any decision. Yadav criticised Bihar's "double-engine" government, alleging rampant corruption and crime against women, specifically targeting Deputy Chief Ministers Vijay Kumar Sinha and Samrat Chaudhary. He cited a surge in violent crimes and the CAG report's findings of unaccounted funds, labeling the current administration as one of "the corrupt, of the criminals."

ECI is also actively encouraging young voters who will turn 18 by October 1, 2025, to register via Form 6, with a dedicated campaign running from August 1 to September 1.

ECI has criticised "certain individuals" for spreading misinformation about the SIR of electoral rolls in Bihar, conducted ahead of state polls expected in November.

The draft electoral roll will be published on August 1 in both print and digital formats. Voters and political parties can file claims and objections for inclusion or removal of names between August 1 and September 1. ECI assured that no voter's name will be deleted from draft roll without prior notice and a formal speaking order.

CONG SLAMS CHIRAG

Congress leader Pramod Tiwari played Union Minister Chirag Paswan, accusing him of being power-hungry. Tiwari pointed Paswan's contradictory stance, questioning Bihar's crime rate despite contesting elections with the NDA and serving as a Union Minister. He had earlier expressed shame in supporting a government unable to curb crime.

SC to hear SIR petitions today

The Supreme Court is set to hear petitions challenging the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of Bihar's electoral rolls on Monday. The ECI maintains the SIR is a crucial, legally recognized process to ensure accuracy and restore public confidence in the electoral rolls, addressing concerns about duplicate or ineligible voters. However, petitioners argue the SIR's legality and procedure are flawed, particularly its exclusion of Aadhaar and Voter ID cards for verification, which could disenfranchise marginalised communities.

N Chithra
CHENNAI

The Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed the Chola era and its emperors saying the heights reached by them were a source of inspiration, "providing an ancient road map for the country" for embarking on the path of a developed nation.

Modi was addressing the public at the valedictory function at the 'Aadi Thiruvathirai' festival on the occasion of the birth anniversary of King Rajendra Chola I at the Gangaikonda Cholapuram temple in Tamil Nadu's Ariyalur.

The PM announced his government would install grand statues of Chola era emperors Raja Raja Chola and his son Rajendra Chola-I in Tamil Nadu. "The legacy of Rajaraja Chola and Rajendra Chola is synonymous with India's identity and pride. The history and heritage of the Chola Empire proclaim the true potential of India," he declared at the millenary of the Gangetic expedition undertaken by Rajendra Chola in 1025.

A commemorative coin for Rajendra Chola at Gangaikonda Cholapuram, the erstwhile capital of the Cholas for 250 years was also released on this occasion. Modi missed no opportunity to send out subtle political messages tapping into the 'spiritually inclined' voters of

the Dravidian State, which goes to polls in less than eight months. The BJP is in alliance with the AIADMK and for the first time has openly declared intentions of sharing power in a State which not only rejected the party in the past but also has traditionally favoured a single-party rule. Modi invited heads of Saivite Mutts, all non-Brahmins, for the event to subtly convey BJP honours the spiritual legacy of the Cholas.

However, Prime Minister Modi aimed to counter the perception of the BJP as a Brahmin-centric party. This follows a similar attempt two years prior with the 'sengol' installation in the new parliament, a claimed symbol of power transfer that lacks historical evidence.

Modi highlighted Chola achievements in economic and strategic advancements, emphasizing unity, naval strength, and defense as inspirations for modern India's development. He connected Chola diplomatic ties with current Indian priorities like national security, referencing 'Operation Sindoor'. PM also lauded the Cholas' cultural unity, linking it to his government's initiatives like the Kashi and Saurashtra Tamil Sangamams and the repatriation of stolen artifacts, including 36 from Tamil Nadu. The event featured a performance by Ilaiyaraaja, with Modi receiving a warm reception.

Modi lauds Shubhanshu

Prime Minister Modi, in his 'Mann Ki Baat' address, lauded India's space advancements, highlighting Chandrayaan-3's success and IAF Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla's return from the International Space Station. He noted these achievements have sparked a surge of interest in science and space among children. Modi mentioned the INSPIRE-MANAK Abhiyan promoting innovation of Indian space startups.

PM highlights Kaziranga feats

In his recent Mann ki Baat address, Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted Kaziranga National Park's rich biodiversity. He praised the park's pioneering Grassland Bird Census, which identified over 40 species, including rare ones. Modi specifically emphasized the innovative use of AI and sound recording technology for the census, allowing for bird identification without disturbing the avian population. CM Himanta Biswa Sarma further noted identification of 43 grassland bird species, some critically endangered

TMC starts 'Bhasha Andolan', BJP scoffs

Aritra Singha
KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress (TMC) launched its "Bhasha Andolan" (Language Movement) across West Bengal on Sunday, following Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's announcement at a July 21 rally.

CM herself is expected to participate in a street protest in Bolpur, Birbhum, on July 28. Addressing a gathering in Cooch Behar, TMC minister Udayan Guha called on people to resist the BJP's divisive politics.

Guha asserted that the BJP, having failed to divide people along religious lines in Bengal, is now targeting the Bengali language and identity. He alleged that Bengali-speaking migrant workers

face harassment in BJP-ruled states, calling BJP "anti-Bengali."

In response, the West Bengal government has introduced a WhatsApp-only helpline for harassed Bengali-speaking migrant workers, with TMC minister Manas Bhunia confirming the party's ongoing support to their families.

Leader of Opposition Suvedu Adhikari dismissed the "Bhasha Andolan" as a "drama" orchestrated to obstruct Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

Adhikari accused Mamata Banerjee of protecting Bangladeshi Muslims and Rohingyas, claiming they constitute a significant portion of her and the TMC's voter base.

Haridwar horror: Narrow passage and scary scenes

PTI
HARIDWAR

As the ambulances drove in with sirens blaring outside the Mansa Devi temple, where a stampede sparked by a rumour killing at least six people, several injured persons were lying at the entrance unattended.

"Chunnis" brought by the devotees to be offered to the goddess were strewn along the stairs that lead to the hill-top temple in Haridwar. Scores of footwear, too, lay abandoned at the entrance.

A video showed a policeman running towards an ambulance with an injured child in his arms. Another footage showed an injured devotee writhing in pain inside an ambulance and

enquiring about his relatives who had been separated during the chaos.

Video clips showed a huge crowd of men, women and children stuck in a narrow passage leading to the temple. Dozens of people, seemingly glued to each other and hardly moving, could only manage to hold the children above their heads.

Mahendra Pratap Singh, an eyewitness who saw the stampede from a rooftop a little distance away, said excess crowd led to the tragic incident. "Excess crowd is the only factor," he said.

An injured devotee, Nirmala, admitted at the government hospital, said the stampede happened as the bulk of people going up and those hurrying downwards

choked the narrow passage. "People coming back from the temple pushed those climbing upwards and then people began falling over each other. Nothing could be seen because of the crowd. I kept lying down," she said from her bed at the hospital.

Locals said if the administration had been a little cautious, the accident could have been avoided.

"Mansa Devi is the biggest centre of attraction for devotees in Haridwar after Har Ki Pauri. Thousands of devotees come here every day. The crowd swells during month of Sawan as a rule. Being a Sunday, the possibility of a larger crowd was very much there. So, the administration should have been more alert," said Ajay Jaiswal, a local.

Without knowledge, rights of no use: CJI

PTI
SRINAGAR

Rights without knowledge are of no use, Chief Justice of India B R Gavai said on Sunday, emphasising the importance of making citizens aware of their rights.

Addressing the North Zone Regional Conference of National Legal Services Authority (NALSA), the CJI also said there was a need to undo the aberrations of the past and restore the old Kashmir where all communities lived in harmony.

"The judges and lawyers together have to ensure justice for the last citizen of the country. The NALSA works in this direction, and we try to take the NALSA work to remote areas of the country -- be it in Ladakh, the Northeast or Rajasthan. Unless people

have the knowledge of their rights, the rights are of no use," CJI Gavai said.

In an apparent reference to the situation in Kashmir over the last 35 years, the CJI said there have been aberrations that need to be undone.

"There have been aberrations, but we have to work to remove these. This dialogue between judges and lawyers will give a new perspective. I am sure this programme will help in rebuilding the traditional Kashmir where all communities -- Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs -- used to live together," he said.

He said the NALSA should continue its work of ensuring that the last resident of the remotest area of the country gets justice. "Through the Constitution of India, we have promised ourselves justice -- political, social and economic."



Manish Godha
JAIPUR

With an aim to get a scientific and holistic understanding of the leopard population, the Rajasthan Forest Department is set to conduct the state's first-ever leopard census.

This will help the state government formulate a long-term conservation and management policy for leopards. The decision comes following the increasing number of leopards and their frequent

Rise in cases of human-animal conflict triggers call for a precise count to formulate conservation plan

movement in residential areas, leading to human - wildlife conflict, most notably in October 2024, when a leopard killed eight people in Udaipur over 12 days and was later declared a man-eater.

The census is likely to take place from October to December with the technical support of the Wildlife Institute of India, covering protected areas and leopard habitats across the state.

"Preparatory meetings have been concluded while training of field personnel will take place between August and September," said a senior officer of the forest department. The leopard population has shown steady growth lately and has reached 925 in 2024 from

507 in 2017 as per the water-hole census.

The sources said that the issue of the increasing number of leopards and cases of their frequent movement in residential areas was raised with the National Wildlife Board, who suggested getting a scientific and precise count to formulate a sound conservation policy. The count will help the forest department to manage the leopard population and prevent human - wildlife conflicts.



Briefs

Teen driving father’s car rams e-rick, kills driver

An e-rickshaw driver died after a car being driven by a 16-year-old boy rammed into his three-wheeler in Delhi’s Dwarka on Friday at 11.15 am, police said. The boy was accompanied by younger sister. When the boy lost control, the car overturned and crashed into an oncoming e-rick, critically injuring its 40-year-old driver. “The victim was rushed to a hospital but succumbed to head injuries. He was declared unfit to give a statement before his death,” said a police officer, adding findings suggest the car was being driven at a high speed and flipped before colliding with the rickshaw. The car is owned by the boy’s father.

Boy ends life after mother scolds him for playing games

A Class 8 student died by suicide in UP’s Lucknow when his mother scolded her for playing mobile games for long hours, according to police. The 14-year-old student was using his mobile phone at night when his mother scolded him for not focusing on his studies. The boy went to his room, where he was found hanging from the ceiling fan with a rope. Upon discovering the boy’s body, the woman screamed and lost consciousness. The boy’s father serves in the CRPF’s 93rd Battalion and was transferred to Lucknow in May. The family, originally from Odisha, has been living in Uttar Pradesh since then.

From the front page

Haridwar temple...

Uttarakhand CM Pushkar Singh Dhami said a magisterial probe has been ordered. He announced a financial assistance of Rs 2 lakh to the next of kin of the deceased and Rs 50,000 to the injured. He also visited the injured at the district hospital in Haridwar and assured their families of all help. President Droupadi Murmu and PM Narendra Modi also expressed grief over the loss of lives in the stampede. The probe into the disaster will seek to determine the cause of the overhead wire’s collapse and to assess whether adequate crowd management and safety protocols were in place. Initial reports suggest that a combination of overcrowding and a narrow pedestrian path contributed to the chaos. District Magistrate Mayur Dixit said, “Based on photos and videos, we found that someone spread a rumour about an electric wire snapping. However, there is no indication from the condition of the injured or the deceased to support this claim. We will investigate who started the rumour.” Eyewitnesses claimed someone in the crowd shouted about an electric current on the pathway, setting off a wave of fear. Ujjwal Pandit, a local priest associated with the Ganga Sabha, described the terrifying moments: “We heard people calling for help around 9 am. Since the path is narrow and meant only for pedestrian traffic, confusion and panic spread instantly. Local shopkeepers and residents initially didn’t understand what was happening.” Ambulances arrived quickly, and we helped police carry the injured. A wall along the path is also suspected to have worsened the crowd bottleneck, contributing to the stampede,” he added. The temple, dedicated to goddess Mansa Devi and located at the Bilwa Parvat, is a major Hindu pilgrimage site accessible by cable car or a steep foot trail. During the Shravan month, thousands of devotees visit daily to offer prayers and seek blessings.

Sindoor showdown...

On the Opposition side, Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge, in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha respectively, are likely to spearhead the attack. Samajwadi Party’s Akhilesh Yadav, along with a host of Opposition MPs, are also expected to participate actively. The upcoming debate follows a week-long washout of parliamentary proceedings, largely due to Opposition protests over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar and other contentious issues. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju announced on July 25 that both sides had agreed to begin discussions on the Pahalgam attack in the Lok Sabha on Monday and in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday. A marathon 16-hour debate has been scheduled in each House — though such debates often stretch even longer. The BJP-led NDA plans to deploy a wide array of ministers and key leaders including Anurag Thakur, Sudhanshu Trivedi, and Nishikant Dubey. Also expected to speak are members of the seven multi-party delegations that visited over 30 world capitals to present India’s position post-Operation Sindoor. These include Shrikant Shinde (Shiv Sena), Sanjay Jha (JD-U), and Harish Bhalayogi (TDP), among others. One of the more intriguing questions is whether Congress MP Shashi Tharoor will be among the speakers. Tharoor, who led the delegation to the US, has reportedly strained relations with his party due to his vocal support

TRAGIC CRASH | Man & his bro were exiting hospital with daughter, 5, after her treatment

Speeding BMW kills girl in Noida

PTI
Noida
 A five-year-old girl was killed and two others were injured when a speeding BMW rammed into a scooter in Noida’s Sector 20, police said. The incident took place on late Saturday night, just as the girl exited the Post Graduate Institute of Child Health in Sector 30. She was in the facility for treatment with her father and uncle. The girl was identified as Ayaat, and the two injured as Gul Mohammad and Raja. Police have arrested two people, the driver and the passenger, booking them at Sector 20 police station for



rash driving and death by negligence. Yash Sharma, 22, is a resident of Sector 37 in Noida, and Abhishek Rawat, 22, is a resident of Sector 70. ACP Praveen Kumar Singh said, “The investigation revealed the accused were returning from a birthday party. They are being medi-

Corporator held in rape case, axed from BJD

Bhubaneswar: BJD corporator of Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Amaresh Jena, was arrested from Balasore on Sunday in a rape case lodged against him in the state capital, police said. Jena, a BJD leader was booked under the BNS sections 64(2) (rape), 89 (committing miscarriage without woman’s permission), 296 (obscene act), and 352 (criminal intimidation), besides section 6 of the Pocco Act, at the Laxmisagar police station, where the survivor lodged a complaint on Wednesday. As Jena was not available at his house and possible locations and remained incommunicado, police formed a special squad and launched a manhunt for the fugitive neta.

JNU V-C SKIPS MEET, IN A FIX

New Delhi: The Ministry of Education has sought an explanation from Jawaharlal Nehru University Vice-Chancellor Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit regarding her absence at a key conference, according to sources. Notably, Pandit had skipped the conference of Vice-Chancellors of Central Universities without formal approval. There was no immediate response from the JNU V-C on the issue. “Her absence was viewed seriously. In such circumstances, V-Cs are required to take prior approval. There was a conference at JNU coinciding with the V-Cs conference. But the invite for the meet was extended in advance,” a source said. The MoE organised a 2-day meet of Vice-Chancellors of Central Universities in Kevadia, Gujarat from July 10. The meet, as part of events to mark 5 years of implementation of the NEP 2020.

UP told to crack down on fake Arya Samaj societies

PTI
PRAYAGRAJ
 The Allahabad High Court has directed the UP government to launch a probe into “fake” Arya Samaj societies engaging in registering marriages. The order, meant for the Secretary, Home, claimed the societies were engaged in solemnising marriages with mala fide intentions, and at times without verifying the age of the groom and the bride. Justice Prasant Kumar said the probe should be by a DCP-rank officer. The court was hearing a plea by Sonu alias Shahnur, seeking quashing of a summons dated September 12, 2024, on the charges of rape and abduction, in his “marriage” to a woman. According to the case, the woman married Shahnur on February 14, 2020, when she was a minor. She lived in a nari niketan till she became a

major, at which point she started living with Shahnur. “Apparently the applicant and the victim belong to different religions. There is averment in the plea they have solemnised marriage in Arya Samaj Mandir at Prayagraj. It could not have been done without conversion as per the existing law,” the court said, dismissing Shahnur’s petition. “The applicant and the victim come from different religions, as such, their marriage cannot be considered valid unless proper conversion is carried out in accordance with the UP Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act, 2021,” the defence counsel said, adding that the marriage certificate they produced, as issued by an Arya Samaj Mandir, seemed to be fabricated, and cited a previous order to claim the problem was rife in Uttar Pradesh.

Preparing for competitive exams, youth ends life in Raj

Jaipur: A 22-year-old man allegedly died by suicide after slashing his wrist and jumping off the third floor of his house in Jaipur’s Harmara, police said. Rohan Chaudhary was preparing for competitive examinations and lived with his family. His father Sheeshram Chaudhary, a retired Army man, was away in Sikar on Saturday. Rohan had dinner and went to his room on the third floor. He allegedly used a blade to slash his wrist before jumping onto the roof of a neighbouring house behind his residence, police said. On Sunday, a resident discovered Rohan’s body and alerted his mother, who had gone to a temple. She and family members rushed to the scene, but Rohan had already passed away. —PTI

6 Odisha dists flooded, 11K people evacuated

Water level rises in rivers, dams as heavy rain pours in parts of Kerala

Bhubaneswar / Thiruvananthapuram: Over 11,000 people have been hit by floods and evacuated from Odisha’s Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Sundargarh, and Keonjhar districts to safety, an official said. At a press conference, Special Relief Commissioner DK Singh said the flood was caused by the overflowing waters of the Subarnarekha, Baitarani and Jalka rivers following heavy rainfall. “The rescued people have been provided shelter at different cyclone centres and other buildings. The government is providing dry food items and cooked food to them,” he said.



Deshbhakti Quiz in Assam

Guwahati: In alignment with the celebration of the 5th Deshbhakti Divas, a grand Quiz Competition was organised by the Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Assam. The event witnessed participation not only from the state but from across India. Held at the Srimanta Sankaradeva International Auditorium, Srimanta Sankaradeva Kalakshetra, Guwahati, the competition drew participation from 348

of the 650 registered teams. Contestants from Kerala and Delhi took part, making the event a national-level contest. Renowned quizmaster Achinta Sharma conducted the competition, which was held in two phases – a preliminary round and a final round. The preliminary round consisted of a written test comprising 32 questions. From this round, six teams were shortlisted for the final round. Minister Pijush Hazarika graced the occasion.

Chhattisgarh Catholic nuns’ arrest: Cong slams BJP, RSS

Thiruvananthapuram: The Congress in Kerala on Sunday vehemently criticised the BJP and the Sangh Parivar over the reported arrest of two Catholic nuns from the state by police in Chhattisgarh. According to media reports, the Kerala-based nuns were arrested at a railway station in Chhattisgarh recently on charges of human trafficking and forced conversation raised by right-wing activists. AICC general secretary KC Venugopal and Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly VD Satheesan cited it as the latest example of attack against minorities in the BJP-ruled states. In a post on X, Venugopal said attacks on minorities have seen a rampant increase under BJP-ruled states, be it Chhattisgarh, Odisha or Madhya Pradesh. “The latest attacks by Bajrang Dal goons on two Catholic nuns in Durg, Chhattisgarh point to a tacit support for such hate crimes from the ruling establishment,” he alleged. Venugopal said he has written to the Union Home Minister and Chhattisgarh

CM demanding strict punishment against culprits and the urgent need to uphold the Constitution so fundamental rights of minorities are not threatened under their rule. Echoing similar sentiments, Satheesan said witchhunt in the name of religion or caste is unacceptable. In a Facebook post, he alleged the Kerala nuns became victims of a brutal police witch-hunt. A “mob trial” was held against the nuns and a false case was filed against them, he alleged. “The rights guaranteed by the Constitution are for everyone. It is not the generosity of the BJP or the RSS. The nuns arrested in a false case in Chhattisgarh should be released immediately,” Satheesan said. Alleging the Sangh Parivar are “wolves in sheep’s clothing”, the Congress leader said they would come to the churches and Christian homes in Kerala with cakes. “In other places, they will disrupt all the celebrations of Christians. They will attack them brutally. The latest example of this was seen in Chhattisgarh,” he alleged. —PTI

Banke Bihari mgmt moves SC on temple administration

New Delhi: The management committee of the Thakur Shree Banke Bihari Ji Maharaj temple in Mathura has moved the Supreme Court against a Uttar Pradesh government ordinance that vests the control of the shrine’s administration with the state. In a plea, the temple management committee, comprising 350 members and “sewayat” Rajat Goswami, said the state’s conduct is mala fide as an issue concerning the use of temple funds to acquire 5 acres was decided by HC on November 8, 2023 and it has denied the state the permission to use the temple funds for acquiring the land. The committee said the UP govt did not file appeals against the HC’s Nov 8, 2023 order and instead, an impleadment application was filed in the pending plea before the top court. “The said SLP was concerning a completely different issue concerning elections in Giriraj Seva Samiti which is totally a separate issue from Banke Bihari ji Maharaj temple. A direction was passed in order dated May 15, 2025 by the Supreme Court, inter alia, granting permission to UP to utilise temple funds to acquire 5 acres of land,” the plea says. The plea is listed for hearing before on Monday. —PTI

Conversion: UP man conceals identity, cheats woman, nabbed

Bijnor: A man has been arrested for allegedly hiding his religious identity, marrying a woman under a fake name, and subsequently forcing her to convert, the police said. In a complaint on Saturday, the woman alleged her husband died 9 years ago. She met a man who introduced himself as Ravi. They got married, and had kids. The man was later identified as Naseem, who had concealed his identity at the time of marriage. He took control of her savings on the pretext of building a house, and coerced her into converting to another religion. —PTI

Property feud: UP man kills parents, sister

Ghaziपुर: A 40-year-old man in UP’s Ghaziपुर allegedly hacked his father, mother and sister to death with an axe over a property dispute on Sunday. Ghaziपुर SP Iraj Raja said Abhay Yadav allegedly killed his father Shivrām Yadav, 65, mother Jamuni Devi, 60, and sister

Kusum Devi, 36, over a property dispute. “Preliminary investigation reveals the deceased had reportedly transferred some land and assets to his daughter, which left Abhay Yadav upset. In a fit of rage, he attacked them with an axe,” Raja said, inspecting the crime scene. —PTI

Cuncolim locals remain skeptical as pollution and odour persist despite GSPCB measures

GSPCB HAS DIRECTED INDUSTRIES AT CUNCOLIM IDC TO MONITOR EMISSIONS, ETPS, AND MAINTAIN SLAG DISPOSAL RECORDS; RESIDENTS REMAIN UNCONVINCED AND DEMAND SAFE DISPOSAL OF 35,000 TONNES OF HAZARDOUS WASTE

GUILHERME ALMEIDA
THE GOAN | MARGAO

A recent report by the Goa State Pollution Control Board (GSPCB) has outlined several environmental initiatives undertaken at the Cuncolim Industrial Estate, aiming to curb pollution in the area, including measures to conduct Ambient Air Quality Monitoring under the National Air Monitoring Programme (NAMP) and Water Quality Monitoring under the National Water Monitoring Programme (NWMP).

In addition, the GSPCB has carried out environmental audits of fish meal and fish processing units operating within the estate. According to the report, industrial units have been directed—under their consent conditions—to implement a range of measures, including Ambient Air Monitoring, Stack Emission Monitoring, Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP) Monitoring, and maintaining detailed records of slag disposal.

However, despite these official claims, residents of Cuncolim—who have waged a long and sustained battle against pollution at the estate—remain unconvinced. Many locals argue that these measures have neither significantly reduced air and water pollution nor addressed the persistent foul odour that continues to emanate from the industrial area.

Adding to local concerns is the unresolved issue of hazardous zinc waste, estimated at around 35,000 tonnes, which has been lying unat-



The hazardous waste dump lying unattended at the Cuncolim Industrial Estate for the last 18 years.

tended at the Cuncolim Industrial Estate for nearly 18 years. Residents are anxiously waiting for concrete action from the government and its agencies—including the GSPCB and the Department of Science, Technology and Waste Management—to safely dispose of the hazardous material.

Hope was recently rekindled when Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, speaking in the Goa Legislative Assembly, announced that Levinson Martins would soon be appointed as the new Chairman of the GSPCB, sparking optimism as well as a degree of scepticism. Optimism because Martins hails from the adjoining village of Assolna and is no stranger to Cuncolim given that he had presided over the GSPCB as its Member Secretary in the recent past. Scepticism for the simple reason whether a change in leadership alone can bring about a meaningful transformation at the long-polluted Cuncolim Industrial Estate when the system needs an overhaul to bring about a change on the ground.

No CETP yet for



The Cuncolim Industrial Estate.



The Cuncolim Industrial Estate.

Cuncolim Estate housing heavy industry, fish units

Unlike many other industrial estates, the Cuncolim Industrial Estate plays host to steel and metal manufacturing units equipped with induction and reheating furnaces, along with fish processing and fish meal units, IMFL/distilleries, and various other facilities.

Steel manufacturing units, in particular, require substantial quantities of water for pro-



file photo of effluents discharged from Cuncolim IDC.

WATER DETAILS OF FISH UNITS:	
Total domestic water consumption	61KLD
Total domestic waste water generation	58.1KLD
Total industrial water consumption	567KLD
Total industrial consented waste water generation	494KLD
WATER DETAILS OF STEEL UNITS:	
Total industrial Water consumption of Steel Industries	749KLD
Total Domestic Water consumption of Steel Industries	58KLD
Total domestic waste Water generation of steel industries	42 KLD
**Gardening and sprinkling 118KLD included	

cesses such as production, cooling, pollution control, slag cooling, and even gardening. Currently, water for these needs is sourced from borewells, the IDC, and private tankers.

Similarly, fish processing units generate wastewater during the handling and processing of fish. This wastewater is reportedly treated in captive Effluent Treatment Plants (ETPs) installed within the units.

Regrettably, the Cuncolim

Industrial Estate still lacks a Common Effluent Treatment Plant (CETP). Despite repeated assurances from the government regarding its establishment, the promises have thus far remained unfulfilled.

Vigilant residents have repeatedly highlighted incidents of effluents from the estate making their way into nearby water bodies and rivulets. This has led to contamination of local water resources, raising serious concerns

GSPCB launches odour study amid complaints

Residents staying in the vicinity of the Cuncolim Industrial Estate complain of the foul odour emanating from the area. In fact, they have pointed out that they have been plagued by unbearable odour since the time the fish meal and fish processing units set shop in Cuncolim. Promises to control odour have in no way mitigated the problems faced by the residents.

The GSPCB report, however, said that an odour study has been initiated by the Board for Cuncolim in September 2024. In fact, the Board has awarded the work of odour monitoring and characterisation of odorous compounds around Cuncolim IDC to a firm.

The Board has identified the odour generating units as fish processing units (6 nos. washing and packing units and 1 fish meal unit).

The report says that around 20-22 locations will be identified by GSPCB. Some locations will be selected in the core and buffer zone of some of the industrial units and some locations in the residential area nearest to the IDC.

about the adequacy and effectiveness of existing wastewater treatment practices at the Cuncolim Industrial Estate.

Recycled effluent

Locals allege furnace smoke escapes into air and not through chimneys

The GSPCB report shows that the steel units are directed to install on-line stack monitoring system for the furnaces and connect the same to Board servers for continuous monitoring. Board officials also conducted inspection of steel units and has directed the steel owners to rectify and increase the flue gas suction hoods. Inspection has been done and show cause notice has been issued to four units.

The report further states that around eight steel units have stopped its operations at Cuncolim, while a few have converted to direct hot rolling rather than reheating thereby further reduction in emission load, resulting in a decrease in the overall emissions from the steel manufacturing units.



File photo of smoke discharged by the units in Cuncolim.

from fish units used in steel units, but impact limited

The GSPCB report indicated that the board had initiated measures to encourage the fish units to supply the ETP treated water to the steel units for slag cooling, mills cooling, gardening, dust suppression, scrubbers. In fact, the process of supplying the treated water from the fish units to the steel units had started some months ago.

The GSPCB report says that approximately 30KLD is recycled from the fish meal/processing units for cooling purpose in steel manufacturing units reducing overall ground water withdrawal. A comparison of the water details of the steel units and fish units, including their water consumption, both domestic and industrial and waste generation, however, shows that the amount of water recycled may form a small percentage of the total water requirements of the steel units.

The GSPCB report stated that the units should provide Electromagnetic Flow meters at the inlet and outlet of ETP. The same should be connected to board's server from receipt of this addendum.

The units should install On-Line Continuous Effluent Monitoring System (OCEMS) on the treated effluent discharge pipeline for measurement of Flow, pH, COD, BOD, TSS and TDS and should provide a connectivity to GSPCB server from receipt of this addendum.

IN SHORT >>

Ponda couple duped of ₹16L in scam

PONDA: A couple from Ponda was defrauded of Rs 16 lakh by six individuals associated with a Kolhapur-based company. A complaint in this regard has been lodged at the Mardol Police Station. The accused convinced the couple to invest in a scheme that promised monthly returns of Rs 4,500 for every Rs 1 lakh invested, over a two-year period.

Chain snatcher nabbed by police

PORVORIM: In a swift breakthrough, Porvorim Police arrested a man involved in a chain-snatching incident. According to SP (North) Rahul Gupta, a complaint was lodged by a woman stating that on July 24, a man arrived on a scooter outside her residence. Claiming to have a parcel in her name, he lured her outside and suddenly snatched her gold chain before fleeing.

