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## 'India My Second Home,' Says Iranian Engineer Working On Zojila Tunnel

Calling Zojila Tunnel an icon, Yousef told NDTV that he is proud to have been associated with the landmark project

**Zojila Tunnel.(Agency)**  
While his own country was reeling under bombs and its bridges were being torn apart, Yousef Es'haghpour Rahimabadi was busy working on building a tunnel in India. From Iran, Yousef is the Authority Engineer for the Zojila Tunnel. Calling it an iconic tunnel, Yousef told NDTV that he is proud to have been associated with the landmark project. The Zojila Tunnel project successfully achieved its historic final excavation breakthrough on Tuesday. Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, along with Chief Minister Omar

Abdullah and Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha witnessed the final ceremonial blast from the Kargil side to connect the excavation fronts from Baltal (Sonamarg) and Meenamarg (Drass-Kargil). Excited at the breakthrough, Yousef called Zojila the most challenging project of his career spanning over three decades. "I have worked in many countries on many tough projects. But this is the most challenging one due to the topography and weather. That's why I am proud to be part of the project," Yousef told



Nazir Masoodi.

Yousef, who is married in India, calls India his second home and describes himself as

Indo-Iranian.

Talking about his experience of working on building something as iconic as the Zojila Tunnel while his country was under heavy bombing, Yousef said that engineers are also soldiers. And that's why he kept working on the tunnel.

"I am happy and honoured to be part of a project that is for the good of people of India," he said, adding that every Indian must be proud of the tunnel. The Zojila Tunnel will become India's longest road tunnel and Asia's longest bi-directional tunnel, spanning a total project length of 30.18 km,

including a 13.153 km main tunnel and 17.030 km of approach roads. The project, estimated at Rs 6,809 crore, is part of a larger effort to strengthen all-weather connectivity along the Srinagar-Kargil-Leh corridor on National Highway-1. The tunnel, being constructed under the Zojila Pass between Sonamarg and Drass, aims to provide uninterrupted connectivity to Ladakh, which remains cut off during winter months due to heavy snowfall and avalanche risks. Once operational, it will reduce travel time on the stretch from over three hours to around 15 minutes, while also improving safety and strategic mobility for both civilian and defence purposes.

## Crores-Rupee Administration Running Under Mehsana Police's Nose!

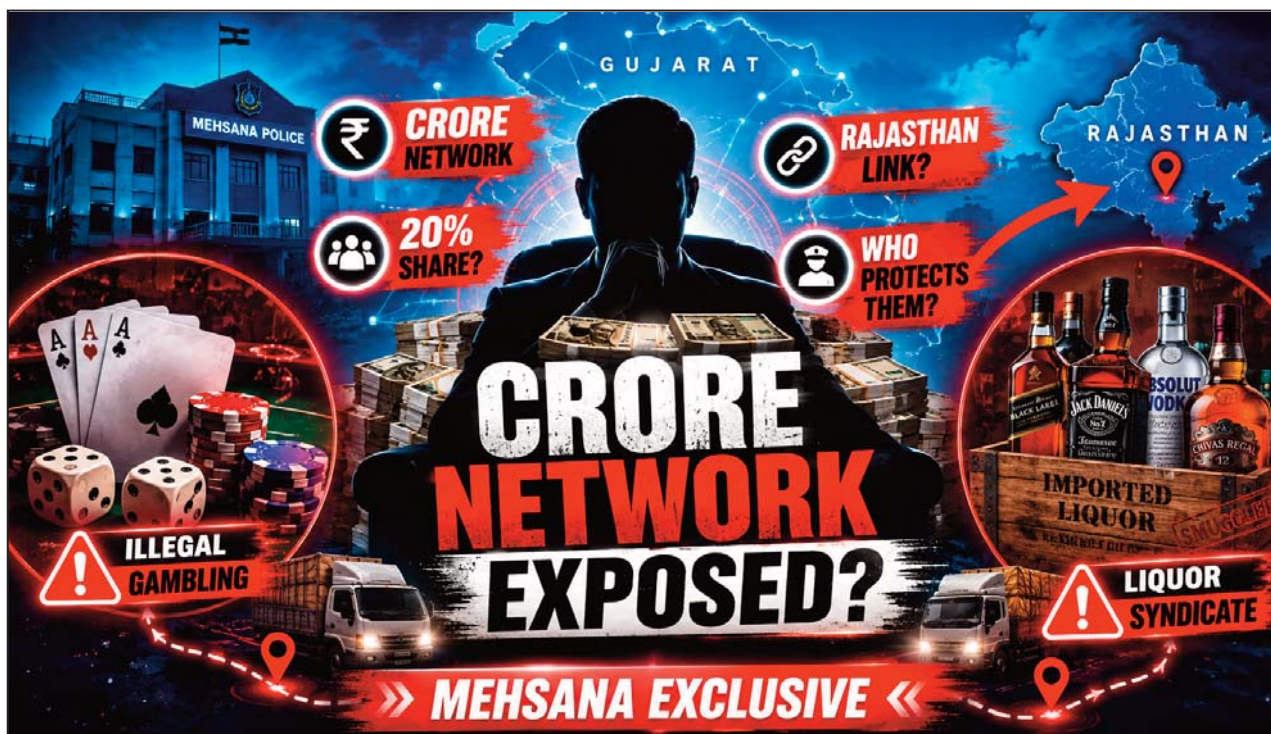
### Why Is Khaki Powerless Before Administrator Tarun Dabhi's Alleged Empire? Direct Challenge to Home Minister Harsh Sanghavi?

**Mahanagar Metro Desk / Pawan Mekan Mehsana, Gujarat:** The reality of Gujarat's prohibition policy is once again under scrutiny as allegations of large-scale gambling and liquor operations continue to surface from Mehsana district. In today's explosive investigation, Pakko Gujarat examines claims that an alleged administrator, Tarun Dabhi, has established a powerful network operating across the district, allegedly influencing illegal gambling, liquor distribution, and collection systems worth crores of rupees every month. According to sources, the alleged network operates through multiple locations and is reportedly linked to an extensive collection mechanism spread across various police jurisdictions.

#### Blast No. 1: Gambling Operations in Bavlu and Nandan Areas

Sources claim that near Thakorvas in Lor village, gambling activities involving substantial amounts of money are allegedly being conducted openly. Questions are being raised regarding the role of local enforcement agencies and whether adequate action has been taken. Near Flor Hotel in Rajpur village, another alleged gambling operation is said to be functioning regularly. Local sources claim that daily collections from such activities amount to significant sums, raising concerns about administrative oversight.

#### Blast No. 2: Foreign Liquor Network Across Langhnaj and Lynch Areas



Sources allege that foreign liquor is being sold openly in the area despite Gujarat's prohibition laws. Reports indicate that illegal liquor distribution continues through local networks operating within the village. Another alleged liquor-selling point is reportedly operating near the highway area, drawing serious questions about enforcement effectiveness. Perhaps the

most serious allegation concerns an alleged interstate connection. Sources claim that the network maintains links with liquor suppliers operating in Rajasthan and that foreign liquor is being smuggled into Gujarat on a regular basis. Local discussions also suggest that certain traders are allegedly pressured to purchase stock only through designated channels, raising

concerns about the existence of a monopolized supply structure. The allegations have triggered debate across the district, with critics questioning whether individuals involved in these activities are operating with confidence due to perceived protection or influence. The controversy has also led to questions regarding the effectiveness of the state's anti-liquor enforcement policies.

Despite repeated allegations and widespread discussions surrounding illegal gambling and liquor operations, residents continue to ask why stronger action has not been visible on the ground. Questions are being raised regarding the role of local police administration. The effectiveness of enforcement agencies. The status of investigations into the alleged network. Whether higher authorities have been informed of the allegations.

Will the Mehsana police administration launch a comprehensive investigation into these allegations, or will questions regarding illegal gambling, liquor trafficking, and alleged collection networks continue to remain unanswered? The public is demanding transparency, accountability, and decisive action.

## Swing from secular to Hindutva: How BJP won over the Bengali Bhadraklok

**New Delhi.(Agency)**

"Where have all the Bhadraklok gone?" asked one of my editors sarcastically when I said that the BJP might sweep the 2024 Lok Sabha election in Bengal after watching the exit poll trends, which predicted a clear edge for the BJP over the Trinamool Congress (TMC). Although sarcastic, his voice reflected a concern as well as disbelief that the Bengali Bhadraklok, shaped by their century-long cultural practices, would accept BJP's Hindutva politics, which was largely considered alien on Bengal soil. However, the myth has now been busted. In the recently concluded 2026 assembly polls, the Bhadraklok largely swung to the BJP, marking a new beginning in Bengal politics. The state

witnessed an unprecedented Hindu consolidation, with the Bhadraklok playing a significant role.

A look at the Presidency region adjoining Kolkata, which is considered the Bhadraklok bastion in the state, reveals the change. Long considered a TMC citadel, the Presidency region this time elected the BJP in a majority in four out of five districts. While the BJP won 208 of the 294 seats in the Assembly election, reducing the Mamata Banerjee-led TMC to 80 seats, it is the saffron party's victory in the Presidency region that is the most interesting. The victory of BJP candidate Swapan Dasgupta from Rashbehari, a Bengali Bhadraklok bastion and fortress of the TMC,



underlines the swing in this election. As a person who grew up in a middle-class Bengali family, this shift seemed interesting to me for two reasons. One, the Bhadraklok have had a long trajectory,

influenced by Congress's secular tradition, and later the Left's party system and cultural Marxism. Drawing influence from existing literary works, music, films, and theatre, the section formed the backbone of Bengal's politics.

Although the TMC did not offer a major intellectual boost to them, a part of them witnessed the rise of a 'neo-left' with a bit of subaltern touch with Mamata Banerjee's emergence. Secondly, growing up in a middle-class family in the suburbs of Kolkata, I saw my family members, relatives, neighbourhood, and friends being sceptical of the BJP, partly because of its Hindutva push and partly because it was considered unfamiliar to Bengal's soil.

The BJP's 2026 breakthrough in West Bengal drew strong backing from the Bhadraklok, long seen as sceptical of Hindutva politics. The shift reflected anti-incumbency against the Trinamool Congress, anger over jobs and corruption, and the impact of RG Kar protests and RSS mobilisation.



## News box

## MCG debars contractor for 2 years after 3 infra projects fail to take off

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

MCG has terminated three contracts amounting to over Rs 81 lakh in Ward 27 and debarred the contractor from participating in tenders for the next two years for allegedly failing to commence any of the allotted projects. The projects include the laying of water supply and sewer lines near Friends Colony, construction of a sump well at Vinayak Plaza and Jyoti Hospital, and installation of a new motor pump set and panel at the Civil Lines boosting station. Official records show that all three projects were awarded to a single contractor, but despite receiving the work orders, the agency did not initiate execution on the ground. Following repeated delays and non-compliance, MCG terminated the contracts through separate orders issued between April and May 2026. Over the past few months, the corporation has terminated seven other contracts involving agencies engaged for sewer cleaning, storm-water drain desilting, water supply works and sewer infrastructure projects. "We have debarred these firms for two years besides terminating their contracts. For the works related to desilting of stormwater drains and sewer lines, we have already floated the tenders and in some cases, the work orders have already been assigned. I have given them the deadline to complete these works by June-end," said MCG executive engineer Sandeep Dhundhwal. The first of the three contracts to be scrapped was a Rs 40.6 lakh project for laying water supply and sewer lines in front of a showroom in Friends Colony. This was followed by the cancellation of a Rs 34.8 lakh contract for installation of a new motor pump set and panel at the Civil Lines boosting station. A third contract worth Rs 6.08 lakh for construction of a sump well at Vinayak Plaza and Jyoti Hospital was also terminated recently.

## Former Army officer alleges harassment by traffic cops during drunk-driving check in Gurgaon

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A 46-year-old former Army officer has alleged that a traffic police team of around 10 personnel harassed him for nearly 90 minutes during a drunk-driving check near Cyber Hub on Saturday night. He has approached the city police commissioner and deputy commissioner (traffic), seeking a departmental inquiry against the personnel for procedural lapses and misconduct. In a detailed representation, the officer said he was stopped at 11.55pm while returning home with his wife and two daughters after dinner at Cyber Hub. He agreed to take a breathalyser test but objected to the mouthpiece on the device, which appeared crushed and used. He requested a fresh disposable straw, but the request was denied. In the interim, the device registered a reading of 91mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood. The officer immediately sought a retest, saying he had not consumed alcohol. He alleged that instead of facilitating one, officials proceeded with challan formalities and directed him to an interceptor vehicle where a traffic inspector was present. He also claimed his phone was taken while he attempted to display his driving licence via DigiLocker, and accused the traffic inspector of making derogatory remarks upon learning of his military background. His family was left standing on the roadside throughout. A retest was eventually conducted, returning readings of 13mg/100ml — well below the legal limit of 30mg per 100ml of blood. "Despite the lower readings, I was not allowed to photograph the display or obtain any written confirmation of the results," he told TOI. His wife subsequently dialled the 112 emergency helpline, following which local police arrived at the spot. The officer alleged that no independent verification or medical examination was arranged, and that the interceptor and police team began dispersing once 112 was contacted.

## 14 illegal shops razed, owners fined over Rs 2 crore

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

The district administration has demolished 14 illegal shops on municipal land near Jama Masjid in Modinagar and imposed a penalty of Rs 2.2 crore on the encroachers. Officials said notices had been issued to these shop owners, after which the structures were dismantled. District magistrate Ravinder Kumar Mandar said the shops had been constructed on a road in Begumabad by the manager of the mosque, Mohammad Aarif. He had either sold them off to others or leased them out. "A case on this matter is ongoing. An order issued by the SDM on May 18 said all shops on this road were illegal. We announced the drive two days ago, and 11



shops were demolished by the owners themselves and three were demolished by us," DM said. At noon on Monday, a district administration team arrived at the site, accompanied by police, and launched the operation. Officials from Modinagar Municipal Council were present. Modinagar Municipal Council had filed a case in the court of the sub-divisional magistrate. "In an order dated Nov 30, 2023, the court had directed eviction of the encroacher and the recovery of a penalty of Rs 2.23 crore. A subsequent application for restoration, filed against this order, was rejected by the court on April 28, 2025, and the original order was upheld," the statement read. Officials said illegal occupation of govt land will not be tolerated and warned that such action against encroachments will continue. "In the gazetted maps of the district.

## Before SIR, Election Commission outlines what can trigger 'logical discrepancy'

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

The Election Commission has come out with several 'logical discrepancies' that can set off notices to voters during special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls starting June 15 — from improbable family age gaps and changing parent names to entries backed by only Aadhaar. Officials said if a voter's details do not match earlier records, or if the data throws up red flags, they may be asked to prove age and address through prescribed documents before their entry is confirmed. They also clarified that Aadhaar will be accepted only as proof of identity, not as evidence of date of birth (DOB) or residence during scrutiny. "Aadhaar is only for identification, not for address and age. Electors will have to submit additional documents for address and age," Badshapur SDM Sanjiv Singla said. The commission has listed more than 10 categories of 'logical discrepancies' and anomalies that can trigger a notice. These

include less than nine months' gap between two persons shown as progeny with the same parents, less than 15 years or more than 50 years gap between a parent and child, different parent names in current enrolment versus the last SIR, incorrect age progression between the current roll and 2002 SIR and cases where only Aadhaar has been submitted. These 'logical discrepancy' flags have drawn attention all the more because they were also at the heart of controversial deletions from electoral rolls in Bengal ahead of the assembly elections earlier this year. During the exercise in Haryana, voters will be broadly grouped as 'mapped' and 'unmapped'. Mapped electors are those whose names appear in the 2002 roll, when Haryana last conducted an SIR, or those not in the 2002 roll but who are recorded as the progeny of mapped electors (father, mother, grandfather or grandmother). Unmapped electors are those who do not meet these

conditions. Officials said if an elector's details match exactly with the previous SIR record, no notice will be issued. If the match is partial or there is a discrepancy in matching, a notice will be served, and the elector may have to produce additional documents. The commission has also cited four broad reasons for conducting the SIR. They include frequent migration, multiple entries of the same voter at different places, non-removal of absentee/shifted/dead entries, and illegal enrolment of foreign nationals. Singla insisted that the objective of the exercise is not indiscriminate deletion. "The purpose of SIR is to purify the electoral list and not to remove anyone. Names of only those who have moved, are dead, or fall in the discrepancy category and cannot submit required documents will be removed. During the process, new voters will also be added," he said. Documents that need to be submitted will depend on the voter's date of birth.

Those born before July 1, 1987, must submit one valid personal document. Those born between July 1, 1987, and Dec 2, 2004, must provide one personal document plus one document of either parent. Applicants born after Dec 2, 2004, must submit one personal document and one document each of both parents. July 1 has been fixed as the qualifying date, meaning anyone who turns 18 by then can seek inclusion. Form 6 for new voters will be available during the exercise, and applications can be made online at voters.eci.gov.in. Enumeration forms can be downloaded from June 15. Polling stations will also be rationalised from June 14 to 26. Singla said the aim is to cap any polling station at 1,200 voters and keep travel distance within 2km, while attaching — as far as possible — members of the same family and residents of the same area to the same polling station. The draft electoral roll will be published on July 21.