WEATHER >>

Max: 30.5 C
Min: 25.6C
Humidity: 80%

TIDES

Low: 06:41 19:37
High: 00:35 13:28

No decision yet on HQ of third district: Govt

CABINET NOTE HAD PROPOSED CURCHOREM

THE GOAN | NETWORK

PANAJI

The State government on Sunday clarified that no decision has been taken regarding the headquarters of the proposed third district of Goa.

In a press statement issued, Director of Planning, Statistics and Evaluation Vijay Saxena said that the government has not yet decided the headquarters of the third district.

"As has been reported in certain sections of electronic and print media that the headquarters of the Third District in Goa would be Curchorem in Quepem Taluka, it has been clarified that the government has not yet decided the headquarters of the district," Saxena said.

However, the cabinet note, which was circulated during the meeting on Friday and passed accordingly, the copy of which is with The Goan, clearly states that "the headquarters of the proposed New District is proposed to be set up at Curchorem in Quepem taluka".

THE TURNAROUND

■ A cabinet note circulated on Friday and passed accordingly, clearly states that the headquarters of the proposed New District will be at Curchorem

■ Kavlekar along with QMC councillors, sarpanchas, panchayat members and others met CM

■ They demanded that the headquarters of the third district be established at Quepem

■ On Sunday, Director of Planning, Statistics and Evaluation Vijay Saxena issues a press statement saying the govt has not yet decided the headquarters of the third district

The statement or rather clarification by the government is issued following opposition cum resentment expressed by former deputy Chief Minister Chandrakant Kavlekar over the proposal.

Kavlekar along with Quepem Municipal Chairperson, Councillors, Sarpanchas, Panchayat Members, and other members of civil society met Chief Minister Pramod Sawant demanding that the headquarters of the proposed third district in Goa be established at Quepem.

"Chief Minister Pramod

Sawant gave us a patient hearing and assured us that our demand has been duly noted," Kavlekar said in a post on 'X'.

The State cabinet had on Friday accorded its approval for creation of Third District, comprising four remote talukas of Canacona, Quepem, Sanguem and Dharbandora. With creation of a third district, the boundaries of the existing North Goa district will remain unchanged, whereas, the South Goa will consist of only Ponda, Salcete and Mormugao.



GOURD OF HOPE: A woman places a cucumber at the feet of the statue of St Anne during the feast day celebrations at Santana Church, Talaulim on Sunday. Popularly known as Touxeachem Fest, the tradition sees childless couples visiting St Anne to pray for the blessing of a child, offering a cucumber as a symbol of their plea.

Govt mulls blockchain tech to secure land transactions

THE GOAN | NETWORK

PANAJI

At the backdrop of land grab cases, the Goa government is considering implementing blockchain technology for land registration and to verify property transactions in the State.

The information was provided by Chief Minister Pra-

mod Sawant to the State Legislative Assembly, wherein he said that the proposal is under consideration of the Department of Information Technology, Electronics and Communication.

"Implementation of Blockchain Technology in land registration and related process is under consideration," Sawant said.

He also said that the government has approved digitization of Notary records and the empanelled agency Info Tech Corporation of Goa Ltd (ITG) has commenced working on the same.

The blockchain is a technology that allows for the tamper-proof and transparent transfer of information in a digital format.

Farmers oppose govt proposal to set up IIT on Sanjivani land

THE GOAN | NETWORK

SANGUEM

Sanguem's sugarcane farmers have strongly opposed any move by the government to allocate land belonging to the Sanjivani Sugar Factory for an IIT or any non-agricultural project.

Farmers from remote villages in the region warned of legal action and mass protests if the government proceeds without addressing their long-standing grievances.

Harshad Shankar Prabhudessai, a farmer from Netravali, said recent media reports about setting up an IIT at Sanjivani's Usgao land have sparked deep concern. He stressed that the land is collectively owned by sugarcane growers across Goa, who are shareholders of the factory.

"The government cannot decide on this land without our consent," he said, also highlighting the state's failure to set up a promised ethanol plant after the factory's closure — a move that has left farmers without livelihood support.

Pitbull attacks nine-year-old Chimbel girl

PANAJI: In a disturbing incident that raises serious concerns over public safety, a nine-year-old girl was mauled by a pitbull in Indiranagar, Chimbel.

The attack occurred around 3 pm on Saturday when the child, a resident of the same neighbourhood, was attacked by the pitbull. She sustained multiple injuries and was rushed to Goa Medical College and Hospital (GMC), Bambolim, for immediate medical attention.

Following the incident, a team from the Old Goa Police rushed to the scene and launched an investigation. Acting under the guidance of Police Inspector Satish Padwalkar, Sub-Inspector Jasvita Naik registered a case and arrested the dog's owner, Riyaz Mallur.

The incident has sparked renewed calls for the enforcement of the ban and stricter action against those keeping prohibited breeds in residential areas.

This marks the third dog bite incident in less than

10 days. A few days ago, a 60-year-old man was injured after being attacked by a Rottweiler in Anawada, Candolim. In another case, a pedestrian was reportedly bitten by a pet dog on the main road near Aathi Resort in Bogmalo.

Last week, the law to prohibit domestication of ferocious breeds of dogs and breeding them was passed by the Goa legislative Assembly.

It empowers the government to notify any breed or class of animals to be "ferocious" and seeks to provide

AS VILLAGES OPPOSE MEGA PROJECTS...

Govt insists it checks water supply before approval

THE GOAN | NETWORK

MAPUSA

Amid growing opposition from villages across Goa to large-scale housing and commercial projects citing lack of basic infrastructure, the State government has claimed that necessary checks are conducted before issuing water availability certificates to such developments.

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, who also heads the Department of Drinking Water (DDW), informed that the department verifies whether a village faces water shortages or irregular supply before clearing multi-crore proposals.

DEPARTMENT'S FACTS & FIGURES

- Estimated total drinking water demand – accounting for domestic, non-domestic and the floating population –stands at 695 MLD
- Dept only able to supply 633 MLD, reflecting a shortfall of 62 MLD
- Only 26.54% of consumers in the State currently receive uninterrupted, 24x7 water supply
- DDW claims despite shortfall, Goa's per capita water supply remains higher than standards prescribed by Centre
- To address emergencies, dept continues to rely on tanker services as a contingency measure



"The department is adhering to the provision of Wa-

ter Supply Rules, 2023, which were notified in the Official Gazette (Series I No. 39 dated

December 28, 2023), while assessing and issuing water availability certificates," said Sawant, responding to a written query during the ongoing monsoon session.

The assurance comes at a time when several gram sabhas across the State – including in Moira, Assagao and Siolim (Bardez) and Varca (Salcete) – have witnessed residents raising red flags over mega housing and hotel projects that they say are putting unsustainable pressure on already limited resources like water and electricity.

Despite the government's claim of procedural checks, official data reveals a gap in

supply. According to the DDW, the estimated total drinking water demand – accounting for domestic, non-domestic and the floating population – currently stands at 695 million litres per day (MLD).

However, the department is only able to supply 633 MLD, reflecting a shortfall of 62 MLD.

Additionally, the Chief Minister acknowledged that only 26.54 per cent of consumers in the State currently receive uninterrupted, 24x7 water supply –highlighting the limited reach of continuous water access even as urbanisation accelerates.

NEXT STOP | Bhopal Metro on fast track, October launch target set

Want to gift Metro to people soon, says CM after trial ride

Our Staff Reporter
BHOPAL

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Sunday took part in a trial run of the Bhopal Metro train, travelling from Subash Nagar station to AIIMS, and later continuing till Rani Kamlapati Railway Station. Calling the experience “pleasant,” he said the government is committed

- **Yadav travels from Subhash Nagar to AIIMS on trial run**
- **Government to invite PM to inaugurate Bhopal Metro train operations**



Chief minister Mohan Yadav, Minister Krishna Gaur, ACS Sanjay Dubey and others taking the trial ride of Bhopal Metro train on Sunday

Indore Metro to be fully operational by year-end: CM

CM Mohan Yadav also said the Indore Metro is already functional, and the government is targeting full operation on the Super Corridor to Malviya Nagar Square section by the end of this year, giving Indore residents full-fledged metro connectivity.

has already inspected the Metro, and Commissioner of Metro Rail Safety (CMRS) will conduct a final inspection soon.

“As soon as CMRS clearance comes through, we will open Metro to public on the priority corridor,” he said.

Before the ride, CM also visited Metro Command Centre near Subash Nagar station and reviewed operational systems and technical aspects of the project.

He said the Bhopal Metro is a major symbol of state’s rapid progress. The total project cost stands at Rs 6,941.40 crore, while the priority corridor from Subash Nagar to AIIMS alone is being developed at a cost of Rs 2.225 crore.

A comprehensive road-map has been drawn up to make both the Orange and Blue Lines fully operational before 2030.

The priority corridor of the Metro includes eight elevated stations, running from Subhash Nagar to AIIMS

The total length of the priority corridor is approximately 7.5 km

The launch of the Metro train will officially grant Bhopal the status of a Metro city

Metro trains, designed for a top speed of 90 km/h, will run at an operational speed of 40 to 60 km/h, with an average two-minute halt at each station. Passengers will have access to modern amenities, including escalators, lifts, Braille signage, clean drinking water, hygienic toilets and facilities for differently abled.

Out of the 27 trains sanctioned for Bhopal, five have already arrived in the city.

This monsoon, youngsters opting for obscure destinations



Our Staff Reporter
BHOPAL

Unexplored and lesser-known destinations in Madhya Pradesh have emerged as the favourite of youngsters interested in adventure activities, or simply sightseeing, this monsoon season.

Instead of flocking to already crowded tourist places such as Pachmarhi and Mandu, the youth are preferring getaways to Pataalkot in Chhindwara district, Midghat near Budhni in Hoshangabad district, and Sultangarh in Shivpuri.

Such places also offer ample greenery and breathtaking views, and adventure sports such as trekking, hiking, and rock climbing. Accessible on even two-wheelers, so they turn out affordable as well.

Pataalkot, a valley in the Satpura mountain ranges, located about 240 km from the state capital, can be reached by road via Piparia. The Doodhi River flows through

the valley, adding to its beauty. Pataalkot is a favourite for those interested in hiking, rock climbing, and trekking, besides bird-watching.

“It seems as if the rains have given a bath to the mountains. It felt so peaceful and calm there,” says Nepal Singh, just back from a solo trip to Pataalkot.

Midghat near Budhni also offers a great view, with numerous waterfalls. The place is just 60 km from Bhopal. Due to safety concerns, the administration had barred access to Amargarh and Digambar Waterfalls in the area, but watching them even from a distance is a treat for sore eyes. Sultangarh is a bit farther, about 365 km from Bhopal. It is best reached by travelling to Gwalior and then catching a bus or hiring a cab. Located in the Narwar Tehsil of the Shivpuri district, Sultangarh is known for a waterfall, River Parwati, surrounded by hillocks covered with thick, green forests.

CM removes 5 Harda officials over lathicharge on Karni Sena

Our Staff Reporter
BHOPAL

CM Mohan Yadav on Sunday removed five officials of Harda district, including four from police and one from district administration, over a controversial lathicharge on Karni Sena members earlier this month.

The action comes in response to a police crackdown on July 12 and 13, when Karni Sena members were protesting, demanding arrest of an accused in a cheating case. The protest turned tense when police used force to disperse the

All five have been attached to the office of IG, Narmadapuram, until further orders

crowd.

During the operation, police reportedly entered Rajput hostel, detained members one by one, and allegedly thrashed them after asking their caste identity. There were also serious allegations that police beat female residents of the hostel.

In the crackdown, police arrested Karni Sena’s district president and national president Jeevan Singh Sherpur, triggering widespread outrage not only within the Rajput community, but across social and political circles.

Following CM’s intervention, ASP Ram Das Prajapati, SDOP Archana Sharma, Kotwali police station in-charge Prahlad Marskole, traffic in-charge Sandeep Sunet, and SDM Kumar Shanu Devedia have been removed from field duty. All five have been attached to the office of IG, Narmadapuram, until further orders.

Bargi dam’s 15 gates opened

Our Staff Reporter
BHOPAL

Eight more gates of Bargi dam were opened on the intervening night of Saturday-Sunday leading to flood-like situation in low-lying areas in Mandla and Dindori districts. Total 15 gates of the dam have been opened so far. Spell of extremely heavy to very heavy rainfall continued in the state on Sunday. An alert has been issued for heavy rainfall in next 24 hours.

Low to Moderate flash flood risk likely over likely at Ashoknagar, Guna, Mandasaur, Neemuch, Raisen, Rajgarh, Sheopur, Shivpuri and Vidisha districts in next 24 hours.

Red alert for extremely Heavy Rainfall, Thunderstorm and Lightning for districts like in Ratlam, Mandsaur and Neemuch districts in next 25 hours. Orange alert for very heavy rainfall in Vidisha, Rajgarh, Barwani, Alirajpur, Jhabua, Dhar, Ujjain, Agar, Guna, Ashoknagar, Shivpuri, Sheopur Districts.

Yellow alert for Heavy Rainfall, Thunderstorm and Lightning likely in Raisen, Sehore, Narmadapuram, Indore, Dewas, Shajapur, Gwalior, Narsinghpur, Seoni, Balaghat, Sagar Districts. Eight more gates of Bargi dam were opened on the intervening night of Saturday-Sunday leading to flood-like situation in low-lying areas in Mandla and Dindori districts. Total 15 gates of the dam have been opened so far.

Spell of extremely heavy to very heavy rainfall continued in the state on Sunday. An alert has been issued for heavy rainfall in next 24 hours. Low to Moderate flash flood risk likely over likely at Ashoknagar, Guna, Mandasaur, Neemuch, Raisen, Rajgarh, Sheopur, Shivpuri and Vidisha districts in next 24 hours.

Water level rises at Indira Sagar Power Station



FP News Service
MUNDI

Due to the recent rainfall in upper regions, the water level at Indira Sagar Power Station rose by 259.06 metres by Sunday evening. The inflow of water from Handia side is approximately 8,000 cubic metres per second. In response to the increasing water levels, the dam management opened 12 gates around 4:00 am today, with 10 gates opened to half a metre and two gates to one metre.

Currently, the discharge from the dam is about 1,620 cubic metres per second, while eight turbines in the powerhouse are generating 1k MW of electricity. A total of 3,460 cubic metres of water is being released from both the dam and the powerhouse. If the water level continues to rise at this rate, the management may increase the number of open gates or the volume of water released after Monday afternoon. Meanwhile, villagers from nearby areas visited the dam site to witness the impressive flow of water from the bridge.

PM lauds Bhopal’s ‘Sakaratomak Soch’ in Mann Ki Baat

Highlights forts of Bundelkhand as symbols of valour

Our Staff Reporter
BHOPAL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his monthly Mann Ki Baat radio address on Sunday, praised the efforts of Bhopal’s women-led “Sakaratomak Soch” group for its contribution to city cleanliness.

Modi said the group, comprising around 200 women, is actively engaged in cleaning 17 public parks in Bhopal and promoting sustainability by distributing cotton bags. He credited such initiatives for helping Bhopal improve its ranking in the national cleanliness survey.

Highlighting importance of heritage, Prime Minister also spoke about the historic forts of Bundelkhand,

CM hears Mann Ki Baat with people

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav listened to the Prime Minister’s address at a government school in Ward 50 of the state capital. Speaking on the occasion, Yadav said the PM’s mention of the Sakaratomak Soch group and Bundelkhand forts is highly encouraging. He also said that on August 10, foundation stone of a rail coach manufacturing factory will be laid in Raisen.

calling them living chapters of India’s glorious past.

He named forts like Gwalior, Datia, Ajaygarh and Chanderi, urging people to explore these sites that echo with tales of bravery and rich history.

Tight curbs around House during session

Our Staff Reporter
BHOPAL

With monsoon session of the state assembly starting Monday, police have imposed strict restrictions in a five-kilometre radius around the Vidhan Sabha.

Dharna, processions, demonstrations and gatherings of more than five people have been banned in the area. Carrying of sharp weapons or firearms is also prohibited during this period, officials said on Sunday.

Police Commissioner Harinarayanchari Mishra issued the order under Section 163 of the Indian Code of Justice. As per the directive, entry of heavy vehicles including trucks, tractor-trolleys, dumpers, tongas and bullock carts will be barred within the restricted zone. However, the order exempts government employees and officials on duty. Burning of effigies, sloganeering and any form of public agitation will not be allowed. Violators will face legal action under Section 223 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita



Security forces on premises of Vidhan Sabha

(BNS).Marriage and funeral processions are exempt from the curbs.

To maintain security, 500 police personnel from various districts have been deployed outside the Assembly. Security checks have also been tightened this time — vehicles with hooters or flash lights (red or yellow) will not be allowed entry. Every vehicle passing in front of the Assem-

bly is being stopped and searched.Only LPG and CNG vehicles with valid RTO permits will be permitted, while private auto-rickshaws are barred from entry.

As per the new route arrangement, ministers will use Gate No. 1 or 3 for entry and exit, while the Speaker, MLAs and officials will enter from Gate No. 1 and exit through Gate No. 3.

Retired NG locomotive to grace Rani Kamlapati Station

OUR STAFF REPORTER
BHOPAL

In a move to preserve the rich technical heritage of Indian Railways, a narrow gauge (NG) engine — Locomotive No 514 (ZDM5) — of historical significance and engineering marvel will be put on display at Rani Kamalapati Railway Station. This Independence Day, the engine will be displayed at the main entrance of the station.

The engine, weighing 22 tons, was officially designated as a heritage item on November 3, 2023.

It was originally used in the Dholpur region on narrow gauge trains, undertaking its first journey on June 3, 1991, and was retired on April 1, 2019, after serving for approximately 28 years. Its last run was on March 30,

Historic engine to be inaugurated as heritage display on August 15

2023, and officially retired on April 1, 2023.

The engine was transported to Rani Kamalapati Railway Station on July 23, after being preserved by the Vacuum Diesel NCR Loco Shed.

General Manager of Rani Kamalapati Railway Station, Mohit Somaiya, stated that the engine represents the technical evolution and history of Indian Railways and is a step towards connecting future generations to the railway heritage.

The formal inauguration will be on August 15, Independence Day, he added.

HR-Project team alignment in IT: IIM-I cracks code

Managers must formally integrate HR & project functions

Atul Gautam
INDORE

A study by IIM Indore has revealed that effective HR implementation in IT projects is driven not by rigid policies alone, but by continuous, strategic collaboration between HR and project managers.

Success hinges on combining structured tools (like staffing

forecasts and dashboards) with flexible interpersonal engagement (like cross-functional meetings and negotiations), the research co-authored by IIM Indore faculty member Prof Shrihari Suresh Sohani has revealed.

The study shed light on how human resources (HR) and project teams could work together more effectively to drive success in information technology (IT) projects.

Published in the journal PLOS ONE, the research uncovered how strategic, ongoing collaboration between HR

managers and project leads was critical to navigating the fast-paced, ever-evolving landscape of IT services.

Drawing on rich qualitative insights from project-based IT firms, the study revealed that successful HR implementation in projects was not simply a matter of top-down policies or planning tools. Instead, it was the result of continuous, coordinated actions between HR and project teams, who often operated under different mandates but must align for organizational success.

“We found that the most im-

pactful HR strategies weren’t handed down in isolation—they were built through consistent, real-time engagement between HR and project functions,” said Sohani. “Especially in IT projects, where timelines shift and skill requirements evolve quickly, this kind of alignment is not optional—it’s essential,” he added. The research identified two key modes of strategizing that HR and project leaders must master:

1. Procedurally embedded strategizing – This involves structured, rule-based planning using tools like quarterly

forecasts, staffing dashboards and budget trackers. These systems help create clarity, consistency and accountability.

2. Interactive and mutual strategizing – Equally vital is the need for interpersonal dialogue—cross-functional meetings, informal negotiations and one-on-one conversations that allow managers to respond to sudden changes in project needs or staffing gaps.

The study emphasised that neither approach was sufficient on its own. “Rigid systems without interpersonal flexibility can become bottlenecks,”

Prof. Sohani explained.

“Conversely, too much informality without structure risks chaos. Organizations must balance both.”

One of the study’s standout findings is the value of mutual accountability. By embedding transparency into staffing and HR workflows, such as tracking who raised a staffing request and how quickly it was addressed, companies can minimize internal friction and improve responsiveness.

Another major insight: shared organizational values like client centricity, project ex-

cellence and diversity help bridge the differing objectives of HR and project teams. When departments operate from a common value base, collaboration becomes smoother, even when priorities diverge.

For leaders in project-driven firms, especially in the high-churn IT sector, the implications are far-reaching. The study calls on managers to formally integrate HR and project functions, promote mutual visibility in decision-making and cultivate a shared culture, all while retaining flexibility to address the unpredictable de-

mands of client work.

“This research offers a micro-level view of how cross-functional collaboration can make or break workforce planning,” Sohani said. “Ultimately, successful HR implementation isn’t built on policy, it’s built on people working together, strategically and consistently,” he added.

As IT firms face increasing pressure to be agile, retain top talent and align skills with client demands, IIM Indore’s latest research provides timely, actionable guidance for navigating the complex intersection of human capital and project execution.

Briefs

AGRA 24x7 Water supply plan for 3 areas

Agra to launch 24-hour Ganga water supply in Avas Vikas, Shastrapuram, and Dayalbagh under ₹208 crore project. Underground tanks and meters to be installed, targeting completion by 2026-end. Pilot phase covers Sector 9-10 first.

SULTANPUR AAP Protests school merger policy



AAP activists demonstrated at Gaura Bibipur primary school in Kadipur against UP's school closure policy. Alleged govt favoring liquor shops over education, violating RTE Act rights.

LAKHIMPUR-KHERI Hariyali Teej celebrated

Women in Londonpur Grant village performed traditional puja for brothers' longevity during monsoon festival. Rituals honored Goddess Parvati and Varun Dev, marking Shiva-Parvati union.

BALLIA Community Toilets in Disarray

Public toilets in Kalyan Dehra and Jigirisd found broken, unusable despite Swachh Bharat funds. Locals allege panchayat negligence; doors missing, no water supply.

DEORIA 19 Cadets selected for NCC

49th UP Battalion selected 19 cadets (7 girls) after rigorous drills at Bhagalpur school. Tests included 1600m race, long jump, and written exam.

RAEBARELI TD Vaccination drive from Aug 1

Jagatpur block to immunize Class 5 & 10 students against tetanus-diphtheria. Inter-departmental meeting stressed coordination with schools and parents.

KUSHINAGAR Protests against school closures

Jan Adhikar Party demonstrated at collectorate against merger of 27,200 schools with <50 students. Submitted memo to President citing RTE violations.



GHAZIABAD Teen raped then blackmailed with video

Two friends allegedly raped a 15-year-old in Muradnagar, filmed acts to threaten her. Case filed under POCSO, police hunting accused.

AZAMGARH Women's Empowerment dialogue conducted

Atrauliya block officials discussed gender inclusion with Nari Sangh. Forest Dept distributed drumstick plants; schemes reviewed for grassroots impact.

PRAISE | PM praises fort restoration and river cleanup efforts

“UP’s Forts reflect India’s pride” PM Modi in ‘Mann Ki Baat’

UP State Bureau LUCKNOW

In the 124th episode of his monthly radio address ‘Mann Ki Baat’, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spotlighted Uttar Pradesh’s rich cultural heritage, focusing on the historical significance of its forts and rivers. At the heart of his remarks was Kalinjar Fort in Banda district, which he described as a “living embodiment of India’s values, culture, and self-respect.”

Calling Kalinjar Fort a symbol of resilience, the Prime Minister recalled its legendary stand against Mahmud Ghaznavi and emphasized its role in India’s history. He also mentioned other Bundelkhand region forts such as Jhansi, Gwalior, Datia, Ajaygarh, and Garhkundar, urging citizens to visit and celebrate the country’s historical legacy.

The PM’s praise extended to environmental efforts as well.



15 monuments marked for restoration, starting with Kalinjar

He lauded Lucknow’s Gomti Nadi Swachhata Team, a volunteer group that has been cleaning the Gomti River every Sunday for ten years. “Their unwavering commitment is truly inspiring,” he said.

These acknowledgments come amid a broader campaign by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath’s administration to restore Uttar Pradesh’s heritage. The state’s Tourism Department is actively working to conserve and promote major forts like Kalinjar, transforming them into tourism hubs. Simultaneously, a state-wide river rejuvenation drive is in progress, involving the revival of small rivers and

PM Modi to Hold Mega Rally in Varanasi on August 2

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to visit his parliamentary constituency Varanasi on August 2, where he will address a public rally in the Sewapuri region. Ahead of the visit, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will arrive on Monday to review preparations and hold meetings with local officials. The rally is expected to draw over 80,000 attendees, with extensive arrangements underway, including a German hangar-style pandal and a dedicated helipad. Despite rain-related logistical issues, officials are working to ensure smooth execution. A list of development projects for inauguration and foundation laying will also be finalized. Additionally, the BJP has launched a city-wide cleanliness campaign in Varanasi, aligning with the PM’s arrival. The effort, led by senior leaders and MLAs, is part of the party’s tradition to honor Modi’s visits with public participation and civic engagement.

large-scale plantation along their banks.

The Prime Minister’s remarks not only drew national attention to UP’s cultural landmarks but also aligned with the Yogi govern-

ment’s efforts to link tourism, history, and conservation. With the 2027 Assembly polls approaching, such recognition of local heritage is also seen as a strategic nod to the region’s identity and pride.

Son axes parents and sisters to death



UP State Bureau GHAZIPUR

A horrifying triple murder has shaken Uttar Pradesh’s Ghazipur district, where a 35-year-old man allegedly killed his parents and sister with an axe following a land dispute. The incident took place in Dilia village under the jurisdiction of the city Kotwali police station on Sunday morning.

According to police, the accused, identified as Abhay, attacked his 70-year-old father Shivram Yadav, his mother Jamuni Devi, and sister Kusum after a violent argument. Kusum had reportedly been given 15 biswa of land by her father a month ago, which had caused growing tensions within the household. Local residents alerted police after hearing

Investigation reveal land dispute as motive behind the triple murder

screams, but Abhay fled the scene before officers arrived. A blood-stained axe was recovered from the site. Police officials, including SP Dr. Iraj Raja, ASP City Gyanendra Nath Prasad, and CO City Shekhar Singh, reached the spot and began an investigation. Neighbors stated that Kusum had returned to live with her parents after two failed marriages, a decision that reportedly angered her brother. The triple murder has left the community in shock, and a manhunt is underway to apprehend the accused. Police are investigating multiple angles surrounding the motive.

Power crisis deepens as 2065 MW generation units shut down

UP State Bureau LUCKNOW

Despite stern warnings from Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and frustration voiced by Power Minister A.K. Sharma, the power situation in Uttar Pradesh continues to deteriorate. Official records claim surplus electricity, yet 2065 MW worth of generation units remain offline, citing “low demand” and technical issues as actual factors.

Villages report receiving less than 10 hours of power daily. Even cities like Lucknow are plagued with 8 to 10 power trips per day. The government maintains that urban areas receive 24-hour supply, but the reality on the ground tells a different story. Experts are calling it a case of administrative failure.

Energy Minister slams power officials

AK Sharma has publicly expressed his fury at the state’s electricity department officials, warning of “dire consequences.” The minister shared an audio recording of a power official’s conversation with a consumer, highlighting alleged misconduct and poor service. In his social media post, Minister Sharma revealed that “several MPs and public representatives” have complained about the behavior of power department employees and officers. He underscored that such “irresponsible” conduct is damaging the government’s reputation. This latest outburst follows earlier reprimands from the minister regarding issues like power tripping, overbilling, and unnecessary cuts across the state. His sharing of the audio clip signals a heightened push for accountability within the department.



The infrastructure is aging, maintenance staff is stretched thin, and faults often take hours to repair. In rural areas, substations are scattered far apart, making fault detection even slower. Meanwhile, nearly 20,000 contract

workers have been let go, weakening the already fragile system.

Private and government power plants remain shut under the pretext of “reduced demand,” while the public sweats in darkness.

Brijbhushan’s sons meet CM

UP State Bureau LUCKNOW

Just four days after former Kaiserganj MP Brijbhushan Sharan Singh met Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, his sons, Prateek and Karan, also held a meeting with the CM on Saturday. This second meeting of the family with CM Yogi within a week has sparked considerable political buzz. Sources suggest that Brijbhushan’s elder son, MLA Prateek Bhushan Singh, is eyeing a ministerial position in the upcoming cabinet expansion, which would require CM Yogi’s approval. The ongoing political differences between Yogi and Brijbhushan have reportedly impacted the latter’s family not just politically but also financially. Interestingly, Brijbhushan himself has stated that his younger son, MP Karan Bhushan Singh, shares a better relationship with CM Yogi than Prateek.

Sahara’s Lucknow empire face collapse

UP State Bureau LUCKNOW

The sprawling 47-year-old empire of Sahara India in Lucknow, once a symbol of the city’s commercial prowess, is now on the brink of collapse. The Lucknow Development Authority (LDA) and district administration have initiated a review of 19 properties leased to Sahara, with action already taken on three.

Three properties, including the SaharaGanj Mall, Sahara Bazaar, and Sahara founder Shri Subrata Roy’s personal residence, have had their leases expire. One property has already been vacated, and three others were recently sealed. The remaining 13 properties are under scrutiny, primarily for alleged violations of lease terms, specifically using



Three properties already vacated, 13 under review after ₹19.8 Crore dues remain unpaid

properties leased for commercial purposes for personal use. A significant outstanding liability of 19.80 crore is owed by the Sahara group to the Lucknow district administration. The LDA’s list of properties under review includes

prominent sites like SaharaGanj Mall in Hazratganj, Subrata Roy’s residence on Sahara Shahrukh Road, various commercial and residential properties in Gomti Nagar, parking spaces, and office complexes. LDA officials confirm that a report has been sent to the government, indicating imminent major action. The action against Sahara began with the sealing of Sahara’s Kapoorthala Complex and Sahara Bhawan-1 and Bhawan-2 in Aliganj on July 19.

RO-ARO exam successfully conducted

UP State Bureau

The Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission (UPPSC) Review Officer (RO) and Assistant Review Officer (ARO) examination was successfully conducted across all 75 districts of Uttar Pradesh on Sunday. This marks the first time the exam was held in a single shift.

The examination, which ran from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM, utilized 2,382 centers statewide. To ensure smooth and fair conduct, each center had a center superintendent and two magistrates deployed. Candidates arrived at their respective centers on time, undergoing rigorous security checks including face recognition, biometric verification, and thorough physical searches before being granted entry. Electronic devices, mobile phones, and smartwatches were strictly prohibited inside the examination halls.



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath paid a courtesy visit to Governor Smt. Anandiben Patel ji at Raj Bhavan on Sunday.

Marriage grant for OBC girls increased to ₹35,000

UP State Bureau LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government has announced an increase in the marriage assistance amount provided to daughters from the Other Backward Classes (OBC). The

grant, previously set at ₹20,000, will now be raised to ₹35,000. Backward Class Welfare Minister Narendra Kashyap confirmed the decision, stating that the proposal is currently being finalized and will soon be implemented.

initiative

Tamsa revival aids 5 purvanchal districts

UP State Bureau LUCKNOW

The Tamsa River considered sacred and vital to eastern Uttar Pradesh is undergoing a large scale revival initiative aimed at improving irrigation, groundwater levels, and ecological balance in five key districts, namely Ayodhya, Ambedkar Nagar, Azamgarh, Mau, and Ballia.

A combined effort by the State Mission for Clean Ganga and District Ganga Committees, the project focuses on restoring the 264 km long river, including an 89



km stretch in Azamgarh district alone. This restoration work is benefiting 121 gram panchayats across development blocks such as Mohammadabad, Tahbarpur, Mehnagar, Rani Ki Sarai, and Palhni.

It also includes desilting,

channel cleaning, and plantation drives along the riverbanks to improve water flow and support groundwater recharge. According to Azamgarh’s Chief Development Officer Parikshit Khatana, the campaign aims to restore the river’s ecological

Afforestation along the river bank help in preventing soil erosion, while improving ecology

health while increasing the availability of irrigation water for local farmers.

Azamgarh Divisional Forest Officer P.K. Pandey added that afforestation along the Tamsa’s banks is underway. This not only helps stabilize soil and prevent erosion but also contributes to improving the over-

all green cover in the region. The forest department’s efforts are part of a broader environmental restoration plan that ties in with river rejuvenation.

Beyond agriculture and ecology, the river holds deep cultural and religious significance. The Durvasa Rishi Ashram, located at the confluence of the Tamsa and Manjusha rivers, attracts lakhs of people during Shravan and Kartik festivals. Similarly, Chandrama Rishi Ashram, where the Tamsa meets the Silni river, becomes a focal point during Ram Navami and Kartik Purnima.

SP workers clash over stage space



Leaders share laugh and display unity after 'small dispute in the family'

descended into a display of passion. Former city president Aju Ishaq, ex-MLA Veeresh Yadav, and district secretary Manoj Yadav took center-stage, unintentionally creating an impromptu reality show. Fortunately, Manoj calmed things down with folded hands, and Sherwani wisely summed up the scene:

50% Subsidy on crop fencing

UP State Bureau LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government has announced a significant relief for farmers, offering a 50% subsidy on fencing to protect horticultural crops. This initiative is now integrated into the Integrated Horticulture Development Mission Scheme and will be implemented on a “first come, first served” basis.

Dinesh Pratap Singh, State Minister for Horticulture, Agriculture Marketing, Agriculture Foreign Trade, and Agriculture Export, stated that the government is continuously working to ensure higher profits for horticulturists at lower costs. This new provision offers an additional benefit alongside existing subsidies for fruits, vegetables, spices, flowers, aromatic, and medicinal plants.

MBBS, MD/MS fee hike

UP State Bureau LUCKNOW

Private medical colleges in Uttar Pradesh have seen a substantial increase in fees for MBBS and postgraduate (MD/MS) courses for the academic session 2025-26. MBBS fees have risen by ₹1.55 lakh to ₹5.71 lakh, while MD and MS programs in several colleges are now up to ₹10 lakh more expensive. The fee hike has been approved by the state government, based on a report from the Medical Education Department’s Fee Regulation Committee.

The Fee Regulation Committee, specifically consti-

17 of 31 MBBS colleges raise tuition fee

tuted to determine fees for private medical colleges, held multiple meetings between February and June this year. During these sessions, proposals from all private colleges participating in counselling were reviewed, and their claims were heard. After verifying the submitted documents, the committee finalized and approved the new fee structures. Out of 31 medical colleges offering MBBS, 17 have seen an increase in their fees.



BENGALURU

Cong leader hacked to death over land dispute



A Congress leader was brutally murdered by a group of men with lethal weapons at Sathanur village in Kanakapura taluk of Bengaluru South (Ramanagara) district on Saturday night.

The victim, Nanjesh (45) from Honganidoddhi village, was the former president of the Achchalu Gram Panchayat.

The incident occurred when Nanjesh was reportedly partying at the dhaba. A gang of four to five unidentified men attacked him with lethal weapons, leaving him bleeding profusely from multiple wounds on his face and body. He was rushed to a private hospital in Kanakapura, but did not respond to treatment.

The preliminary investigations suggest land dispute as the reason for the murder. Nanjesh had reportedly been involved in a heated argument with locals a few days back over a piece of land in his village, which escalated into a physical altercation.

MANGALURU

Dharmasthala: Demand grows for fresh probe

The All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) has called for a fresh and impartial investigation into a series of allegedly suspicious deaths of women in Dharmasthala village, located in Dakshina Kannada district.

The demand was raised during a convention held in Mangaluru on Sunday, following startling revelations by a former sanitation worker who alleged that the mutilated bodies of several women, believed to have been sexually assaulted and murdered, were forcibly buried in the area.

During the meeting, AIDWA district vice-president Eshwari Balkunje presented the resolution, which was supported and approved by the association's president Jayanti B. Shetty.

BENGALURU

Constable on patrol attacked

A police constable was stabbed while attempting to mediate a heated argument between a father-in-law and his son-in-law at Valmiki Nagar in Chamarajpet here on Saturday night.

The altercation involved Mohammed Shafeeullah and his son-in-law, Tabrez Pasha.

The dispute reportedly arose after Pasha divorced his first wife, the daughter of Shafeeullah, and the latter was consequently making arrangements for his daughter to marry someone else. Enraged by this, Pasha and his relatives confronted Shafeeullah, leading to a violent quarrel. During the scuffle, Pasha allegedly hit his father-in-law on the head with a bottle. The police personnel on night patrol rushed to the scene. As Constable Santosh intervened, Pasha stabbed him with a dagger.

BELAGAVI

Four held for heroin trafficking

Belagavi's Khadebazar and Market police stations have successfully arrested four individuals in separate operations for their involvement in heroin trafficking.

In one operation, police apprehended Vishwanath Gotadaki and Mayur Rawat in Tangadi Galli. From them, authorities confiscated 14.63 grams of heroin valued at ₹33,000. In another action, police arrested Vaktarahmad Naikwadi, Roshan, and Zaameer Mulla in Kamath Galli, seizing 14.39 grams of heroin worth ₹11,800. Separate cases have been registered at the Khadebazar and Market police stations regarding these incidents. Meanwhile, in a major breakthrough, Maharashtra police, acting on intelligence, have raided a large-scale MDMA drug manufacturing unit located near the Ring Road on the outskirts of Mysuru. The operation was initiated after Maharashtra police recently arrested a drug peddler who revealed that drugs were being supplied from Mysuru.

'SUPER CM' | 'He keeps visiting the state to see whether the govt is fulfilling the promises'

'Surjewala is not interfering in admin, BJP-JD(S) allegations far from truth'

NT Correspondent
DAVANGERE

Senior Congress leader and Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara on Sunday ruled out any interference by AICC general secretary in-charge of the state, Randeep Singh Surjewala into administration, as he termed opposition parties calling him "super CM" as mere allegations, which is far from truth.

He said as the party's general secretary in-charge, Surjewala's repeated trips to the state is natural, as he has to keep watch on whether the Congress government is implementing promises made to the people in its manifesto before polls.

As Surjewala recently held a series of one-on-one meetings with ruling party MLAs and ministers, opposition BJP and JD(S) took a dig at the Congress, calling him 'super



CM". They had also claimed that the Congress high command, which had completely lost confidence in CM Siddaramaiah, has imposed a "Ran-

deep rule" in Karnataka.

Responding to a question on the opposition's criticism of calling Surjewala "Super CM", Parameshwara said, "They are mere allegations.

There is no truth in it. Surjewala is our party general secretary in-charge. He has been appointed by AICC. There is nothing new in it. He was there before the elections and

'Surjewala holding one-on-one meetings with MLAs and ministers is the Congress party's internal matter'

even now.

Naturally, he keeps visiting the state to look into whether the government is fulfilling the promises made by the party in the manifesto ahead of polls."

Speaking to reporters here, he clarified that Surjewala has neither called any officials for a meeting, nor has he given any instructions to them. There is no interference into

the administration by him.

"The BJP and JD(S) are purposely making unnecessary allegations and there is no truth in it," he added. There have been allegations about Surjewala holding meetings with some of the state government officials, but they have been denied by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy DK Shivakumar.

Responding to a question, Parameshwara said Surjewala holding one-on-one meetings with MLAs and ministers is the Congress party's internal matter.

"What does the BJP have to do with it? Don't their party general secretaries visit the state and hold meetings with BJP leaders and workers here? Similarly, our general secretaries too come. Our party needs to check whether we are fulfilling the promises made to the people or not," he added.

'File criminal case against firms supplying fake seeds, fertilisers'

NT Correspondent
BENGALURU

Accusing the ruling Congress of 'failing' Karnataka, state BJP President B Y Vijayendra on Sunday urged the Siddaramaiah-led government to file a criminal case and take strict action against companies that are supplying fake seeds and fertilisers to farmers.

He said a police vigilance team should be formed to take strict action against the networks that cheat farmers. Vijayendra later also said that BJP's farmers' wing will hold a state-wide protest on Monday, as he accused the state government of creating "artificial shortage" of urea in various parts of the state because of its "mismanagement", leading to "panic" among farmers. He also alleged that brokers and traders hold stocks.

The BJP chief was responding to reports about fake seeds and fertilisers being supplied to farmers in some parts of the state, and protests by farmers in various places alleging a shortage in the supply of urea.

"The efforts to trouble the food-providing farmers and exploit them within the system have been ongoing for a long time. Companies supplying fertilizers and seeds are engaging in the despic-



able act of sabotaging agricultural activities by providing fake seeds to the enthusiastic farming community that is expecting a good harvest in the backdrop of a promising monsoon this time," Vijayendra said.

"I urge the government to file a criminal case against such companies in this regard and take strict action, and also to take all necessary measures to ensure that the farming community gets quality seeds and necessary fertilizers in a timely manner," he said in a post on 'X'.

Stating that it should be the government's top priority to ensure that the farming community, which is the largest human resource of the country and who live by trusting nature, does not face any problems, Vijayendra said, in this context, Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led

central government, along with agricultural incentive schemes, has taken precautionary measures to protect farmers.

"The state government too needs to take committed steps in this regard, so that the lives of farmers are not affected," he said.

To strengthen the Agriculture Department and to take strict action against the networks that cheat farmers, a police vigilance team should be formed, the BJP leader said, adding the hashtag "CongressFailsKarnataka".

"This time, mother nature has embraced the farmers through a good monsoon, I urge the government to take all possible precautionary measures to thwart any fraudulent attempts that may disrupt the farmers from enjoying its benefits," he said.

Don't know reason behind Dhankhar's resignation: Kharge

NT Correspondent
VIJAYAPURA

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday said he has no information on the actual reason for Jagdeep Dhankhar resigning as the Vice President.

Dhankhar has to tell what really happened as the matter is between him and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he said.

Noting that Dhankhar always took the government's side, the Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha said he never allowed the opposition, whenever it tried to raise issues, whether it was concern-

ing farmers or poor or on foreign policy issues.

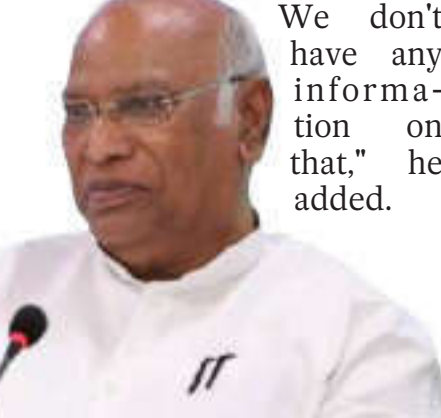
"I don't know all those details. He (Dhankhar) was always on the government's side. He should say what happened," Kharge said in response to a question whether Dhankhar was forced to resign as he spoke in favour of farmers.

Speaking to reporters here, Kharge said, "When we raised several issues concerning farmers, poor, international issues or foreign policy, he never used to give us an opportunity (in Rajya Sabha as its Chair-man)."

"When we tried

to raise issues by giving notices on issues regarding the poor, atrocities against women, dalits and downtrodden, and incidents like Hindu-Muslim clashes, he did not give us an opportunity. It (reason for Dhankhar's resignation as Vice President) is between him and Modi.

We don't have any information on that," he added.



BBMP's chicken rice plan for strays sparks cheers, criticism, memes

NT Correspondent
BENGALURU

Every day for the last six years, promptly at noon, 37-year-old 'Protein' Prabhu has sat with a basket of bananas at the entrance of the sprawling Indian Institute of Statistics campus, adjacent to the Bangalore University campus, feeding the monkeys that live in and around the area.

Prabhu also feeds about 30 dogs in the vicinity, but he

waits until nightfall to avoid agitating neighbours who object to feeding strays. He is happy that the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has decided to feed chicken and rice to street dogs across all eight zones—around 4,000 in total—at an estimated cost of Rs 2.8 lakh. "This is a great step to control dog aggression, and a huge relief to people like me who spend from our own pockets. I spend about Rs 2,500 daily on chicken and rice for the



dogs, and another Rs 2,000 for 50 kg of bananas that I feed to monkeys and cows," Prabhu told PTI. According to BBMP's tender

Dharmasthala: SIT intensifies investigation

NT Correspondent
MANGALURU

The Special Investigation Team (SIT), set up by the Karnataka government to probe the allegations of "mass burials" in Dharmasthala, intensified its investigation, with consultation and inquiries on Sunday.

The man who had confessed to burying bodies in Dharmasthala appeared before the SIT for the second day for inquiry.

The SIT team was joined by its chief Pronab Mohanty -- Director General of Police (Internal Security Division) -- who oversaw on-ground assessments and reviewed progress with officers.

The team also held detailed discussions with local authorities, scrutinised records of missing persons, and revisited earlier reports of suspicious deaths in the region, officials said.

Investigators also interacted with residents in and around Dharmasthala and inspected specific sites believed to be associated with the allegations, they said.

The SIT was constituted by the state government following claims about alleged mass murder, rape, and burials in Dharmasthala, over the past two decades.

The SIT, headed by Mohanty, consists of Deputy Inspector General of Police (Recruitment) M N Anucheth and IPS officers Soumyalatha S K and Jitendra Kumar Dayama.

Twenty police personnel—inspectors, sub-inspectors, head constables and constables—from Udupi, Dakshina Kannada and Uttara Kannada have also been deployed to the SIT.

Water discharge from KRS stepped up, Ranganathittu closed for visitors

NT Correspondent
MYSURU

Following heavy rainfall, inflow into major dams in the Cauvery basin in Karnataka has shot up suddenly.

On Sunday, over 50,000 cusecs of water was being released from KRS dam while the Kapila river has submerged the bathing ghat in Nanjangud town. As the KRS reservoir has already reached the brim at 124 feet, the dam authorities have released excess water downstream in the Cauvery resulting in flooding.

The famous picnic spot,



Ranganathittu bird sanctuary near Mysuru in Srirangapatna, has been closed for visitors as a precautionary measure. Once the water level recedes, the sanctuary will be opened, said sources. On ordinary days, the sanctuary draws

1,000 to 1,500 visitors, while the numbers surge to 3,000 to 3,500 on weekends and holidays.

The facilities at the sanctuary may also get flooded if the discharge from the dam is stepped up during the course of the day. Police have been deployed at the KRS dam and other spots, including Balamuria the river bank to stop people from getting close to the water.

People have started thronging the bridge built across Cauvery near KRS dam to get a glimpse of the overflowing Cauvery.

This community turns discarded idols into celebration of 'circularity'

NT Correspondent
BENGALURU

Class Nine student Ayushvi Roy picked up a compact, framed picture of Goddess Saraswathi and a tiny glass idol of Lord Ganesha, both discarded in a pile of thousands, after browsing about 30 minutes.

These, said Roy, will be placed in the small shrine in her room that she is putting together with the idols that she is drawn to. Born to atheist parents, her home was bereft of idols and worship, Roys said. "But I am a believer and I make it a point to come to the temple every day," Roy told PTI.

It was on one of her visits to her favourite temple -- Siddhi Vinayaka temple at the 7th Sector of HSR Layout -- that Roy came across a recycling event like no other.

Organised by HSR Citizen Forum on July 26, the event saw old pictures of Gods and Goddesses and idols being collected from those who



would have otherwise discarded them underneath some trees, which would have eventually ended up in landfills.

Here at the event, after Udvāsana pooja -- which is believed to aid the "extraction" of the deity's presence from the idol or image and returning it to its source -- these discarded idols and pictures either find a second home or are recycled following due process. Sitting among a pile of stripped frames, separating nails, paper, plastic, glass and wooden bits, so that

whatever can be recycled can be recycled, 68-year-old Ananthakrishnan, a retired banker and a resident of HSR Layout said he never misses an opportunity to attend the sustainable events organised in their community.

"They give me a sense of purpose. Of all the events, this one is special to me. I have attended all three organised so far. You can say I am becoming a pro at stripping these old photo frames," Ananthakrishnan told PTI.

Another volunteer, Sunil Reddy, a software engineer

who turns social activist on weekends, said he is amazed at the turnout every single time.

"When we held this for the first time, about nine months ago, we had 50 people coming with their unwanted idols and framed photos. I thought that was big. Today, we had people coming all the way from Mysuru and Hosur. Just goes to show where there is a will, there will always be a way," Reddy told PTI.

The youngest volunteer of the lot, 9-year-old Prashasthi, Class 5 student, who came dressed as goddess herself, waits patiently for her mother, Pragathi Badarinath, to hand her a frame after removing all the dangerous bits. She didn't mind doing this. She shrugged when asked. "But my favourite activity with my mom and her community friends is when we make our own clay Ganesha idols during Vinayaka Chaturthi," Prashasthi told PTI.

Addressing the Goa Assembly last week, Sawant claimed that the Centre would not approve the Mahadaya project.

Youth swept away in Bhadra river

NT Correspondent
CHIKKAMAGALURU

An incident has emerged from NR Pura taluk in Chikkamagaluru district, where a young man was swept away along with his jeep into the Bhadra river. Search operations by local police and the taluk administration are underway to trace the missing driver, identified as Shamant.

According to initial reports, Shamant had been working for several days operating a pick-up jeep, transporting laborers to coffee estates. On Thursday evening, he had reportedly travelled to Kalasa on a hire request. While returning to his village, his vehicle accidentally veered off the road and plunged into the fast-flowing Bhadra river.

The jeep is believed to have been swept downstream from the Kalasa region, prompting intensified search operations in and

around Balehonnur and Magundi. Police teams are combing the river stretch despite adverse weather conditions and strong currents posing serious challenges.

In a tragic turn of events, Shamant's mother, overwhelmed with grief and anxiety, reportedly took her own life even before her son's body could be recovered. On Thursday night, her body was discovered in a pond behind their home. Kalasa police have registered a separate case in connection with her death.

The dual tragedy has cast a pall of gloom over the village, with locals mourning the loss of two lives from the same family in a single night. Authorities have urged residents to exercise caution during heavy rainfall and rising river levels, which have made many rural roads and bridges unsafe.

BMTC rolls out 148 non-AC e-buses

NT Correspondent
BENGALURU

The Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) on Friday announced the induction of 148 non-AC electric buses from Tata Motors Ltd for public service, along with the launch of new routes under express services and package tours.

The first phase of this induction was marked by the ceremonial flag-off of 10 non-AC electric buses by State Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy.

By further expanding its fleet of electric buses, BMTC has taken a significant step towards promoting public transport and combating rising vehicular pollution in Bengaluru. As of now, BMTC operates a total of 1,436 electric buses across various routes in the city, it said. "These additional 148 new non-AC electric buses, supplied by TML (Tata Motors Ltd) Smart City Mobility Solutions Ltd, are being operated under the Gross Cost Contract (GCC) model for a contractual period of 12 years at a rate of Rs 41.01 per kilometre per bus, inclusive of electricity charges," BMTC said in a statement.

"Financial assistance of Rs 39.08 lakh per bus has been extended under the Directorate of Urban & Land Transport (DULT) and the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) scheme," it added.

According to BMTC, the electric buses is instrumental in preventing the emission of approximately 2.07 lakh kg of carbon dioxide (CO2) into the atmosphere and contributes to saving nearly 77,000 litres of diesel daily.

RSS chief advocates for ‘Bharatiya’ education model

HD Bureau
KOCHI

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat has emphasised the urgent need for a shift in India's educational framework, calling for an alternative system rooted in 'Bharatiya' philosophy to achieve a 'Viksit Bharat'. Speaking at the national 'Chintan Baitak' held in Kochi as part of the education conclave organised by the 'Shiksha Samaskriti Utthan Nyas', Bhagwat addressed a gathering of educators and thought leaders, advocating for a paradigm shift that he believes is essential to the country's future growth. Bhagwat, highlighting the hi-

storical influence of Western educational ideologies on India's system, stressed that this has often overshadowed traditional indigenous knowledge systems. "To build a Viksit Bharat, we require an education system that is rooted in our own culture, history, and values. This is not just a theoretical pursuit, but a practical need for national development," he stated during the event. The RSS chief's remarks have sparked significant debate among educators, policymakers, and social analysts, as they reflect ongoing discussions on the role of traditional versus modern educational frameworks in shaping India's future. His emphasis on 'Bharatiyata' or



Indianness in education suggests that the current system, which has largely been shaped by Western thought, is inadequate for meeting the unique needs of

a rapidly changing nation. Bhagwat's vision for education focuses on restoring the country's traditional knowledge systems, including ancient wisdom found

in Sanskrit texts, Ayurveda, and indigenous sciences. He believes that these areas are deeply connected to the identity and soul of India, offering insights that could be

The vision focuses on restoring the traditional knowledge systems, including ancient wisdom found in Sanskrit texts, Ayurveda, and indigenous sciences

integral to solving contemporary problems in areas like health, agriculture, and technology. This push for a 'Bharatiya' education system aligns with the RSS's broader ideol-

ogical goals of cultural revitalisation. Bhagwat's speech underscored that the current educational framework, largely shaped by British colonial legacies, has contributed to a loss of Indian cultural identity. The RSS chief pointed out that many students graduate from the system with little understanding of their own heritage, leaving them disconnected from their roots. Supporters of Bhagwat's call argue that modern education needs to recognise and incorporate the richness of India's cultural and philosophical traditions. They suggest that India's rich history of scientific advancements, spiritual practices, and social governance

systems offers valuable lessons for modern education. Advocates argue that by blending these traditional teachings with contemporary knowledge, India could create a unique educational ecosystem that caters to its diverse population while remaining globally competitive. Bhagwat's speech also touched on the importance of the holistic development of children. He argued that an education system based on Bharatiya philosophy would focus not only on academic knowledge but also on fostering character, ethical values, and a sense of social responsibility, as described in the Vedas.

MESSY REVISIONS | Some names have been completely omitted, others shifted

Opposition protests flaws in electoral roll revision

HD Bureau
KOCHI

The Opposition in Kerala has raised strong objections over discrepancies in the draft electoral rolls for Kochi Corporation and the broader Ernakulam district, published by the State Election Commission. Both the United Democratic Front and Bharatiya Janata Party have accused the government of attempting to manipulate voter lists in favour of the ruling Communist Party of India [CPM], alleging deliberate errors in the compilation process. UDF's Ernakulam MLA T. J. Vinod formally lodged a complaint with the Chief Election Commissioner, copying relevant authorities, including the District Collector and the Kochi Cor-

poration secretary. His petition highlighted serious concerns about voters being placed in incorrect wards, with many being shifted to neighbouring wards or even to entirely different Assembly constituencies. **Both the United Democratic Front and Bharatiya Janata Party have accused the government of attempting to manipulate voter lists in favour of the ruling CPM**

the Kochi Corporation's newly delimited wards, have sparked widespread criticism. Opposition leaders have claimed that this could potentially alter the outcome of upcoming local body elections. "The inclusion of voters in incorrect wards is not a minor issue. It creates confusion, and more importantly, it could influence the election results," Vinod stated in his petition. He further alleged that the problem was not an isolated incident but part of a larger, systematic effort to skew the

electoral process in favour of the CPI. He demanded immediate rectification of the electoral rolls and called for an independent investigation into the issue. Both the UDF and BJP have accused the CPI-led state government of colluding with election officials to engineer discrepancies. They argue that the ruling party has been trying to influence the electorate in key constituencies, particularly in urban areas like Kochi, where elections are expected to be highly competitive. The allegations have prompted calls for transparency and scrutiny in the voter registration process. The CPM, however, has dismissed these accusations, terming them politically motivated. Party spoke-

persons have rejected the claims, arguing that the discrepancies were the result of technical errors and administrative oversights, not deliberate tampering. They have assured that the issues raised by the opposition would be addressed and corrected, as per electoral norms. Despite the ruling party's response, the opposition's claims have found resonance among residents who feel that the draft rolls have not accurately reflected the actual voter base. Many local leaders, particularly in areas that have undergone recent ward reorganisation, have expressed concern that voters who have lived in a particular area for years may find themselves disenfranchised due to these errors.

Over 100 school buildings unsafe

HD Bureau
KOCHI

The Local Self Government Department has flagged more than 100 government school buildings in the state as structurally unsafe, with the number expected to rise as inspections continue. These buildings, primarily constructed before 2007, are mostly tiled-roof structures that do not adhere to modern building standards. The assessment was prompted by two incidents: the electrocution of a student at an aided school in Thevalakkara, Kollam, and the collapse of a roof at the Government UP School in Karunagappally, Alappuzha. The alarming findings have raised concerns about the safety of school infrastructure across the state, particularly in rural areas where many of these schools are situated.



The LSGD's engineering wing is overseeing the ongoing inspections, which are being conducted systematically across all districts. According to department sources, the initial list of 100 buildings is just the beginning, and more structures may be found to be at risk as further assessments are made. The inspections have revealed significant structural weaknesses, including aging roofs, cracked

walls, and foundations that have deteriorated over time. Many of these issues were left unaddressed due to a lack of proper maintenance and the absence of adequate repair protocols. These unsafe buildings have created an urgent need for swift remedial action, with local bodies being tasked with the responsibility of demolition and reconstruction.

Natesan challenges Satheesan

HD Bureau
KOCHI

Vellapally Natesan, General Secretary of the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam, has presented a stark challenge to the United Democratic Front ahead of the upcoming state assembly elections. During an event in Paravur, Natesan declared that if the UDF secures 100 seats, he would resign from his position within the SNDP. However, he cast doubt on the likelihood of the UDF achieving such a milestone. Natesan's remarks have sparked a flurry of political activity, particularly in response to a recent statement made by V. D. Satheesan, a senior leader within the opposition. Satheesan had earlier ridiculed the SNDP for its alleged opposition to the Ez-



hava community and mocked its leadership, which led Natesan to respond with a direct challenge. Natesan accused Satheesan of exhibiting arrogance, driven by his own ambitions to become the Chief Minister. The SNDP leader questioned Satheesan's understanding of the Ezhava community, as well as his commitment to secularism, pointing out the

lack of tangible contributions to the community's welfare. "Has he given anything to the Ezhava community?" Natesan questioned, sharply criticising Satheesan's perceived indifference to the needs of his own base. The latest remarks are particularly significant, given the community's influence in Kerala's political dynamics.

Shakthan replaces Ravi as DCC chief

HD Bureau
KOCHI

Pressure from political circles and internal party dynamics have led to a significant change in the leadership of the Thiruvananthapuram District Congress Committee, with senior leader N Shakthan now taking on the temporary role of president. The appointment follows the resignation of Palode Ravi, whose controversial phone conversation with a local leader sparked tensions within the party. Palode Ravi's resignation marks the culmination of mounting pressure from within the Congress, as the leaked phone conversation gained widespread attention. The contents of the conversation, which were deemed politically sensitive, led to accusations of misconduct.

Payment backlog jeopardises Ayushman Bharat Kerala

HD Bureau
KOCHI

Hospitals in Kerala are grappling with unpaid claims under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, putting significant strain on the state's healthcare system. The delays have triggered growing concerns about the financial sustainability of the programme, which promises free healthcare for economically weaker sections of society. The flagship health insurance scheme, launched by the Centre, aims to provide cashless hospitalisation for up to ₹5 lakh annually to over 55 crore eligible beneficiaries across India. Despite its ambitious scope, the scheme is facing mounting challenges in terms of timely disbursement of funds to healthcare providers, a problem that is particularly pronounced in

Kerala. The unpaid claims have reportedly exceeded ₹400 crore, with many hospitals in the state unable to recover the costs incurred for treating patients under the scheme. This backlog has led to mounting financial pressure on medical facilities, with

Ayushman Bharat has been widely praised for its outreach and the potential to transform the healthcare landscape in India, especially for the underprivileged. Since its inception, the scheme has enabled over 9.84 crore hospital admissions, with payments exceeding ₹1.4 lakh crore.