## High-Voltage Drama in Gandhinagar

## BJP Leader's Liquor Permit Push for Son's Hotel Sparks Clash Inside Secretariat

Mahanagar Metro Desk

**Gandhinagar:** A dramatic confrontation reportedly unfolded inside the Gujarat Secretariat in Gandhinagar, triggering political and administrative discussions across the state capital. The incident allegedly involved an influential BJP leader who had arrived to pursue a liquor permit application for his son's hotel. The situation escalated after he was informed that the concerned senior official was unavailable, leading to a heated altercation between security personnel and members of the leader's entourage. According to sources, the BJP leader visited the Secretariat to meet a senior government official regarding the processing of a liquor permit for his son's hotel. Given Gujarat's status as a prohibition state, the matter quickly attracted attention within administrative circles. Officials on duty reportedly informed the delegation that the concerned officer was attending a meeting and could



not be available immediately. The response allegedly led to dissatisfaction among the visitors, resulting in a tense exchange outside the office premises.

As the situation intensified, women police personnel deployed for

security and crowd management reportedly attempted to restrict access to the office area. This allegedly led to a confrontation between the police staff and security commandos accompanying the political leader. Witnesses claim that the ver-

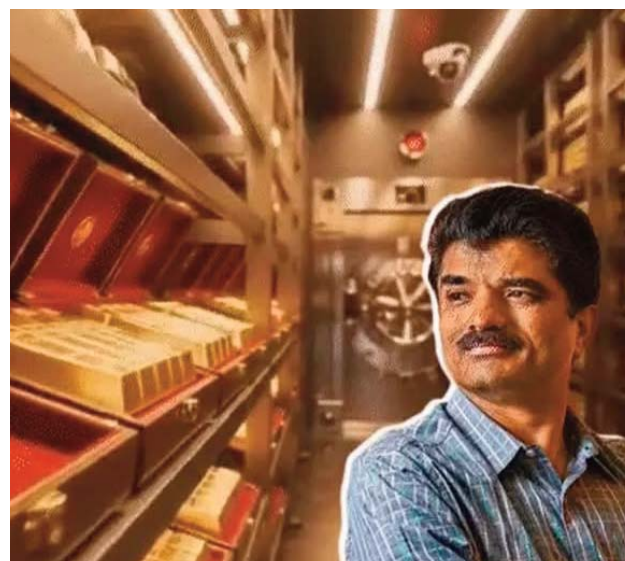
bal exchange quickly escalated into a heated argument, creating commotion inside the Secretariat complex. The incident reportedly caused concern among government employees and visitors present in the area. The Secretariat is considered

one of Gujarat's most sensitive and highly secured government zones. The reported confrontation between security personnel and members of a political delegation has raised questions regarding protocol compliance and conduct within government premises. The controversy has drawn additional attention because of the alleged effort to secure a liquor permit for a hotel in a state where alcohol regulations remain a politically and socially sensitive issue. Following the incident, senior police and administrative officials reportedly took note of the matter and initiated a review of the circumstances surrounding the confrontation. Authorities are expected to examine security footage, witness accounts, and protocol-related issues before determining any further action. The incident has generated considerable discussion in political circles and is likely to remain under scrutiny as officials continue their inquiry.

## First Harshad Mehta from Gujarat, Now Rajesh Mehta? Market Buzz Grows Amid Questions Over a Multi-Trillion-Rupee Business Empire

Mahanagar Metro Desk

**Ahmedabad:** Gujarat once gave India a name that became synonymous with one of the biggest stock market scandals in history — Harshad Mehta. Today, another businessman with roots linked to Gujarat is drawing significant attention in financial circles. Businessman Rajesh Mehta, whose family traces its origins to Rajkot, and the companies associated with him have become the subject of intense market discussion, raising questions among investors, analysts, and regulatory observers. The Mehta family's business journey reportedly began in the jewelry trade before expanding into a large global enterprise over the decades. What started as a traditional business eventually grew



into an international operation with a substantial presence in the precious metals and jewelry sector. However, alongside the success story, a number of questions are now being raised regarding valuations, corporate structures, and market perceptions.

Recent controversies and regulatory attention have fueled debate over whether the company's market valuation accurately reflects its underlying business fundamentals. Market participants are asking whether there is a significant gap between the

company's operational performance and the valuations being reflected in financial markets. If any regulatory concerns were ultimately proven, analysts warn that the impact could extend beyond the company itself, potentially affecting institutional investors as well as a large number of retail shareholders. Discussion has also intensified regarding investments made by Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC). Financial experts note that if any major irregularities were to emerge, institutional investors with significant exposure could face consequences. However, they emphasize that no conclusions should be drawn until regulatory reviews and investigations are completed. The Harshad Mehta episode

taught investors a lasting lesson: not everything that shines in the stock market is necessarily gold. Today, investors are once again asking whether soaring market valuations are supported by strong fundamentals or driven primarily by expectations and sentiment. The matters discussed remain subject to ongoing scrutiny and public debate. Allegations and concerns mentioned in market discussions have not been proven in a court of law. Any final conclusions will depend on the findings of regulators and competent authorities. One thing, however, remains certain: whenever businesses involving billions of dollars and millions of investors come under the spotlight, every question becomes important.

# Lokesh's Russia visit opens new avenues for investments in Andhra

VIJAYAWADA. (Agency)

Reinforcing the growing economic partnership between Andhra Pradesh and the Russian Federation, HRD and IT Minister Nara Lokesh successfully concluded a visit to Russia involving a series of high-level engagements during the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) 2026.

The visit builds upon the strong foundation established by RUSAL's investments in an alumina smelter in Andhra Pradesh. During discussions with senior leadership of RUSAL at SPIEF, both sides reviewed progress on the company's ongoing investments and explored opportunities to expand into a fully integrated aluminium value chain in the state. Discussions covered downstream aluminium manufacturing, automotive and aerospace alloys, aluminium foil production and the long-term potential for an integrated aluminium complex encompassing alumina

refining, aluminium production and value-added manufacturing. Commenting on his visit to Russia, Nara Lokesh said: "Russia and India share a longstanding and trusted partnership. Our engagements during SPIEF 2026 have opened new avenues for collaboration in industry, technology, smart cities, mobility, artificial intelligence and advanced manufacturing.

Andhra Pradesh is committed to building enduring partnerships with Russian businesses and institutions. Together, we can create mutually beneficial opportunities that drive innovation, investment, jobs and sustainable economic growth for both our regions." Lokesh visited various industries, conferences and institutions and held discussions with Russian companies and government officials during his visit to



Russia.

The visit also included engagements with major Russian companies and institutions across sectors including energy, logistics, transportation, rail manufacturing, critical minerals, semiconductors and digital infrastructure. At SPIEF, Minister Lokesh

highlighted Andhra Pradesh's vision of becoming a globally competitive manufacturing and technology hub. Speaking on the sidelines of the forum, Lokesh stated that the shifting centre of global economic growth toward emerging economies presents unprecedented opportunities for regions that combine infrastructure, talent and policy stability. The discussions at SPIEF also reflected the growing importance of technology, logistics, artificial intelligence and skilled workforce development in shaping the next phase of economic growth. A major focus of the visit was urban innovation and intelligent mobility.

Minister Lokesh held detailed discussions with the Government of Moscow and Transport Minister and Vice Mayor Maksim Liksutov on advanced traffic management systems, AI-powered transit monitoring,

integrated command-and-control centres and digital mobility solutions. Andhra Pradesh and Moscow agreed to explore technical cooperation aimed at improving urban mobility, reducing congestion and enhancing road safety through data-driven governance. Technology cooperation emerged as another key pillar of engagement.

Meetings with senior leadership of Sberbank, including discussions at School 21 and SberCity, focused on artificial intelligence, digital transformation, future skills and innovation ecosystems.

The AP delegation also engaged with the Government of St. Petersburg on opportunities to collaborate under safe and smart city initiatives.

HRD Minister Nara Lokesh held discussions with senior leaders of the Republic of Tatarstan, including Minister of Industry and Trade Oleg Korobchenko and Deputy Prime Minister Roman Shaykhutdinov.

## Short news

### Nine workers killed, five injured in VSP explosion

Visakhapatnam. (Agency)

In a ghastly industrial accident, nine workers lost their lives and five others were injured in a major explosion at the Steel Melting Shop-1 (SMS-1) of Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL), the corporate entity of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, on Monday.

The accident occurred at around 4.15 p.m. while steel production operations were underway at Caster-2 of SMS-1. According to an official statement issued by RINL, the unit was under casting operations and preparations were being made to pour molten crude steel from a ladle into a tundish through a slide gate mechanism. Before the slide gate could be opened, a sudden and severe explosion took place.

The blast triggered a massive fireball that shot up to the ceiling of the shop floor. The intense heat and flames engulfed the area. Eight workers succumbed to their injuries at the site, while six others were rushed to hospitals for treatment. One of the injured later died at the hospital, taking the death toll to nine. Four of the injured are stable, while one is critical.

Medical teams treat Vizag steel plant blast victims

Medical teams are continuing treatment and monitoring of the injured. The deceased include five regular employees of the steel plant including Gonthina Bhanu Kumar, GV Appa Rao, M Krishna Nagu, K Prabhakar and Gold Kumar and three contract workers identified as Ramana, Trinadh and N Appala Raju. The identity of the ninth victim was officially confirmed as Suri Babu at the time of filing this report.

Emergency response teams, plant safety personnel and firefighters rushed to the scene immediately after the explosion. Rescue operations continued for several hours as officials worked to secure the affected section and assist injured workers. Senior plant officials monitored the rescue and relief efforts. RINL has initiated an internal investigation into the incident.

### Telangana charts makeover across eight tourist destinations

HYDERABAD. (Agency)

The state government has initiated the preparation of comprehensive master plans for eight special tourism areas identified under its new tourism policy, aimed at strengthening infrastructure and improving visitor experiences. A review meeting involving tourism officials, consultants, architects and engineers was held at Tourism Plaza in Begumpet on Monday to discuss the proposals. The eight destinations selected in the first phase are Vikarabad, Somasila-Alampur, Warangal-Ramappa, Nagarjunasagar, Yadadri-Pochampally, the Adilabad Tribal Cluster, Bhadrachalam and Kaleshwaram. These are part of a larger list of 27 Special Tourism Areas identified by the government.

Officials said tourism development should move beyond conventional sightseeing and focus on experiences that encourage visitors to spend more time at destinations. The plans seek to promote nature, heritage, spirituality and adventure activities while showcasing local culture and history.

The government has directed planners to study successful tourism models from across the world and adapt suitable practices. Proposals under consideration include landmark attractions, cantilever viewing decks, skywalks, adventure activities, cultural programmes and eco-tourism facilities. Special attention was given to Bhongir Fort, where the surrounding terrain is being examined for heritage and adventure tourism projects.

## Nine-hour water cuts, offices shut: Mumbai water tanker strike bites on day one

Mumbai. (Agency)

Offices sent workers home early, housing societies enforced nine-hour water cuts, and Western Railway reported a 20 per cent shortfall at key stations on Monday, as the Mumbai Water Tankers Association (MwTA) went on indefinite strike, deepening a water crisis the city is already facing due to a 10 per cent BMC cut amid depleting lake stocks.

At Andheri East's Marol Plaza, which has five commercial buildings, at least 12 offices sent employees home early. Deepak Dhole, technical manager of Sahar Plaza, said the complex depends on 10-15 tankers daily for over 450 workers.

"We are heavily dependent on 10-15 tankers daily to cater to demand as over 450 people work in the premises. Now with the tanker strike, the offices are compelled to implement work from home. This directly impacts the peons and sanitation staff as their wages get impacted," Dhole said.

At Kanakia Rainforest in Marol, a 600-flat

complex across 10 buildings, a nine-hour water cut was enforced on Monday. Resident Manoj Ganguli said the society had already been procuring 20 tankers a day to cope with the BMC cut.

"For the last four days, we have been



procuring as many as 20 water tankers owing to the water cut by BMC. Now, as the strike of water tankers commenced, our problem has worsened. We have imposed a water cut for five hours during the night while another four-hour water cut is being imposed between 1 am and 5 am," Ganguli said.

At a high-rise near Malad's Infinity Mall, resident Ashish Gupta said his 204-flat building already receives only 60 per cent of its water supply from BMC.

"Our building comprises 204 flats and even without a water cut, we receive only 60 per cent of total water supply. For the rest of the 40 per cent, we have to rely on the water tankers. While we managed today, if this strike persists, we may face an acute water crisis within the next two days," Gupta said.

Railways, project sites hit

Western Railway reported a 20 per cent water shortfall at key stations including Bandra Terminus, Mumbai Central and Dadar. The shortage has forced the railway to shift train watering activities to Surat and Valsad, while coach-washing has been temporarily suspended. Two major BMC infrastructure projects, the Coastal Road (North) and the Goregaon-Mulund Link Road, also felt the pinch, though civic officials said the impact on day one was minimal.

Tanker water is used during concrete pouring in excavation work, and BMC is set to begin

## Mumbai's next OTP isn't for your bank account-it's for your water tanker

Mumbai. (Agency)

Amid the city's ongoing water shortage, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) is eyeing to introduce a new water tanker policy that seeks to introduce a "radical change" through digitisation of the potable water tanker procurement process in Mumbai. To curb unauthorised trips, the civic body is charting a revised policy to introduce OTP-based bookings and digitally monitor the process of supplying and transporting potable water through the civic-owned as well as licensed tankers.

Senior officials privy to the developments said that the intent behind the digitisation of the system is to achieve more transparency in the process through which tankers fill potable water from the civic body's water



filling points.

According to officials, BMC controls 33 potable water filling points across the city through which water is supplied to the civic fleet of water tankers and over 200 licensed water tankers which are authorised to supply potable water.

"With the new policy, we seek to address the

present gaps by introducing a system of online approvals for procurement of water tankers by societies and others availing the system. We are looking into the possibility of introducing an OTP-based system of booking. Once the permission is issued, an OTP will be sent to the customer on the basis of which tankers will be allowed to extract water from the water filling points," a senior official told The Indian Express. Additionally, the new water tanker policy seeks to digitally monitor the process of approvals granted as well as the water extracted from the civic approved water filling points for water tankers. "Similar to the desilting dashboard, a digital portal will be launched through which permissions will be granted and the entire process will be monitored."

## Sarpanch, SMC Deputy Mayor's sons clash over removal of 'encroachment' in Surat village

SMC Deputy Mayor Sudhakar Chaudhary denies allegations of encroachment, sarpanch says panchayat decides to fence land near party plot, run by Chaudhary's sons

Surat. (Agency)

The removal of alleged encroachment on government land in Surat's Saniya Kande village on Sunday led to a verbal altercation between village Sarpanch Jashpalsinh Solanki and two sons of newly appointed Deputy Mayor of Surat Municipal Corporation Sudhakar Chaudhary.

A video of the heated argument between the village sarpanch and the deputy mayor's sons Rahul Chaudhary and Atul Chaudhary, who have taken a party plot near the government land on rent, has since gone viral on social media. Solanki, who is also BJP state Kishan Morcha secretary, said the "encroachments" were removed following complaints from



local residents. On Sunday, Solanki, along with villagers, reached the government land, which is being used as grazing land by local residents, and started removing "encroachments" including make-shift shops. Soon after, Rahul and Atul turned up

and quarrelled with the village sarpanch. Later, Dindoli police reached the spot and brought the situation under control. The village has a population of over 50,000 people. Speaking to The Indian Express, Solanki said: "The cattle grazing land with survey number 77 is owned by the panchayat. The Deputy Mayor's son took the Madhuban party plot, having revenue survey number 76, on rent, and they had levelled the grazing land and allowed people to start an omelette shop, a pan shop, a chicken shop, etc, which were being functioning till late in the night.

They have also made a pathway on the grazing land to reach the Madhuban party plot." "Earlier, we asked them to remove such encroachments following complaints from

the villagers. Seeing no positive response from them, we decided to remove the encroachments," he said.

"On Monday, we had a meeting with the Gram Panchayat and decided to fence the entire cattle-grazing land under revenue survey number 77 with barbed wires. We will also submit a memorandum to the Surat district collector and the Mamlatdar in this connection on Tuesday," he said.

Meanwhile, SMC Deputy Mayor Sudhakar Chaudhary, also from the BJP, denied the allegations of encroachment on the government land. "My sons have taken a party plot, where marriage and other events are held, on rent, and we have not done any encroachment. The party plot is the only source of income of the family. I have seen a video of the heated argument between the sarpanch and my children," he said.

## India finds a new archetype, the corporate saas villain

Meghna Pant

Every generation of Indian women seems to inherit its own cultural villain. For our grandmothers, it was Lalita Pawar's cold glare. For the early 2000s, it was Ramola Sikand adjusting her bindi while psychologically terrorising daughters-in-law. And now, in 2026, thanks to social media, the kitchen villain is dead.

India has found a new archetype: the corporate saas villain. She is English-speaking. Educated. Accomplished. Financially independent. Legally savvy. She does not stir poison into kheer. Her power comes from respectability, social capital, and her ability to weaponise systems that were designed to protect families.

And no figure embodies this evolution more than Giribala Singh. If the sari-clad saas was the villain of the television age, Giribala Singh represents the rise of the suit-clad saas — the modern matriarch whose violence is no longer loud, emotional, or obvious. It is strategic. Documented. Sanitised.

For decades, Indian popular culture portrayed the "evil saas" as a bitter, insecure woman guarding her domestic territory from a younger rival. She was controlling, manipulative, emotionally cruel, but ultimately confined to the private space of the home. Her weapons were guilt, taunts, emotional blackmail, and family politics. The damage she caused was intimate, invisible.