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some struggling to cover operational costs due to delayed reimbursements. Smaller private hospitals, in particular, are feeling the impact the hardest, as they rely heavily on government reimbursements for treating low-income patients under the scheme.

However, healthcare providers argue that the operational challenges—such as delays, underpayments, and the need for constant bureaucratic follow-up—are undermining its original vision. For Kerala's hospitals, the delayed payments have re-

sulted in a precarious financial situation. "We are caught in a vicious cycle," said a senior official at one of the largest private hospitals in Thiruvananthapuram. "We treat patients under Ayushman Bharat, but the reimbursement process is sluggish, making it hard for us to continue offering these services." Hospitals have also raised concerns over the complexity of the reimbursement process. Many facilities claim that the paperwork required to submit claims is unnecessarily cumbersome, which leads to delays in payment. Healthcare providers must go through multiple verification layers, which often slows down the disbursement of funds. For hospitals already grappling with tight budgets, such administrative bottlenecks only add to the strain.

offgrid

CBCI seeks intervention in Kerala nuns' arrest

HD Bureau
KOCHI

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India has condemned the arrest of two nuns from Kerala in Chhattisgarh, claiming that the case against them was fabricated under the influence of right-wing groups. The CBCI has called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah to intervene, as the allegations against the nuns continue to draw attention. Sister Vandana Francis and Sister Preethy Mary, both from Kerala, were detained by police at Durg railway station in Chhattisgarh while travelling with three girls

from the state. The nuns, who are employed at Fatima Hospital in Agra, were reportedly on their way to board a train to Agra when the incident unfolded. According to reports, the situation began when a Travelling Ticket Examiner approached the three girls and asked to see their tickets. The girls explained that they had not bought tickets yet, as they were waiting for the nuns who were to assist them in purchasing them. Suspicious of the situation, the TTE reportedly raised an alarm, which led to local activists getting involved. Subsequently, the police detained the nuns, accusing them of improper conduct and en-



gaging in an alleged attempt to facilitate the trafficking of minors. The CBCI, a key body representing the Catholic Church in India, has vehemently denied the acc-

usations, labelling them as baseless and politically motivated. The body believes that the case against the nuns was orchestrated by right-wing outfits seeking to target religious communities, pa-

The situation began when a TTE approached the girls and asked to see their tickets. The girls explained that they had not bought tickets yet, as they were waiting for the nuns

minorities. The CBCI has expressed grave concern over what it sees as a rising trend of attacks and false cases being levelled against religious communities, pa-

rticularly the Christian community, under the current political climate. The incident has sparked widespread outrage and calls for justice, particularly from various religious groups and organisations. The CBCI has specifically appealed to the Chhattisgarh government, which is led by the Bharatiya Janata Party, to take a firm stand in defending the rights of minorities. The body has stressed that the actions of local authorities, influenced by external pressure, undermine the rule of law and the protection of basic rights guaranteed under the Indian Constitution. While police officials have yet to respond to the CBCI's

claims, the situation highlights the growing concerns over the targeting of religious minorities in some parts of the country. The nuns' case has become a flashpoint, with activists and human rights organisations calling for a thorough and impartial investigation into the matter. Further complicating the issue is the broader context of religious intolerance and increasing tensions between majority and minority communities in various regions of India. This incident is part of a larger pattern of incidents where individuals from minority religious groups, particularly Christians, have faced intimidation, harassment, and

legal challenges, often under the pretext of safeguarding national security or protecting the integrity of traditional cultural values. The call for government intervention by the CBCI underscores the critical role of the central administration in ensuring that the rights of minority communities are upheld in every part of the country. The CBCI's demand for the Prime Minister and the Home Minister's involvement in the case is seen as an attempt to pressure the authorities into taking appropriate action, especially in states governed by parties with strong right-wing affiliations.



The Free Press Journal
Founder Editor: S Sadanand

ICJ's ruling on climate change

Climate activists are having their day in court, if Wednesday's International Court of Justice (ICJ)'s unanimous opinion is a bellwether. The Hague court declaration that governments were legally liable for greenhouse gas emissions is the latest addition to the increasing volume of climate litigation around the world. The judges described as "wrongful acts under international law" the grant of exploration and extraction licenses and subsidies for the coal, oil, and gas industry, which only reluctantly recognised responsibility for global warming in the 2023 COP28 summit. They further pronounced that states had to pay reparations, including monetary compensation and the restitution of damaged infrastructure from catastrophic climate incidents.

The non-binding ICJ opinion is the outcome of a 2023 UN General Assembly resolution that sought to ascertain the obligations of governments to tackle global warming and the consequences if they failed to honour them. In the court hearings, youth activists representing vulnerable communities from frontline states in the Pacific and the Caribbean, which bear the brunt of rising sea levels, argued that the handful of countries that produce the vast bulk of GHG emissions should be held legally accountable for the impact from the climate crisis.

The ICJ's determination builds on two previous opinions on the responsibilities of governments on a question of the gravest importance for the survival of the planet. The first relates to a query from the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law. In response, the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea, in May 2024, declared that rich countries had a duty to reduce emissions faster than developing nations. Emissions must be curbed from land-based sources, international shipping, and aviation sectors, the tribunal averred. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights earlier this month ruled that a stable climate was a human right that states must protect. Meanwhile, the recent spurt in lawsuits to challenge public and corporate inaction to counter climate change has focused on carbon reduction targets and claims for damages against climate-related disasters, according to the UN Environment Programme. It is a moot point whether the spurt in climate litigation will hasten the transition away from fossil fuels.

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A govt directive on school safety

The death of seven children and injuries to at least 27 others in a building collapse at a government school in Rajasthan's Jhalawar district is an unspeakable tragedy that was wholly avoidable. Safety is the cardinal principle that should guide schooling, beginning with the trip to school, the time spent in the institution, and the journey back home. Evidently, administrators in Rajasthan and elsewhere have not felt compelled to address glaring lacunae in the maintenance of buildings, which led to the structure in poor repair collapsing at the Pipodi govt school in Jhalawar, taking the lives of children, including a six-year-old. Two other school buildings also collapsed elsewhere, but students had a providential escape because one in Nagaur had been closed preventively due to damage and the second in Karauli had not reopened for the day. State govt, which are ultimately responsible for public safety, predictably become wiser after the fact, and the incident in Rajasthan is no different: an inspection of all public buildings has been ordered by the BJP govt, while the Union Ministry of Education has made a safety audit at schools mandatory, covering the state of student facilities; five officials were suspended to assuage the community. What happened in Pipodi is particularly distressing, because students had been complaining about the rain-damaged roof, but their pleas were ignored by teachers and authorities, defying even common sense. It is also disturbing that the monsoon's impact was not anticipated by the district authorities, in spite of a state government report identifying 2,200 schools to be in a dilapidated condition and 49,000 in need of repairs to electrical fittings and water structures.

The lack of attention to safe and high-quality public schooling is a global embarrassment for the country, and it has persisted through the decades, in spite of the literature pointing to the vital importance of schooling not just for economic development, but also for individual advancement and well-being. The Union govt has been collecting a 4% Health and Education Cess since 2018-19, with the latest annual collection touching Rs 73,000 cr, the bulk of it devoted to primary and middle school schemes for the poor. It cannot be argued, simultaneously, that India has world-leading economic growth and also that it lacks sufficient funds for school safety. There are distressing reports of road accidents involving students going to school from around the country because of inadequate transport access. Extreme monsoon weather, influenced by climate change, threatens old public buildings and houses. What is more, western India is projected to receive heavy, erratic rain as part of this pattern, and more cyclones are forming in the Arabian Sea than the Bay of Bengal. Such factors should sound the alarm in all states, and remedial action on public buildings needs to follow. Safe, universal, and free schooling is the cornerstone of a truly Viksit Bharat, and govt must do everything to achieve that within the decade.



The Road Ahead

JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN

One death is a tragedy; a million deaths is a statistic. This is a statement attributed to Joseph Stalin, the Soviet leader who ruled by brutal oppression. We, as humans, feel empathy for the pain and suffering of an individual. In the era of 24-hour television and social media, human interest stories capture the imagination of millions of people and generate widespread discussion and debate. Such moments also afford us an opportunity to think carefully and learn lessons for the future and to improve our collective social life.

The Nimisha Priya trial and conviction in strife-torn Yemen is one such case that is agitating the minds of many Indians. Nimisha Priya is one of the millions of hard-working Indians who sought an opportunity for a better life in the oil-rich Arab world. Her business partner, according to Nimisha, stole money from her, threatened her physically, and even confiscated her passport and documents to control her. Her police complaint did not yield any result. Nimisha claims that in July 2017 she sedated her business partner with ketamine in order to retrieve her passport and other

documents, but because of an accidental overdose, he died. Nimisha was arrested as she was fleeing the country. She was tried and convicted for murder and sentenced to death in 2018. The trial was entirely in Arabic, and the accused had no legal representation or interpreter to defend herself. Nimisha and her supporters requested a retrial. Nimisha was moved from Al Bayda jail to the capital, Sanaa, and was retried in another trial court. The retrial, in 2020, also ended in conviction and a death sentence. In 2023, Yemen's Supreme Judicial Council rejected Nimisha's appeal. In December 2024, Rashed Muhammad al-Alimi, the president of the internationally recognised government of Yemen, approved her death sentence and execution. Her scheduled execution earlier this month was postponed, presumably because of pressure from the Indian government and human rights groups. Let us now unbuckle the case and examine the issues.

First, some of the human rights groups are using this case as a platform to oppose the death sentence in principle. That will not be helpful; most countries outside Europe, including the US and India, have the death sentence. In any Islamic

country where the retributory justice of an eye-for-an-eye is the norm, it is futile to appeal on grounds of opposition to the death sentence.

Second, there seem to be only two courses available for clemency or commutation of sentence after a lengthy judicial process convicted Nimisha. Either the president should pardon her, or the victim's family should support a clemency petition by accepting diyah, a financial compensation in lieu of 'Qisas' or retribution.

Third, the situation is complicated because we do not even know who is in charge in Yemen. Sanaa, the capital city where Nimisha is jailed, is controlled by the Houthis. Yemen is in the midst of a complex civil war with multiple groups and factions in control of various parts of the country. India and most world nations have no diplomatic relationship with the Houthis. And the death sentence was notionally approved by al-Alimi, whose control is tenuous at best. Iran has influence over the Houthis, but given the complex situation in the region, it is uncertain who can intervene effectively on behalf of Nimisha.

Fourth, the Indian government has done its best, as the Attorney

General reported to our Supreme Court. Probably further efforts will be made for Iranian intervention. But we should remember that in matters of criminal justice, it is very difficult for any foreign government to influence another country. It is infinitely more complicated when that country is in the midst of a civil war, and nobody knows who is in charge where, and when you have no diplomatic relationship with the local group in control.

Fifth, millions of Indians live in countries where the rule of law is not strong. We should have a system of counselling for Indians seeking economic opportunities in countries where their rights could be extinguished easily, or where there is no transparency in the justice system, or punishments are unduly harsh. Non-resident Indians are contributing enormously to our country and are remitting vast sums (\$135B in 2024-25). We need to help prevent them from becoming unwitting victims of local circumstances.

Promoting awareness in advance, counselling and support services to deal with cases like impounding passports or conditions of slave labour are vital. Acting after a ghastly tragedy unfolds is

ineffective and very difficult.

Finally, we must focus on our own rule of law situation. While we have a normative rule of law and an independent judiciary, there is a deep crisis in our justice system. Fifty-two million cases are pending, many of them for years; about two-thirds of them are criminal cases. Only 10-15% of criminal cases end in conviction where a confession is extracted, often by third-degree methods. About 70% of jail inmates are under-trial prisoners. Extra-judicial settlements have become common, and, increasingly, might is becoming right. Our own social stability and economic growth demand a massive, integrated effort to reform our institutions of rule of law. It is easy to respond to one case that appeals to our emotion. But we must realise that behind every pending case and failure of justice, there are many human faces with tears and suffering. Reform of police, forensics, prosecution, procedures, and judiciary in trial courts as well as constitutional courts should be a very high priority for us.

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Comment

ALI CHOUGULE

In entertainment, nostalgia is said to play an important role in creating audience loyalty. However, though emotionally satisfying, nostalgia may not be enough to ensure success for the new season of an old popular daily soap that explored traditional values and social norms deeply embedded in Indian culture. The move that has stirred both cheer and scepticism among Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu This (KSBKBT) return 17 years after it went off air raises a question: why now, and how relevant is the saas-bahu saga today? The reboot of an old daily soap that once stood as a symbol of family values may loop you back in time, but it is hardly a boost to creativity, considering a reboot of an old story done to death is not an alternative to new possibilities in TV entertainment.

Before we come to the reasons behind its revival, relevance, and past success, it is important to go back to the early days of satellite television in India. KSBKBT debuted on Star Plus on July 3, 2000. In the 1990s, Star Plus, then a Hindi-English bilingual channel, was a struggling third player in the general entertainment channel (GEC) space. Zee TV, with its mass programming and first-mover advantage, was a clear leader, followed by the urban-centric Sony Television. The popular misconception is that

KSBKBT catapulted Star Plus to the lead position in the mass entertainment space. But the fact is that it was Amitabh Bachchan-hosted Kaun Banega Crorepati, a unique and localised quiz format with relatable content blending entertainment and education, which totally disrupted the GEC landscape, significantly boosting the channel's reach and viewership beyond expectations.

In television entertainment, often it takes one hit show to transform a channel's fortunes. KBC did that for Star Plus. Balika Vadhu did the same for Colors in 2008, and Tarak Mehta Reluanchi SAB TV as a comedy brand a year later. KSBKBT was a huge beneficiary of KBC's success; its association with Star Plus provided a platform for the show to reach a wider audience. The daily show format was an experiment that worked well because of its relatability for a large segment of women who could connect with the drama of family dynamics. Along with Ekta Kapoor's other popular shows like Kahani Ghar Ghar Ki and Kasauti Zindagi Kay, Star Plus retained its lead over the competition for eight years. Credit must be given to her for changing the fiction programming landscape. However, the quality of content cannot be judged on the sole parameter of high ratings. The same long-running "K-shows" that were lapped up by viewers became so

melodramatic, exaggerated, and convoluted with generation leaps, reincarnations, plastic surgeries, replacements, and repetitive storylines that their viewership dropped significantly. Star Plus even had to use the contractual termination clause to retire Kyunki and Kahani. Since then, neither TV channels nor Ekta, nor others who imitated her formula, have attempted to sanitise the content of daily soaps, from the morass of one kind of programming: family mythology, gender politics, and domestication of women.

In the entertainment industry, sequels, reboots, new seasons, and revivals are part of a conservative business strategy. Apart from the economic rationale, they also reveal something about a lack of creative imagination and incentive for new ideas and stories. As a result, repeating old ideas and concepts has become a safe business mantra. In this kind of an ecosystem, nostalgia has become a safer option to revisit than venturing into something risky and speculative. The consequence of this creative freeze is the narrowing of the range of what can be speculated, imagined, and invented. This phenomenon is not confined to the realm of the entertainment industry alone but extends to other sectors of Indian businesses too.

A conservative ecosystem that gives precedence to stability over risk-taking not only discourages de-

sire for new possibilities but also narrows imagination and ambition. A society that resists change tends to cheer the familiar and encourages recreation of past successful formulas through selective memory, reminiscence, glorification of tradition, and mythology. The value system that perceives any departure from an established social order as a threat is a culture that remembers more and thinks less. In such an environment, a finite new season of KSBKBT offers both business comfort and cultural conformity. The mindboggling repetition happening in television programming suggests a systemic embargo on imaginative storytelling about aspirational India. This explains why, instead of mirroring modern values and aspirations of today's women fighting for their space and voice, TV shows continue to reinforce domestication of women while punishing ambition and individuality. Speaking about her return as 'Tulsi' in KSBKBT, actor and politician Smriti Irani recently said that it is an "attempt at boosting India's creative industry". What boost can the show give to creativity when the show's revival is an attempt to largely stress the very value system and family dynamics it is already done with?

In the year 2000, when KSBKBT came on TV, India's political discourse was characterised by a mix of persistent social challenges re-

lated to caste, religion, and regional disparities. The shift in political power with the BJP's rise and Congress' decline also marked a significant shift in ideological discourse. It is difficult to say whether the then prevailing social and political discourse enabled the focus of TV fiction programming to shift from contemporary themes and simplistic stories to saas-bahu shows reinforcing traditional gender roles, duties, and sacrifice with a liberal dose of religion and overt religiosity—festivals, poojas, havans, customs, and traditions—but the correlation is difficult to go unnoticed and ignored.

Today, the political discourse is increasingly centred around the recovery of a mythological, unified past. From the renaming of cities, demonisation of the Mughals, and rewriting of textbooks to the sacrosanctisation of academic and other institutions, the reshaping of public discourse in line with Hindu nationalist views, often at the expense of other cultural and religious identities, is being seen as an attempt to reframe history from a Hindutva point of view.

In this socio-political and cultural turn in the direction of the past, KSBKBT's return aligns with the current ideological narrative.

The writer is a senior independent Mumbai-based journalist. He tweets at @ali_chougule

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NEET exam

Several NEET-PG aspirants from Tamil Nadu have expressed frustration over their being allotted examination centres in nearby states for the upcoming test scheduled for August 3. The TN government has been fighting for the abolition of NEET for the past 4 years, despite the fact that the National Board of Examination has been allotting examination centres for TN candidates in different states, including Northern states. This is a grave injustice. The education ministry should advise the board of examinations to have enough centres in each state to accommodate the number of candidates.

N. Mahadevan, Chennai

Fair deal

India and the UK's free trade pact promises a \$34 billion annual boost. Finalised after three years of tough talks over visas, tariffs, and tax breaks, the deal opens UK markets to

Indian exports like textiles, gems, and marine goods with duty cuts of up to 20%. Tariffs on 99.7% of Indian food items will also go. The pact strengthens both nations' positions globally.

M.R. Jayanthi, Vashi

Rahul fails

The Congress Party struggles under Rahul Gandhi's leadership. Disconnected, directionless, and lacking reforms, the party stagnates. Rahul, raised in privilege, lacked real-world exposure and developed unrealistic entitlement. He has failed to understand India's pulse, triggering political irrelevance. His behaviour in Parliament reflects frustration over not winning power for a third time. Until Congress introspects and reforms its leadership, revival is unlikely.

C.K. Subramaniam, Navi Mumbai

Language woes

Maharashtra governor CP Radhakrishnan warned

Hindi-Chini Bhai-Bhai?

India resuming the issuance of tourist visas to Chinese nationals does signal a tentative thaw in the strained bilateral relationship. Since the Galwan Valley clash in 2020, diplomatic and military tensions between India and China have been high, resulting in a freeze in people-to-people ties, including tourism and educational exchanges. Ties have also been impacted by Operation Sindoor, where China sided with Pak. Caution will be required while dealing with China, as military standoffs at the LAC continue, and core issues remain unresolved.

Gregory Fernandes, Mumbai

that language violence harms investments and long-term prospects. He shared how, as a Tamil Nadu MP, he saw similar violence—unable to fully understand Hindi, he struggled to mediate. Stressing that all mother tongues should be respected, he said ignorance of Hindi even obstructs his duties. His remarks highlight the need for linguistic

harmony and sensitivity, especially in a diverse state like Maharashtra.

Nikhil CK Maniam, Seawoods

EC's countermove

The EC, in a counter affidavit on Monday, claimed it is constitutionally empowered to determine citizenship for inclusion in the electoral roll, unaffected by the Citizenship Act,

1955. This raises two questions: First, does the EC have the power to prescribe a new definition for determining the citizenship of a person seeking inclusion in the electoral roll?

Second, since the Citizenship Act, 1955, specifies documents for applying for citizenship, except by birth, can the EC also prescribe documents

as proof of birth-based citizenship for inclusion in the electoral roll?

Riti Dwivedi, Indore

Dube schooled

The behaviour of MP Nishkant Dubey towards the Marathi language and Marathi people is completely inappropriate. The importance of the mother tongue is very important. The mother tongue is a part of the regional identity. No person who is proud of his region will tolerate insults to his mother tongue.

Sudhir G. Kangutkar, Thane

Well played Pant!

Rishabh Pant returned to playing international cricket after a near-fatal accident when chances of him even walking on his legs were dim. Batting with a fractured toe was far easier for the lion-hearted cricketer, who scored a 50 at Old Trafford when most others in the team struggled.

S.N. Kabra, Mumbai

The Nimisha Priya case must serve as a lesson for India

We must have a system of counselling for Indians seeking opportunities in countries where their rights could be extinguished easily

Tulsi's return on TV is a boost to conformity, not creativity

The mindboggling repetition happening in TV programming suggests a systemic embargo on imaginative storytelling about aspirational India

Briefs

TRaverse CITY (US)
11 stabbed at Walmart, accused held

Chaos unfolded at a Walmart in Michigan after a man burst into the store during a calm shopping afternoon and randomly stabbed 11 people, authorities say. Minutes after the attack on Saturday, the suspect was in custody with the help of bystanders at the store. The 42-year-old suspect, who was a Michigan resident but not known to law enforcement, entered the store shortly before 5 pm and used a folding knife to stab the victims, the Grand Traverse County Sheriff's Office said in a statement on social media. Their ages weren't immediately known. A sheriff's deputy arrived on the scene within 3 minutes and took the man into custody.

WARSAW
Vatican urged to defrock Polish priest

The archbishop has asked the Vatican to defrock a priest charged with the killing of a 68-year-old homeless man who was beaten with an axe and set on fire. Prosecutors on Saturday charged the priest, Miroslaw M in line with Polish privacy rules, with murder with particular cruelty. He is being detained ahead of a trial and faces 15 years to life behind bars. The priest allegedly struck the victim, Anatol Cz on the head with an axe, doused him in flammable liquid and set him on fire.

ABUJA
Niger boat tragedy: 25 feared dead

A boat transporting passengers to a market in Nigeria capsized, killing at least 25 people on Saturday near Gumu village in the Shiroro area of Niger state, an official said. Search and rescue efforts were on, but were limited as armed gangs control the area. "Very few people can go to the scene because of banditry in that area," an official said. Armed groups, commonly referred to as bandits, have stepped up attacks in recent months in the north-central region, complicating the rescue.

SHAOLIN
Temple head in sexual scandal

The head of China's Shaolin Temple, the famous Buddhist shrine specialising in martial art Kung Fu, was placed under probe for embezzlement and sexual misconduct, media reported. Abbot Shi Yongxin is suspected of criminal offences, including embezzling and misappropriating project funds and temple assets as per the temple's official website. The abbot has seriously violated Buddhist precepts by maintaining improper relationships with multiple women and fathering illegitimate children, the report said.

FACILITATING AID | Daily ceasefire from 10 am to 8 pm in 3 key areas; food airdrops begin as outrage over starvation deepens

As hunger bites Gaza, Israel starts war pause

AP
DEIR AL-BALAH (GAZA STRIP)

The Israeli military on Sunday began a limited pause in fighting in three populated areas of Gaza for 10 hours a day, part of a series of steps launched as concerns over surging hunger in the territory mount and as Israel faces a wave of international criticism over its conduct in the 21-month war.

The military said it would begin a "tactical pause" in Gaza City, Deir al-Balah and Muwasi, three areas of the territory with large populations, to "increase the scale of humanitarian aid" entering the territory. The pause begins every day at 10:00 am to 8:00 pm local time until further notice, starting Sunday.

The military also said that it would put in place secure routes for aid delivery and that it carried out aid airdrops in Gaza, which included packages of aid with flour, sugar and canned food.

Food experts have warned for months of the risk of famine in Gaza, where Israel has restricted aid because it says Hamas siphons off goods to help bolster its rule, without providing evidence for that claim.

Images emerging from Gaza in recent days of emaciated children have fanned global criticism of Israel, including by close allies, who have called for an end to the war and the humanitarian



Smoke rises from an explosion in the northern Gaza Strip, as seen from southern Israel on Sunday

Ship carrying activists, aid intercepted

The Israeli military has intercepted a Gaza-bound aid ship seeking to break the Israeli blockade of the Palestinian territory, detaining 21 international activists and journalists and seizing all cargo, including baby formula, food and medicine, the Freedom Flotilla Coalition said on Sunday. The coalition that operates the vessel Handala said the Israeli military "violently intercepted" the ship in international waters about 40 nautical miles from

Gaza, cutting the cameras and communication, just before midnight Saturday. "All cargo was non-military, civilian and intended for direct distribution to a population facing deliberate starvation and medical collapse under Israel's illegal blockade," the group said in a statement. The Israeli military had no immediate comment. Israel's Foreign Ministry posted on X early Sunday that the Navy stopped the vessel and was bringing it to shore.

catastrophe it has spawned.

The United Nations' food agency welcomed the steps to ease aid restrictions, but said a broader ceasefire was needed

to ensure goods reached everyone in need in Gaza.

Israel said the new measures were taking place while it continues its offensive

against Hamas in other areas. Ahead of the pause, health officials in Gaza said at least 27 Palestinians were killed in separate strikes.

"This (humanitarian) truce will mean nothing if it doesn't turn into a real opportunity to save lives," said Dr. Muneer al-Boursh, director general of Gaza's Health Ministry, who called for a flood of medical supplies and other goods to help treat child malnutrition. "Every delay is measured by another funeral."

The local pause in fighting came days after ceasefire efforts between Israel and Hamas appeared to be in doubt. On Friday, Israel and the US recalled their negotiating teams, blaming Hamas, and Israel said it was considering "alternative options" to ceasefire talks with the militant group.

US-EU trade deal sealed before deadline: Trump

Agencies
EDINBURGH (UK)

President Donald Trump announced Sunday that the US and the European Union reached a framework for a trade deal after talks with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in Turnberry, Scotland.

Trump said the details included 15% tariffs across automobiles and other products. That's in line with the other deal the President struck recently, with Japan, but more than the European Union was pushing for. It's also a big increase from tariffs that have been in place on products on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

"The European Union is going to agree to purchase from the US \$750 billion worth of energy," Trump said. "They are going to agree to invest into the US \$600 billion more than they're investing already."

Trump began talks with von der Leyen earlier Sunday with Friday's deadline looming to reach a trade deal to avoid 30% tariffs on European imports.

The framework comes after Trump announced duties on most EU goods would be



President Donald Trump meets European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen at the Trump Turnberry golf course in Scotland on Sunday

"The European Union is going to agree to purchase from the US \$750 billion worth of energy," Trump said

increased from the 10% universal baseline to a 30% levy on August 1, citing that the US and European Union have one of the "largest trade deficits" and failed to reach a deal by Trump's previous July 9 deadline.

At a news conference ahead of the talks, Von der Leyen told Trump he is "known as a tough negotiator and dealmaker."

Trump reaffirmed that tariff letters to other US trading partners who failed to secure a deal will face new duties on Friday, with the exception of tariffs on steel and aluminum. "Most of the deals, other than steel and aluminum, which we've been getting are 50% tariffs," he said.

Earlier on Sunday, Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said there would be no further extensions or grace periods after August 1, but "big economies" can continue trade talks with the US. "August 1, the tariffs are set. They'll go into place," Lutnick said in an appearance on "Fox News Sunday."

'China, US set to extend tariff truce'

Agencies
BEIJING / WASHINGTON

Beijing and Washington are expected to extend their tariff truce by another three months at trade talks in Stockholm beginning on Monday, the South China Morning Post (SCMP) reported on Sunday.

During the expected 90-day extension, the US and China will agree not to introduce new tariffs or take other actions that could further escalate the trade war, the report said.

While the earlier discussions in Geneva and London focused on "de-escalation", in the latest meeting

the Chinese delegation will also press President Trump's trade team on fentanyl-related tariffs, the report further said.

The third round of United States-China talks is set to be held in Stockholm on Monday to tackle longstanding economic disputes at the centre of the countries' trade war.

IS-backed rebels hit Congo church, 34 die



AP
KINSHASA

At least 34 people were killed on Sunday in an attack on church premises in eastern Congo by Islamic State-backed rebels, according to a civil society leader.

The attack was carried out by members of the Allied Democratic Force (ADF) around 1 am inside the premises of a Catholic church in eastern Congo's Komanda. Several houses and shops were also burnt.

"More than 21 people were shot dead inside and outside and we have recorded at least three charred bodies and several houses burned. But the search is continuing," Dieudonne Duranthabo, a civil society coordinator in Komanda, told The Associated Press.

Earlier this month, the group killed dozens of people in Ituri in what a United Nations spokesperson described as a bloodbath.

A spokesperson for the Congolese army in Ituri prov-

ince, where Komanda is located, confirmed 10 dead.

"What we know this morning is that there was an incursion by armed men with machetes into a church not far from Komanda, where about 10 people were killed and massacred and some shops were set on fire," Lt. Jules Ngongo, the DRC Army's spokesperson in Ituri, said.

The ADF, with ties with the Islamic State, is a rebel group that operates in the borderland between Uganda and Congo, has routinely conducted attacks against civilian populations.

"We are truly disappointed because it is incredible that such a situation could occur in a town where all the security officials are present," Duranthabo said. "Some citizens have started fleeing the area and are heading towards Bunia."

"We demand military intervention as soon as possible, since we are told the enemy is still near our town."

The ADF was formed by disparate small groups in Uganda in the late 1990s.