But the modern version is far more sophisticated. Today's powerful matriarch is often educated, articulate, and fully aware of how institutions work. She knows the language of legality, respectability, and public perception. She understands that power in the 21st century is not exercised through open confrontation. It is exercised through narrative.

And that changes the nature of control entirely. Because when legal knowledge, social status, and professional authority combine with patriarchal conditioning, oppression no longer looks loud or dramatic. It becomes procedural, strategic, sanitised.

That is what makes Giribala Singh so culturally unsettling. She represents an evolution of a very old Indian archetype. That is why discussions surrounding her online are not merely outrage over allegations of cruelty. It is something deeper. Women recognise a familiar pattern: a type of power they have encountered in drawing rooms, family WhatsApp groups, wedding negotiations, and inheritance disputes.

The horror is not simply the possibility of wrongdoing. It is the perception that education and legal expertise are allegedly being used not to pursue truth but to shape narrative. To manage optics. To protect the son. To undermine the dead woman. To create enough doubt around her character that sympathy itself becomes negotiable. The traditional mother-in-law stereotype was rooted in jealousy, insecurity, and domestic control. This newer version feels institutional. She is not merely controlling the kitchen anymore. She understands media language, strategic statements, anticipatory bail, and the extraordinary power of appearing respectable while dismantling another woman's credibility piece by piece. The victim-blaming. The character assassination. The sanctimony. The emotional manipulation wrapped in access, influence. Women are increasingly realising that some of the harshest policing of female behaviour does not always come from men directly. Sometimes it comes from women who uphold patriarchal systems on men's behalf. That is what makes this moment culturally uncomfortable. For years, Indian women have been told that education is liberation. And it is. But education alone does not guarantee empathy. Power without empathy simply creates more sophisticated forms of oppression.

## Divisions of our own making

Enough of insider-outsider, Hindu-Muslim, my caste and not my caste!

Ira Pande

I am no historian, economist or social anthropologist. Let's get that out of the way at the very beginning so that I am not torn apart for being flippant or naive. However, I do have a great memory (even at 75) and can remember almost all that happened to fashion my life in these seven decades. My friends call me a storehouse of useless information and even if they have never always meant that as a compliment, I take it as one. What I enjoy is to document all the trivia that has a history of its own, and that links others of my generation to a galaxy that is light years away from the globalised world that has rendered faceless or useless all those who are not connected digitally. The '50s and '60s were the foundational decades of our country as we know it now. Moreover, for those of us, like me, who were born then, it went along with a way of life and an upbringing that left a deep imprint on each one of us. Everything that is still good in this country dates to that time, but all that eventually derailed the innocent promises of that age can also be traced back to those decades. My birth in 1951 was also when India was given its Constitution. So I like to believe that the values that it was founded on were also the same we were given as my generation grew up. Today, when I look around, I find that all those who stand up for those eternal human values are mostly from our age group. You will find them in each public demonstration against the erosion of human rights, the division of this country along caste and creed, the centralisation of power and the snuffing of weak voices.

This is, of course, a romantic view and peculiar to a certain section of the upper middle class, who had a long history of a liberal education behind them but who lived modest lives. In the mofussil towns of UP, this meant that we were products of a mixed education. We went to missionary schools that still taught us British rather than Indian history, prayed in chapels and abided by the rules of a Christian way of life. Our 'home' lives were markedly different, yet I strongly believe that exposure to an education by Roman Catholic nuns made me a better Hindu and sharing my tiffin box with Farzana made me guilt-free about eating halal meat. I often joke that our exposure to the Avadhi culture of Lucknow made me a Shia Brahmin but the truth is deeper than that flippant remark. Our ease with switching from one language to another as we spent the day was perhaps another seamless acceptance of different voices, views and sounds. And in case this makes our generation sound like a bunch of sanctimonious prigs, let me add that caste, religion and epithets were then not politically erased by any high-minded moral police. I remember a municipal sweeper (be-turbaned and attired in a khaki



uniform) who came every day to clear the smelly stuff that our personal mehtar emptied into a tin shed, hidden in a khet far from the house and called a bumpoliss (don't ask why). We would meet him again as we walked to school, carrying a headload of nightsoil on his head, singing, 'Har phool main khusboo hai, har patta khoos-khoos hai' (Every flower has a fragrance and each leaf looks happy). As soon as we saw him, we'd hold our noses and dart over to the other side of the road and cross our fingers (antioli, that our Brahmin maliji said would avert the sin of meeting a mehtar). I blush in shame as I remember this because the singing sweeper was the sweetest, most playful character and pretended to frighten us by coming towards us. Today, children would be (rightfully) punished for this cruelty but we were innocent kids then and never questioned how we could hurt sentiments and human dignity by our behaviour. Servants were cared for by families and generations worked for the same family for years, yet they ate their

food from china plates, while we ate from silver or steel thalis. Their tea was served in glass or chipped mugs while we drank milk or tea from steel, copper or brass. There is much to be said for sanitising our everyday language from politically-loaded words and concepts but the muscle memory of those long-held beliefs remained embedded. To those who did not have the benefit of a liberal education or upbringing, these beliefs were waiting to be exploited by political parties that slyly made it 'kosher' to be proud of being a Hindu or Muslim instead of being proud to be an Indian. Added to this is the division of the country along linguistic lines that has resulted in a disturbing form of sub-nationalism. Many cannot read or write in their own mother tongues yet they insist on calling those who come from a different state 'outsiders'. The recent political wars fought in Bengal over who could or could not belong there also exposed the harm that the champions of this chauvinism have done to the state.

## Cautious RBI: Monetary policy factors in the risks

The Indian economy has remained resilient and its fundamentals are stronger than in prior shocks

THE Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee has, as expected, kept interest rates unchanged at 5.25 per cent. The repo rate was last cut in December from 5.5 per cent. The wait-and-watch approach signals continuity, but the revised growth figures amid the West Asian conflict tell a cautionary tale. The lowering of the GDP forecast to 6.6 per cent from 6.9 per cent projected in April factors in the higher energy prices, supply chain disruptions and a weaker rupee. If the monsoon is uneven or weak, the projections could alter. The consumer price index inflation rate remains under the Central bank's target level of 4 per cent, but the comfort zone is fast narrowing. A host of underlying inflationary pressures are at play. For an average Indian, tough months lie ahead. The Indian economy has remained resilient and its fundamentals are stronger than in prior shocks. However, resilience cannot be mistaken as



immunity. The impact of rising input costs is being felt by smaller units and across households. Higher fuel costs are being passed on to transportation, logistics and production expenses. At this juncture, ensuring stable business activity for the medium and small industries becomes critical. Several measures have been announced by the RBI with an eye on dollar inflows. In parallel, the Centre has exempted foreign investors from capital gains tax on government bonds. It's a significant step to make the debt market more attractive for global capital. The RBI policy underscores its continued vigilance on inflation risks, particularly from crude oil and food prices. At the same time, it is keeping future data-dependent policy options open in case price pressures intensify. The big question now is how well India can navigate the global reality of expensive oil, geopolitical uncertainty and volatile capital flows.

## Universe: The teacher who unteaches

You look to the Guru as a master, a teacher, a guide. And yet, he is none of these

Ira Pande

Who is a Guru? Ah, a question born not out of curiosity but out of the soul's aching cry in the wilderness. When life bruises the heart and the mind stumbles in the fog of uncertainty, this question arises — soft but heavy with longing. And yet, to answer is like trying to describe the fragrance of rain to one who has never known the monsoon. A Guru is a figure who stands above you, adorned in the pomp of divinity. No! He is the quiet traveller, walking beside you in the shades of your pain, unseen, unnoticed. He is not a rescuer descending from paradise; he is the mirror held up to your trembling face, reflecting not what you are but what you could become. You cry, 'Show me the light!' but the Guru leads you into darkness. You beg for comfort, and he tears away the illusions that shield you. Is this cruelty? No, this is love — the kind that breaks before it mends. The type of love that leaves scars, not as reminders of pain, but as marks of transformation. Love is soft, you say? Think again. The mother's hug protects, but the father's hand disciplines. The Guru is gentle as the moonbeam and fierce as the midday sun. Do you see rejection or learn to stand alone when the Guru turns away? Does the bird curse the wind when it no longer carries it, or does it find its wings? The Guru tells the disciple lost in illusions, 'Wake up!' But waking is bitter, for the dream was sweet. He is the fire that consumes your illusions. A Guru appears when you are ready — not when you seek or desire, but when the spirit can no longer bear the weight of ignorance. But beware, their arrival is not a celebration. It is a hurricane, a churning chaos that will strip you of every mask, every lie you have clung to. He



does not come to soothe you but destroys your ego so you may finally meet the truth within. Imagine a man drowning in a river, thrashing, screaming for help. What does the Guru do? He will not throw a rope. The Guru

will push you deeper, holding you under until you stop fighting. 'Learn to float,' he says — not with words, but with his presence. And when you stop resisting, when the river no longer feels like an enemy, you rise — not

because he saved you, but because he taught you to save yourself.

A Guru's compassion is a curious contradiction. He walks among mortals, carrying burdens not his own, yet remains untouched. He takes on your poison, not to suffer for you but to show you that poison itself can be transmuted into nectar. Like Shiva, who swallowed Halahala, he does not fear the venom. He bears it with a quiet smile, his only reward being the joy of seeing you awaken. But how strange, how bizarre! You look to the Guru as a master, a teacher, a guide. And yet, he is none of these. The Guru does not teach; he unteaches. The Guru does not lead; he compels you to walk alone.

You may call him cruel, for he will not soothe your ego. You may call him heartless, for he will not indulge your desires. Yet, in the quietude of your soul, you will know: the Guru's love is like the love of the earth for the seed. The world does not coddle; it buries the seed in darkness, crushes it with soil and drowns it in the rain — only so it may sprout and touch the sky.

And yet, the most excellent satire of all: the Guru is not apart from you. He is the spark within, the voice you have long silenced. When you find the Guru, you are not meeting another — you are meeting yourself, the self you had forgotten. So, tell me, O seeker — when the Guru's fire calls to you, will you step into its blaze? Will you let it burn away the chains that bind you, even if it leaves you raw and exposed? For the Guru does not offer peace; he provides freedom. And freedom is the greatest terror and the greatest gift of all.



# 15 Surprisingly Healthy Foods



lower your blood pressure, improve blood flow to your brain and heart, and make you less likely to have certain kinds of heart disease. Dark chocolate is best because it has the most cocoa -- where the flavonoids live -- and the least sugar. But you can have too much of a good thing, so just eat a little bit.

## Eggs

They give you a full range of B vitamins and amino acids, which are the building blocks of protein. They also have some nutrients that aren't in a lot of foods, like vitamin D and selenium. And eggs make you feel full for a while, which makes them such a great way to start the day.

## Dark Meat Chicken



It has more saturated fat than white meat, but it's far richer in minerals like iron, zinc, and selenium, as well as vitamins A, B, and K. It's also high in taurine, which breaks down fat and helps with inflammation and blood pressure.

## Potato Salad

Cooled potatoes have something called "resistant starch," which acts like fiber and can help keep you regular and your gut healthy. But hot or cold, potatoes have lots of nutrients, like potassium and magnesium. Look for low-fat, low-calorie mayonnaise to dress the salad.

## Coffee

Doctors used to warn people off coffee if they were at risk for heart disease or a stroke. But

research now shows that even heavy coffee drinking doesn't raise your chances of those. And having three to five cups a day might even lower them. But too much joe can make you jittery and do a number on your stomach. Also, watch the cream and sugar.

## Alcohol

Happy hour can be good for you. Research shows that moderate drinking -- one a day for women and two for men -- may protect you from heart disease, kidney stones, gallstones, and type 2 diabetes. But don't get carried away. Too much alcohol can have the opposite effect.

## Frozen Vegetables

Turns out, frozen vegetables have the same health benefits as fresh -- even more in some cases because they're picked and frozen at their nutritional best. Stock your freezer, and they'll be there whenever you need them.

## French Brie

As part of a balanced diet, full-fat dairy foods, like brie, yogurt, and whole milk, aren't likely to raise your risk of obesity, heart disease, stroke, or diabetes. But the calories can add up, which is where the "balanced" part comes in.

## Pork

If you're trying to lose weight, lean pork tenderloin might be the secret weapon you've been looking for. Having it as part of your regular diet instead of beef and chicken may help you lose weight and body fat, and make your waist smaller, too.

## Avocado

Not all fat is bad. The kind in avocados is linked to a healthy heart and good cholesterol levels. And adding them to your regular diet may help with belly fat and protect your eyes and skin.



## Pasta

A healthy diet doesn't have to be boring. Some foods that may seem like guilty pleasures can be good for you. What matters is how you prepare them and how often they're on your table. Take pasta: It's low in fat and salt and keeps you satisfied longer, so you're less likely to snack or overeat. But watch what you put on it. If you cover it in a rich alfredo sauce, you can boost the fat and salt. Try some whole-grain pasta with olive oil and a bit of Parmesan instead.

## Red Meat

It has to be the right kind: We're not talking prime rib or greasy hamburgers. Lean red meat -- when you've trimmed off all the fat

you can see -- is a great source of protein, omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin B12, niacin, zinc, and iron. And in small portions, it's been shown to lower LDL, the "bad" cholesterol.

## Popcorn

Junk food, right? Not so much. It's a whole grain that's loaded with fiber, which helps fill you up and keeps you regular. It also has vitamin B, manganese, and magnesium, as well as antioxidants, which may protect you against disease and cell damage. The key to keeping it healthy is to go easy on the salt and butter.

## Honey

This natural sweetener is full of antioxidants that can protect your cells and be good for

inflammation. It also can help with the mix of bacteria in your gut, which is important for digestion and getting nutrients from food.

## Peanut Butter

Yes, it has quite a bit of fat. But it's mostly the unsaturated kind, which isn't bad for you. Studies have shown that people who eat nuts or peanut butter regularly are less likely to get heart disease or type 2 diabetes than people who rarely eat them. It's also a good source of something many Americans need more of: potassium. To make the most of it, go the unsalted route.

## Chocolate

It's all about the flavonoids, which may help protect you from cell damage. They also may

When it comes to cleansing your body of harmful toxins, food really is the best medicine. You'll be amazed to learn that many of your favorite foods also cleanse the body's detoxification organs like the liver, intestines, kidneys and skin, preventing harmful toxic buildup. Help ward off the harmful effects of pollution, food additives, secondhand smoke and other toxins with delicious fruits, vegetables, nuts, oils and beans.

## APPLES

Because apples are high in pectin, a type of fiber that binds to cholesterol and heavy metals in the body, they help eliminate toxic build up and to cleanse the intestines. Just make sure they're organic!

## AVOCADOS

We rarely think of avocados as a cleansing food, but these nutritional powerhouses lower cholesterol and dilate blood vessels while blocking artery-destroying toxicity. Avocados contain a nutrient called glutathione, which blocks at least thirty different carcinogens while helping the liver detoxify synthetic chemicals.

## BEETS

Time to whip up some delicious borscht soup since its main ingredient, beets, contain a unique mixture of natural plant compounds that make them superb blood purifiers and liver cleansers.

## BLUEBERRIES

Truly one of the most powerful healing foods, blueberries contain natural aspirin

that helps lessen the tissue-damaging effects of chronic inflammation, while lessening pain. Blueberries also act as antibiotics by blocking bacteria in the urinary tract, thereby helping to prevent infections. They also have antiviral properties and help to block toxins from crossing the blood-brain barrier to gain access to the delicate brain.

## CABBAGE

Cabbage contains numerous anticancer and antioxidant compounds and helps the liver break down excess hormones. Cabbage also cleanses the digestive tract and neutralizes some of the damaging compounds found in cigarette smoke (and secondhand smoke). It also strengthens the liver's ability to detoxify.

## CELERY AND CELERY SEEDS

Celery and celery seeds are excellent blood cleansers and contain many different anticancer compounds that help detoxify cancer cells from the body. Celery seeds contain over twenty anti-inflammatory substances. It is particularly good for detoxifying substances found in cigarette smoke.

## CRANBERRIES

Cleanse your body from harmful bacteria and viruses that may be lingering in your



urinary tract with cranberries—they contain antibiotic and antiviral substances.

## FLAXSEEDS AND FLAXSEED OIL

Loaded with essential fatty acids, particularly omega-3s, flaxseeds and flaxseed oil are essential for many cleansing functions throughout the body.

## GARLIC

Eat garlic to cleanse harmful bacteria, intestinal parasites and viruses from your body, especially from the blood and intestines. It also helps cleanse buildup from the arteries and has anti-cancer and antioxidant properties that help detoxify the body of harmful substances. Additionally,

garlic assists with cleansing the respiratory tract by expelling mucous buildup in the lungs and sinuses. For the health benefits, choose only fresh garlic, not garlic powder, which has virtually none of the above properties.

## GRAPEFRUIT

Add a ruby red grapefruit to your breakfast to benefit from pectin fiber that binds to cholesterol, thereby cleansing the blood. Pectin also binds to heavy metals and helps escort them out of the body. It also has antiviral compounds that cleanse harmful viruses out of the body. Grapefruit is an excellent intestinal and liver detoxifier.