Thailand, Cambodia to talk peace today

Both sides to meet in Malaysia after US president's push for ceasefire

Agencies
BANGKOK

Donald Trump said on Saturday that he had called the leaders of Cambodia and Thailand, pressing them for an immediate ceasefire following border clashes.

At the beginning of a private visit to his Scottish golf courses, the US president wrote on Truth Social that both nations "have agreed to immediately meet and quickly work out a Ceasefire and, ultimately, PEACE!"

Both countries thanked him



for his concern and efforts, though shelling continued overnight. Cambodia has accepted his request for a ceasefire, while Thailand stressed the need for a dia-

logue between the two countries.

State media in Malaysia reported that both sides would come to the country on Monday to discuss the conflict.

Iran executes 2 for attacks on civilian sites

AP
TEHRAN

Iran said on Sunday it has executed two members of the exiled opposition group Mujahedeen-e-Khalq after convicting them of carrying out attacks on public and civilian infrastructure.

The judiciary's official news website, Mizan Online, reported that Behrouz Ehsani Eslamlou and Mehdi Hasani were hanged on Sunday morning after being found guilty of using improvised mortar launchers to target residential areas, educational institutions and government buildings.

Greece tackles wildfires as extreme heat creates chaos

Agencies
ATHENS

Residents in Kryoneri, 12 miles north from Athens, have had to be evacuated along with people living in villages in the same region after a fire which broke out on Saturday spread rapidly.

Four other fires continue to burn across the mainland and islands including Crete.

On the island of Kythira, the coastguard along with private boats rescued people from one of the beaches.

Record-breaking temperatures and strong winds have allowed the fires to spread easily and the scattered locations have made tackling the



blazes difficult. Greece has requested assistance from the EU. Two Italian aircraft were expected to arrive later on Sunday, while Czech Republic firefighters are reportedly already on the ground.

Officials said the situation

was improving, but there was still a fire threat in the country. "Today is expected to be a difficult day with a high risk of fire, almost throughout the territory," fire brigade spokesman Vassilis Vathrakogiannis said.

Indian-origin man assaulted in Australia

PTI
MELBOURNE

An Indian-origin man was brutally attacked with a machete by a group of teenagers in Australia, leaving him with multiple injuries, including a nearly severed hand.

Saurabh Anand, 33, was approached by the teenage boys from behind when he was walking home on July 19 after picking up medicines at a pharmacy at Central Square Shopping Centre in Altona Meadows, Melbourne.

They shoved him to the ground before viciously attacking him, "The Age" newspaper reported. One of the teenagers had his hands in Anand's pockets, rummaging for valuables. He said another boy punched him in the head repeatedly until he fell to the ground. A third teen pulled out a machete and held it to his throat. "They didn't stop there," the newspaper quoted Anand as saying from his hospital bed, days after enduring several surgeries to reattach his severed left hand.

"My instinctive reaction was to bring my arm up to protect my face and wrist. While I was trying to protect myself, the machete just went through my wrist. The second attack, the machete went through my hand ... the third went through my bone."

slavery gains

Edinburgh univ links to racist theories out

The University of Edinburgh played a major role in the creation of racist theories and profited from slavery, a review has found. Findings, published in the university's Race Review, lay out how it received at least the equivalent of £30m in "philanthropic gifts" which can be traced to the profits of colonial commodities like tobacco, sugar and cotton.

This money funded bursaries, scholarships and the construction of university buildings. University principal and vice chancellor, Prof Sir Peter

Mathieson, pledged to "learn and move forward" from the report, which was commissioned in 2021.

The Race Review sought to identify some of the ways that the university was implicated in the practices and systems of enslavement and colonialism, as well as the apartheid and genocide of colonised people, in Australasia, Asia, Africa, the Middle East and the Americas.

It says it also "considers some of the consequences of these histories today in terms of statistical under-representation



and the persistence of institutional and structural racism".

The report has been published online amid a public pledge to address racial dis-

crimination. Archival research also examined how the "legacies of wealth" amassed from slavery and colonialism in the 17th and 18th centuries can be

traced to contemporary endowments and capital campaigns. It also looks at how leading thinkers of Scottish Enlightenment, who were also prominent university figures in 18th Century, promoted theories of racial inferiority and white supremacy used to justify colonialism.

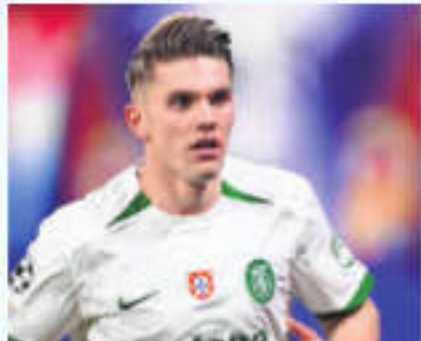
The review points out that although the Enlightenment is often celebrated for its influence on modern liberal democracy, its thinkers were also responsible for nurturing "some of the most damaging ideas in human history".

Germany train mishap kills 3



At least three people were killed and several injured when a passenger train derailed in Germany's Biberach on Sunday evening. Operator Deutsche Bahn said the crash occurred "for unknown reasons" near Riedlingen and Stuttgart. Reports say there had been a storm in the area a little while ago. 100 people were on board the train when at least 2 carriages derailed in a forested area.

Briefs
LONDON
Arsenal signs Sweden's Gyokeres



Arsenal signed Sweden forward **Viktor Gyokeres**, bringing an end to the Premier League club's years-long search for a prolific goal-scorer. Gyokeres completed a move from Sporting Lisbon worth a reported 63 million pounds (\$85 million) and signed a five-year contract. "Viktor is an exceptional talent and has consistently demonstrated he has the qualities and winning mentality required of a top-level centre-forward. His physicality, intelligence and work ethic make him a perfect fit for our vision," said Arsenal sporting director Andrea Berta. The 27-year-old striker joins Arsenal after establishing himself as one of the deadliest finishers in world soccer after two outstanding seasons in Portugal, where he fired Lisbon to back-to-back league titles.

WASHINGTON
Fokina beats Shelton, in DC Open final



Alejandro Davidovich Fokina broke big-serving Ben Shelton a half-dozen times and eliminated the No. 4 seed by a 6-2, 7-5 score in the D.C. Open semifinals to follow up his upset of No. 1 seed Taylor Fritz a night earlier. The 12th-seeded Davidovich Fokina, a 26-year-old from Spain, will face No. 7 seed Alex de Minaur on Sunday for the title at the hard-court tournament. De Minaur advanced to his second Washington final by beating Corentin Moutet 6-4, 6-3. Davidovich Fokina will be seeking his first ATP trophy in his fourth career final. No matter the outcome, he has guaranteed himself a debut in the top 20 of the rankings after arriving in D.C. at No. 26.

NEW DELHI
Nitish in legal trouble with his ex-agent



India all-rounder **Nitish Kumar Reddy** got embroiled in a legal trouble. The all-rounder, who was a part of India's squad for the five-match Test series against England, got injured after the third match and has been ruled out of the remaining two Tests. After returning to India, Reddy landed in a pit of controversy as his former agent filed a petition against him, asking him to clear his dues of Rs 5 crore. Reddy was managed by the player agency, Square The One, and they have dragged the matter to the court. According to some sources of India Today, Reddy opted for a new manager during the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

SMG questions captain's say in selection calls

Ex-India captain feels maybe Gill wanted Kuldeep, not Shardul

PTI
MANCHESTER

The legendary Sunil Gavaskar believes Shubman Gill may not have had the final say in selecting the playing XI, a decision he insists should rest solely with the captain and not be influenced by anyone else, including the head coach.

The continued omission of left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav has triggered intense debate, especially after Joe Root's record-breaking century in the ongoing fourth Test, where he eclipsed Ricky Ponting to become the second-highest run-scorer in Test cricket. Root, now on 13,409 runs, trails only Sachin Tendulkar's record tally of 15,291. "At the end of the day, it is the captain's team," Gavaskar said on Sony Sports. "You can't say that he didn't want somebody like, in Shardul Thakur's case or Kuldeep Yadav's case, that he didn't want them, maybe Shubman didn't want Shardul in the team and wanted Kuldeep," he added.

Despite boasting a strong match-up against Root -- having dismissed the England batter twice in three balls across two limited-overs games in 2018 at Manchester and Lord's -- Kuldeep has remained sidelined throughout the series. In both instances, Root was completely foxed by the Kuldeep's guile. The general perception is that



You can't say that he didn't want somebody like, in Shardul Thakur's case or Kuldeep Yadav's case
Sunil Gavaskar
former India skipper

head coach Gautam Gambhir has pushed for bowlers who can contribute with the bat, especially after India's collapse in the Headingley Test where they slumped from 430/3 to 471 all out in 11 overs. Gavaskar felt strongly that Kuldeep should have been part of the playing XI. "He should have had him in the team. He is the captain. People are going to talk about him and his captaincy out there. So, it's got to be his call really." The former India skipper also felt that internal disagreements or selection dynamics may be kept under wraps.

FOURTH TEST | Gill, Jadeja and Washington slam incredible hundreds

India script the great escape

PTI
MANCHESTER

Skipper Shubman Gill, Washington Sundar and Ravindra Jadeja slammed fine hundreds as India scripted a great escape to draw the fourth Test and keep the series alive at Old Trafford, here on Sunday.

Gill's 103, Jadeja's 107 and Washington's 101 were the main highlights of India's incredible effort to save the Test match after England had them on the mat on the evening of the fourth day.

England, led by skipper Ben Stokes, did all they could to break the shackles of Jadeja and Washington but it did not materialize.

Earlier, Jadeja and Washington extended India's fight but more importantly raising visions of a morale boosting draw.

Both Jadeja (53 batting off 102) and Washington (58 batting off 139) batted with a strong purpose to save the game, frustrating a worn out England attack.

At tea, India were 322 for four after collecting 99 runs from a wicketless afternoon session.

Ben Stokes, who looked lethal in his eight over spell in the morning, could not keep up the intensity in the three overs he bowled in the second session.

In a 15-run over from Stokes, Washington pulled the England captain for a six and four to bring up his fifty before Jadeja employed the cut to complete his fifth half-century in six innings.

With not much batting to come and Rishabh Pant injured, it remains to be seen if India can pull off a draw from here.

What made England's life difficult is that left-arm spinner Liam Dawson (0/70 in 39



India's captain Shubman Gill (centre), Ravindra Jadeja (left) and Washington Sundar in action. Agencies

overs) was not able to challenge the Indian left-handers enough while Jofra Archer too get could not get a break-through post lunch.

The second new ball is now 38 overs old, making batting easier.

In the morning session, Shubman Gill completed a gutsy hundred after Stokes battled through pain to dismiss a well set K L Rahul, leaving India at 223 for four at lunch.

Resuming the day at 174 for two with a deficit of 137, India remained on course to draw the game courtesy a fighting effort from Gill, who brought up his fourth century of the series. The Indian captain fell at the stroke of lunch with the visitors still trailing England by 88 runs.

Scoreboard
India first Innings: 358
England first Innings: 669
India second Innings (overnight 174/2 in 63 overs)

Y Jaiswal c Root b Woakes 0, KL Rahul lbw b Stokes 90, Sai Sudharsan c Brook b Woakes 0, S Gill c Smith b Archer 103, W Sundar (not out) 101,

Ravindra Jadeja (not out) 107 **Extras:** (B-14, LB-2, W-2, NB-6) 24 **Total:** 425/4 in 143 overs **Fall of wickets:** 0-1, 0-2, 188-3, 222-4 **Bowling:** C Woakes 23-4-67-2, J Archer 23-3-78-1, B Carse 17-3-44-0, L Dawson 47-11-95-0, J Root 19-2-68-0, B Stokes 19-2-68-0, B Stokes 11-2-33-1, H Brook 3-0-24-0

Considering India's backs against the walls and series on the line, this could be Gill's most defining century if India managed to save the match and keep the series alive.

Expecting the ball to come back in, Gill felt for the one from Jofra Archer that shaped

away, getting a faint outside edge.

The 188-run marathon stand between Gill and Rahul (90 off 230) was finally broken when the latter was trapped in front by Stokes with a ball that kept a tad low from length.

Soon after, Stokes got one jump to sharply from a similar length that foxed Rahul, leaving the Indian skipper in a lot of pain.

The rising ball first crashed into Gill's right thumb before taking a piece of his helmet.

It was remarkable that Stokes, who was not fit enough to bowl on day four, managed an eight-over spell on day five despite discomfort in his right shoulder and hamstring. Like at Lord's, he did not care much about his injury prone body to help the team's cause.

The new ball was taken after the 80th over and resulted in the wicket of Gill. Jadeja too would have be gone first ball but Joe Root could not hold on to a tough chance at first slip off Archer.

Ponting backs Sudharsan at No 3 spot

Former Australia skipper urges management to show faith in batter

ANI
MANCHESTER

Former Australian captain Ricky Ponting backed young Indian batter Sai Sudharsan to be "good enough" for a number three spot in the future and urged the team management to show faith in him.

The number three debate was once again up following a shaky start to India's second innings at Manchester.

Aiming to overcome a 311-run deficit, Chris Woakes sent opener Yashasvi Jaiswal and Sudharsan both packing for ducks. In the previous innings, though, Sudharsan had shown signs of promise and his remarkable temperament, scoring 61 in 151 balls with seven fours, powering India to 358 along with other fifties from Jaiswal and Rishabh Pant.

Since India has moved on from Cheteshwar Pujara following the loss to Australia in the ICC World Test Championship (WTC) final, India has tried skipper Shubman Gill, Devdutt Padikkal, KL Rahul, Sudharsan and Karun Nair at number three. Except for a fine run during the home sea-



You do not need that looking over your shoulder all the time, worried that if you're going to get another opportunity. That is why I was really surprised that they made the call on Sudharsan, obviously for the first test match here
R Ponting, Ex-Australia skipper

son from Gill, all these experiments have produced below-par results during away series in Australia and England.

With 91 runs in four innings, Sudharsan, at the age of 23, does look like a promising prospect, but his manner of dismissals has raised some questions about whether he is

ready for that spot yet. During the second innings at Manchester, he could not decide if he wanted to play or leave the delivery bowled outside off stump and edged it to Harry Brook at second slip.

His indecisiveness led to India sinking to 0/2 just before the first session ended. Big

centuries from Joe Root and skipper Stokes and some extra runs from tailenders proved to be a serious headache for India. The Indian second innings began on a shocking note with Yashasvi Jaiswal and Sai Sudharsan going back to the pavilion on a duck. KL Rahul and Captain Shubman Gill steadied India's innings with a patient and stellar stand of 174 runs.

India finished Day 4 on 174/2 and are now 137 runs behind England. If the Indian team can salvage the match on the fifth and final day on Sunday, it will be an achievement in itself. England went wicketless in the final session as Indian batters added 126 runs to their tally, with KL Rahul 87* and Shubman Gill 78* unbeaten on the crease.

India started the third session at 86/2 with Gill, who looked in fine touch, notched up his eighth Test fifty and fourth against England off 77 deliveries.

Sudharsan has been one of the great emerging talents from the Indian Premier League in last couple of years.

Indo-Pak clash approval likely after BCCI go-ahead: Kaneria

The announcement came just days after a highly sensitive episode involving the India Champions team

ANI
NEW DELHI

Former Pakistan spinner Danish Kaneria, while sharing his take on the Asia Cup schedule which was long mired in controversy and debate, stated that India-Pakistan clash likely came after the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) received approval from the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

In the detailed fixtures announced by the ACC on Saturday, India and Pakistan are set to meet in the Asia Cup group stage clash on September 14.

The announcement came just days after a highly sensitive episode involving the

India Champions team, which had withdrawn from a scheduled clash against Pakistan Champions in the World Championship of Legends.

"Cricket should happen (between the two countries)... People are talking about it because a recent incident occurred where there was supposed to be an India-Pakistan match at the World Championship of Legends, but ex-India cricketers boycotted the match. That move hinted that perhaps India would also skip playing Pakistan in future events like the Asia Cup or even ICC tournaments. The boycott made headlines, and many statements followed, creating an impression that India

might not participate in matches against Pakistan."

"But then there was an online meeting where Mohsin Naqvi - who is both the PCB chairman and the head of the Asian Cricket Council - and BCCI representatives were present. The ACC must have received a green signal from the BCCI, which is why the India-Pakistan match was scheduled," Kaneria told IANS.

Kaneria believes BCCI should have taken more time and consulted top leadership before committing to such a high-stakes fixture.

"I believe the BCCI should have given it more thought and taken time before making a decision. There shouldn't be double standards - sometimes yes, sometimes no. If you're talking about patriotism, then you have to stand by it consistently.

Cricket should happen ... People are talking about it because a recent incident occurred where there was supposed to be an India-Pakistan match
D Kaneria, ex-Pakistan spinner



on song

Green, Inglis power Australia to 4-0 lead in T20 series

AP
BASSETTERRE (ST KITTS)

Half-centuries to Cameron Green and Josh Inglis led Australia to a three-wicket win over West Indies and extended its lead to 4-0 in a five-match Twenty20 international series.

Australia chased down West Indies score of 205-9 in the final over without too much trouble with Green top scoring with an unbeaten 55, his third fifty of the series, while Inglis set the tone early

with a spritely 51.

It's the seventh time West Indies have failed to defend a score in excess of 200 in Twenty20 internationals, the most of any ICC member nation.

Sherfane Rutherford made 31 off 15 balls to top score for the hosts, who also had handy contributions from the middle order - Rovman Powell (28), Romario Shepherd (28) and Jason Holder (26) after being asked again to bat first at Warner Park.

Shai Hope, who made a brilliant unbeaten 102 on Friday - to become the second male West Indian player after Chris Gayle to score a century in each format - could only manage 10 this game before chipping a catch to a diving Glenn Maxwell off Xavier Bartlett.

Aaron Hardie, playing this game for the rested Tim David was the pick of Australia's bowlers with an economical 2-24 off four overs, including Roston Chase for a first ball duck

and later Powell to interrupt the hosts progress.

Adam Zampa (3-54) took three wickets, while Bartlett (2-39) and Sean Abbott (2-61) picked up two wickets each.

Australia's reply started shakily with captain Mitch Marsh out in the first over for Jediah Blades' first T20 international wicket.

A 66-run stand between Josh Inglis and Glenn Maxwell helped recover Australia and put them ahead of the game.

Inglis scored his second

half-century of the series off 28 balls, with 10 boundaries and a six, but gifted a catch to deep square two balls later off Shepherd (1-59).

Maxwell, opening the batting for the third consecutive match, got his highest score of the series with 47 from 18 balls before he was caught off Akeal Hosein (1-36) immediately after the mid-innings break to have Australia at 129-3 but still looking comfortable. That changed in the space of three balls from Blades.



Briefs

MUMBAI

Iyer unveils SMF Yoddhas official jersey



Shreyas Iyer on Sunday unveiled the official jersey of SoBo Mumbai Falcons Yoddhas for Upcoming Pro Govinda League Season 3. Mumbai Falcons who reached the T20 Mumbai League finals, are now expanding their legacy beyond the boundary ropes. "I'm proud to be associated with the Mumbai Falcons. This isn't just about sport — it's about identity, teamwork, and creating pathways for those who give their all," said Shreyas Iyer.

NEW DELHI

'TT needs a system to make champs'



Veteran paddler Sharath Kamal believes Indian table tennis needs a well-defined system to help young talent make a successful leap to the senior level. While recent results have been encouraging, he insists that promise alone is not enough without a system that supports long-term growth. "We can't rely on one-off stars, we need a structure that consistently produces champions," Sharath told PTL. "There's a lot of young talent, but the key issue lies in the transition, unless we put the right systems in place, we won't see junior champions turn into senior champions."

BELGIAN GP | The Australian pips fellow McLaren driver Norris

Piastrri sizzles after rain

AP

SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS

Oscar Piastrri beat his McLaren teammate and title rival Lando Norris to win Formula 1's Belgian Grand Prix on Sunday after heavy rain delayed the start.

Piastrri eased past his teammate and title rival Norris on the first racing lap after the safety car pulled into the pits on lap four, following a delay to the start of more than an hour.

Norris reduced Piastrri's lead toward the end of the race but the Australian held on with worn tires and Norris couldn't get close enough to challenge.

Piastrri bagged another 25 points to extend his championship lead over Norris from nine points to 16 and denied his British teammate a third Grand Prix win in a row.

Charles Leclerc was third for Ferrari after he kept Red Bull's Max Verstappen behind him all race. On Saturday, Verstappen held off both McLaren's to take the sprint win, with Piastrri second and Norris third.

Mercedes driver George Russell finished ahead of Williams driver Alexander Albon, who held off a charging Lewis Hamilton (Ferrari) who came home seventh from a pit lane start. Liam Lawson (Racing Bulls), Gabriel Bortolotto (Kick Sauber) and Pierre Gasly (Alpine) rounded out the top 10.



McLaren driver Oscar Piastrri in lead during Belgian Grand Prix on Sunday. F1

Following an 80-minute rain delay and four laps behind the Safety Car, the Belgian Grand Prix got under way, with Norris leading McLaren team mate Piastrri for a rolling start.

With the circuit having substantially dried and with track position, Piastrri pitted on Lap 12 for the medium tyres with Norris forced to complete another lap, and after making his own stop the following tour for hard rubber, the Briton found himself nine seconds adrift.

Despite having to manage his softer compound, Piastrri maintained a healthy gap which only reduced in the

TOP FIVE POSITIONS

- 1 Oscar Piastrri McLaren
- 2 Lando Norris McLaren
- 3 Charles Leclerc Ferrari
- 4 Max Verstappen Red Bull Racing
- 5 George Russell Mercedes

final laps to as much as 3.1s, but a small mistake from Norris at La Source on the penultimate lap meant the margin extended to 3.4s at the chequered flag. It was the sec-

ond straight day that Piastrri held off Norris after taking second place ahead of his teammate in Saturday's sprint, won by Max Verstappen.

Except for the weather, Piastrri's overtake of Norris was almost a copy of Verstappen's opening-lap pass on the Australian from second on the grid in the sprint.

Piastrri had been disappointed to qualify second behind Norris, but it "turns out starting second at Spa is not so bad after all," he said. Piastrri took his sixth win of the season and is the first McLaren driver to win the Belgian GP since Jensen Button in 2012.

Varma to captain South Zone in Duleep Trophy

Tilak was in fine touch for Hampshire recently, hitting two hundreds in four innings for the county side

PTI

BENGALURU

India batter N Tilak Varma was on Sunday named as the South Zone skipper in the season-opening Duleep Trophy to be held here next month.

The 22-year-old Tilak, who has played four ODIs and 25 T20Is, was in fine touch for Hampshire recently, smashing 100, 56, 47 and 112 in four innings for the English county side. Kerala players were rewarded for their excellent run till the Ranji Trophy final as four players from the state found place in the 16-member squad. They were: Mohammed Azharuddeen, who will be Tilak's deputy, MD Nidheesh, Basil NP and Salman Nizar.

Tamil Nadu batter Narayan Jagadeesan, who has flown to England as a cover for the injured Rishabh Pant, senior left-arm spinner R Sai Kishore and middle-order batter Devdutt Padikkal too are in the squad. India and Karnataka pacer Vyshak Vijaykumar will lead the South Zone bowling attack.

Meanwhile, prolific batter R Smaran, who was Karnataka's highest run-getter in last season's Ranji Trophy with 516 runs, has been included as a standby, possibly because of the unspecified injury that he picked up in May that prevented him from joining IPL



Tilak Varma, who plays for Hyderabad, in a file pic. PTI

side Sunrisers Hyderabad.

This year the Duleep Trophy will return to the Zonal format between six teams, deviating from the previous years' set-up of India A, B, C and D. The senior national selectors picked the sides when the tournament was played in the A, B, C and D format, but now the teams will be picked by respective zone selectors.

The four-day tournament will be played here at the BCCI Centre of Excellence grounds from August 28. North Zone will face East Zone while Central Zone will take on North East Zone in the quarterfinal matches. South

Zone and West Zone have got a direct entry into the semis.

SOUTH ZONE SQUAD:

Tilak Varma (captain), Mohammed Azharuddeen (vice-captain), Tanmay Agarwal, Devdutt Padikkal, Mohit Kale, Salman Nizar, Narayan Jagadeesan, T. Vijay (Andhra), R Sai Kishore, Tanay Thyagarajan, Vyshak Vijaykumar, MD Nidheesh, Ricky Bhui, Basil NP, Gurjapneet Singh, Snehal Kauthankar. Stand-by: Mohit Redkar, R Smaran, Ankit Sharma, Edhen Apple Tom, Andre Siddarth, Shaikh Rasheed.

SportVot

Hi unveils grants, Nov 7 centenary festival plans

PTI

MAHABALIPURAM

Hockey India has announced a substantial increase in its financial grants to support the organisation of national and grassroots-level events during its 15th Congress here.

Form now on, ₹70 lakh each will be allocated for hosting the Senior Men's and Senior Women's National Championships, ₹30 lakh each for organising Junior Men, Junior Women, Sub-

Junior Men, and Sub-Junior Women National Championships.

Besides, ₹25 lakh will be given to each state to support the organisation of district and state-level competitions.

Marking 100 years of Indian hockey's journey, Hi will organise a nationwide festival on November 7. It will feature 1,000 simultaneous matches - one men's and one women's match in every district of the country - engaging over 36,000 players.

FPJ News Service

MUMBAI

Nexus secured a hard-fought 2-1 victory over Holy Cross in a closely contested quarterfinal match of the Suburban Premier Football League in Borivali on Sunday. Both teams showed equal intensity with two shots and two shots on target each. The game was played cleanly with no fouls.

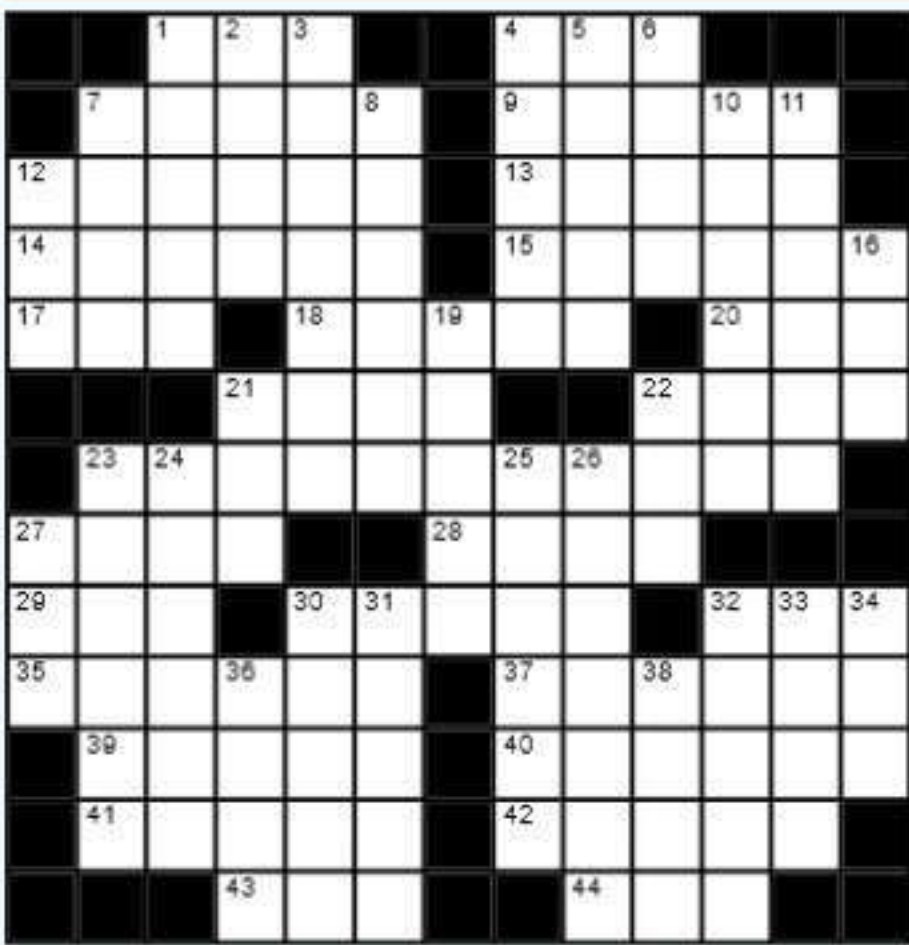
Milan Club streamrolled Wings of Champions 5-0 in another quarterfinal match that turned to be one-sided

affair. They registered 5 shots, all of which were on target, while the opposition failed to register even a single attempt. The game remained clean throughout, with no fouls, cards, or offside.

Satya Vijaya put on a commanding display, thrashing Shelar 6-0 in the third quarterfinal match. They dominated the attack with six shots and six on target, whereas Shelar couldn't manage a single shot. The match went smoothly without any fouls, cards, or offside calls.