## KALE

Steam some kale to benefit from its powerful anti-cancer and antioxidant compounds that help cleanse the body of harmful substances. It is also high in fiber, which helps cleanse the intestinal tract. Like cabbage, kale helps neutralize compounds found in cigarette smoke and strengthens liver cleansing.

## LEGUMES

Add a handful of cooked beans to your next meal—they're loaded with fiber that helps

lower cholesterol, cleanses the intestines and regulates blood sugar levels. Legumes also help protect the body against cancer.

## LEMONS

Excellent liver detoxifiers, lemons contain high amounts of vitamin C, a vitamin needed by the body to make an important substance called glutathione. Glutathione helps the liver detoxify harmful chemicals. Add a squeeze of fresh lemon juice (not the bottled variety) to pure water to support your cleansing efforts on a daily basis.

## SEAWEED

Seaweed could be the most underrated vegetable in the western world. Studies at McGill University in Montreal showed that seaweeds bind to radioactive waste in the body. Seaweed also binds to heavy metals to help eliminate them from the body. In addition, they are powerhouses of minerals and trace minerals.

## WATERCRESS

If you haven't tried watercress, add this delicious green to your next sandwich—it increases detoxification enzymes and acts on cancer cells in the body. In a study at the Norwich Food Research Centre in the United Kingdom, smokers who were given 170 grams of watercress per day eliminated higher than average amounts of carcinogens in their urine, thereby eliminating them from their body.

Eating a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables assists with detoxifying harmful substances from your body. Who knew cleansing could taste so good?

# Top 15 Cleansing Foods

# 3 exciting ways to enjoy Mushrooms

**Mushrooms complement a variety of dishes and are available throughout the year. These three mushroom-based recipes bring delight to the dinner table.**

## 1. In a soup

### Wild mushroom soup

This soup made with velutée sauce gives a delicious start to dinner parties or supper.

**Ingredients:** 10 gm maida, 2 gm carrot, 2 gm celery, 10 gm onions, 10 gm garlic (peeled), 2 gm oyster mushrooms, 2 gm shiitake mushrooms, 2 gm fresh mushrooms, 30 gm mushroom paste, 10 gm butter, 20 ml rich cooking cream, 2 pieces of bread sticks, salt and white pepper powder to taste, fresh oregano for seasoning

**Method:** Make the velutée sauce first. To make the sauce, you need some vegetable stock. Take roughly chopped onion, garlic, carrot, celery and leek. Cook in water for a long time to get vegetable stock. Take another pan and make a white sauce by whisking butter and maida together. Add this to the vegetable stock and keep aside. Soak the shiitake and oyster mushroom in hot water. When it has absorbed enough water, take oil in a pan and saute the 3 types of mushroom keeping some aside for garnishing the soup. Now make a paste of sauteed mushrooms.

Now take the velutée sauce in a pan and add mushroom paste to it. Add cream and cook it while checking for seasoning. Garnish with cream and serve hot.

## 2. In a pasta

### Penne Boscaiola

This creamy mushroom dish is a hit with kids and grown-ups alike.

**Ingredients:** 10 gm oyster mushrooms, 10 gm shiitake mushrooms, 20 gm fresh mushrooms, 40 gm mushroom paste, 50

gm white sauce, 30 ml fresh cream, 10 gm garlic (peeled), 1 gm parsley, 20 gm parmesan cheese, 10 gm olive tapenade, 80 gm penne pasta, 2 portions of garlic bread, 80 ml olive oil, salt to taste

**Method:** Soak the shiitake and oyster mushroom in hot water. When it becomes soft, keep some mushroom aside and cut it into cubes. Saute remaining mushroom with garlic and make the pasta. Keep aside. Blanch the pasta in hot boiling water with oil and salt. Keep aside.

Now make the white sauce for it. Mix together butter and refined flour and add it to the boiling milk. Cook it well.

Take a pan, saute garlic. Add cubed mushrooms to it. Add some white sauce and then the pasta and cream. Cook for a while, check for seasoning. Lastly add the parmesan cheese to it. Garnish with olive tapenade, grated parmesan cheese and chopped parsley. Serve hot with garlic bread.

## 3. In a risotto

Mushroom roast onion and ricotta risotto

This Italian dish is great main for a gourmet vegetarian menu.

**Ingredients:** 60 gm arborio rice, 20 gm grana padano cheese, 20 ml white wine, 10 gm garlic (peeled), 20 gm onions, 2 gms oyster mushroom, 2 gm shiitake mushroom, 20 gm ricotta cheese, 30 gm fresh mushrooms, 30 gm mushroom paste, 20 ml rich cooking cream, 2 slices of garlic bread, 50 ml olive oil, 50 gm butter.

**Method:** Soak the shiitake and oyster mushrooms in hot water. When it has absorbed enough water, take oil in a pan and

saute the three types of mushroom keeping some aside for mixing with the risotto. Toss the remaining mushrooms with oil, garlic, wine and a little cream and make a paste. Cut the onions and mushrooms into cubes, dry in the oven and set aside.

Pour some oil in a pan, saute garlic. Add rice to it and saute well. Now add mushroom paste and vegetable stock. Add the roast onion and mushroom paste to the mix. Check for seasoning when the rice is cooked. Add the ricotta cheese; cook the risotto for some time. Now add the parmesan cheese to it. Add the butter and serve.



## Healthy Packed Lunches for work

So, let's get started with these nutrient-rich, easy to prepare, creative, packed lunch ideas that'll keep you interested

in healthy food, come work or play!

**Mint chutney veggie sandwich** **Ingredients:** 4 slices wholemeal bread, 1 tbs butter, 1/2 cup Mint-Coriander Chutney (blend coriander leaves, onions, black salt and green chillies together), 2 large thickly sliced potatoes, 1 sliced cucumber, 2 thinly sliced tomatoes, 1 large beetroot, 1 large sliced onion, 1 tsp Chaat Masala, pepper and salt to taste.

**Method:** Lay all slices of bread and lay butter in it. Now add mint chutney to it and lay all the thin slices of vegetables in the sandwich. End with a generous sprinkling of chaat masala and cut in half before serving.

**Poha** **Ingredients:** 1 potato, 1 onion, a few green chillies, 1 tablespoon chana dal, 1 tablespoon urad dal, a few curry leaves, 4-5 peanuts, 1 tablespoon oil, 2 cups poha (beaten rice), turmeric powder, salt to taste and lime juice.

**Method:** Soak the poha in water for around an hour. Now prepare the tadka by heating oil and add urad dal, mustard seeds, chana dal, green chillies, curry leaves,

onions and potatoes to it. Give it a nice stir and add the poha to the mixture. Let it stay on slow flame for 5-7 minutes. Yummy poha for breakfast is ready.

**Chicken tikka wraps** **Ingredients:** 1 2-pound roasted chicken, 1/2 cup prepared barbecue sauce, 1 cup of black beans, 1/2 cup frozen corn, 1/4 cup reduced-fat sour cream, 4 lettuce leaves, 4 10-inch whole-wheat tortillas (or you can even replace this with whole wheat chapattis), 2 limes. **Method:** Place a large nonstick panover medium-high heat. Add chicken, barbecue sauce, beans, corn and sour cream; stir to combine. Cook until hot, 4 to 5 minutes. Place the mixture over whole wheat chapattis and serve warm, with lime wedges.

**Sabudana vada - Sago patties** **Ingredients:** 4 potatoes boiled and mashed, 1/2 a cup of sabudana, 2 cups of water, 1 chopped onion chopped, 2 chopped green chillies, grated ginger, 5 to 7 peanuts coarsely crushed, 1 tsp cumin seeds, 1 tsp raw mango powder, 2 tablespoon oil and salt to taste.

**Method:** Soak the sabudana in water for a night. The next morning, mix the sabudana with all the other ingredients and form handy-sized balls out of it. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in a pan and roast them till golden. Serve with mint chutney.

**Leftovers** Yes, last night's leftovers can become this morning's breakfast. Take the chicken out of the curry and put it in a sandwich. Last night's salad can also go into a sandwich. Make an extra chapatti the previous night, roll in some leftover vegetable, and you have a filling, healthy breakfast.

Learn how to make this quick and easy dish

### Ingredients

One small cauliflower  
1/2 kg peas  
1 red carrot (chopped)  
4 onions  
3 tomatoes  
4 cinnamon sticks  
4 peppercorns  
Some macaroni if you wish  
2 bouillon cubes  
1 tablespoon oil

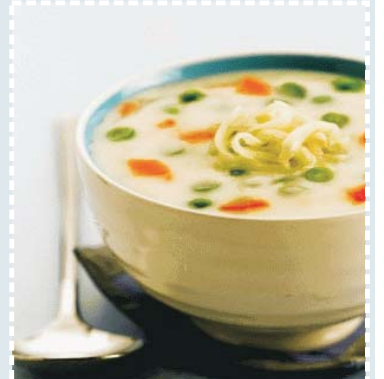
### Method

Put one tablespoon oil in a pan and fry cinnamon sticks and peppercorns. Add chopped onions and fry till transparent. Add tomatoes and fry till done. Add two bouillon veg cubes and stir till it melts. Add two cups of water, and stir. Add the veggies and macaroni and bring to a boil. Serve hot. This can be had with toasted bread or hard brun pav.

### Tips you can use

This dish can be made with different variations from mushroom tomato and onions to macaroni, tomato and onions. However, the more veggies you add the more filling and nutritious it will be. If you prefer chicken you can use chicken bouillon cubes instead of vegetable, and add steamed, shredded pieces of chicken. It's essentially a clear soup that is ideal for those on a diet or

## Recipe: Vegetable Soup



those looking for a quick, tasty and light meal. French beans and macaroni are other variations that you can try. Some people prefer making the chicken broth at home, that is an option you can explore if you have the time.

## Indian food additives market to grow 12% CAGR

**The growing demand for ready-to-eat food products coupled with rising preference for natural or organic food ingredients will grow at a compounded rate of 12 per cent and drive the food additives market in India over the next five years, a research firm recently.**

According to a report from TechSci Research, the growth in per capita disposable income and rising urban middle class population are among the key market contributors which will drive the growth.

"India has been witnessing significant rise in food consumption level, prevalence of processed and packaged food, convenience food, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, bakery items, ready-to-eat food products and cereals. These trends are expected to drive remarkable growth in the demand for food additives in the country over the coming years," the report said.

According to the report, due to cultural and regional diversities, the pattern of food consumption is not uniform in India resulting in the western region generating the

highest demand for food additives. "The region is expected to continue spearheading the market due to the presence of a large number of food and beverage manufacturing companies in the states of Gujarat and Maharashtra," it said. "Indian food additives market is dominated by the flavours segment due to their substantial use in beverages, savory items and cereals. With rising incidences of health problems like diabetes, consumers are also shifting towards all-natural, low calorie sweeteners such as Stevia. As a result, sweeteners are most likely to witness faster growth over the next five years and emerge as the leading segment in India food additives market through 2020," said research director at the firm Karan Chechi.

**If you are someone who is unwilling to eat the same lunch box food every time you sit in the office canteen, then these 5 ideas for healthy Indian packed lunches are perfect for you. Along with being delicious, these lunches are also loaded with health benefits.**

**Indian packed lunches are perfect for you. Along with being delicious, these lunches are also loaded with health benefits.**



# Govt clears new Rs 13,000-crore Great Nicobar airport, drops INS Baaz expansion

**The new airport will be built at Chingen near Galathea Bay and is expected to serve both civilian and military aviation requirements. Defence sources said the decision followed studies that found extending INS Baaz's existing 4,500-foot runway to around 10,000 feet was impractical because of topography and infra-related constraints.**

Rs 81,000-crore mega development project on the ecologically sensitive island.

Government and defence sources said the proposed dual-use airport will come up at Chingen, near Galathea Bay on Great Nicobar's southeastern coast, and will serve both civilian and military aviation needs. The location is strategically significant as it lies close to the western approaches of the Malacca Strait, one of the world's busiest maritime chokepoints linking the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea.

A substantial share of global container traffic and energy shipments passes through these waters, making the island a key vantage point for monitoring maritime activity in the eastern Indian Ocean. Officials say the airport will strengthen India's ability to monitor and respond to developments along this critical trade route.



The decision effectively shelves long-standing plans to extend the runway at the Indian Navy's INS Baaz air station in Campbell Bay. According to sources, studies found that lengthening the existing 4,500-foot runway to around 10,000 feet would be difficult because of terrain limitations, navigational challenges and the need for extensive supporting infrastructure. Officials also concluded that a runway expansion could have a greater impact on

tribal settlements, forests and wildlife habitats than the proposed greenfield airport.

The new airport is expected to be completed within five years and will remain under naval operational control while serving civilian aviation needs, according to reports. Officials argue that the greenfield site provides greater room for future expansion and strengthens India's military reach, surveillance capabilities and logistics footprint in the strategically important Andaman and Nicobar archipelago.

**WHY GREAT NICOBAR MATTERS** Great Nicobar, India's southernmost island, occupies a strategically important position near major international shipping lanes. The island lies close to the Six Degree Channel, a key sea route leading into the Malacca Strait, through which a large portion of global maritime trade passes.

India already maintains a significant military presence in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, including INS Baaz (commissioned in 2012), and the country's only tri-services command (established in 2001) to integrate the Army, Navy and Air Force in the strategically vital region. Strategic experts have long argued that strengthening infrastructure on the islands would enhance India's ability to monitor maritime traffic, project power in the Indo-Pacific and respond to the growing presence of China in the Indian Ocean Region.

## THE WIDER GREAT NICOBAR PROJECT

The airport is one of four major infrastructure components proposed under the Great Nicobar Island Development Project, whose overall cost is estimated at around Rs 81,000 crore. At the heart of the project is a planned International Container Transshipment Terminal.

### New Delhi.(Agency)

The government has decided to build a new Rs 13,000-crore greenfield civil-military airport as part of the Great Nicobar project instead of expanding the existing naval airfield at INS Baaz, a move that comes amid an intensifying political battle over the

## Mahagauri expects cubs on 'lucky day' this month, trend continues for 17 years

### New Delhi.(Agency)

Delhi Zoo may soon welcome another Asiatic lion cub, with pregnant lioness Mahagauri expected to give birth on June 27, officials said. The development has revived hopes for the zoo's lion breeding programme, which had struggled for years before Mahagauri delivered cubs in 2025 after an 11-year gap.

Interestingly, the number 27 has become closely associated with lion births at the National Zoological Park. Officials said every successful lion birth at the zoo since 2009 has taken place on the 27th—including births on June 27 in 2009 and 2014, and April 27, 2025.

"It may be a numerical coincidence, but all the recent lion births at the zoo happened on the 27th. Naturally, it has become a memorable date for us," an official said.

Mahagauri's expected delivery is also significant because she is likely to become the first lioness at the zoo since 2009 to conceive again within about a year of giving birth, a rare occurrence in the zoo's recent breeding history. Officials said lion breeding at Delhi Zoo remained healthy until 2009, with cubs being born every few years. However, the programme declined sharply afterward and nearly came to a standstill.

By 2021, Sundaram, a lion born at the zoo in 2009, was the only lion left at the facility. Now around 17 years old, Sundaram's ageing prompted zoo authorities to search for new breeding stock. To revive the population, Delhi Zoo brought one male and two female lions from Junagadh in Gujarat in 2021. Among them was Shailja, born in 2020, who was expected to strengthen the breeding programme.

However, officials said the plan suffered a setback after Shailja sustained a serious injury while moving inside her enclosure. She later developed a paralysis-like condition in her hind limbs, leaving her unable to breed. As a result, hopes for expanding the lion population now largely rest on Mahagauri and Maheshwar.

Their first successful breeding resulted in the birth of five cubs on April 27, 2025. However, three cubs died shortly after birth as they were not fully developed. The remaining two survived after veterinarians hand-reared them on artificial cat milk because Mahagauri was initially unable to nurse them.

## Sonam Wangchuk from Ladakh.

### The lion, not the cockroach

### New Delhi.(Agency)

New Delhi's Jantar Mantar on Saturday saw protests by the once-satirical, now-serious Cockroach Janta Party (CJP). Ladakh-based innovator, educator and climate activist Sonam Wangchuk joined Abhijeet Dipke, the CJP founder, as he came back to India to lead the protests on Saturday.

Wangchuk had earlier this week extended his support to the youth-led movement over the NEET paper leak issue, lending credibility and visibility to a protest that began as internet satire before metamorphosing into an organised group.

While many know activist-educator Sonam Wangchuk, many might not know another Sonam Wangchuk, who's also from Ladakh. He was an Indian Army officer who fought the Pakistanis in the 1999 Kargil war and etched his name in history. He was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra (MVC), India's second-highest wartime gallantry award.

While climate activist Wangchuk fought Ladakh's water crisis through innovations like artificial glaciers, soldier Sonam Wangchuk, battled Pakistani intruders in the Kargil War.

And unlike the ironic mascot of a political movement built around what Dipke said is "a surviving a dysfunctional system", Colonel Sonam Wangchuk earned another identity in the mountains of Kargil. The Lion of Ladakh.

### WHO IS SONAM WANGCHUK, THE LION OF LADAKH

Born on May 11, 1964, in Sankar (near Leh) in the erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir, Colonel Sonam Wangchuk grew up amid the rugged mountains that would later test his mettle. Influenced by a relative in the Indian Army, he joined the Officers Training Academy in Chennai and was commissioned into the 4th Battalion of the Assam Regiment.

## Times have changed, pre-marital sex no ground to judge character: SC

### New Delhi.(Agency)

Can a consensual relationship between two unmarried adults be used to question a person's character? Can a relationship that ends without marriage automatically be treated as deception? In a judgment with implications far beyond a single recruitment dispute, the Supreme Court has answered both questions with a firm no.

At a time when pre-marital relationships still continue to attract social stigma and often find their way into courtrooms, the country's highest court has said that a physical relationship between two consenting unmarried adults cannot by itself become a basis for judging someone's character. It also warned against the

tendency to presume wrongdoing merely because a relationship eventually breaks down.

"Physical relationship between two consenting unmarried adults cannot

prohibit two consenting unmarried adults to have a relationship of their choice," a bench of Justices Manmohan and Manoj Misra said, as reported by Bar and Bench.

### A MESSAGE BEYOND ONE CASE

The observations came while the court was hearing the case of Gajula Thirupathi, a police constable recruit from Telangana whose selection was cancelled because of a criminal case stemming from a relationship with a neighbour more than a decade ago. But the judgment went much further than deciding whether one candidate deserved a government job. The bench took

on a question that increasingly sits at the intersection of law, society and personal liberty: should adults be penalised for consensual relationships.



and should not by itself be a ground to draw an adverse impression about the character of the person in that relationship. There is no law which

## Kerala Muslim League MLA lights lamp at event, sparks row

### New Delhi.(Agency)

A major controversy has erupted in Kerala after Perambra MLA Fatima Thahliya, the first woman legislator from the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), lit a traditional nilavilakku (lamp) during the inauguration of a restaurant in her constituency in Kozhikode district recently.

The incident sparked debate within Kerala's Muslim socio-political circles over whether Muslims, particularly public representatives, should participate in ceremonies traditionally associated with other religions. The act drew criticism from the Samastha Kerala Jamiyyathul Ulama, a leading Sunni-Shafi body of Islamic scholars in the state.

In a statement issued following discussions on the issue, the Samastha Central Mushawara said Muslims

should avoid participating in ceremonies and practices that are not rooted in Islamic teachings and are observed by followers of other religions as part of their religious

traditions. The organisation noted that the lighting of a nilavilakku has historically been practised by non-Muslims as a distinct religious ceremony and urged Muslims to exercise caution while also

maintaining communal harmony.

Addressing the controversy, Samastha leader Abdul Hameed Faizy Ambalakkadavu reiterated the body's position through a Facebook post.

He stressed that Islam encourages cordial relations and tolerance towards people of other faiths but draws a clear distinction when it comes to adopting religious practices.

Islamic laws are precise, clear and explicit. Islam strictly instructs believers to show friendship and tolerance towards followers of other faiths.

The companions of the Prophet would instruct their families that when a goat was slaughtered and cooked, the first portion should be given to a Jewish neighbour," news agency PTI quoted Faizy as saying.



## Cooling room confusion hits Delhi's LNJP heatwave readiness

### New Delhi.(Agency)

With Delhi witnessing repeated heatwave alerts this summer, hospitals across the capital have been instructed to maintain facilities and protocols for the treatment of heatstroke patients.

However, interactions with frontline staff at Lok Nayak Jai Prakash (LNJP) Hospital suggested that awareness regarding these arrangements may not have effectively reached all personnel responsible for guiding patients and attendants.

When enquiries were made regarding the location of a cooling room or heatstroke treatment facility, security personnel initially appeared unaware of any such arrangement and directed visitors to the hospital helpdesk. At the helpdesk, staff members also seemed unfamiliar with the

term "cooling room" and were unable to immediately identify where heatstroke patients are treated. They said such patients are taken to the "green area".

However, the green area is not a dedicated

attended to, while the red area is reserved for critical emergency cases.

The interaction with hospital staff indicated that frontline personnel responsible for guiding visitors were unable to explain the hospital's heatwave-related arrangements or identify any specific facility meant for heatstroke management.

While hospital staff eventually directed enquiries to the emergency department, the difficulty in obtaining basic information regarding heatstroke treatment pathways highlighted a gap in awareness among personnel expected to assist patients and attendants.

Meanwhile, the medical director refused to share any information regarding the matter. On May 26, Health Minister Dr Pankaj Kumar Singh had announced the establishment of a

dedicated heat illness ward at LNJP Hospital.

The statement issued by the minister said the newly created ward was equipped with timely treatment facilities, dedicated beds, emergency care support, ICU backup and step-down recovery arrangements for patients affected by heatwave conditions.

### Govt launches bamboo cooling zones amid heatwave

The Delhi government has launched eco-friendly bamboo cooling zones in Bawana and Alipur to provide relief from heatwave. Developed under the Heat Action Plan, the structures use bamboo, vetiver grass screens and mist-based cooling systems to lower temperatures naturally. The facilities offer chilled drinking water, ORS packets, seating and rest areas for vulnerable groups, including labourers and street vendors.



cooling room or heatwave treatment facility. It is the non-critical section of the emergency department where patients with relatively less serious conditions are

## Frantic chase as stepladder hits 3 planes at Delhi airport amid storm

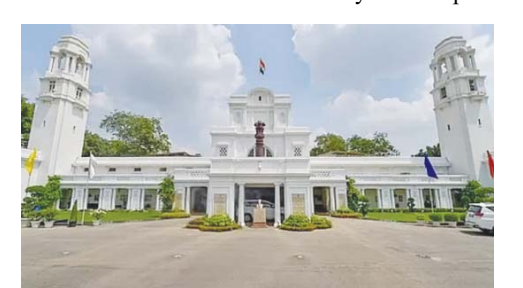
**While Air India has not officially issued a statement on the incident, an airline source said along with three Air India planes, aircraft belonging to other operators were also affected by the hostile weather conditions.**

### New Delhi.(Agency)

The Delhi government is planning to construct a watchtower and a dedicated patrolling track along the boundary wall of the Vidhan Sabha premises in Civil Lines after the recent security breach and multiple hoax bomb calls.

The Public Works Department (PWD) has floated a tender to this effect. The decision follows a security breach in April, when a masked intruder managed to force entry through one of the assembly's boundary gates, raising serious concerns over existing safeguards.

"A watchtower and patrolling track will be constructed at the Delhi Assembly as a step to



improve overall security arrangements; a tender has been issued for the project," a PWD official said. According to officials, the PWD will execute the work.

"It has floated a tender for the construction of a watchtower and a patrolling track to improve surveillance and response capabilities within the assembly premises," said a senior PWD official.

Apart from the breach incident, Delhi Assembly Speaker Vijender Gupta had also received bomb threats during the annual budget session earlier this year, adding to the safety concerns of the authorities.

To ensure rapid response within the premises, officials are planning the deployment of a dedicated mobile patrol vehicle capable of swift movement and immediate intervention.

Under the other safety improvements, officials are also working on strengthening of physical infrastructure at access points, making the gate systems robust enough to withstand forceful entry attempts.

### Recent lapse

In a major security lapse in April this year, an unidentified car breached the Legislative Assembly premises, ploughing through an iron barricade.

## Rupee rises 20 paise to 95.41 against US dollar in early trade

Mumbai.(Agency)

The rupee rose 20 paise to 95.41 against the US dollar in early trade on Tuesday as Brent crude oil prices and the US dollar index retreated from their elevated levels after a pause in US-Iran hostilities.

Forex traders said the rupee opened on a positive note after Israel and Iran agreed to deescalate and ease strikes. At the interbank foreign exchange market the rupee opened at 95.47, then touched 95.41, registering a gain of 20 paise from its previous close. On Monday, the rupee depreciated 43 paise to settle at 95.61 against the American currency. The rupee is likely to trade a 95.40-95.80 range with weakening bias, IFA Global said in a research note. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading at 99.98, down 0.06 per cent. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading lower by 0.99 per cent at USD 93.32 per barrel in futures trade. On the domestic equity market front, Sensex climbed 350.57 points to 73,874.83, while the Nifty was up 114.50 points to 23,237.50.

In global developments, Israel and Iran agreed to deescalate and ease strikes. US President Donald Trump spoke with Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu. However, Iran has warned that it will retaliate if Israeli bombing continues. Foreign institutional investors offloaded equities worth Rs 5,555.67 crore on a net basis on Monday, according to exchange data.

Meanwhile, India recorded a current account surplus of USD 7.1 billion, or 0.7 per cent of GDP, in the January-March quarter of 2025-26, helped by services exports and higher remittances, according to Reserve Bank data released on Monday. The surplus was USD 13.7 billion or 1.4 per cent of GDP in the fourth quarter of 2024-25. However, for the entire fiscal 2025-26, the current account deficit stood at USD 25.2 billion or 0.6 per cent of GDP compared to USD 22.9 billion or 0.6 per cent of GDP in 2024-25.

## AI investment outpacing business outcomes: Cognizant

MUMBAI.(Agency)

Cognizant Chief Executive Ravi Kumar said companies are investing heavily in artificial intelligence, but many are yet to see the expected business benefits as the technology moves from experimentation to large-scale deployment.

Speaking at the company's AI Forum in New York, Kumar said a gap had emerged between the capabilities of AI systems and the value organisations are generating from them.

"There is a lot of reasons why the production value is way below the capability," Kumar said. "If chapter 1 was about broad open based experimentation, chapter 2 would be about specifics, realism, costs, and bridging that gap." Kumar said about \$1 trillion had already been invested in AI infrastructure globally and another \$6 trillion to \$7 trillion could be invested by 2030. However, he said the business benefits from those investments had not kept pace with advances in AI technology. "The capability is going up. The production value is right out here. In some ways, that's the gap we are going to address as a company," he said. According to Kumar, enterprises are increasingly facing rising AI costs without corresponding productivity gains. He cited comments from companies and industry groups that have raised concerns about returns from AI investments. He also said many organisations had focused on AI model usage without linking spending to business outcomes. "The pace of change has been absolutely high clock speed. There's been a sense of FOMO, fear mongering, and that has led to token consumption without linkages to ROI and without linkages to outcomes," Kumar said. Further, Cognizant used the event to outline its strategy around what it calls "AI builders", a model aimed at helping companies deploy AI across software systems and business operations.

## India aims for BTA-negotiated tariff rates after Section 301 probe concludes

New Delhi.(Agency)

India's exports to the US will be subject to tariff rates negotiated under the proposed Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) once the ongoing Section 301 investigations are completed and a trade deal is concluded, according to Commerce Ministry sources. However, if the agreement is not in place by the time the investigations conclude, Indian exports will continue to face the standard Most Favoured Nation (MFN) tariff rates, officials said.

The Indian negotiating team is focused on securing tariff concessions that ensure Indian exporters remain competitive vis-à-vis other major exporting nations. "If the US wants to impose any additional duties, it must first complete the Section 301 process. Once the investigations are over, tariff rates will be determined by the terms negotiated under the agreement," a government official said. The temporary 10 per cent additional tariff imposed by the US is scheduled to expire on July 24. Thereafter, only MFN tariff rates would apply to US trading partners in the absence of any separate arrangement. Sources added that once a trade agreement is signed, tariff decisions would be implemented through an order issued by the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR), rather than under the Section 301 framework. With the Section 301 investigations expected to conclude within the next 30 days, officials indicated that negotiations on the BTA are also progressing towards a conclusion. Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal had last week expressed confidence that an India-US trade agreement could be finalised by July. According to sources, both sides are likely to review the findings of the investigations before moving towards the final stages of the agreement. India is seeking tariff treatment that is more favourable than that available to competing exporters, particularly other Asian economies that have significant access to the US market.

# From Oman to Gujarat: The mega pipeline that could reshape India's energy future

**Every flare-up in the Strait of Hormuz sends shockwaves through global energy markets. Could a proposed 2,000-km undersea pipeline from Oman to Gujarat help India break free from that vulnerability? Let's find out.**

New Delhi.(Agency)

A pipeline stretching nearly 2,000 kilometres beneath the Arabian Sea, at depths of more than 3,000 metres, could one day carry natural gas directly from Oman to Gujarat. The proposed Oman-Gujarat Deep-Sea Gas Pipeline has been discussed for decades, but renewed concerns over energy security and supply disruptions have brought it back into focus. If built, the project could provide India with a direct source of natural gas while reducing its

dependence on shipping routes that pass through the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most strategically important maritime corridors. Estimated to cost around Rs 40,000 crore, the pipeline is being pitched as a long-term solution to strengthen India's energy resilience. But it would also rank among the most technically demanding infrastructure projects ever attempted in the region, requiring construction and maintenance thousands of metres below the ocean surface. The party said the proposed pipeline would stretch nearly 2,000 kilometres beneath the Arabian Sea at depths exceeding 3,000 metres, delivering reliable energy supplies to homes, fertiliser plants and industries. The accompanying video described the project as a "direct energy lifeline" that would avoid tanker routes, conflict zones and disruptions linked to the Strait of Hormuz. The message was clear: as global energy markets become more unpredictable, India wants greater control over its own energy future.

**WHY HORMUZ MATTERS SO MUCH**

**TO INDIA**

The Strait of Hormuz is often called the world's most important oil chokepoint. A substantial share of India's oil and

high as \$24-25 per MMBtu. Such price spikes can ripple through the economy, affecting fuel costs, inflation and government finances. For policymakers, the lesson was simple: relying too heavily on one route carries risks.

**THE PIPELINE THAT HAS BEEN WAITING FOR 30 YEARS**

The idea is not new.

Plans for a direct gas pipeline between Oman and India have been discussed since the early 1990s. But concerns over cost, technology and commercial viability repeatedly pushed the proposal to the sidelines. What has changed now is the urgency. India's growing energy demand, combined with geopolitical uncertainty, has brought the proposal back to the forefront.

At the centre of the plan is the Middle East-India Deepwater Pipeline — a roughly 2,000-kilometre underwater pipeline stretching from Oman to Gujarat.



liquefied natural gas imports passes through this narrow route between the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea.

**That dependence creates vulnerability.**

When tensions escalated in the region earlier this year, LNG prices reportedly jumped from around \$10-12 per MMBtu (metric million British thermal unit) to as

## Why the government cut Ujjwala LPG subsidy from nine to four cylinders a year

New Delhi.(Agency)

Households. The move, however, is not about reducing support to poor families, but about plugging gaps in the system that officials say were being misused.

**SUBSIDY REDUCED FROM NINE TO FOUR CYLINDERS**

Under the revised rule, Ujjwala beneficiaries will now get subsidy support for up to four LPG refills in a year, instead of nine earlier. The change has been made with immediate effect, according to government sources. Officials say the decision is based on actual usage data, which shows that most Ujjwala households already use around four cylinders a year on average.

**GOVERNMENT FLAGS MISUSE OF SCHEME**

The main reason behind the change is the suspected diversion of subsidised LPG cylinders. Government sources have said that some individuals were allegedly taking advantage of the scheme by claiming multiple subsidised refills in the names of beneficiaries, reported CNN-

News18.

These cylinders were then believed to be used for commercial purposes or sold outside the intended domestic use. This, officials say, led to leakage in the subsidy



system and increased financial burden on the government. Authorities believe that restricting subsidised refills will help stop misuse and ensure that government support reaches genuine users. The idea is to tighten the system without affecting genuine consumption needs. Officials have stressed that the change is aimed at improving efficiency rather than cutting support for poor families.

**NO LIMIT ON ACTUAL LPG**

**PURCHASE**

Importantly, the government has clarified that there is no restriction on how many LPG cylinders a beneficiary can buy in a year. Households can continue to purchase additional cylinders as needed. The only change is that subsidy support will now be limited to the first four refills, after which consumers will have to pay the full price. Meanwhile, government data shows that most Ujjwala beneficiaries use around four cylinders annually. On this basis, officials argue that the revised cap will not significantly impact regular users. They say the adjustment brings the scheme closer to real consumption patterns while helping reduce wastage and misuse.

**AIM TO STRENGTHEN WELFARE DELIVERY**

The government maintains that the move is part of a wider effort to make welfare schemes more efficient and targeted. By reducing leakage and stopping diversion, officials believe the subsidy system will become more transparent and sustainable in the long run.

## Retail auto sales record 9.55% growth despite heatwave and fuel price hike

MUMBAI.(Agency)

Despite evolving headwinds such as an above-normal heatwave, fuel-price pressure and the evolving West Asia situation, automobile retail sales registered its best ever May sales across 3-wheeler, passenger vehicle (PV), tractors and overall registrations. As per Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) data released on Monday, total automobile retail sales grew by 9.55% year-on-year to a record 25,31,067 units in May 2026. Passenger vehicles (PV) retail sales were at a record 4,02,591 units last month as compared to 3,26,656 units in May 2025, a growth of 23.25% while two-wheelers also clocked best-ever monthly numbers at 18,44,947 units in May this year as compared to 17,15,581 units in the same month a year ago, a growth of 7.54%. Dealers reported a visible rise in enquiries for fuel-efficient and alternative-powertrain options,

reflected in the two-wheeler EV share climbing to 9.25% from 6.11% a year



ago. EV share in the passenger vehicle segment also improved to 6.63%. PV retails were the clear standout at 4,02,591 units, a robust 23.25% YoY expansion, with the Bharat-led character of the recovery firmly intact — Rural PV grew 30.35% YoY against Urban at 18.80%. Dealers pointed to a small-car revival co-existing with a sustained SUV mix, healthy booking pipelines and refreshed

product launches, alongside a richer alternative-powertrain mix in which CNG share rose to 23.34% and EV share improved to 6.63%. Overall alternative fuel share rose to 38%+ in May," said FADA President C S Vigneshwar. On 2W sales, Vigneshwar said that dealers attributed the steady commuter and rural participation to marriage-season buying and continued affordability under the GST 2.0 framework, even as heatwave conditions dampened showroom walk-ins in several markets and selective model-wise supply gaps tempered the momentum. Looking ahead to June 2026, FADA said that dealer sentiment is measured, with 50.52% of dealers expecting growth, 39.90% anticipating a flat market and only 9.59% foreseeing a decline. With the south-west monsoon having set in over Kerala on 4th June and beginning its northward.