Crossword #1576



Across

- 1 Master of Accountancy, acronym?
- 4 East Indian shrub
- 7 Foot-ways or narrow roads
- 9 Sheen
- 12 Forty winks
- 13 With reference to, concerning
- 14 Bypass; deviation
- 15 A level, treeless expanse of arctic land
- 17 Utilise
- 18 Sultan's wives
- 20 Grain morsel
- 21 England's Harry ____
- 22 Be all ____ and bone : be very thin
- 23 Putting in maximum effort; sparing no pains? (5,3,3)
- 27 Terrain
- 28 Low in pitch?
- 29 "Fin" changed for some information, shortly
- 30 Bottomless or deep chasm
- 32 School grp.
- 35 ____ thing : a thing that can be eaten?
- 37 East African policeman - "Aka sir" anagram?
- 39 Thrill or entuse
- 40 ____ delicious : yellow apple?
- 41 Repeat what's gone before
- 42 Foe
- 43 Hours in short ?
- 44 Briny - Arabian for one

Down

- 1 Dull finish
- 2 ____ time : never? (2,2)
- 3 Gavaskar's opening partner
- 4 Large marble
- 5 Collection of songs released together
- 6 Oddball; an eccentric person
- 7 Leander of Indian tennis
- 8 Leapt, jumped or pranced
- 10 Japanese number puzzle
- 11 Sea channel
- 12 Control-Display Unit
- 16 Aeronautical Telecommunications Network
- 19 Prepared
- 21 Young goat
- 22 Bribe
- 23 A male goose
- 24 Available - as the records show? (2,4)
- 25 Gil Blas author
- 26 Scholastic instruction
- 27 An intentional untruth; a falsehood
- 30 Table in church
- 31 Toots or honks
- 32 26th Jan. award ____ Bhushan
- 33 A three in cards, dice or dominoes
- 34 The Scottish for 'own'
- 36 German composer of Coffee Cantata?
- 38 Swiss artist

YOUR DAY By Vinayak Vishwas Karandikar



ARIES: A favourable day for studies, business, entertainment, and family enjoyment. Expenditure is likely on beauty products, luxury items, education or children. The day is beneficial for those in education, the art field, entertainment, sports, banking, government jobs, politics, event management, architecture, and those conducting art classes. Lucky number: 6; Lucky colours: Pink, Yellow



TAURUS: A day suited for travel, study, entertainment, and communication. Expenditure on properties, vehicles, travel, communication, medical bills or luxury items is possible. Gains are seen for those in tourism, the hospitality industry, journalism, politics, advertising, entertainment, the art field, banking, and medicine. You may have disputes with younger siblings or your spouse, but you'll take initiative in household work. Lucky number: 8; Lucky colours: Blue, Black



GEMINI: A day of enjoyment, travel, communication, and spending. Spending is likely on essential items, travel, communication, vehicles, beauty products or children. Opportunities for those in government jobs, banking, medicine, the hotel business, the energy sector, politics, and the entertainment industry. A long drive or fun travel with family is indicated. Some may suffer from blood pressure or eye problems. Lucky number: 5; Lucky colours: Green, Red



CANCER: A fulfilling day for studies, travel, investments, and caring for your health. Expect expenditure related to medical needs, family, travel, luxury or investments. Gains are indicated for those in medicine, politics, government jobs, the energy sector, farming, the automobile business, architecture, and the art field. Some may suffer from diabetes, weakness, toothaches or eye problems. Lucky number: 6; Lucky colour: Pink



LEO: You will focus on travel, expenses, work, and health. Expenses on travel, entertainment, businesses, fathers or communication are likely. The day is beneficial for professionals working in tourism, hospitals, advertising, and the entertainment industry. A long drive or fun travel with family is indicated. Some may suffer from blood pressure or eye problems. Lucky number: 1, 2; Lucky colours: Orange, Silver, White



VIRGO: A good day for travel, entertainment, enjoyment, and studies. Expenditure on travel, medical needs, education or families is likely. Those in tourism, politics, government jobs, the art field, and entertainment will progress. Some may suffer from blood pressure, back pain, chest pain or diabetes. Lucky number: 5; Lucky colour: Green



LIBRA: A day for success, recognition, cautious travel, and communication. Expenses are expected on businesses, health or travel. A favourable day for those in banking, the hotel business, politics, the medical field, government jobs, entertainment, and the hospitality industry. Some may suffer from blood pressure, diabetes, body pain, knee pain, eye pain or heart pain. Lucky number: 5; Lucky colour: Green



SCORPIO: Success in both business and family life, with a need for cautious communication. Expenditure on studies, travel, businesses, luxuries or entertainment is likely. Gains are seen for those in communications, journalism, education, travel, the art field, tourism, and the boarding and lodging business. Lucky numbers: 2, 3; Lucky colours: Silver, Yellow, Saffron



SAGITTARIUS: It is a mixed day; success may follow struggle; possible losses are also seen. Expenditure on businesses, health, education, premium services, spouses or fathers is likely. A good day for doctors, entertainers, artists, interior decorators, and automobile dealers. Some may suffer from dysentery, indigestion, body aches, stomach pain, kidney troubles or hernias. Lucky number: 1; Lucky colour: Orange



CAPRICORN: Challenges can be expected in your career and family life; focus on enjoyment and work. Expenditure on wife, medical needs, businesses, children, entertainment or premium services is likely. Success is seen for those working in insurance, finance, and sports. Some may suffer from diabetes, back pain, lumbar pain, heart problems, eye infections or skin issues. Lucky number: 6; Lucky colour: Pink

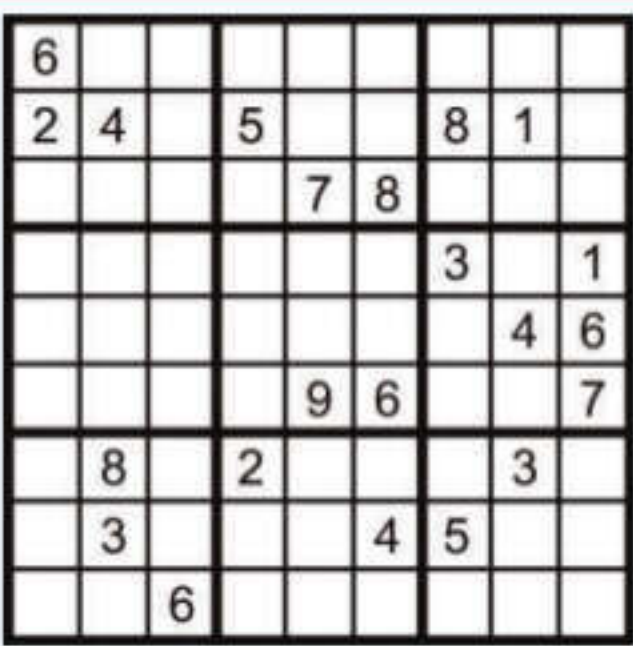


AQUARIUS: A busy day for you both in terms of career and family matters; also, it is a good day for enjoyment and earning. Expenditure on businesses, spouses, education, health, interior decoration or vehicles is possible. Those in the occult, the medical field, the hotel industry, and the automobile sector will progress. Some may suffer from stomach, diabetes or chest problems. Lucky numbers: 6, 7; Lucky colours: Pink, Grey



PISCES: A day to enjoy, study, earn, and recover from health issues. Expenses are likely on children, businesses, entertainment, health or education. Gains are seen for those in politics, banking, the art field, entertainment, sports, medicine, and the education sector. Some may suffer from back issues, eye problems, heart troubles or throat problems. Lucky number: 9; Lucky colour: Red

FPJ - SUDOKU - 467



WHAT TO DO: Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Every puzzle has only one correct solution.

Solution

Across: 1 Mac, 4 Rail, 7 Paths, 9 Goss, 12 Camp, 13 About, 14 Beirut, 15 Tundra, 17 Use, 18 Goss, 19 Ready, 20 Hat, 21 Kane, 22 Skn, 23 Goss, 24 Land, 25 Land, 26 Deep, 29 Inf, 30 Abyss, 31 Recap, 32 PTA, 33 Edible, 37 Askan, 39 Late, 40 Golden, 41 Recap, 42 Enemy, 43 Hrs, 44 Sea. Down: 1 Mate, 2 At no, 3 Chauhan, 4 Agate, 5 Album, 6 Loan, 7 Lesson, 8 Kile, 9 Bad, 10 Kile, 11 Recap, 12 Recap, 13 Recap, 14 Recap, 15 Recap, 16 Recap, 17 Recap, 18 Recap, 19 Recap, 20 Recap, 21 Recap, 22 Recap, 23 Recap, 24 Recap, 25 Recap, 26 Recap, 27 Recap, 28 Recap, 29 Recap, 30 Recap, 31 Recap, 32 Recap, 33 Recap, 34 Recap, 35 Recap, 36 Recap, 37 Recap, 38 Recap, 39 Recap, 40 Recap, 41 Recap, 42 Recap, 43 Recap, 44 Recap.

Overcoming fear

—Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

What are symptoms of fear? An intense sensation of trembling in the body, shaky breath, a tendency to hold on to something, and a feeling that the ground below your feet is loose.

When does fear develop? Very young children do not have fear. But as they grow older, they develop fear. That is because fear is related directly to ego—as ego develops, so does fear.

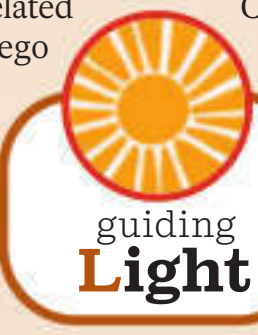
Fear can be experienced only in the waking or dreaming state, not in sleep. And when fear intensifies, you cannot even sleep. It can lead to insomnia. We tend to hook this sensation of fear, which is so intense, to a particular event or thing. Suppose we think that the fear is because of heights; then we are linking this sensation with a particular situation. Getting rid of the situation does not eliminate the fear but merely postpones it. Only one thing can eliminate fear, and that is awareness. When you become aware of fear, just accept it; you will find fear flips over and becomes love.

Love, fear, and hatred are not different energies but different manifestations of the same energy. That is

why, irrespective of whether you feel love, hatred, or fear, the sensation is in the same area, that is, between your navel and your heart. So I would say fear is love standing upside down. They cannot co-exist. You must have observed that a person who harbours intense love or hatred does not fear anything. Children have total love, so they have no fear or hatred.

Fear, within limits, is essential. It comes up in the natural process of evolution. But we can turn fear around and transform it into unconditional love. In fact, it is necessary. If we don't attend to fear, if we don't transform it through awareness, it can ferment in the system and hamper our blossoming.

You ordinarily have no control over when the mind will expand and when it will contract; when it will feel fear, love, or hatred. Observing the emotions changing within us is meditation. And meditation, the process of observing, of being totally aware of the various emotions within us, helps us to gradually gain control. Slowly and steadily, it will be in your hands to feel the way you want to feel.



ARCHANGEL MICHAEL MESSAGE FOR THE DAY

A day to overcome delusion, be practical, creative and think outside the box.

You will complete pending tasks. Travel or travel plans will be made. News may worry and confuse you.

You will feel sorrow; ask for help and try to shift your focus from negative to neutral.

Tip for the day: Visualize a purple oval light around you and say, "Divine shield on" three times.



Lots of divine miracles your way, Sheetal Sapan Mhatre.

RISING TENSIONS
India flags US student visa delays as social media vetting sparks concerns

Colossal Waves of Anxiety

Education Desk
MUMBAI

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has received several representations from Indian students and their families, flagging difficulty in obtaining US student visa appointments after American authorities announced an expanded screening and vetting for visa applicants, the government said on Thursday, July 24, 2025.

In a written response to a query in the Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh said the MEA took up the matter with the US embassy in New Delhi as well as the US Department of State. The ministry was asked whether the government is aware of US student visa issues being faced by prospective Indian students.

The US is one of the most favoured destinations of Indian students for higher education. As of January 2025, there are about 300,000 Indian students, mostly in graduate (Masters) programs in STEM fields. As per the US State Department's website, Indian students in the

US contribute about \$8 billion annually to the US economy. Despite this irrefutable fact, potential students and their parents experience "colossal waves of anxiety" today.

Education partnership is an important pillar of India-US ties with strong linkages and history of higher education collaborations. Under the Fulbright-Nehru bi-national Program, both countries support Fulbright-Nehru scholarships and grants to US and Indian scholars, professionals, and students.

"On 18 June 2025, the US Department of State (DOS) issued a press release titled 'Announcement of Expanded Screening and Vetting for Visa Applicants.' In the said press release, DOS stated that it uses all available information in its visa screening and vetting to identify visa applicants who are inadmissible to the United States, including those who pose a threat to US national security," the minister said.

To facilitate the vetting, all applicants for F, M, and J non-immigrant visas would be instructed to adjust the privacy settings on their social media



We use all available information in our visa screening and vetting to identify visa applicants who are inadmissible to the United States, including those who pose a threat to U.S. national security. Under new guidance, we will conduct a comprehensive and thorough vetting, including online presence, of all student and exchange visitor applicants in the F, M, and J nonimmigrant classifications.

Department of State, USA, (June 18,2025)

profiles to "public," according to the guidelines.

"Following these developments, the Ministry of External Affairs has received several representations from Indian students and their families flagging difficulty in obtaining student visa ap-

pointments. The ministry took up the matter with the US Embassy in New Delhi as well as the US Department of State," Singh said.

While the issuance of a visa is a sovereign prerogative of the state concerned, the MEA has "consistently raised" with the US embassy in New Delhi as well as the US State Department in Washington, DC the issues being faced by prospective Indian students in obtaining US visas, he added.

"The Government of India remains engaged with the US Government to promote mutually advantageous and secure mobility frameworks that allow for streamlining avenues for legal mobility of students and professionals and facilitating short-term tourist and business travel," Singh said.

In a written response to a separate query, the MoS said the Indian government remains engaged with authorities in the United States on "addressing illegal immigration and human trafficking by taking strong action against the bad actors, criminal facilitators, and illegal immigration networks." In a separate query, the MEA was asked whether the government has taken cognisance of the illegal immigration rackets operating in the country that fraudulently send Indians abroad, causing loss of money and national reputation.

— With inputs from PTI

Students can now take India’s FGME, NExT after “Philippines MD Program”

Simple Vishwakarma
MUMBAI

In a move that brings long-awaited clarity to Indian students pursuing medical education abroad, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) of the Philippines has officially confirmed that its Doctor of Medicine (M.D.) programmes align with the latest eligibility norms set by the National Medical Commission (NMC) in India.

The assurance was issued through a formal communication between CHED and the Embassy of India in Manila. In a recent advisory, the embassy stated that Indian individuals who graduate from Philippine medical schools accredited by CHED are now qualified to sit for both the forthcoming National Exit Test (NExT) and India's Foreign Medical Graduate Examination (FMGE).

MD curriculum matches NMC's requirements

The CHED clarification puts to rest lingering doubts around whether Philippine medical degrees meet India's evolving licensure regulations. As per the latest details, the Philippines' M.D. program fulfils all the mandatory components outlined by the NMC, including:

- A 54-month Doctor of Medicine program, not including the undergraduate pre-medical course
- English-medium instruction throughout the duration of the course
- All necessary subjects are covered in accordance with NMC Schedule I (Gazette Notification dated November 18, 2021).
- A one-year internship at the same institution or an affiliated hospital
- A degree that can be registered and used in the Philippines

Student perspective

Aditya Dharmendar Bulbule, a third-year MD student at Davao Medical School Foundation (DMSF), echoed the relief shared by many of his peers. "When I found out that the Philippines' MD program is now aligned with NMC norms, I felt extremely relieved. There was a lot of uncertainty earlier, and this update brought me peace of mind. Now, I can focus on my studies without constantly worrying about the eligibility of my degree," he said.

Aditya also shared that the ambiguity had affected his long-term plans.

"Yes, I was genuinely concerned about my eligibility for FMGE or NExT due to the lack of clarity in previous years. At one point, I even had to rethink all my future plans.

But now that the MD degree



from DMSF and the Philippines is officially recognised, I feel assured and more focused on my academic goals."

He had considered other destinations like Ukraine and Georgia but ultimately chose the Philippines for several reasons. "It was more affordable, the medium of instruction is English, and the climate and disease pattern is very similar to India. Most importantly, I chose DMSF through Transworld and Dr David Pillai, who were extremely supportive and helped students with everything, from accommodation to food and other basic needs. The teaching at DMSF is well-structured and student-focused, and the university has a strong FMGE passing rate, which was a major factor in my decision," he added.

Now in the final stretch of his education, Aditya is preparing for the mandatory licensure exams. "Yes, I'm planning to take the FMGE or NExT after I graduate from DMSF, as I have to serve my country. I've already started preparing by solving previous years' questions and going through lecture reviews."

Dr Pankaj Anil Kokate, an MBBS graduate from DMSF and a current FMGE aspirant, echoed similar sentiments. "It feels great that the Philippine M.D. program now aligns with NMC guidelines.

This means Indian students are receiving education that matches our country's standards. Since medical education and practice in the Philippines are similar to India's, it's the best opportunity for Indian students to achieve their dream and serve the community."

Reflecting on the earlier confusion, he said, "Yes, the lack of clarity around eligibility made me nervous while preparing for FMGE.

Uncertainty about whether you even qualify for the exam affects how you prepare. But now that CHED has officially communicated the alignment, and it's accepted by the Indian Medical Council, we can focus purely on our studies."

He also pointed out a critical factor for future students: "One big positive is that DMSF's FMGE passing rate is consistently above 85%."

Rohit Nair, MD, a graduate from Bicol Christian College of Medicine, Philippines, said, "I completed my MD in 2023 and have been preparing for the FMGE ever since. The recent confirmation that our degrees are now fully aligned with NMC norms gives me a sense of closure. For a long time, there was a fear that all our years of hard work might not count in India. Now, I can concentrate on revising confidently without second-guessing the legitimacy of my qualification."

"This confirmation from CHED ends years of uncertainty for Indian students," said Kadin Pillai, managing director of Transworld Educare and director of Kings International Medical Academy. It demonstrates that Philippine medical education not only satisfies the stringent requirements of the NMC but also prepares our students for professions around the world.

Guidelines

While this update is a major relief for the over 2,000 Indian students who travel to the Philippines each year for medical education, the Embassy has urged aspirants to follow a few important guidelines:

Ensure that the pre-medical (Bachelor's) degree is CHED-accredited and matches the required course duration and structure

Before starting an M.D. program, you must pass the National Medical Admission Test (NMAT).

Before submitting an application, review the most recent NMC and CHED advisories.

Get authentic receipts and pay tuition directly to the universities

Get a degree and academic documents apostilled by the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs to ensure validity in India.

India leads with 800+ schools as Cambridge hits 1,000 in South Asia

Education Desk
MUMBAI

Over 800 Cambridge International Schools have already been placed in India, making the country the central hub of Cambridge's growing presence in South Asia.

A whopping 81% of all last year's fresh hires were from India alone, thus verifying the nation's growing trend towards international curriculum and future-oriented education models.

The milestone comes as part of a larger regional development, with the total number of Cambridge schools across South Asia crossing 1,000, a 16% jump from last year.

Bramhapriya World School in Pune, Maharashtra, is the 1,000th school to become a part of the Cambridge community.

The higher demand in small towns is significant, although 53% of Cambridge International Schools in India are based in Tier 1 cities.

As it stands today, 47% of Cambridge schools across the country are based in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, with the southern region leading the trends.

This change represents a major step towards universal access to international education, even outside of major cities.

"Crossing the 1,000 school milestone in South Asia, with



Indian schools, parents, and students are prioritising global standards in learning

India contributing the lion's share, speaks volumes about how Indian schools, parents, and students are prioritising global standards in learning," said Vinay Sharma, Senior Vice President for International Education, South Asia. "Our focus is not just academic excellence, but equipping learners with skills to face challenges like climate change and artificial intelligence."

To meet growing academic demands, Cambridge will introduce a third checkpoint test series starting in March 2026, offering more scheduling flexibility for Indian schools.

With more than 70 IGCSE and 50 A-level subjects available to students ages 3 to 19, the Cambridge Pathway allows for individualised study across academic areas.

Aligning with its emphasis on values-based, practical education, Cambridge also launched Cambridge Climate Quest, its first climate literacy program, in India last year.

India-UK CETA Writes a New Chapter, A Blueprint for Shared Prosperity

The India-UK historic trade agreement will usher in a new era in the comprehensive strategic partnership and deepen collaboration not only in trade and economy, but also in emerging technologies, education, innovation, and research.

Education Desk
MUMBAI

India and the United Kingdom have taken a major step in building a stronger economic partnership with the signing of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) on Wednesday, 24 July, 2025. The agreement was signed by Commerce and Industry Minister, Piyush Goyal and Secretary of State for Business and Trade, Jonathan Reynolds in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his British counterpart Keir Starmer.

Education was one of the key topics that came under discussion between PM Modi and PM Keir Starmer. The pact is expected to increase trade between the two nations, and higher education will continue to remain in the limelight in future. Marking a major shift in India's approach to global education partnerships, six UK universities are set to open campuses in India—with the University of Southampton already leading the way. On July 16, it became the first foreign university to inaugurate a campus in Gurugram, Haryana.

"Friends, even in the education sector, both countries together are writing a new chapter," said PM Modi, addressing the media after the signing ceremony. "Southampton University's new campus in Gurugram is a proud moment, and five more UK universities will follow."

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 of India, which promotes the internationalisation of Indian higher education, is in line with this educational advancement. It also reflects a larger trend in which India welcomes international educational institutions to increase learning opportunities for students and promote knowledge exchange.

British Council welcomes education focus

Alison Barrett MBE, British Council India Country Director, opined that the education sphere of the UK-India bilateral relationship has emerged as a pillar of strength.

"I'm pleased to see education recognised as a core part of the relationship, placing young people from both countries at the heart of this vibrant exchange,"

she said.

According to Barrett, the action would strengthen ties between institutions in both nations and further the goals of NEP 2020. "This shared vision gives us a strong institutional framework for closer and more effective partnerships," she added.

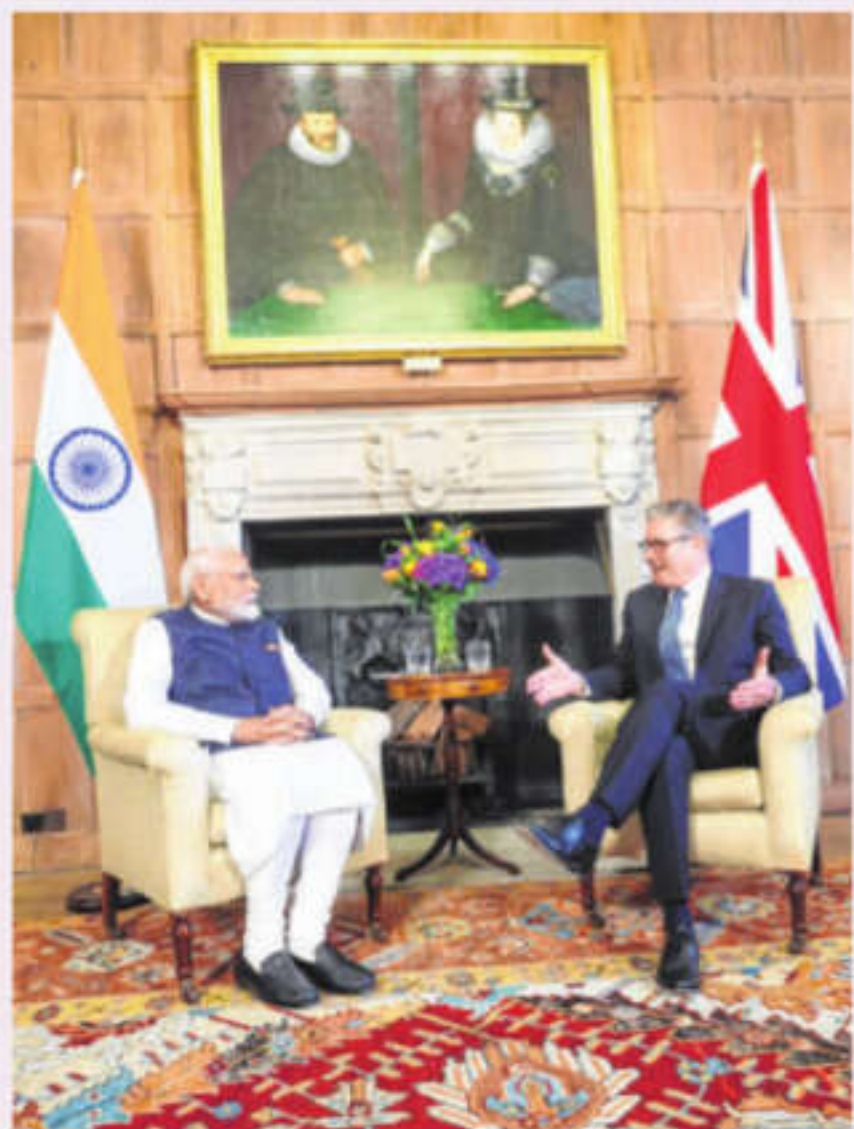
The education announcement builds on the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership formed in 2021 between India and the UK, which spans trade, defence, clean energy, and cultural exchange.

With British institutions entering the Indian educa-

tion landscape, and a powerful trade pact now in place, the India-UK partnership is moving beyond diplomacy—into classrooms, laboratories, and futures shaped by cross-border learning.

The deal marks a significant milestone in India's engagement with major developed economies and reflects a shared commitment to strengthening economic integration. As the world's fourth and sixth largest economies respectively, India and the UK's bilateral engagement holds global economic significance. The signing of the India-UK CETA follows the successful conclusion of negotiations announced on May 6, 2025. The bilateral trade between the two countries stands at nearly \$56 billion, with a joint goal to double this figure by 2030.

The services sector, a strong driver of India's



India has also secured an agreement on the Double Contribution Convention. This will exempt Indian professionals and their employers from social security payments in the UK for up to three years, improving the cost competitiveness of Indian talent.

The agreement has been designed to make trade more inclusive. Women and youth entrepreneurs, farmers, fishermen, startups, and MSMEs will gain new access to global value chains, supported by provisions that encourage innovation, promote sustainable practices, and reduce non-tariff barriers.

CETA is expected to boost trade volumes significantly in the coming years, creating jobs, expanding exports, and supporting a deeper, more resilient economic relationship between India and the United Kingdom.

--With inputs from PIB & PTI

chart your professional path

Canberra calling Indian students!

In an increasingly competitive global job market, students today are prioritising education pathways that directly lead to real-world career outcomes. As per a recent report, the government shared that over 13 lakh Indian students pursued higher education abroad in 2024, a number that reflects the growing demand for future-ready academic environments. Amidst this wave, Australia's capital, Canberra, is rapidly emerging as a top destination for ambitious students seeking not just a degree but a launchpad for career success.

What sets Canberra apart is its uniquely career-focused education ecosystem, one that actively blends academic learning with practical industry experience. With access to internships, work-integrated learning programs, and post-graduate placements, students benefit from an education model that seamlessly transitions them from classroom to career.

The city's institutions maintain strong ties with both private and public sector leaders, ensuring that graduates are well-positioned to step into high-quality professional roles.

Average Income & Employment Rate

Canberra boasts the nation's highest average income and employment rate, positioning it as an ideal city to kick-start a career. For international students, an additional year of post-study work rights ensures a smoother, more secure transition from education to employment.

"Home to numerous government agencies, international organisations, and private sector companies, Canberra opens doors to a wide range of job opportunities," says Professor Michelle Lincoln, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of Canberra. "At the University of Canberra, our 89% placement rate reflects the strength of our industry connections and the outcomes



we deliver for students."

Backed by a robust tertiary education and training sector, Canberra offers students not just world-class learning but real access to meaningful employment opportunities.

Internships & Work Experience

Canberra's universities offer a wide spectrum of opportunities, from academic and non-academic internships to part-time roles, enabling students to gain practical experience while maintaining a balanced academic life. Institutions like the Australian

With access to internships, work-integrated learning programs, and post-graduate placements, students benefit from an education model that seamlessly transitions them from classroom to career

National University (ANU) and the University of Canberra (UC) place strong emphasis on work-integrated learning—short periods of paid or unpaid work related to the field of study - to ensure career development is embedded into the student journey.

As Elizabeth Bailey, Associate Director, ANU Careers & Employability, notes, "Canberra offers a rich environment for students to engage beyond the academics through part-time work, student organisations, sports, and community involvement. With personalised career consultations and industry-linked events such as career fairs, employer panels, and networking opportunities with

government bodies, NGOs, research institutes, and private sector leaders, ANU equips students with the tools to chart their professional path."

Echoing this approach, Professor Michelle Lincoln of the University of Canberra, further states, "UC's internship and placement programs are designed to immerse students in real-world projects that reflect professional scenarios. These experiences not only strengthen technical and soft skills but also enhance employability through resume building and industry exposure."

(The author is Assistant Director, Study Canberra, Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Government)

Gardening tips

Essentials for a perfect indoor garden



Abhishek

Growing a garden in the backyard is something most people are doing these days. But, it is important to note that not all weather conditions support an outdoor garden. That is when the prospect of growing an indoor garden sees considerable sheen. One of the best features of growing an indoor garden is that it can be as simple and as complex as you want it to be. So depending on your requirement, you can take necessary steps and make necessary amends as and when required. This article highlights the essential tips for the perfect indoor garden. Here are 4 tips for a perfect indoor garden. Read on to know further.

Choose planters

It is important to choose the right size of planters depending on the plant you wish to grow. A good thing about planters is that you can customize them the way you wish. Choose a planter that isn't too big or too small. While purchasing your planter, keep in mind the size your plant is capable of growing and make a purchase on the basis of that.

Choosing the soil

Remember not to use garden soil to grow your plants indoors. This is an important tip that has to be taken into account. Garden Soil if used in pots indoors, owing to its high density and weight, disallows adequate oxygen from nourishing it. The plants therefore don't grow appropriately. Also, try not to incorporate prepared mixes. They usually squeeze out oxygen from the soil, thereby hindering healthy plant growth. Use humus and perlite in the ratio 4:1 for best results.

Don't follow a predetermined watering cycle

Yes, it is a fact that experts advise watering of plants once a week. Actually, that wouldn't be the accurate method you'd have to follow. You'll have to water your plants as and when it is required. Maybe twice a week sometimes. Keep this in mind. The frequency of watering is dependent on the type of soil, the plant and the weather.