## Coal Exchange Rules notified to enable transparent coal trading, market-based price discovery

**To facilitate the initiative, the Ministry of Coal had already designated the Coal Controller Organisation (CCO) in December 2025 as the authority responsible for registering and regulating Coal Exchanges.**

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Ministry of Coal has notified the Coal Exchange Rules, 2026, paving the way for the establishment of Coal Exchanges in the country as part of efforts to modernise India's coal supply chain and create a more transparent and efficient coal market. The rules were published in the Official Gazette, following the enactment of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2025, which introduced



the concept of a Mineral Exchange and empowered the Central Government to promote transparent and efficient trading of minerals, including coal and its processed forms. To facilitate the initiative, the Ministry of Coal had already designated the Coal Controller Organisation (CCO) in December 2025 as the authority responsible

for registering and regulating Coal Exchanges. Under the framework, eligible entities will be authorised by the CCO to establish and operate Coal Exchanges, frame market rules and bye-laws, and facilitate coal trading. Registrations for operating Coal Exchanges will be granted for a period of 25 years. According to the

Ministry, the introduction of Coal Exchanges marks a shift in coal marketing from the traditional "one-to-many" sales model to a competitive "many-to-many" trading platform. The Ministry said the new system "will enable transparent and market-driven price discovery, improve efficiency, and provide coal producers, including commercial and captive miners, with easier access to a wider pool of buyers." It added that "Public Sector coal companies can also leverage the platform to enhance market participation."

The government said the Coal Exchange initiative reflects its commitment to "enhancing ease of doing business, promoting transparency, and building a modern, self-reliant energy ecosystem."

According to the Ministry, by creating a more competitive and efficient coal market, the reform is expected to strengthen energy security, support industrial growth and contribute to the vision of Viksit Bharat through sustainable economic development and a future-ready energy sector.

## Short news

## Odisha govt to set up hostel for 4,000 women workers at Kalibeti industrial estate

BHUBANESWAR.(Agency)

The state cabinet on Monday gave approval for the development of women workers' hostel at Kalibeti industrial area of Khurda district for secure and well-equipped accommodation of female workers of textiles and apparel industries. The hostel would be constructed at a cost of Rs 210.36 crore.

The project will be funded by Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) and executed by IDCO. It will be completed within 24 months from the date of its launch.

Chief secretary Anu Garg told mediapersons that Kalibeti Industrial Estate hosts textiles and apparel giants like MAS Holdings, EPIC and Indian Stitches. The mega textiles and apparel units are expected to generate more than 20,000 jobs within the next few years.

Given that women constitute 60 to 70 per cent of the workforce in textiles and apparel industry, the demand for accommodation for them has become priority area of the government. Garg said the hostel will cater to 4,000 women workers and ensure safety, productive environment, cost saving and less travel time to work. Besides, in a major decision to provide relief to beneficiaries of economically-weaker sections of society under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban 2.0, the cabinet approved a proposal to bring down the stamp duty and registration fee for affordable housing units meant for EWS to below.

## Uprooted tree wrecks nine shops as heavy rain, wind batter Fort Kochi

KOCHL.(Agency)

Heavy rain and strong winds led to widespread damage in Fort Kochi, with an uprooted tree destroying nine roadside shops near the Fort Kochi beach in the early hours of Monday.

The incident occurred around 1am near one of the entrances to Fort Kochi Beach, close to the PWD Rest House. Shop owners said the massive tree crashed onto a row of shops, destroying three structures and partially damaging six others. One of the affected shops had been vacated a few days earlier. There were no injuries or casualties.

The shop owners alleged that concerns regarding the condition of the tree had been repeatedly raised with authorities. "We knew the tree would fall. Complaints were submitted before the heritage office and village office, but they did not fell the tree completely. Only a few branches were removed," alleged Sudheer, the owner of one of the partially damaged shops. He estimated the total loss in the Rs 10- Rs 15 lakh range.

"If it had happened a few hours earlier, there would have definitely been casualties," he added.

Authorities and emergency personnel reached the spot shortly after the incident and began removing the tree. However, concerns loom over the safety of several other aging trees in the area.

"There are several other trees in the vicinity that are in vulnerable condition and could get uprooted," Sudheer said, urging authorities to conduct an inspection and take preventive measures.

## GCC plans to integrate its website and Namma Chennai mobile app at Rs 2.6 crore

CHENNAI.(Agency)

Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) is planning to transform its official website and Namma Chennai mobile application into a unified citizen-centric digital platform that will introduce a wide range of public services that even extends beyond the corporation's purview. The project, estimated to cost Rs 2.62 crore, is expected to be completed within one year from the issuance of the work order.

Speaking to a corporation official from the IT cell said, "Earlier, the app and web portal primarily offered GCC-related services only. However, we now plan to completely rebuild these platforms aiming to create a single digital interface that serves Chennai residents across various aspects of urban life, expanding its scope."

These platforms, once upgraded, are expected to provide seamless access to civic services, mobility services, tourism services, government payments, public amenities, citizen engagement initiatives, and other approved government and partner services. Surveys, public consultations, feedback and rating mechanisms will also be incorporated. An AI-powered chatbot will assist residents in accessing services, submitting requests and completing transactions through integration with government databases, authentication systems and payment gateways. It will also offer personalised service recommendations, notifications, reminders and context-aware suggestions.

## Choked by Vegetation, forgotten by time: Kakatiya-era temple in Warangal in ruins

Lucknow.(Agency)

A deadly shove from a moving train in Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly district that claimed the life of Bihar cleric, Maulana Tauseef Raza, has now been cracked wide open, with the Government Railway Police (GRP) arresting a suspect after an extensive trail involving 300 passengers across four coaches.

The incident, which took place on April 26, was triggered by a brawl over alleged theft of a mobile phone, officials claimed. The accused has been identified as Pankaj Rajput, a resident of Moradabad. While the police had initially termed the cleric's death an accident, they launched a probe after his wife handed them a clip of her conversation with Raza that night, in which he is heard asking her to seek police help. Raza, a cleric in a mosque at his home in Kishanganj district, had come to attend a religious event in Bareilly and was returning home in a Bihar-bound train. Police

were informed that his body was lying near the tracks in the Cantonment area, with a mobile phone helping identify him.

The accused was identified after scanning over 300 passengers aboard the train the cleric was travelling in and questioning many of them, officials said.

Moradabad GRP Superintendent of Police (SP) Ashutosh Shukla told The Indian Express, "We got major help from Home Guards Recruitment Exam candidates travelling in the same train.



These aspirants recorded on their mobile phones a heated exchange between Raza and Pankaj. But the police team investigating the case had a tough time tracing these candidates."

## How police traced passengers

Raza was travelling in a sleeper coach, S-8, even though he had a general ticket, it is learnt. The police team collected the list of nearly 300 passengers travelling in the S-7, 8, 9 and 10 coaches. While many of these passengers were contacted on phone, a woman admitted to having witnessed the cleric being heckled by a likely drunk passenger, the SP added. He said, "The woman said the accused picked a fight with the cleric, accusing him of stealing his mobile phone even as he had the device with him. The cleric tried to convince him that he had no other mobile phone except his own, but the man kept abusing and shouting at him. She said Raza went to other coaches to avoid the confrontation, but the accused kept chasing him.

## 'No ID, no entry': Karnataka orders stricter enforcement against underage drinking

Bengaluru. (Agency)

Amid growing concern over underage drinking in Bengaluru, Karnataka Home Minister Priyank Kharge Monday ordered a crackdown on pubs, bars, and breweries, directing the police to ensure that no person below the legal drinking age is allowed entry or served alcohol. During the meeting held in Bengaluru, Kharge said there is a growing concern over underage drinking and substance exposure among adolescents and young adults in Bengaluru.

Kharge said no customer will be allowed entry into pubs, breweries, bars, clubs or liquor-serving establishments without valid age proof. Government-issued identification must be considered only for entry and for serving alcohol.

"Children and young people must be protected from alcohol and substance abuse. Commercial establishments cannot place profit above the safety and future of our youth. The rule is simple: No ID, No Entry.



Any establishment abetting underage drinking will face severe action," Kharge said. If alcohol is served to underage individuals, the owners, license holders, and managers will be held responsible, and CCTV footage of the entrance must be preserved for a defined period to verify compliance, he added. He also directed the police to coordinate with educational institutions, parents, resident welfare associations, and citizen groups to prevent minors from being

exposed to alcohol, tobacco and narcotics.

The Karnataka home minister also cited a recent study conducted among 4,093 students from pre-university courses, undergraduate colleges, and higher secondary classes across four educational institutions in Bengaluru. The study found that one in three adolescents in the city is at risk of developing health issues due to alcohol or tobacco use.

It was conducted by researchers from St John's Medical College, Bengaluru; CHRIST University, Bengaluru, and Kasturba Medical College, Manipal.

"The study further found that 33 per cent of young adults surveyed used alcohol, while nearly 18 per cent were addicted to tobacco. This is significantly higher than the national prevalence rates of 8.7 per cent for tobacco use and 7.9 per cent for alcohol use, and also above Karnataka's reported prevalence of 4.7 per cent for tobacco use and 8.5 per cent for alcohol.

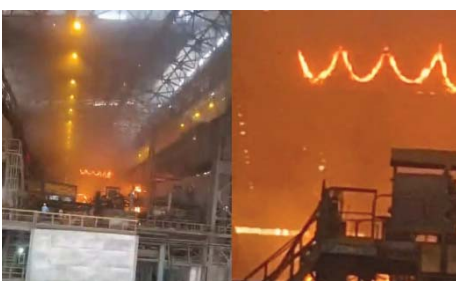
## Eight workers killed, several injured at Visakhapatnam Steel Plant as molten iron spills

VISAKHAPATNAM.(Agency)

Eight workers were killed and several others injured after molten iron spilt on them at the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant on Monday. The incident occurred in the Steel Melting Shop (SMS) unit while production activities were underway. According to preliminary information, buckets attached to a ladle carrying molten metal collapsed, causing a large quantity of molten steel to spill suddenly onto the shop floor. Eight workers died on the spot, while several others sustained injuries. The injured were shifted to nearby hospitals for treatment.

Following the accident, the plant management initiated emergency response measures and deployed safety teams to the affected area.

Reacting to the incident, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu expressed shock and grief over the loss of lives. The CM reviewed the situation with officials and directed all departments to coordinate relief and rescue efforts. Officials



briefed him on the status of the injured workers and ongoing operations.

IT Minister Nara Lokesh conveyed his condolences to the families of the deceased workers and wished a speedy recovery for those injured. He stated that the government machinery is actively overseeing medical care and relief measures.

Former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy also expressed grief over the accident. He conveyed condolences to the bereaved families and urged authorities to provide the best possible treatment to the injured. He called for a comprehensive inquiry into the incident

and stressed the need for strict adherence to industrial safety standards. He also directed party leaders and representatives in Visakhapatnam district to assist the affected families.

Meanwhile, the district committee of Centre of Indian Trade Unions demanded a thorough investigation into the accident. In a statement, district leaders alleged that inadequate maintenance, ageing equipment and lapses in safety management may have contributed to the incident.

The organisation sought strict action against those found responsible and demanded compensation of Rs 5 crore for the families of the deceased workers. It also called for stronger safety measures to prevent similar incidents in the future. The accident has once again drawn attention to workplace safety in heavy industries, with employees, unions and public representatives seeking accountability and stronger safeguards for workers.

## School building craves for attention in Andhra

VISAKHAPATNAM.(Agency)

For dozens of children in the Komira village of Ravikamatham mandal in Anakapalle, the start of the academic year has brought uncertainty rather than excitement. With one school building declared unsafe and the remaining structure unable to accommodate all students, classes are being conducted in cramped spaces, forcing some children to attend lessons in a nearby temple. Parents and students on Monday staged a protest at the Komira Swarna Panchayat office, urging the government to provide an immediate alternative facility and sanction funds for a new school building.

The Government Primary School has 68 students from Classes I to V, most of them belonging to SC, ST and BC communities. While the school has two buildings, one has fallen into a dilapidated condition. The roof leaks during rains, cracks have developed in the walls and portions of the slab are peeling off. Officials have reportedly declared the structure unsafe for use.

As a result, all five classes are being managed with limited space. Classes IV and V are conducted inside usable classroom, while Classes II and III are seated in the veranda. The Headmaster's table and school materials share same space. Class I students are being taught in Rama temple as there is no room left in building. The situation has become more challenging this year as enrolment has increased. The school had 49 students last academic year, but 24 new admissions have pushed the strength to nearly 70. Though an additional teacher has been deputed, the shortage of classrooms continues to affect learning.

## On way to engagement ceremony, 5 from Gujarat family killed in Jalgaon crash

Mumbai.(Agency)

Six people, including five members of a family from Gujarat travelling to an engagement ceremony, were killed in a triple collision involving a car, a Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) bus and a motorcycle on Tuesday. The accident occurred in the morning near Mangrul village in Amalner taluka of Jalgaon district.

The victims, from Gujarat's Vyara town, were on their way to Amalner for a family engagement function when the accident occurred on the Amalner-Dhule highway. A local motorcyclist was also killed in the crash. According to preliminary information, the accident took place around



7 am when a speeding car travelling from Dhule towards Amalner allegedly lost control and crashed head-on into an ST bus and a motorcycle coming from the opposite direction.

The impact was so severe that the motorcycle was crushed and the car was

reduced to a mangled heap of metal. All five occupants of the car and the motorcyclist died on the spot.

The sound of the collision drew villagers from nearby Mangrul, who rushed to the accident site and launched rescue operations even before emergency services arrived.

The force of the crash left several passengers trapped inside the wrecked car. Villagers, police personnel and MSRTC staff worked together to pull survivors and victims out of the twisted vehicle. Police from Amalner police station, led by Inspector Dattatraya Nikam, reached the spot along with emergency responders and coordinated rescue efforts. Ambulances shifted the injured to nearby hospitals for

treatment.

One passenger travelling in the ST bus, identified as Deepak Dilip Patil, sustained injuries and is undergoing treatment. Doctors said his condition is stable. Several others also suffered injuries and were admitted to hospital.

The accident disrupted traffic on the highway for several hours before police and local residents cleared the road and restored movement. The bodies were sent to Amalner Rural Hospital for post-mortem examination. Police said relatives of the deceased have been informed and family members from Gujarat are travelling to Jalgaon. Police said the exact cause of the crash is yet to be established. Investigators are examining.

Tiruchy: 60 of the 208 battery vehicles used by corporation dysfunctional, waste collection at doorstep takes a hit

BENGALURU.(Agency)

With the garbage issue remaining unsolved for many years because of multiple reasons, including inefficiency of the government and the powerful and unyielding contractors' lobby, the Lokayukta has stepped in to put an end to the menace.

From now on, garbage management in Bengaluru would be overseen by the Lokayukta, giving hope to citizens that Bengaluru may shed its 'garbage city' tag.

Expressing his displeasure over the garbage issue in Bengaluru, Lokayukta Justice BS Patil told TNIE that the report by the Lokayukta SP and DySP on the city's garbage management is disheartening. The Lokayukta will monitor garbage management and hold public hearings, for which dates will be announced in advance, Patil said.

This decision comes after the Lokayukta on June 5 inspected the Bengaluru North City Corporation (BNCC), covering Anandnagar, RT Nagar and Byatrayanapura, which were riddled with blackspots. Irked by poor garbage management, the Lokayukta had sought an explanation from the Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Ltd (BSWML). In return, BSWML had expressed its helplessness and pointed to the powerful contractors' lobby, along with bureaucratic inefficiency, for the city peppered with heaps of garbage and multiple black spots.

"It (garbage pile) is a very serious matter, and we are going to monitor it. We want to see to it that something drastic is done," said Justice Patil. He added that there is no accountability on the contractors' part as vehicles lack GPS tracking. BSWML Chief Executive Officer Karee Gowda, who appeared before the Lokayukta, said, "I conveyed to the Lokayukta that without the completion of garbage tender process, nothing will happen.

I brought to his notice how the contractors' lobby has impacted garbage management and how they are trying to hold BSWML to ransom."

## NEWS BOX

## Somali referee won't officiate in World Cup after being denied entry into the United States

New Delhi. (Agency)

Somali referee Omar Artan won't officiate in the World Cup after being denied entry into the United States. US Customs and Border Protection said Monday that a Somali national who was planning to referee in the World Cup had been denied entry after arriving to Miami International Airport from Istanbul on Saturday. While the CBP statement didn't mention the person by name, Artan is the only World Cup referee from Somalia. FIFA confirmed later Monday that Artan wouldn't be able to train and officiate at the World Cup, then released a statement on the referee's behalf. "Despite the circumstances, I am in a positive mood and I am focused on the next challenges in my refereeing career," Artan said in the statement. "I would like to thank FIFA and (the African federation) for all their support and I promise to keep my refereeing levels up as I concentrate on the future. I want to thank the football family for their messages and wish my colleagues all the best success during the World Cup and I look forward to joining them again in future competitions." In its own statement, FIFA said it was not involved in the immigration processes and was informed by authorities that Artan's "status



will not be changed at present." In line with previous FIFA events, a host government ultimately determines who receives a visa and who is admitted into their country," soccer's governing body said. CBP issued a release explaining why Artan was denied entry. "During processing, the traveler underwent additional inspection, a routine part of CBP's inspection process when officers need to verify information or determine admissibility," CBP said in its statement. "Following inspection, the traveler, a referee for the FIFA World Cup, was determined to be inadmissible due to vetting concerns and was denied entry." CBP noted that all travelers seeking entry into the US — including athletes, coaches and staff — are subject to CBP inspection and vetting. "Admissibility determinations are made on a case-by-case basis using law enforcement, national security, and immigration information available at the time of inspection," the CBP statement said. "CBP officers have the authority to question travelers, conduct inspections, and determine admissibility consistent with US law."

## No rivals, beyond medals: How yogasana became more than a hunt for glory



Ahmedabad. (Agency)

As the first World Yogasana Championship got into full swing, I made my way to the arena wondering what angle I would take for a feature on the tournament. After spending some time understanding how yoga has evolved into a competitive sport and the technicalities involved in judging it, I realised the story needed to be about something else. My first thought was to explain the events and the intensity of the competition. But the task ahead of me seemed tougher than the asanas being performed on stage with remarkable precision. With close to 78 countries participating and battling for medals, it was never going to be easy to keep track of the action across six age categories and multiple disciplines. As I moved from one mat to another, trying to absorb everything happening around me, one moment quickly caught my attention.

A rhythmic pair event featuring athletes from Sudan was underway. While the athletes performed on stage, their coaches started dancing off it. Soon enough, athletes from different countries joined in and what began as a competition suddenly looked more like a celebration. One of those dancing off the stage was Alan Rakhman, the captain of the Uzbekistan team. He was hard to miss throughout the event, constantly cheering on young competitors regardless of which country they represented. When I caught up with him and asked why he wasn't looking at others as rivals, his answer was simple.

"This isn't a sport for me, it's my lifestyle," said Alan to India Today. Suddenly, I started noticing how athletes were looking out for one another. Regardless of age, nationality or gender, everyone seemed invested in helping each other perfect their moves, improve their asanas or even work on something as simple as their breathing. It felt like I had stumbled upon the very essence of the sport.

## Bangladesh T20 captain reacts to World Cup boycott: Can play in Pakistan, then why not India?

**Litton Das has challenged Bangladesh's official line on pulling out of the T20 World Cup in India over security. His account raises fresh questions about why the call was eventually made.**

New Delhi. (Agency)

Bangladesh T20I captain Litton Das has reignited debate over his country's withdrawal from the T20 World Cup in India, a decision that was initially attributed to security concerns. His latest comments directly challenge earlier explanations that the call was mutually agreed upon by players and the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

The remarks have brought renewed attention to one of the more controversial administrative decisions in Bangladesh cricket, especially as the International Cricket Council (ICC) had found no credible security threats at the time of the tournament. Speaking to Bangladesh outlet Prothom Alo, Litton Das questioned the reasoning behind the withdrawal and compared it with Bangladesh's experiences touring other nations. "They told us there was no safety in that country (India).



We told them, we have played in Pakistan too. They used to stand outside the room with guns. What can be more dangerous than that?" he said. "If we can play in Pakistan, why not India," Litton added, underlining his disagreement with the decision. Former interim

sports advisor Asif Nazrul had earlier stated that the players and the BCB collectively decided not to take part in the tournament. However, Litton has rejected that account, implying that the decision was not as consensual as suggested and that the players'

perspective may not have been fully reflected in the final call.

## WHY BANGLADESH BOYCOTTED?

Bangladesh were originally scheduled to participate in the T20 World Cup co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka. However, the BCB eventually opted out of playing matches in India, citing security concerns amid deteriorating political relations between the two countries at the time.

In response, the board reportedly pushed for a hybrid model, requesting that all of Bangladesh's matches be moved to Sri Lanka instead of being staged in India. The proposal was put forward as a compromise solution that would still allow Bangladesh to remain in the tournament. The ICC, however, after conducting its own assessments, found no specific or credible threat to Bangladesh's participation in India and rejected the request to relocate matches. With no resolution between the governing body and the BCB, the ICC reportedly issued an ultimatum requiring Bangladesh to either confirm participation under the existing arrangements or withdraw entirely. Ultimately, Bangladesh pulled out of the competition, and Scotland were drafted in as replacements to ensure the tournament could proceed as planned without disruption to the overall schedule or format.

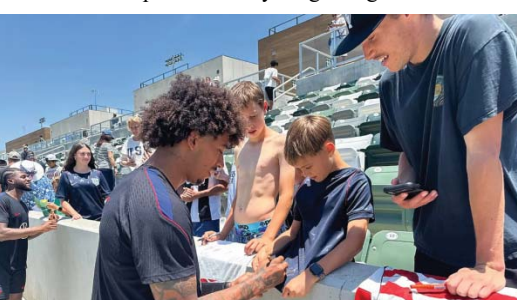
## US team settles into World Cup training base with optimism and gratitude for fan support

**US coach Mauricio Pochettino entertained the crowd and got a "U-S-A!" chant going while his team was doing a brief gym workout before it got on the grass.**

IRVINE, Calif. (Agency)

The US national team already knew it was in for a once-in-a-lifetime experience this month as the home team in a World Cup. But when the 26 players took the field at Orange County's Great Park on Monday to the cheers of several thousand fans who had turned out just to watch a mere practice, they were given yet another reminder of just how special this opportunity will be if they seize it. The Americans projected confidence and excitement as they settled into their training base for at least the next three weeks in Southern California. The team convened in

Georgia last month before playing two friendlies in the past eight days. All three of the Americans' World Cup group stage matches are on the West Coast, starting with their opener Friday night against



Paraguay at SoFi Stadium, the palatial NFL arena about 50 miles away in Inglewood, California. "I think the group is in a really good place at the minute," US captain Tim Ream said. "We've all been, I wouldn't say overwhelmed, but pleasantly surprised by the excitement and the buzz around the team and

in the stadiums. Pulling up here with 5,500 fans ready to watch a training session is incredible. I just think we're in a good place mentally right now. It's been a long two weeks, a hard two weeks, but guys are in a great position mentally, physically and emotionally, and ready to get going."

The team was greeted in Irvine by rows of enthusiastic fans who won a multi-stage lottery among 32,000 applicants for the chance to watch practice and to get autographs at FIFA's Community Day event. US coach Mauricio Pochettino entertained the crowd and got a "U-S-A!" chant going while his team was doing a brief gym workout before it got on the grass.

"The facilities are amazing," Pochettino said. "It's more than we expect, and not only the facilities, but the people who are here working. Great facilities and great people are an amazing combination. We are grateful, and I want to say a big thanks."

## Injured US defender Chris Richards goes through full practice in boost for World Cup availability

IRVINE, Calif. (Agency)

Top defender Chris Richards participated in his first full practice with the U.S. World Cup team on Monday when the Americans reported to their training base in Southern California.

Richards tore two left ankle ligaments while playing for Crystal Palace on May 17, and he missed the Americans' two friendlies over the past week. He was included on the United States' 26-man roster for the World Cup, but injured players can still be replaced until Thursday evening. "We will see," U.S. coach Mauricio Pochettino said. "Today is the first time with the team, and so it's good to have nearly everyone ready to be selected for the game." The Americans open their home World Cup against Paraguay at SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, California, on Friday night.

The 26-year-old Richards had worked out on his own away from his teammates during U.S. practices in recent days, but he got through the full workout in front of more than 5,500 fans at Great Park in Orange County with no apparent problems. Richards then laughed and joked with

## What really happened at London nightclub Ben Stokes and England teammate visited

New Delhi (Agency)

England's red ball captain Ben Stokes has come under scrutiny after the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) confirmed it is investigating an alleged breach of team protocols following England's first Test win over New Zealand at Lord's. According to a Telegraph report, Stokes and teammate Gus Atkinson were involved in a nightclub altercation with a rugby player in London shortly after the match. The ECB has delayed the announcement of England's squad for the second Test while it determines whether disciplinary action, including possible suspensions, will be taken against the pair. The incident comes less than two years after the ECB introduced stricter behavioural guidelines and a midnight curfew for players following a series of off-field controversies. "Stokes and Atkinson breached the team's new midnight curfew and were embroiled in a melee with a

Saracens academy player," The Telegraph reported. Saracens is a leading rugby union development programme linked to the professional English Premiership club Saracens, which the involved player was part



of. According to the report, the confrontation began when the rugby player allegedly threw a punch at Atkinson but instead struck an ECB security guard who was accompanying the

players. The guard reportedly required stitches following the incident, while neither Stokes nor Atkinson sustained injuries. "The Saracens player caused this and has a rep. I would not want the England cricket captain to lose his job over this," a source was quoted as saying by the report. The ECB is understood to believe that neither Stokes nor Atkinson initiated the confrontation. However, it remains unclear whether additional punches were exchanged during the altercation that followed.

## WHY THE ECB IS INVESTIGATING?

Following the Ashes, the ECB implemented a midnight curfew and introduced a revised code of conduct aimed at improving discipline within the national setup. While several England players returned home after the Lord's Test, which concluded around lunchtime, a group of approximately seven players reportedly went out in London to celebrate the victory.



fans while signing autographs after practice. The Americans badly want Richards to be a key contributor at the heart of their defense, so they are giving him every opportunity to get fit. Richards is considered the best central defender among a thin U.S. pool at the vital position. Richards has previously said he fully expects to play in this World Cup despite the injury setback. He missed the event in 2022 in Qatar because of a hamstring injury. Tyler Adams was briefly on the field with his teammates but went back to the gym while practice continued. A spokesperson said the team is merely managing the Bournemouth midfielder's workload.

## FIFA World Cup in USA is a mess before kick-off: Footballer detained, referee deported

**FIFA World Cup: Just days before the beginning of football's greatest spectacle, the FIFA World Cup has run into a myriad of controversies. The latest of those involves Africa's best football referee.**

New Delhi. (Agency)

Just three days before the start of football's greatest spectacle, the FIFA World Cup continues to run into bizarre controversies. What started as a simple ticketing and logistical fiasco has taken a darker turn, where footballers and staff have been detained at airports for several hours, and one official has not even been allowed to enter the United States. The controversies are unending, with the latest one involving Africa's best football referee, Omar Abdulkadir Artan. The Somali official was turned away by authorities at

Miami International Airport and sent straight back on a flight to Istanbul, irking the entire football fraternity. The decision to deport the referee stunned the football world, especially since reports suggest that Artan was travelling on a diplomatic passport. The Somali Embassy in Nairobi had stepped in to help him secure his visa after initial delays, but US border control ultimately refused to let him into the country. The incident prompted the Somali Prime Minister to issue a public statement calling out the US administration. "I am deeply disappointed by the news that Omar Artan, Africa's finest referee and one of the best in the world, may be unable to officiate at the FIFA World Cup due to visa-related circumstances," Hassan Ali Khaire said. "Omar has earned his place through talent, hard work, professionalism, and integrity. Having officiated at the highest levels of African and international football, his credentials speak for themselves. He represents not only Somalia, but also the aspirations of millions of young Africans who

believe excellence should be recognized on the world stage," he added. America's growing conflict in West Asia has led to multiple problems ahead of the FIFA World Cup. Just

two days ago, on June 7, Iraq vice-captain and the country's top striker, Aymen Hussein, was detained and interrogated for seven hours. Hussein is a talismanic figure who scored the goal that secured Iraq's qualification for the finals. The striker was not alone in this



ordeal. One more footballer from the team, along with the team photographer, was held at the airport for questioning. While Hussein was eventually allowed into the country, the team's photographer was barred from entering the United States.

## DONALD TRUMP'S OPEN THREAT TO IRAN FOOTBALLERS

The origin of the issue can be traced to a Donald Trump statement on March 12, months before the tournament. At the height of tensions between the United States and Iran, Trump openly questioned whether the Iran national team should be allowed to participate in the competition. "The Iran National Soccer Team is welcome to the World Cup, but I don't really believe it is appropriate that they be here, for their own life and safety. Thank you for your attention to this matter!" Trump wrote.

Despite the concerns raised by Iran, FIFA refused to entertain requests to move the team's matches outside the United States.

# Kiara Advani

## Pens Birthday Note For Toxic Director Geetu Mohandas, Calls Her A 'Genius Mind'

Bollywood actress Kiara Advani wished the director of her upcoming period gangster drama, "Toxic: A Fairy Tale for Grown-Ups" on social media. The 'Shershaah' actress took to the Stories section of her official Instagram handle and called the filmmaker a "genius mind

@geetu\_mohandas (sic)," read her post.

Commemorating the occasion, the makers also released a Behind The Scenes (BTS) video from the shoot of the highly anticipated drama on Monday.

The clip had Geetu calling the shots on the set, along with orchestrating large-scale action sequences, and guiding performances.

"Behind every shot that hit different, every silence that said more than dialogues ever could, there she was!

Happy birthday @geetu\_mohandas," the post further included the wish.

In December last year, the makers unveiled Kiara's sizzling first look as Nadia from "Toxic".

Speaking about Kiara's performance in the drama, Geetu had shared, "Some performances don't just belong to a film, they redefine an artist. What Kiara created on screen in this film is nothing short of transformative. As a director, I am deeply proud of her and for the performance she has delivered, and for the faith and heart she brought into our shared journey."

Jointly backed by Venkat K. Narayana and Yash under the banner of KVN Productions and Monster Mind Creations, "Toxic" features 'KGF' star Yash as the lead, along with Nayanthara, Huma Qureshi, Tara Sutaria, and Rukmini Vasanth in significant roles.

In April, the makers announced that they had decided to delay the release of "Toxic". The project, which was previously expected to be released on June 4 this year, will now reach the cinema halls across the globe on a new date, which is yet to be announced.



constantly powered by passion and fearless vision".

"Happy Birthday to the captain of our ship... A genius mind powered by infectious passion and a fearless vision... Here's to your best year yet... Love and more love to you always..."



## Why Dostana 2 Keeps Running Into Trouble: A Timeline Of The Rom-Com Sequel's Setbacks



For a film that once seemed designed as a breezy extension of one of Dharma Productions' most popular rom-coms, Dostana 2 has had a strangely turbulent journey. What began as a flashy, youth-driven follow-up to the 2008 hit Dostana has, over the years, turned into one of Bollywood's most discussed stalled projects, shaped by public exits, casting changes, creative disagreements and repeated restarts.

As of June 2026, the film is reportedly back in uncertain territory after director Advait Chandan stepped away from the project due to creative differences. His exit adds another chapter to a long-running saga that has kept the Karan Johar-backed sequel away from the big screen for more than seven years.

**Dostana 2 Was Announced With A Fresh Young Cast**

The journey began in 2019 when Dharma Productions officially announced Dostana 2 as a spiritual successor to the 2008 romantic comedy, which starred Abhishek Bachchan, John Abraham and Priyanka Chopra. The sequel was initially expected to feature Kartik Aaryan, Janhvi Kapoor and Lakshya in lead roles, with Collin D'Cunha attached as director.

At the time, the film generated strong buzz. The original Dostana had become popular for its comedy, music and stylish treatment, and there was curiosity around how Dharma would update the franchise for a new generation. The sequel was expected to offer a contemporary take on relationships, identity and modern romance with younger faces at the centre.

The project reportedly entered pre-production and even began limited filming before the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted schedules across the film industry.

**Kartik Aaryan's Exit Became The Film's First Big Setback**

The biggest blow came in April 2021, when Dharma Productions announced that Kartik Aaryan would no longer be part of the film. In its statement, the production house said that due to "professional circumstances," the team had decided to maintain "a dignified silence" and recast the film.

## Sidharth Malhotra Wishes 'Vvanderful' Birthday To Ekta Kapoor, Sends Love And Hug



Sidharth Malhotra and Tamannaah Bhatia are coming together in folk thriller, Vvan. The film is all set to release in August this year and will be produced by Ekta Kapoor. And today, Sidharth wished her a happy birthday with a photo. He also wrote a sweet note.

Taking to his Instagram stories, Sidharth Malhotra shared the photo and wrote, "Happy birthday @ektarkapoor! Wishing you a vvan-derful year ahead! Big love and hug." Speaking about his experience working with Ekta Kapoor, Sidharth Malhotra expressed deep admiration for her hands-on approach and storytelling prowess. "I have never had a producer who could narrate the film to me from start to finish," he shared. "The amount of hard work that she has put into this film, along with this prolific team, is truly commendable. But because I've known her the longest, I have to say I am most excited about my project."

**Vvan New Release Date Announced**  
Recently, Trade Analyst Tam Adarsh took to his X handle and announced the news, "EKTA R KAPOOR - TVF JOIN FORCES: SIDHARTH MALHOTRA - TAMANNAAH BHATIA STARRER 'VVAN' RELEASE DATE LOCKED... 28 Aug 2026 [#RakshaBandhan] is the release date of #Vvan, a folklore-driven thriller. Stars #SidharthMalhotra and #TamannaahBhatia. Produced by #BalajiMotionPictures in association with #TVF, the film is directed by #ArunabhKumar and #DeepakMishra."