Know the moisture content

Depending on you plant, you'll have to keep a tab on the moisture content. Know this for a fact- the average moisture content in a home during winter is equivalent to the level in the Sahara desert. You can consider clustering plants together in order to ward off the ill effects of excess moisture.



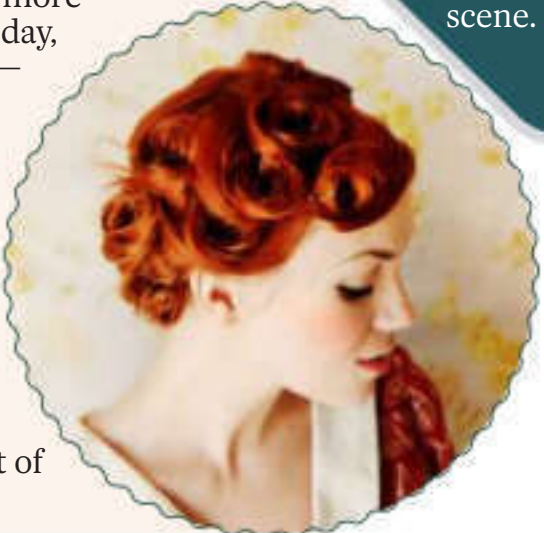
Ensure adequate light

Lighting plays a crucial role in the growth of indoor plants. While some plants can thrive in low-light conditions, most require a good amount of indirect sunlight or artificial grow lights. Place your plants near windows that receive plenty of natural light, preferably from the east or south side. If natural light is limited, invest in LED grow lights that mimic the full spectrum of sunlight. This ensures healthy photosynthesis and prevents your plants from becoming leggy or pale.

Short history of kiss curls

Kiss curls—also known as spit curls—originated in the early 20th century and gained prominence in the 1920s and 1930s. They were popularized by iconic figures such as Josephine Baker, Bette Davis, and Clara Bow, who used the soft curls to frame their faces with elegance and sensuality. The style was particularly symbolic in flapper fashion, adding both femininity and flair during a time of bold cultural transformation.

Kiss curls saw resurgence in the 1950s with rockabilly queens and pin-up girls, and again in the 1980s with music icons like Madonna and Prince, where the curls took on a more rebellious twist. Today, kiss curls are back—seen on celebrities like FKA Twigs, Zendaya, and Doja Cat. Their revival reflects a broader return to expressive, crafted hairstyles that celebrate individuality, texture, and the art of hair sculpting.



Why kiss curls are trending again

The resurgence of kiss curls speaks to a deeper fashion narrative: nostalgia blended with modern edge. In a digital era where Y2K, '90s, and '70s trends are reappearing, the intricate kiss curl adds a nostalgic yet refreshing twist to contemporary styles.

They're also highly versatile—working with natural textures, sleek buns, or even undercut styles. With the growing emphasis on embracing natural beauty and personal style, kiss curls offer a nod to vintage sophistication while allowing room for creativity. Whether worn delicately with a low chignon or boldly alongside a dramatic updo, they create an instant focal point.

Neeta Senacha

What's making waves in the fashion spotlight? It's the charming revival of the kiss curl—a delicate, face-framing swirl that radiates old-Hollywood glamour and timeless elegance. From the silver screens of the 1920s to today's red carpets and runways, kiss curls are once again turning heads. More than just a hairstyle, they're a graceful expression of art, individuality, and vintage allure. With a bit of practice and the right styling tools, you can master this iconic look that bridges decades of fashion history. Whether you're a retro enthusiast or simply looking to elevate your everyday style, kiss curls offer a polished, nostalgic twist that adds instant charm and sophistication. Read on to discover the history behind this iconic trend, how to achieve it, and the best ways to style it for today's fashion scene.



How to master kiss curls for a vintage look

How to achieve kiss curls

Step 1: Prep your hair

Start with clean, dry, and detangled hair. Kiss curls work best on slightly damp hair for styling flexibility.

Step 2: Choose your curl section

Select small sections of hair along the hairline—typically at the temples, forehead corners, or nape. The amount and position depend on your desired look.

Step 3: Apply styling gel or pomade

Use a strong-hold gel or styling pomade to coat the section. This will help mold the curl and keep it in place throughout the day.

Step 4: Shape the curl

Using the tail end of a rat-tail comb or your finger, carefully sculpt the hair into a "C" or "S" shape against your skin. Secure each curl in place with a small piece of tissue or wrapping strip if needed until it sets.

Step 5: Set and seal

Let the curl set naturally or use a diffuser on low heat. Once dry, gently remove any tissue used and finish with a light mist of hairspray for added hold.



What to wear with kiss curls

Kiss curls pair beautifully with a range of looks, depending on the aesthetic you're channeling:

Vintage glam: Team kiss curls with finger waves or a pin-up bun and a satin dress. Think pearls, gloves, and red lips for a full retro revival.

Modern chic: Combine kiss curls with a slicked-back ponytail or bun, gold hoops, and a power blazer for a sharp, editorial finish.

Boho elegance: Blend kiss curls with natural curls, soft makeup, and flowy fabrics like chiffon or silk for a dreamy, romantic look.

Street edge: Add kiss curls to a braided style or high bun, paired with statement eyewear and bold lips for a contemporary, fashion-forward vibe.

Ready to give kiss curls a try? With their delicate design and dramatic impact, they may just become your new signature style.

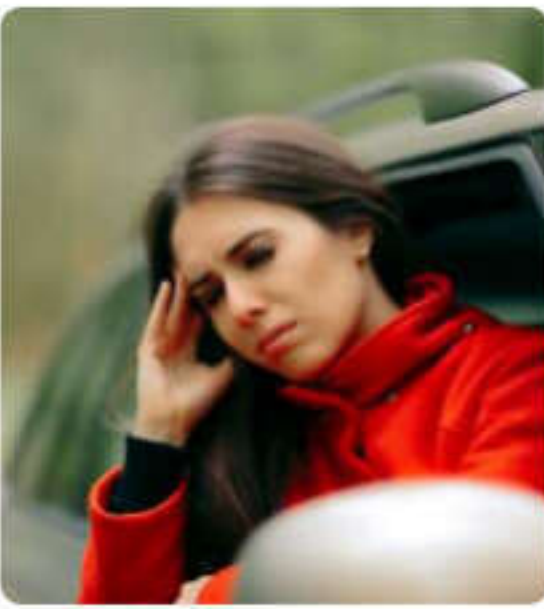
How can you avoid vomiting while traveling?

Chandana Rao

Traveling can be an exciting adventure, but for some people, it can also be a recipe for nausea and vomiting. Motion sickness, also known as travel sickness, can occur when the brain receives conflicting signals from the inner ears, eyes, and sensory nerves. This can lead to symptoms such as nausea, dizziness, and vomiting, especially during car or bus rides, boat trips, or flights. However, with some careful planning and dietary choices, you can reduce the likelihood of experiencing these unpleasant symptoms while traveling. Let us explore what to eat while traveling to avoid vomiting and ensure a more comfortable journey.

Ginger: Nature's remedy

Ginger is renowned for its ability to soothe an upset stomach and reduce nausea. Whether consumed in the form of ginger tea, ginger ale, or ginger candies, this spicy root can help alleviate motion sickness symptoms. It's a natural and effective remedy that has been used for centuries to calm queasy stomachs.



Crackers and dry bland foods

When traveling, it's best to stick to dry, bland foods like crackers, pretzels, or plain bread. These foods are gentle on the stomach and can help absorb excess stomach acid, reducing the likelihood of vomiting. Avoid greasy, spicy, or heavy foods, as they can exacerbate nausea and discomfort.

Bananas: Nature's power snack

Bananas are a great snack to have while traveling, as they are easy to digest and rich in potassium, which can help replenish electrolytes lost due to vomiting or motion sickness. They are also gentle on the stomach and can help settle an upset stomach.

Applesauce: A light and nourishing snack

Applesauce is another light and easy-to-digest snack that can help calm a queasy stomach. It's a good source of vitamins and minerals and can provide a quick and convenient source of energy while traveling.

Clear liquids: Stay hydrated

Staying hydrated is important while traveling, but it's best to avoid sugary or carbonated beverages, as they can aggravate nausea. Instead, opt for clear liquids like water, herbal tea, or electrolyte-rich drinks to stay hydrated and reduce the risk of vomiting.

Peppermint tea: A soothing brew

Peppermint tea is known for its calming and soothing properties, making it an excellent choice for settling an upset stomach. It can help relax the muscles of the digestive tract and reduce nausea and vomiting.

Avoid heavy or spicy foods

While traveling, it's best to avoid heavy, greasy, or spicy foods, as they can be hard to digest and may exacerbate nausea. Instead, opt for light, bland foods that are gentle on the stomach.

Stay hydrated

It's important to stay hydrated while travelling, especially if you're experiencing nausea or vomiting. Dehydration can worsen these symptoms, so be sure to drink plenty of fluids throughout your journey. However, avoid drinking large amounts of liquid at once, as this can make nausea worse. Instead, sip small amounts of water or clear liquids regularly to stay hydrated.

Avoid alcohol and caffeine

Alcohol and caffeine can both contribute to dehydration and may worsen nausea and vomiting. It's best to avoid these beverages while traveling, especially if you're prone to motion sickness.

Take breaks and get fresh air

If you start to feel nauseous while traveling, try taking breaks and getting some fresh air. Stepping outside or opening a window can help reduce feelings of nausea and make you feel more comfortable.

Therefore, traveling can be a wonderful experience, but motion sickness can quickly put a damper on your plans. By choosing the right foods and beverages, you can reduce the risk of vomiting and enjoy a more comfortable journey. From ginger to crackers to clear liquids, there are plenty of options to help settle your stomach and make your travels more enjoyable. So pack your bags, grab some snacks, and get ready for a nausea-free adventure!

Bhadra Kamalasanan

Ask anyone what Chinese food is and they would say "chowmein". The rest of us generally talk about the components of a Chinese platter with an overstating tone. Clearly, each of us needs an upgrade in our knowledge of Chinese food and its score on the health-o-metre. So, before you pick the chopsticks on your next trip to a Chinese restaurant, read this anatomy of common Chinese foods.

Low-calorie lobster sauce

If you have had the opportunity to eat a plate of lobster sauce from an authentic Chinese restaurant, you can surely recall its rich taste. This makes the dish appear nothing less than one laden with calories. On the contrary, lobster sauce has just about 50 calories per quarter cup. Also, it is not dense with sugar. Among other things about Chinese food, this sure takes you by a pleasant surprise.



Things to know about chinese food

Edamame is not exactly low cal

Before you choose to start your feast with a fibre-packed soybeans appetiser, make sure you also inquire how the pods are prepared. If you are told that they were simply steamed in water, then they are just the right thing to eat. But if they are tossed in oil after steaming, you must move to the next item on the list. The possibility of becoming overweight consuming this Chinese dish is among the health risks of Chinese foods.

Steamed dumplings don't limit the calorie consumption

Steaming sure does save a lot of calories from being consumed when compared to the fried ones, but whether or not that helps depends on what is inside the dumpling. Steamed pork dumplings usually have about 80 calories per piece and those that are filled with vegetables have only 35 calories.

Veggies can be deceitful

You may think that there is nothing healthier than a side of greens. But, do not be fooled, as these veggies are deep fried for extra texture before they are stir fried. The bad news is that some vegetables are capable of absorbing oil the way sponge does with water. So, make your choice by opting for less sponge-like veggies. Eggplant, for instance, absorbs oil like no other vegetable.

A tofu takeout can wreck your diet

Not all tofu diets are favourable for your weight loss regime. There are some that are high in calories. This is because in these dishes, the tofu is deep fried before it is stir fried. Remember to ask how it is prepared so that you can decide not to have them if they are stir fried. Ask them to include soft or plain tofu.

Shrimp chips aren't all that light

From afar, the feather-light shrimp chips seem to be way healthier when compared to crunchy noodles. But, they are a mixture of deep-fried shrimp and starch. A handful of shrimp chips are packed with more than 200 calories as well as 14 grams of fat. If you must have these shrimp chips during snack time, make sure you couple it with green tea.

One entrée can serve up to two people

Chinese as well as Thai dishes usually have food that is enough for two or three people. These entrées are meant to be for an entire family. So if you are dining out, make sure that you split it with your friends or family.



Fresh or dried fruit : Which is better?

Water loss equals volume loss

Fruits can be left out in the sun to dehydrate naturally. The loss of water completely from the fruit means loss of physical size. If you compare dried fruit and fresh fruit by volume, then you will always find more sugar and calories in the dried fruit. 30 grapes have about 12 grams of sugar and 48 calories, according to the United States Department of Agriculture Agricultural Research Service National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference. 30 raisins have 47 calories and just 10 grams of sugar.

Sugar content

Fresh fruits and dried fruits are at par when it comes to the density of glucose. The water content is higher in fresh fruits and lower in dried fruits. On the other hand, the sugar content is higher in dried fruits and lower in fresh fruits. Dieters need the fibre and water from fresh fruits to stay fuller for a longer period as dried fruits won't last long in the stomach.

Vitamins

Fresh fruits are extremely necessary for the body to prevent dehydration. They contain vital vitamins like vitamin A, vitamin B, and vitamin C. Dried fruits do not contain water, which sometimes compromises their vitamin content since these vitamins are generally heat-sensitive. The essential mineral, folate is also lost. Vitamin C is also decreased in the dehydration process of dried fruits.



Why should you eat fruits every day?

- Eating ample amounts of fruits lowers the risk of many harmful diseases.
- Having fruits daily will make your immune system strong.
- Fruits contain antioxidants that combat free radicals.
- The water content in fruits keeps your skin supple and the body well hydrated.
- Fruits are high in fibre and hence hinder the fat-storing process.
- Fruits boost your brain power. Fruits are a nutrient-dense food.
- Fruits will keep your digestive system healthy and keep your body energized.

Nutrient density

Since fruits are a nutrient-dense food, their calorie content is less. The advantage of having fresh fruits is that it will keep your body hydrated due to the water proportion in them.

On the other hand, when water is extracted from the dried fruits, calories get concentrated alongside the nutrients. People who are trying to lose weight can't have dried fruits because of the high calorie content. Fresh fruits can provide your body with energy.

Neha Ghosh

Whether you are unwell or not, doctors always recommend you to have fruits, isn't it? Fruits are required by the body, because it is an excellent source of body fibres, essential salts, and minerals. So, in this article, we will be discussing which fruit is better - fresh fruits or dried fruits.

Dried fruit vs fresh fruit nutrition

But apart from the supply of nutrients that the fresh fruits have dried fruits are also not left behind. Let's have a look at the dried fruit vs fresh fruit in terms of nutrition.

Pics: Varinder Chawla

CAUGHT ON CAM

Celebs were snapped as they were out and about in Mumbai



Ali Fazal is spotted outside a mall in Bandra

Sonakshi Sinha strikes a pose as she is snapped in the suburbs

Aisha Sharma is all smiles as she is spotted outside her residence

Bobby Deol is snapped outside a theater in Juhu

'Being in a healthy relationship has only just happened!'

Kabir Singh Bhandari

Son Of *Sardaar 2* gave Kubbra Sait something she had never been part of before — the front seat at her first big movie trailer launch. In *SOS 2*, she plays Mehwish, a wild, fun, free-spirited and unapologetic character. Over a phone call with *The Free Press Journal*, she spoke about her character, experiences filming abroad, being in a relationship, friendship with Mukul Dev, and more. Excerpts:

Q. You wore mismatched earrings to the Son Of *Sardaar 2* trailer launch?

A. Yes! My character is like that, she does these crazy things — one of them being her mismatched earrings. And I guess they just became like a real fun process to be a part of, because every time we had a costume change for her, we would spend like 20 minutes deciding: how about a lock with a lemon? Or a cherry? Or a strawberry! Crazy, fun stuff.

Q. How was the experience working with the cast?

A. It was a beautiful and wholesome experience. I was away from home but had my own people. We were shooting for 45 days in Scotland. We used to just go out, watch plays together, find different cuisines to eat. We would be working for over 12 hours, but still had the energy to go out and explore. The weather was great for most parts of it — it seemed like the Scottish weather could change anytime. People used to cook on set. In fact, when we came back to Bombay, I made biryani. People would make food from their home and bring it to the sets, and we would eat together, cracking jokes all the time. It was just so nice because we just got the opportunity to actually get to know each other, which we rarely do. I met Sanjay Mishra — such an accomplished actor. He's so brilliant. I met Sharat Saxena incidentally — I had worked with him 12 years ago. Mukul Dev too — obviously, it's a very sad thing that Mukul passed away. But Mukul and I had known each other before I moved to Mumbai to become an actor. Such great moments. We all looked out for each other, and it would be so cold, we would just give each other warm hugs — it was more accessible than a blanket.

Q. How did you know Mukul Dev, from before coming to Bollywood you said?

A. Yes, I was working in Dubai as an emcee at an award function, and someone introduced

Kubbra Sait shares insights on love, personal growth, Son Of *Sardaar 2*, and her heartfelt memories with Mukul Dev



Mukul Dev



Kubbra Sait with the Son Of *Sardaar 2* cast

me to Mukul and asked me to show him around, as he doesn't go out often. So I was just driving him around everywhere. We went shopping for his daughter. At that time, I had no idea that I was going to be moving to Mumbai in the next few years.

Q. What are your thoughts about marriage and the whole marriage scene right now?

A. You know, after a very long time, I'm happy to say that, I've finally found meaning in relationships. I think the first relationship I had to crack was the one with myself. How am I willing to show up unapologetically for me? Who am I when I'm the happiest, and who am I when I'm not feeling so good and I'm sad about something? We are all going through these myriad emotions. So understanding myself became my first relationship with myself, and that has undoubtedly opened up relationships with other people. But I am very happy to say that, you know, for me, being in a long relationship — a healthy one — has only just happened. And I'm growing in it. I'm happy to see where it goes.

I am very happy to say that for me, being in a long relationship, a healthy one, has only just happened. And I'm growing in it. I'm happy to see where it goes — Kubbra Sait



Pic: Instagram @kubbrasait

Newborn bliss

CJ Desk

Actor Vineet Kumar Singh and his wife Ruchira Singh have welcomed their first child, a baby boy, three years after their marriage. On Sunday, the couple took to social media to share the joyful news and announce the arrival of their newborn.

In a joint post, the duo wrote, "God's kindness overflows! Move over world, the littlest Singh has arrived and he's already stealing hearts and milk bottles. Thank you, God, for this precious little bundle of joy! - Ruchira & Vineet."

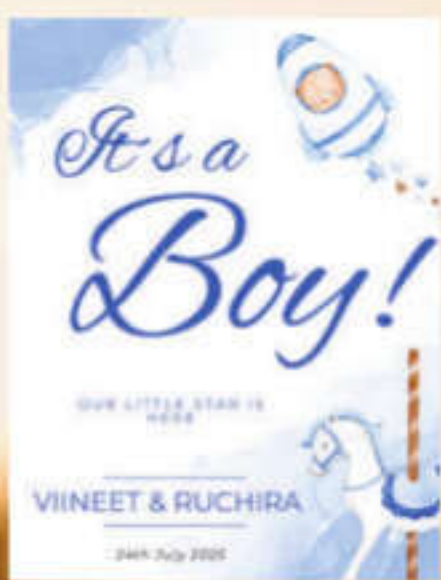
Several celebrities congratulated Vineet and Ruchira in the comments section, celebrating the arrival of their baby boy with heartfelt messages. Vikrant Massey wrote, "Bahut bahut badhai bhai sahab." Ahana Kumra wrote, "Such good News you two!!! Can't wait to meet the little one!!!" Avinash Tiwary wrote, "Congratulations bhai!" Rasika Dugal added, "Congratulations."

In May, Vineet and Ruchira announced their pregnancy with a maternity photoshoot. In the pictures, the actor is seen lovingly cradling Ruchira's baby bump. One photo shows him hugging his wife, who is dressed in a green bodycon dress, while another captures the couple enjoying pasta and pizza together.

"New Life & Blessings! From the universe, with love... Baby arriving soon!! Namaste, little one!!! We are ready to welcome you," Vineet captioned his post.

Vineet Kumar Singh and Ruchira Singh got married in November 2021 in an intimate ceremony attended by close friends and family.

Vineet Kumar Singh and wife Ruchira Singh welcome their first child, a baby boy, three years after their wedding



Tanushree slams body-shamer

After posting about eating mutton post-Shravan fast, Tanushree Dutta faces backlash and slams body-shamer with a powerful response

CJ Desk

Actress Tanushree Dutta recently shared a post on her social media handle in which she showcased pieces of mutton, talked about its benefits, and explained how she would cook it for herself. She also mentioned that she had completed the Shravan fast and was eating mutton afterward, for which she faced backlash for consuming non-vegetarian food during the holy month of *Shravan*.

However, after Tanushree highlighted the health benefits of mutton fat, a user fat-shamed her. In response, she firmly stated that she is fit and has no intention of being skinny. The troll commented, "Itna fat khaogi tabhi to itni fatty hoti ja rahi ho," to which the actress gave a sharp response. She asked the user to Google the facts and pointed out that goat meat contains the least amount of bad cholesterol, significantly lower than any other meat.

"About commenting on my body, you have no right but just to state facts. But just to state the facts: I'm very fit. I'm very fit not skinny but very well built and I look good in anything I wear. Stop body-shaming women who are big and beautiful. Not everybody wants to look like a skinny little boy," said Dutta.

Her caption also read, "Fat if consumed in limited quantity also doesn't add fat in the body. Healthy fats consume *karke bhi lean ho sakta hai insaan*. It is fat but it does not make u fat in the real sense because our body needs good fats to run well. And our body has fat processing mechanism."



I am not going to hide: Ishaan

CJ Desk

Actor Ishaan Khatter, who was recently seen in the Netflix show *The Royals*, is in a relationship with Kuala Lumpur-based model Chandni Bainz. While the couple has never publicly confirmed their relationship or shared pictures together online, they are frequently seen together at intimate dinner outings. The actor has now spoken about his reasons for maintaining privacy around his relationship.

Speaking to Zoom, Ishaan shared that he believes it's important to respect his partner Chandni Bainz's privacy as well. He acknowledged that being in the limelight naturally

sparks public curiosity, but when something feels right and special, there's an instinct to protect it, and that, he says, is exactly how he feels.

"I don't want to hide or lie or anything. Also, I am not going to stop living my life. I am in my 20s and I am not going to hide in a hole. I am not going to not go out and have a meal if I want to, you can't stop living your life," he added.

The 29-year-old actor added that he is not going to allow that to dictate how he thinks, feels and every decision he makes because someone has to be aware of what the conversation is. "But if you are doing that, you are living for the cameras. I act for the cameras, but I can't live for the cameras," shared Ishaan.



'My dad just said this to me'

CJ Desk

Bollywood star Salman Khan recounted the precious piece of advice he got from his father, legendary screenwriter Salim Khan. He shared a thoughtful message that no one can force anyone to do something and wished he had heard his father's advice earlier; however, Khan said it's "never too late". Taking to his Instagram handle, he wrote a cryptic post along with a picture of himself in black T-shirt, "Present becomes yr past, past catches up 2 your future, present Is a gift, do

Salman Khan recalls valuable advice given by his father Salim Khan, wished to hearing it "earlier"

right with it, mistakes repeated becomes a habit n then your character, dont blame any 1, no 1 can make u do anything that u don't want to. My dad just said this to me, it's so true. *Kash* I heard this earlier but never too late" After his post, netizens dropped heart emojis and expressed their love for the superstar. One of the social media users wrote, "Your

caption,so beautiful word..and thats very true", while the other commented, "Super *bhaijaan*" On the work front, Salman Khan was recently seen in *Sikandar*, alongside Rashmika Mandanna. The film also starred Kajal Aggarwal, Sharman Joshi, Sathyaraj, Jatin Sarna, Sanjay Kapoor, Prateik, Smita Patil, and Kishore.



Selena's sweet wedding plans

Selena Gomez reveals she wants a mini cake and her Nana's biscuits and gravy for an intimate wedding with Benny Blanco

CJ Desk

Selena Gomez has some special wedding plans, and she recently shared details about her nuptials to fiancé Benny Blanco, reported People. "Whenever that day comes," said Gomez added "I do know I don't want a big cake." Rather, she shared that she prefers a smaller and more intimate dessert, reserved for herself and Blanco. Gomez added, "I think I'd want a mini one for just us that we can freeze." Gomez revealed that her "preferred dessert would be biscuits and gravy." But not just anyone's recipe, "My Nana's biscuits and gravy," Selena Gomez said. "That sounds like dessert to me." Despite Gomez's recent dessert-dishing, she and

Blanco, who got engaged in December 2024, have "not yet" begun planning their wedding, the music producer previously revealed, reported People. During the July 10 episode of the Therapuss with Jake Shane podcast, Blanco shared that the couple have not started wedding planning because they "both need to chill" and have "both been working so much." "We got engaged and then we were filming music videos for our album, then it's holidays, then right after the holidays we had to start all the promo for our stuff, do that," the producer said.



INDIA COUTURE WEEK 2025

RUNWAY NOSTALGIA

CJ Desk

If anyone wants to know how to make a grand comeback, then they should definitely take notes from ace designer Manish Malhotra. On Saturday night, he returned to the India Couture Week after more than 5 years, and with his unique show, he once again proved why he is still at the top of his game.

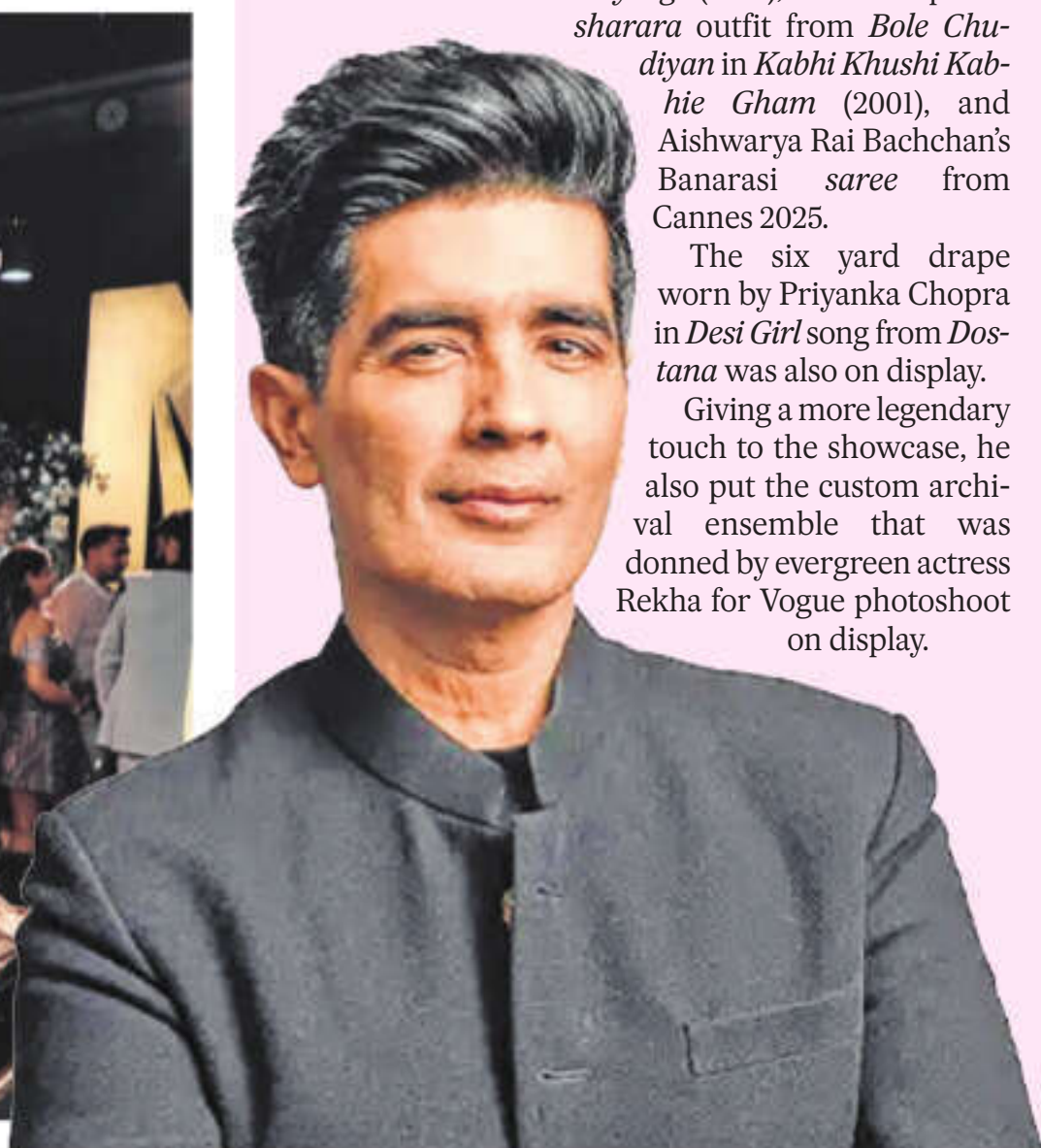
A gala held at the Taj Palace in Delhi gave fashion-holics a golden opportunity to have a look at some of the iconic ensembles created by Manish Malhotra in his professional journey spanning over three decades.

The attendees were definitely in for a treat as Manish displayed his most celebrated outfits at ICW, including Kajol's green *lehenga* from *Mehndi Laga Ke Rakhna* song in *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995), Kareena's peach *sharara* outfit from *Bole Chudiyan* in *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* (2001), and Aishwarya Rai Bachchan's Banarasi *saree* from Cannes 2025.

The six yard drape worn by Priyanka Chopra in *Desi Girl* song from *Dostana* was also on display.