About the film  
Vvan: Force of the Forest is generating significant buzz as it brings together Sidharth Malhotra and Tamannaah Bhatia in a gripping tale set against the backdrop of an ancient forest. Set in the dense, mythical heartlands of Central India, VVAN is rooted in Indian folklore and is being shot in real forest locations to ensure authenticity and depth. Directed by Deepak Mishra and Arunabh Kumar, and produced by Shobha Kapoor, Ekta R Kapoor and Arunabh Kumar, the film is a joint production venture of Balaji Motion Pictures and The Viral Fever (TVF).

# Shilpa Shetty

## Says Her Kids Have Never Seen Her On Big Screen: 'I Want To Do A Theatrical Release Film'

Shilpa Shetty has expressed her desire to return to the big screen with a full theatrical release, saying she wants her children Samisha and Viaan to experience watching her films in cinemas rather than only on digital platforms. The actress shared that her children have never seen her on the big screen. While her son did watch her 2023 film Sukhee, she noted that it was screened in a preview theatre.

want to do because I've been there, done that for a very long time. I want to justify it when I'm seen on screen," she said. She further explained why she is aiming for a theatrical release next. "My children haven't seen me in a theatre. That's why I want to do a film that gets a theatrical release. My son watched Sukhee in 2023, but it was in a preview theatre. I hope I get something that's like the films we used to make earlier," Shilpa said.

She further added, "I've had to hedge my bets and decide what's important for me. Sukhee released at a time when we didn't get enough theatres. It was such a disservice to the movie. But OTT is a great platform because people can discover a film at their own time. Now I'm aiming for a film with a theatrical release, so my kids can watch me on screen."

She said that while she is aiming for a theatrical release, the length of her role has never been the criteria for her. "There have been instances where I've said no, and my reasons were totally justified — they were mine. There are some very big films I've said no to, but that's between me and the producer. Why should I speak about it? I never ever regret my decisions," she said.



### Shilpa Shetty: 'My Children Haven't Seen Me On Big Screen'

In a conversation with Hindustan Times, Shilpa Shetty said that she is now hoping to be part of a project that gets a theatrical release. For her, the motivation is deeply personal as she wants her children to see her work on the big screen.

"I don't want to compromise too much on what I



NEWS BOX

World conflicts hit peak in 2025

**OSLO. (Agency)**  
The world saw the highest number of state conflicts since the Second World War in 2025, a Norwegian study said on Tuesday, warning of a surge in attacks targeting civilians. The annual "Conflict Trends" report from the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) said 65 conflicts involving at least one state were recorded worldwide last year, a new high since 1946. Conflicts between states also hit a new 80-year peak, doubling from the year before to eight -- including border clashes between India and Pakistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Cambodia and Thailand, as well as Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Israeli military operations against Syria. "Unfortunately there is not a lot of positive things," researcher Siri Aas Rustad told a group of media outlets, including AFP. "Usually I'm able to sort of squeeze something positive out of it, but this year it's shocking, the numbers." Last year was the third deadliest since the end of the Cold War, with around 245,000 deaths directly related to fighting or political violence -- nearly 76,500 of them attributed to attacks directly targeting civilians, compared with 14,200 in 2024. The sharp increase in civilian deaths is due to the conflict between the army and paramilitaries in Sudan, where the siege and massacres carried out in El-Fasher city in the Darfur region are estimated to have left some 60,000 people dead. Since the end of the Cold War, only 1994 and 2021 have seen more bloodshed, due to the Rwanda genocide and the war in Ethiopia's Tigray region respectively. Africa worst affected  
"What has happened in the past five or six years is that we have several big conflicts going on at the same time and they seem to take over from each other. The world doesn't get any break," Rustad said.  
"And that's different from previously -- this continuous high intensity level of conflict globally."

US appeals court raises concerns about Alabama's use of nitrogen gas for executions

**MONTGOMERY. (Agency)**  
Alabama's use of nitrogen gas to put people to death needs more study of whether it violates a constitutional ban on cruel and unusual punishment, a federal appeals court decided Monday.  
The state first used nitrogen for capital punishment in 2024, and the ruling could upend Alabama's next scheduled execution on Thursday. The method involves strapping a respirator to the person's face and replacing breathable air with pure nitrogen, causing death from lack of oxygen. The three-judge panel on Monday night reversed a judge's May finding that the nitrogen method does not violate the U.S. Constitution's ban on cruel and unusual punishment and remanded the case for additional consideration.  
The ruling came in a lawsuit filed last year by Jeffery Lee, a man on death row who is scheduled to be executed with nitrogen on Thursday at a south Alabama prison. The panel stopped short of staying Lee's planned execution. However, the panel asked the judge to consider whether his proposed alternative of a firing squad was feasible. The U.S. Supreme Court requires a two-prong test for people challenging the constitutionality of an execution method. They must show the method provides a substantial risk of superadded pain and that a feasible alternative method is available. The appeals court said Lee met the first test but sent it back to the trial court to consider the second. The appeals panel raised concerns about the nitrogen method and how long it might take the subject to lose awareness.

Sweden set to ban mobile phones in schools, joining trend of shelving screens for students

**MALMÖ. (Agency)**  
Long championed as a leader in adopting digital technology, Sweden is set to ban mobile phones in schools beginning in the fall for the next academic year as part of a broad, international reversal on the use of screens in classrooms. Since 2023, the Scandinavian country's center-right coalition government has pursued a policy prioritizing more reading time and less screen time, particularly among preschool students, by favoring books and other traditional learning tools. Lawmaker Joar Forsell, chairperson of the Swedish parliament's education committee, said officials have seen a decline in the general ability to read and write in Sweden, especially among younger students. "We're rolling the screens back because we believe that books and more traditional ways of learning are better for kids," Forsell said. Sweden's plans are part of a broader shift and a digital reckoning against smartphones in schools internationally after countries outfitted their campuses with laptops, tablets and learning apps for their students. Classrooms have become saturated with screens and a growing number of parents, teachers and school districts say it is time to scale back. In the Nordics, Denmark looks set to implement a similar ban to Sweden, and a law restricting use of mobile devices in schools in Finland came into effect last August. Other countries from Spain to South Korea have taken a variety of steps that range from a ban of mobile phones in classrooms to limits on screen-based homework. The Los Angeles Unified School District, the second-largest school district in the U.S., has said it will ban screens until second grade, require daily caps for screen time per grade, ban YouTube and require an audit of all education technology contracts. Backing away from screens Tech-savvy Sweden, which is home to music streamer Spotify and telecoms giant Ericsson, has one of the most digitally advanced education systems in the world. But the mobile ban aims to foster learning environments with fewer distractions by building on restrictions on phones already

In 'final throes' of reaching West Asia peace deal, claims Trump

**WASHINGTON. (Agency)**  
US President Donald Trump said Tuesday that negotiators were in the "final throes" of talks for a peace deal in West Asia, after Iran and Israel halted fresh hostilities that threatened to reignite the months-long war. Trump has repeatedly said that a peace agreement with Tehran is imminent, but diplomacy has stalled and the two sides have traded fire despite a ceasefire in place since April 8. Iran and Israel "were going back and forth and now they both agreed through me to stop and we're in the final throes of what will be a very, very good deal," the US leader told reporters on his return from an NBA Finals game. Asked whether it would be matter of days or weeks, he said it would take "two or three days". Tehran has repeatedly stated any deal should include Lebanon -- where Israel has been pressing its war with Iran-backed Hezbollah -- and fired missiles at Israel on Sunday. That prompted Israeli retaliation, despite US pressure for restraint. Iran fired another salvo before announcing it was ceasing military action, and hours later Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that the "fire on that front is contained". Tehran said on Monday it would attack again if Israel persisted with its strikes in Lebanon, while Netanyahu warned in turn that should Iran "make the mistake of

resuming attacks against us, we will respond with full force". Earlier, Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz insisted that the campaign in Lebanon would carry on regardless and said Israel would strike the Hezbollah-dominated southern suburbs of Beirut in retaliation for each attack on northern Israel by the militant group. Trump, who has reportedly grown increasingly exasperated with Netanyahu, had earlier urged both sides to stop "shooting" and said that "final negotiations" towards peace would proceed "subject to ignorance or stupidity getting in its way". The Israeli premier, though, said in a televised statement he had told Trump that "Israel has a full right to self-defence, and we are exercising it as required". According to Axios, Israel was preparing for a major wave of strikes on Iran before Trump personally called Netanyahu and urged him to stop. "I said, 'Bibi, you better be careful, or you will be on your own very soon,'" Trump told Axios. US Vice President JD Vance told Fox News on Monday that while the United States and Israel shared interests, their positions did not always align. "The Israelis

and the United States, we have a lot of shared interests," Vance said. "But we also have some situations where our interests diverge." Deadly strikes in LebanonIran fired nearly 30 missiles at Israel, according to the Israeli military, while Israel struck military sites in the Islamic republic. No casualties were reported in either Iran or Israel following the

some intercepted and another landing near soldiers without causing casualties. Calm in Tehran  
Despite fears of renewed conflict, Tehran appeared relatively calm on Monday, with the city's cafe terraces crowded. Traffic was lighter than usual for a weekday and queues formed at petrol stations. Maryam, 41, an accountant, described "a sense of uncertainty and confusion." "You don't know if there's going to be a war, nor do you know if the peace agreement will last," she said. In Israel's Tel Aviv, meanwhile, residents again headed to shelters as sirens sounded. I hope it will be short, but you can never know," said Jonathan Ariel, 30. "Last time we thought it would be short and then it was a month," he said. Iranian media reported early Tuesday that Tehran's international airport -- closed during the missile exchanges -- had reopened, allowing flights carrying hajj pilgrims from Saudi Arabia to land. The conflict has severely disrupted shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, while Washington has imposed a blockade on Iranian ports. Oil prices were down Tuesday after spiking more than five percent early the previous day, before paring their gains.

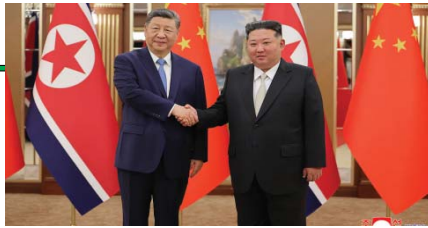


Xi and Kim push for greater ties between China and North Korea

Reports imply that the summit produced outcomes both leaders could portray as gains; Xi reaffirms influence on North Korea and Kim wins some economic and political benefits.

**SEOUL. (Agency)**  
Chinese President Xi Jinping and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un underscored their commitment to deepen cooperation and rebuild their complicated traditional alliance, as Xi is on a rare visit to Pyongyang in a likely attempt to reassert Beijing's unique influence over its socialist neighbour. It's extremely difficult to independently verify reports released by state-controlled media outlets of North Korea and China. But their dispatches on the meeting touted a joint push for greater cooperation while not mentioning North Korea's banned

pursuit of nuclear weapons. This implies the summit produced outcomes both leaders could portray as gains; Xi reaffirms influence on North Korea and Kim wins some economic and political benefits. It was Xi's first visit to North



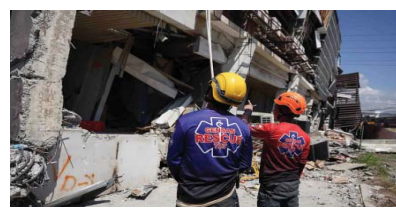
Korea in seven years. Xi and Kim last met in Beijing in September after viewing a military parade alongside Russian President Vladimir Putin and other foreign leaders. Xi was given pomp-filled, extravagant welcome ceremony upon arrival at Pyongyang's international airport on Monday. Xi and his wife Peng Liyuan were greeted by

Kim and his wife Ri Sol Ju, who broadly smiled and clapped. Xi later arrived at Pyongyang's main square, where a military honor guard and thousands of people, including children carrying balloons and hopping, staged a welcoming ceremony. Buildings surrounding the plaza were draped in the two countries' flags, giant portraits of Kim and Xi and red-and-yellow banners welcoming the Chinese leader and celebrating the nations' "friendship and unity." Kim calls North Korea-China ties 'most important'  
In a summit later Monday, Xi expressed China's willingness to expand cooperation in a wide range of areas including trade, agriculture, construction and technology. China's state broadcaster CCTV said in an online report. Xi said the two countries should strengthen strategic cooperation and firmly safeguard their respective sovereignty and security interests, according to the report.

20,000 people displaced by the Philippine earthquake that killed at least 37

**GENERAL SANTOS. (Agency)**  
Rescuers searched ruined buildings in the southern Philippines on Tuesday to ensure no one was still trapped a day after one of the strongest earthquakes to hit the country in a half-century killed at least 37 people and displaced more than 20,000. Only four people were considered missing on official records in the southern provinces near where the 7.8 magnitude quake struck Monday morning, but the Office of Civil Defense acknowledged several collapsed and heavily damaged buildings must be thoroughly inspected for possible survivors or casualties. The earthquake centered off Mindanao, the second most populous Philippine island, injured nearly 500 people and displaced more than 20,000, most of whom fled to emergency shelters. Many people who left their homes feared a tsunami. Waves up to 1.4-meter (4.6-foot) above tide level were measured in the Philippines, but the only tsunami damage reported was to six

shanties on stilts in a coastal village. Smaller waves washed ashore in Indonesia and Palau and as far away as southern Japan. Landslides and building collapses caused several deaths. The



earthquake left a trail of destruction, including in General Santos, a lively coastal city of more than 700,000 people known as the country's tuna capital, where at least 13 people were killed in collapsed buildings and due to falling debris. At least 18 died in Sarangani province mostly in a landslide that buried houses in the mountainside town of Glan, according to Rafaelito

Alejandro of the Office of Civil Defense. The other deaths were reported in the southern provinces of South Cotabato and Davao Occidental, and on Balut Island, disaster-response officials said. About 2,000 houses and 117 government buildings and facilities were damaged in several provinces, according to an initial government damage assessment. The international airport in General Santos remained shut, forcing the cancellation of 63 domestic flights except for those on humanitarian mission. About 6,000 public school buildings in quake-hit provinces must be assessed before classes can resume. The quake struck on the first day of classes nationwide after a two-month summer break and many who sustained injuries were young students who had gathered with excitement for morning flag-raising ceremonies. Authorities have warned that buildings that sustained cracks could collapse due to aftershocks, some of them dangerously powerful.



and Afghanistan continues to guide their modern-day relationship. "The proud people of Afghanistan have endured much in this century, and the Government of India will continue to stand for peace and stability in order to foster development in the country," he said. He also noted that India's capacity-building and humanitarian assistance initiatives for the Afghan people are present in all 34 provinces and across more than 500 development partnership projects. "Visits to India by Afghan ministers last year have ensured necessary planning and coordination so that our support reaches the intended beneficiaries. Generations of Afghans, having suffered years of active hostility, are now suffering neglect from the international community," he said.

Protesters, police clash in Bolivia after president signs law enabling a harsher crackdown

The renewed clashes erupted after President Paz signed a measure that could pave the way for a hard-line government crackdown on the demonstrations that have roiled Bolivia over the past five weeks.

**LA PAZ. (Agency)**  
Protesters in Bolivia demanding the resignation of conservative President Rodrigo Paz hurled firecrackers, stones and sticks at police who responded with tear gas on Monday, leading to dozens of arrests as road blockades continue to paralyze the Andean nation. The renewed clashes in the central city of Cochabamba erupted after President Paz signed a measure that could pave the way for a hard-line government crackdown on the demonstrations that have roiled Bolivia over the past five weeks, disrupting transportation and causing shortages of food, fuel and medical supplies. Bolivia's national workers' union,

peasant farmers and Indigenous groups from the highlands -- outraged over Paz's scrapping of fuel subsidies and frustrated with his failure in the last seven months to resolve Bolivia's persistent economic problems -- have set up 90 blockades on key routes nationwide, effectively isolating major cities, especially La Paz, the seat of government and neighboring El Alto. Battered by rising inflation and low wages, many protesters accuse Paz of neglecting them since they helped vote him into office. A report released over the weekend by the independent public ombudsman said that, from May 1 to June 2, the unrest resulted in 10 deaths, 37 injuries and 365 arrests. The government says seven of the deaths were caused by a lack of medical attention, but that all incidents are being investigated. Paz has tried to negotiate with the protesters and urged restraint in the use of police force against them. But demonstrators have largely refused to sit down with the president and continue to demand nothing short of his



resignation just seven months after he took office. His election last year ended nearly 20 years of uninterrupted rule by Bolivia's Movement Toward Socialism, or MAS, the party founded by charismatic ex-President Evo Morales. Pressure is growing on Paz to mount a more aggressive response to the unrest. On Monday, he signed legislation that eases the government's ability to impose a state of emergency that would suspend constitutional rights and empower the

military to restore order and clear the blockades. But for a state of emergency to come into force, Paz must issue a separate decree. It's unclear whether he'll decide to do so, as violent military crackdowns on protests have toppled Bolivian presidents before. "This law is to protect the majority of the country that is instigating the protests," Paz said in a national address after signing the law. "I extend my hand to the social organizations that have legitimate demands and reiterate my willingness to engage in dialogue." After his speech, crowds stormed a public transport union office in El Alto as tensions surged over fuel shortages, leading to at least 28 arrests, police said. Clashes engulfed the central city of Cochabamba, where protesting farmers attempted to cut off a bridge that connects the region to the west of the country. Police detained 23 people as they sprayed tear gas to disperse demonstrators throwing stones and dynamite.