Giving a more legendary touch to the showcase, he also put the custom archival ensemble that was donned by evergreen actress Rekha for Vogue photoshoot on display.

Kajol's green *lehenga* from *DDLJ* to Kareena's *sharara* in *K3G*, Aishwarya's Cannes *saree*: Manish Malhotra showcases his iconic outfits at India Couture Week



'Publicity stunt nahi hai'

Akshay Kumar breaks silence on the *Hera Pheri 3* controversy involving co-star Paresh Rawal and addresses fan concerns and speculations



CJ Desk

Hera Pheri 3 has been in the news for multiple reasons. A couple of months ago, the movie made it to the headlines because of Paresh Rawal's exit. It was reported that Akshay, who now holds the rights for the franchise, had filed a legal case against Rawal for leaving the movie. However, things were solved, and everyone's favourite Babu *Bhaiya* joined the cast of the film again. But, netizens started speculating that maybe all this was a publicity stunt.

Now, Akshay Kumar, while interacting with Hindustan Times, revealed that it was not a publicity stunt. He said, "Nahi, yeh publicity stunt nahi hai. The things went legal, so when legal things are involved, we cannot call it a publicity stunt; it is a real thing."

The actor further added, "But *ab sab kuch thik ho gaya hai*. Very soon, some kind of announcement can come. Yes, there were some ups and downs. But now everything is solved, and we are back together, and we have always been together. Yes, that's it!"

We are sure fans of the *Hera Pheri* franchise will be happy to know that everything is solved, and soon the movie will be officially announced.

Earlier, this year, there were reports that Akshay, Suniel, and Paresh have shot for an announcement video, and reportedly, during the IPL, it was supposed to be launched. But that didn't happen.

FILMY SHOTS

Ruchi Gujar booked for creating ruckus at film premiere in Mumbai

The Amboli police on Saturday registered an FIR against actress Ruchi Gujar, 27, based on a complaint filed by producer and director Man Lal Singh, 40. The police filed the case against her for allegedly arriving at the Solang Valley movie premiere at Cinepolis, located in Fun Republic Mall, Andheri West, on Friday, where she verbally and physically abused Singh. She allegedly threw a water bottle at him, hit him with her sandal, and threatened to stop the release of the film.



Aneet Padda politely declines to pose for paps at Mumbai airport

Aneet Padda, the current social media sensation, is enjoying the massive success of her film *Saiyaara*, where she stars opposite debutant Ahaan Panday. As the film enters its second week and races toward the ₹200 crore mark at the domestic box office, celebrations are already underway. According to paparazzo SneyhZala, the cast is flying to Singapore to mark the film's phenomenal run. On Sunday, Aneet was spotted at the Mumbai airport, reportedly heading to Singapore. Wearing a blue shirt, black cap, and face mask, she briefly posed for paparazzi after saying, "Mujhe sharam aa rahi hai," before politely declining further photos.

Johnny Depp, Alice Cooper pay tribute to legendary singer Ozzy Osbourne

Johnny Depp joined rock icon Alice Cooper on stage at London's O2 Arena to pay tribute to iconic singer Ozzy Osbourne, reported People. John Michael "Ozzy" Osbourne, the lead singer of British heavy metal band Black Sabbath, passed away at 76. He breathed his last on July 22, Tuesday, after a year-long struggle with Parkinson's disease. Cooper surprised the crowd at London's O2 Arena with a special appearance from Depp, 62, as the group performed Black Sabbath's 1970 hit



Paranoid. Depp, who is Cooper's Hollywood Vampires bandmate, walked on stage with a guitar in hand halfway through *Paranoid*. Cooper, wearing an Osbourne T-shirt, later lifted his fist in the air when the song ended, as shown in concert video footage posted on YouTube.

BRANDSutra

Mumbai, Monday, July 28, 2025



Rock bottom became the solid foundation on which I rebuilt my life
— J.K. Rowling

Finding A New Footing

From durability to design, and affordability to discounts—**Sachin Joseph** of Paragon Footwear on how the pillars of being ‘customer-first’ look different in the digital age.



Tsunami Costabir

When Paragon scaled operations nationally in the 1980s and 1990s, it quickly became a household name—synonymous with affordable, durable footwear. In markets where consumers owned just one pair of footwear for every occasion—be it work or weddings—Paragon rose to become the number one player by volume, thanks to its iconic rubber ‘Hawai chappals’.

The pillars of durability, affordability, and legacy that once made the brand a market leader now often take a backseat to variety, design, and “good deals rather than low MRP”—which increasingly shape consumer choices.

Now, in its 50th year of business, the brand is closely tracking shifts in consumer behaviour to plan its next strides. Sachin Joseph, Executive Vice President – Marketing & IT at Paragon Footwear, gives us a deep dive into these evolving dynamics.

Legacy vs Relevance

While Paragon once dominated markets with its flagship rubber chappals, today about 40–45% of its turnover comes from PU (Polyurethane)-based footwear. And though disposable incomes have risen across the country, a significant chunk of Paragon’s consumer base remains extremely price-sensitive. “For the Paragon consumer, even a five-rupee increase in MRP can impact a purchase decision,” Joseph explains.

At the same time, there’s a growing segment of consumers who are experimental, design-conscious, and driven by global fashion trends. Women, in particular, are now leading purchase decisions—looking not just for affordability, but variety, style, and choice.

In such a landscape, leaning solely on durability and quality no longer suffices. Paragon has responded by rolling out over 50 new designs each month, strategically

cally deploying them across different regions using AI-powered insights.

Playing On Emotions, Not Just Features

Instead of focusing on features in its communication, Paragon leans into emotional storytelling—as seen in its recent ‘Zid, Chalthe Rehne Ki’ campaign. “Paragon has been part of Indian families for generations. Consumers tell us their fathers and grandfathers wore the brand. And even if they themselves didn’t, they probably had it thrown at them by their parents at some point!” laughs Joseph.

While comfort and quality remain R&D priorities, the brand rarely highlights them overtly. Instead, brand salience is maintained through emotional resonance, shelf presence, and in-store visibility.

Appealing To Every Buyer

For the Paragon brand, a majority of their marketing spend continues to be on traditional media and television. “About 15-20% of our spend is on digital but for our brands like Eeken and Stimulus that speak to the youth, it is a larger percentage.”

For the most part, digital spend is about creating awareness, and conversions prove difficult to track due to a large presence in offline distribution. “We take up prime properties for TVCs and focus on performance marketing on digital marketplaces.”

Joseph notes that the shopper on e-commerce is largely different from one in a Multi-Brand Outlet (MBO) or an Exclusive Brand Outlet (EBO). In e-commerce, consumers are interested in seeing variety and bagging deals in the form of high discounts, rather than low MRPs. In MBOs, affordable price and brand trust wins. While for EBOs, a variety in design, colours and more premium offerings come into play.

Today, a lot of shopping is also happening on Q-commerce. “Gone are the days when consumers would go to the same shop year-after-year and only stick to trusted brands.” With additional disposable incomes, consumers are willing to take chances. And if it doesn’t work out, they won’t buy that brand the next time.

When Digital Becomes The Backbone Of Retail

Joseph reveals that the company has made investments in software that tell them about tastes and preferences and how they change from state to state. “It’s not just about South vs East. The kind of colours, size of the footwear, and types of designs that each state likes is different.” These tools, combined with Paragon’s vast



historical data, help the brand fine-tune predictive design cycles, reduce sampling costs, and optimise inventory placement—ensuring on-time order collection and retail visibility.

Paragon will also be expanding their exclusive retail store presence through franchisee networks. “We’re launching a new store format in the next month, with a completely revamped design.” The idea is to continue to provide for the original, price-sensitive customer, while adding on layers for the experimental, digitally savvy and design-first consumer.



Jury Secrets On What Sets Award-Winning Work Apart

MMA India

MMA Global India, in the spirit of the 14th edition of SMARTIES, hosted two special LinkedIn Café sessions, bringing together top CMOs, marketers and industry leaders to open up the jury room, and share what truly sets award-winning marketing apart.

Across these two conversations - the Main Jury session and the Selection Jury session - one idea was clear: marketing effectiveness is evolving fast, but the principles that win remain rooted in clarity, impact and insight.

From Ashish Bajaj (Narayana Health), Kaushik Chakraborty (Tata Capital), Piyush Jain (Agilus Diagnostics), Shantanu Shauhan (Noise), Akila Jayaraman (JioAds), Shailendra Sharma (Asian Paints), Rajiv Gopinath (Publicis Media) and more, here’s what the combined Jury and Selection Jury had to say about raising the bar, avoiding common pitfalls, and building entries that don’t just get shortlisted - but take home the Gold.

When two finalists score similarly across all criteria, what intangible qualities push one to the top?

- Clarity of storytelling - a crisp, compelling are that defines the problem, insight, solution, and outcome.
- Emotional pull and human insight - entries that make the jury feel something stands out.
- Degree of innovation that nudges the industry forward - smart use of tech or media formats with purpose.
- Simplicity over jargon - entries that cut through complexity to deliver clear intent.
- Authenticity - soul over sparkle, work that feels genuine and culturally relevant.
- Scale and relevance to real consumer truths.

How important is the ‘craft’ of the submission itself - case video, clarity of write-up, and storytelling - in determining winners?

- Your submission isn’t documentation - it’s your final creative deliverable.
- A well-edited, emotionally engaging video, with clear data storytelling, shows respect for both the idea and the jury’s time.

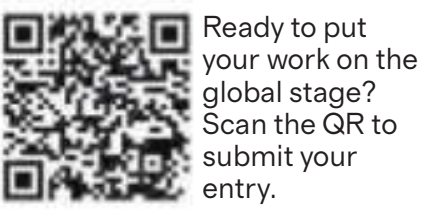
- Avoid “verbal diarrhoea” - more words don’t mean more value.
- Tailor your story to the category, and don’t assume the jury knows your brand.
- Package the insight, execution, and impact in a tight, persuasive, well-crafted narrative.

What’s one thing that always impresses judges - and one thing that instantly puts them off?

- Impresses: Sharp human insight, cultural relevance, emotional resonance.
- Clear link to business impact - real metrics over vanity numbers.
- Seamless blend of technology and creativity, where tech feels integral, not bolted on.
- Puts off: Forced narratives, category mismatch, buzzword overload.
- Entries clearly designed just to win awards without real-world scale or impact.
- Poorly packaged or excessively complex submissions that lose the plot.

Which categories are raising the bar the fastest—where are you seeing more boldness, integrated thinking, or unexpected storytelling?

- AI-powered personalisation at scale.
 - B2B with main-character storytelling and sharper narrative.
 - Brand Experience with immersive, local relevance and authentic emotional connection.
 - Martech-led hyper-personalisation that remains human and empathetic.
 - Purpose-driven work that delivers real, not performative, impact.
 - In an era where marketing budgets are scrutinised, and award shows themselves are asked to prove their value, SMARTIES India is doubling down on what matters most: effectiveness, innovation and business impact.
- If you’re a brand, agency or marketer looking to showcase work that moves the needle, these are the principles to keep front and centre.



Ready to put your work on the global stage? Scan the QR to submit your entry.

Team BrandSutra

Throughout his career, media maven Raj Nayak had the privilege of working with employers who gave him the authority to make decisions, along with accountability, knowing that if he messes up, it was his funeral.

That freedom guided him in cracking landmark deals in the broadcasting industry—selling USD 800,000 packages for Star Sports for USD 2 million; leaving his job at the Star Network to launch NDTV, and now, when he should be retiring, starting House of Cheer Networks to certify companies in being the “happiest places to work”. In an interview with Gautam Shelar, he pours out his love and admiration for the potential of the broadcasting industry. He also drops truth bombs about how they’ve shot themselves in the foot. Watch the interview in its entirety on YouTube @SellSideConversations.

Edited excerpts...

Q. How did you land your first sales job?

A. I got my first job at Tata Economic Consultancy Services. They had an annual magazine called The State Of The Nation. That’s how I entered media by default, not by design. I first indulged in writing, and realised that I couldn’t write for nuts. I also realised that it doesn’t pay. Advertising, in those days, was glamorous. It also paid much more. Later, I joined a newspaper called the Indian Post, which was the newspaper that every household had. I was their Deputy Ad Sales Manager. That’s how I got into mainstream media. From there, there was no looking back. I began working with other publications and later television.

Q. Did you do any formal courses to learn sales?

A. No. I don’t believe that selling can be taught. It’s like swimming. You have to jump into the pool to learn. Sure, you can hone your skills and get better at it. But you have to want to sell.

Q. Tell us about the early days of television in India.

A. I was probably the sixth employee

Prime Time, Paisa & Perception

Raj Nayak on autonomy in decision making, selling cricket like the Super Bowl, and what’s broken in Indian TV today.



of Star TV in India. I joined as an area sales manager heading North and East. From there, I grew to the vice president of the company, as part of the ManCom team.

Selling, in hindsight, was much easier back in the day. And one of the reasons was the novelty. Nobody knew anything about television, and whatever you told them was treated as gospel truth.

And as Star TV, an international company, we knew a lot about what was happening in international markets. By 1994, Rupert Murdoch had taken over the company. For us to be associated with News Corp and Fox, gave us a lot to learn.

At the time, under the Star Network, we had Star Plus, Star Movies, BBC and MTV. Later, we got Star Sports.

Q. Tell us about the USD 2 million deal you cracked.

A. It was the 1999 Cricket World Cup.

We had to sell spots and typically, only the matches that India plays would get sold. For other matches, there were viewers, but no buyers.

I always say *‘paisa phekho, tamasha dekho’*. You have to impress clients. It’s all about perception. We would host parties, we would get the cricketers to come. And, because of that, the clients, too, would come.

And the company would spend top dollar. They would never scrounge in situations like this. They would never ask about the budget as long as we got that revenue back.

So to get that revenue back, we had to sell all matches — not just the India playing ones. And I decided, unilaterally, to sell the entire series in the form of packages. You either buy the entire series, or nothing at all.

Five days before the event, not one client had picked it up. My boss had agencies calling him asking, “Whom do you have as your sports head? He’s committing suicide.”

While I was scared, I had conviction, knowing that there is no way an advertiser will not buy cricket. I also couldn’t go back on my decision because it was a matter of showing face.

Three days before the event, we started filling up. And three days into the event we were sold out. That was a turning point in my career.

Q. Tell us about the USD 2 million deal.

A. I wanted to go to the US, because my brother-in-law lived in LA. So my boss told me to find some work and do a meeting there. I set up a meeting with LG’s global ad agency to check a box of doing a meeting.

I had read somewhere that Intel had bought a spot for USD 1.2 million for the Super Bowl. Using that as a reference point, I asked them, “How many people watch the Super Bowl?” They said, the whole country.

I told them, just like a Super Bowl, we have a sport called cricket and

everybody watches it. And the entire population of America was equal to just the population of India’s middle class.

The deal would be eight spots per day for a period of about 40 to 50 days and I asked them to take a wild guess on how much they would have to pay. They came up with an atrocious figure, and I said what if I give it to you for USD 2 million provided you give me a confirmation letter today.

They gave me the letter and that’s how I sold our USD 800,000 package for USD 2 million. After that, every client in India was sold that spot for USD 2 million, because that became the benchmark.

Q. How did you start NDTV?

A. I quit 13 channels at Star to launch one channel—NDTV. Later, we launched three channels—NDTV 24x7 (English), NDTV India (Hindi) and NDTV Profit.

The brand equity that Dr Prannoy Roy built, if someone had to measure it, was easily among the top 10 brands in the country across sectors.

He told me from the start that there would be a thick wall between editorial and commercial. So no matter how much a client spent, I couldn’t get a thing done within a show.

NDTV we started at 0 revenue and went to about 650 crores—mainly from NDTV 24x7 which was our driver channel bringing in about 450 crores. Today, news channels are struggling, but they only have themselves to blame. I believe that television is still very powerful and impactful but they shoot themselves in the foot. Because which channel can you trust today?

Q. What is the art or science of making a sale?

A. I come from the school of thought where, when you go for a sale, you think—if it doesn’t happen, it doesn’t happen. Otherwise, you turn out looking desperate.

Also, I don’t think anybody can succeed if they don’t have autonomy. You need to have trust in your leader. Hold him accountable, but give him authority. That is what both Dr Roy and the Murdochs did for me.

FREE PRESS JOURNAL SCHOOL

MUMBAI | MONDAY | JULY 28, 2025

India secured a draw in the fourth test match of the Anderson-Tendulkar Trophy against England at Old Trafford, Manchester on Sunday

INDIA MANAGES TO PULL OFF DRAW



Saiyaara enters Rs 200-cr club

Mohit Suri's Saiyaara has officially entered the Rs 200 crore club in its second week. The romantic drama, which marks the debut of Ahaan Panday and Aneet Padda, has collected Rs 217.25 crore in India within just nine days of its release.

tellar centuries from Ravindra Jadeja and Washington Sundar in the second innings guided India to secure a draw in the fourth test match against England at Old Trafford, Manchester on Sunday. India batted for more than five sessions to save the Manchester Test. India, at the end of the final session on Day 5, was 425/4, with Jadeja 107 and Sundar 101 unbeaten at the crease. The duo added 203 runs for the fifth wicket. Ben Stokes was awarded player of the match for his brilliant five-wicket haul, followed by a stellar hundred in the first innings.

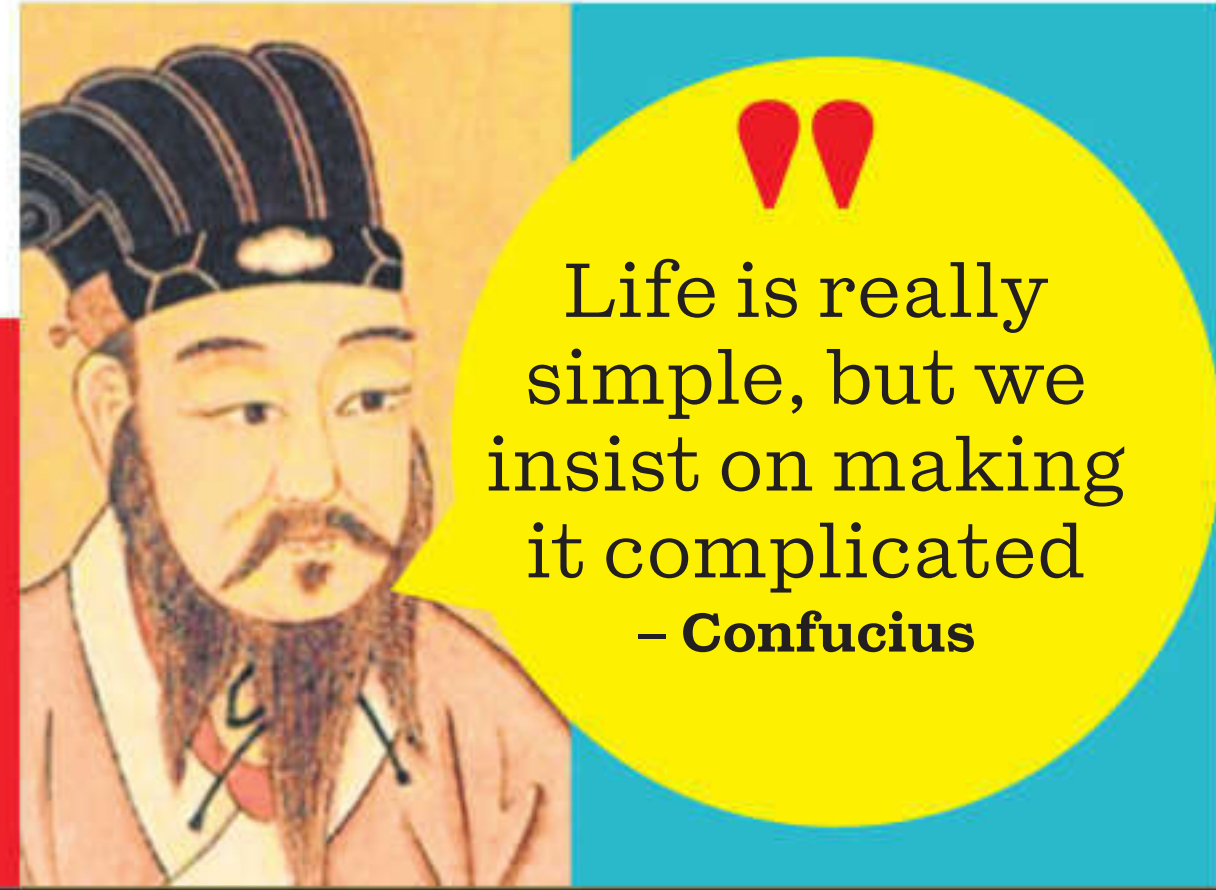
This was his consecutive POTM award in the ongoing series. England went wicketless in the final two sessions.



Keep your eyes open to your mercies. The man who forgets to be thankful has fallen asleep in life- Robert Louis Stevenson

DID U KNOW?

India managed to draw a Test match at Old Trafford cricket ground after 35 years



Life is really simple, but we insist on making it complicated
- Confucius

AI: TCS to fire 12K senior, top managers



India's largest IT services provider Tata Consultancy Services will reduce its workforce by 2 per cent in its 2026 financial year, primarily affecting middle and senior management. The company is retraining and redeploying staff as it enters new markets and deploys AI, but about 12,200 jobs will be cut as part of the process.

BCCI to go for major overhaul after Eng series



The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is considering a major overhaul when it comes to the Indian cricket team after the Test series against England, according to a report by The Telegraph. The report claimed that head coach Gautam Gambhir's job is currently safe.



♥ No one can make you do anything that you don't want to
- Salman Khan

MUMBAI | MONDAY | JULY 28, 2025

Deepika among 90+ women shaping culture

DID U KNOW?

Deepika is also set to receive a Hollywood Walk of Fame in 2026.

Bollywood actor Deepika Padukone has been named in the 90+ Women Shaping Culture list of global cultural publication "The Shift", for her advocacy of mental health and women empowerment. Besides, Deepika, the list included the names of other popular celebrities like singer-actor

Selena Gomez, Hollywood star Angelina Jolie and singers Billie Eilish and Olivia Rodrigo, among others. The 39-year-old actor has been an active mental health advocate over the last years and is the founder of Live Love Laugh Foundation that aims to educate people regarding mental health.



Alumni should return favour



Jammu and Kashmir CM Omar Abdullah Sunday called upon the alumni of the Kashmir University to continue their association with the varsity, saying they have greatly benefited from it and should return the favour through their experience. The chief minister was addressing the 'Mega Alumni Meet-2025' of the Kashmir University in Srinagar.

Parents' Day not enough



Bollywood actress Kajol, an avid social media user, has shared her thoughts on the significance of Parents' Day, expressing that the title feels too small to truly honour the role parents play in our lives. Taking to her Instagram handle, she said that she believes

that parenthood deserves a larger and more meaningful acknowledgment beyond just a single day of celebration.

Dolphins studying us?



adma Bhushan awardee Shekhar Kapur, has shared an interesting story about the AI deciphering the signals from dolphins. The filmmaker recently took to his Instagram, and shared a picture of a dolphin. He wrote, "The scientists were studying the intelligence of a dolphin in a tank. Sending signals and stimuli to the dolphin, as computers through the latest AI technology would record and analyse the dolphin's response. They continued the study over several months looking for patterns. 'How intelligent are the dolphins really?', they asked.



The AI engine quickly analysed. It found that while the scientists were trying to study the dolphin, the dolphin was actually analysing and studying them back

What unnerved the scientists was the way the Dolphin would always come back and stare at the scientists as if to say 'Hey, what's your next signal?'. As if this was a game the dolphin was enjoying/ 'Was the dolphin just

enjoying the play?' Does play have a pattern?' The filmmaker was talking about the recent DolphinGemma project by Google in which AI documents and studies communication patterns by dolphins.

Different but no Less



Legendary actor Anupam Kher said that he was honoured to meet with Indian Army officer Colonel Sofiya Qureshi, who briefed the media during Operation Sindoor, and present her with his latest book, 'Different But No Less'. The actor posted a video, calling the book "very special." The book is based on his real-life experiences. Kher, has earlier penned 'The Best Thing About You Is You,' 'Lessons Life Taught Me Unknowingly,' and 'Your Best Day Is Today.'



♥♥ Taking calculated risk under pressure is my hallmark
- Shubman Gill

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SCHOOL | p3

MUMBAI | MONDAY | JULY 28, 2025

Shubman scripts new record



Indian skipper roars after defiant 100 on Day 5 of India-England 4th Test match

Gill joins Bradman, Sunil Gavaskar



At the historic Old Trafford in Manchester, Shubman Gill carved his name alongside legends as he smashed his fourth century of the series, a superbly composed 103 on the final day of the fourth Test against England. With this hundred, Gill has now

joined Don Bradman and Sunil Gavaskar as the only captains in Test history to score four centuries in a single series. Bradman had done it in the 1947-48 home series against India, while Gavaskar lit up the 1978-79 home series against the West Indies, but Gill has made this landmark on away soil and in his debut Test series as captain. Gill's 103 is the first century by an Indian at Old Trafford in 35 years

since a young Sachin Tendulkar's iconic 119 in 1990. In terms of overall World Test Championship (WTC) numbers, Gill's record continues to grow stronger. He now has nine centuries in the WTC era, equalling Rohit Sharma's tally but in lesser innings.

DID U KNOW?
Rahul Dravid holds the highest batting average among Indian players against England in Tests, averaging 60.93.

Hockey India hosts 15th Congress

Hockey India successfully conducted its 15th Congress in the historic town of Mahabalipuram on Sunday. Marking a century of Indian hockey's glorious journey, the session witnessed a series of landmark announcements including substantial financial support for state and national-level hockey development. To commemorate the formation of its first-ever national governing body, Hockey India will organise an unprecedented, nationwide celebration on November 7.



5 debutants impress in Barcelona's win



FC Barcelona kicked off their 2025/26 preseason with a 3-1 victory over Vissel Kobe, at the Misaki Park Stadium, a match notable for the debut appearances of five new faces in the blaugrana shirt, Joan Garcia, Marcus Rashford, Roony Bardghji, Jofre Torrents and Pedro Fernandez 'Dro'. All five newcomers contributed positively in a game that offered fans a glimpse of Barca's evolving squad.

India at Para Badminton Int'l



India's para badminton stars Sukant Kadam and Krishna Nagar delivered an impressive performance at the British & Irish Para Badminton International 2025. They clinched silver and bronze respectively in their categories. In the Men's Singles SL4 category, Sukant Kadam displayed a commanding run to the final. In the Men's Singles SH6 category, Krishna Nagar advanced to the semifinals before finishing with a hard-fought bronze medal.

QUICK NEWS

Stuttgart signs Chema Andres

Midfielder Chema Andres has joined VfB Stuttgart from Real Madrid. The 20-year-old midfielder, who has signed a contract through to June 2030, has been given the number 30 shirt by the Bundesliga outlet.

HOCKEY SUB JR MEN'S NATIONALS

The 15th Hockey India Sub Junior Men National Championship 2025 is set to begin on July 28 (Monday) at Chennai's MRK Hockey Stadium, featuring 29 teams divided into three divisions.

Hamilton's start from pit lane

Ferrari driver Lewis Hamilton will start the Belgian Grand Prix from the pit lane after putting in a new power unit following a horrible Qualifying on Saturday, after his best lap was deleted for exceeding track limits.



MUMBAI | MONDAY | JULY 28, 2025

PM bats for India as sports superpower

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday, in the 124th episode of his monthly radio programme 'Mann Ki Baat', shared his vision for making the country a sporting superpower and hailed the Indian contingent for winning close to 600 medals at the recent 'World Police and Fire Games'. He also claimed that start-ups related to sports, whether they are sports management or manufacturing, will be helped in every way.



Nitish quashes rumours of quitting SRH



Injured India seam-bowling all-rounder Nitish Kumar Reddy has quashed rumours of him leaving Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) in the Indian Premier League (IPL) for another franchise, adding that he will always stand by his current team. Previously, reports had emerged saying that Reddy had expressed his desire to leave the franchise over his role in the team.



Empowering rural sports talent

The vision is to combine sports, education and rural development in far-flung areas

Archery academy in remote C'garh village



An archery training centre will come up in a remote village in the tribal-dominated Jashpur district of Chhattisgarh as part of the government's push to empower rural sporting talent, an official said

on Sunday. With a vision to combine sports, education, and rural development under an integrated approach,

DID U KNOW?

The complex will feature an archery training academy, a primary health unit and a skill development centre



Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai has been taking steps towards holistic progress in remote regions of the state, an official statement said. As part of this vision, an integrated multi-purpose complex will be developed in Pandrapath in Bagicha development block of

Jashpur. It will be equipped with world-class facilities to nurture budding talent from tribal areas, it said. The National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) has sanctioned Rs 20.53 crore for this project under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative.

Everton coach Moyes urges new signings

Everton coach David Moyes emphasized the need for several new signings ahead of the upcoming Premier League season following a 3-0 defeat to Bournemouth. During the League's match at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey, Everton's loss underscored the club's urgency to

bolster its squad as per Xinhua. Everton has already signed striker Thierno Barry and goalkeeper Mark Travers, while the loan of Charly Alcaraz has been made permanent. Moyes also revealed that they have made an offer for Bayern Munich defender Adam Aznou.

Tilak Varma to lead in Duleep Trophy

India left-handed batter Tilak Varma will captain South Zone in the 2025 Duleep Trophy, starting on August 28. The tournament, which will be held in the old zonal format of six teams, will mark the beginning of 2025/26 domestic cricket season. Though Tilak

didn't play for Hyderabad in the previous Ranji Trophy season due to his Indian team commitments, the left-handed batter scored a century on his County Championship debut for Hampshire against Essex and followed it up with scores of 56, 47 and 100.

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