



## Third Indian ship incident reported in Oman in 3 days, last 2 were struck by US

The Indian Embassy in Oman said it is monitoring a vessel incident off Shinas port and coordinating with local authorities. The report came a day after three Indian seafarers were confirmed dead in another strike, intensifying concern over shipping safety in the Gulf.

**New Delhi (Agency)**  
A fresh vessel incident has been reported off the coast of Oman, prompting the Indian Embassy in Muscat to closely monitor the situation amid heightened concerns over maritime security in the region. In a post on X on Thursday, the embassy said it had received information about an incident involving a vessel off Shinas port and was coordinating with local authorities to gather more details. "We have learnt of an incident involving a vessel off Shinas port of Oman, earlier today. We are closely monitoring the situation and

coordinating with the local authorities for further details," the embassy said. Multiple reports identified the vessel as MT Jalveer. However, authorities have not yet officially disclosed the nature of the incident, the extent of any damage, or whether there were casualties.

The development marks the third vessel-related incident reported off Oman in the past three days. The first involved MT Marivex on June 8, when a fire broke out aboard the tanker



following what maritime security sources described as a suspected strike. All 24 Indian crew members on board were

reported safe. The second incident occurred on June 10, when the tanker MT Settebello came under attack in the Gulf of Oman. The vessel was carrying 24 Indian crew members. While 21 were rescued, three Indian seafarers who initially went missing were later confirmed dead, according to Union Shipping Minister Sarbananda Sonowal. The Settebello strike triggered a sharp diplomatic response from New Delhi. India summoned the senior-most US diplomat in the country and lodged a strong

protest over the attack. The Ministry of External Affairs condemned the strike and expressed concern over the safety of Indian nationals aboard the vessel. The United States later said its military had carried out a "precision" strike on the tanker after it allegedly failed to comply with instructions from American forces. US Central Command said the action was part of its ongoing maritime operations targeting Iranian oil shipments. With details about the MT Jalveer incident still emerging, the Indian Embassy said it remains in touch with Omani authorities and is closely tracking developments.

## Did DCP Rajdeep Singh Nakum Act Beyond Authority?

### Questions Mount Over Surat Demolition Drive

**Mahanagar Metro Desk / Pawan Makan Nadiad, Gujarat:** Surat: The demolition operation carried out on May 29 and 30 in Surat's Nasirnagar area has triggered a major controversy, raising serious questions about administrative accountability and the role of law enforcement agencies. With heavy police deployment accompanying the demolition of slum dwellings, the incident has become a subject of intense political and public debate. The controversy deepened after discussions emerged in local political circles regarding the role of DCP Rajdeep Singh Nakum in the operation. Critics and activists are questioning under whose authority the large-scale demolition was conducted and whether proper legal procedures were followed. Prominent social activist and political leader Aslam Bicycleman strongly criticized the operation, drawing comparisons with the colonial-era actions of General Dyer. He alleged that poor residents were displaced without adequate notice and that their belongings were thrown onto the streets during the drive. According to activists, the key concern is whether the affected families were given sufficient prior warning and whether due process was observed before the demolition was carried out. The controversy took a dramatic turn after officials of the Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) reportedly clarified that no official demolition order had been issued by



the civic body for the operation in question. If the municipal corporation did not authorize the demolition, who ordered the operation? Under what authority was a large police force deployed? Which department was responsible for executing the action? These questions have intensified scrutiny of the entire

episode. The matter has sparked demands for an independent and high-level inquiry into the events of May 29-30. Critics argue that if procedural violations occurred, accountability must be fixed regardless of the rank of officials involved. If no official municipal order existed, under which legal provisions was police pro-

tection provided during the operation? Was the administrative machinery used in a manner inconsistent with established procedures? Should an independent investigation examine the decision-making process behind the demolition? As political pressure builds and public debate intensifies, the Nasirnagar demolition controversy is expected to remain a significant issue in Gujarat's administrative and political landscape in the coming days. This report reflects allegations, questions, and statements attributed to activists and public discussions surrounding the incident. Any conclusions regarding responsibility would depend on official investigations and verified findings. This controversy is no longer just about a demolition drive in Nasirnagar; it has become a larger question of accountability, authority, and the rule of law. If the Surat Municipal Corporation maintains that no official demolition order was issued, and under whose instructions was such a massive police deployment carried out? Until these questions are answered, public suspicion and political scrutiny are unlikely to fade. Attention is now turning toward Gandhinagar, where many are demanding an impartial and high-level investigation. One thing is certain: the truth behind this episode may be buried beneath layers of bureaucracy and conflicting claims, but the demand for answers is only growing louder.

## "I Am Where I Am...": Babul Supriyo's Cryptic Post As Trinamool, Rebels Spar

**New Delhi (Agency)**  
The Trinamool Congress appears to be bleeding legislators after losing to the BJP in the April-May Bengal election. Mamata Banerjee's party - which dominated the state for 15 years, sweeping over 180 of its 294 seats in each of the past three polls - won just 80, and has been scrambling to stop an exodus of top leaders, including 20 of its 28 members of parliament. Actor Satabdi Roy and physician Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar - both given their political breaks by Banerjee - are in that group. Roy told NDTV the MPs will align with the BJP-led bloc, a swap that will have a seismic impact on the Bengal political landscape. On Tuesday the Trinamool's Rajya Sabha MP, Babul Supriyo - once the BJP's poster boy for

Bengal - responded to speculation he might join that group with a long Facebook post. Supriyo, 55, declared himself "tired of media calls asking me which side I am on" question and said: "I am exactly where I am - with the Party & Leader I am!!" But the popular singer also acknowledged the BJP's "overwhelming mandate" - something Banerjee and her loyalists have refused to do so far, insisting the election had been manipulated to ensure a win for the party. "I shall work with Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari and use my MPLAD (i.e., the Rs 5 crore funds given to MPs for their constituency)," he said. The olive branch to Adhikari and the BJP, as well as a positive reference to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, have been seen as Supriyo trying to re-



build bridges with his ex-employer. The apparent jibe to rivals within the Trinamool seemed to reinforce that assumption; "... many within my own party were brutal to me for the 'jhalhuri episode'," he said, referring to 2015, when Supriyo was a BJP MP and union minister,

but shared a plate of the snack with Banerjee. "... but I got work done in Asansol (Supriyo won the Asansol Lok Sabha seat in 2014 and 2019) and restarted, or resolved, 90 per cent of the problems of the east-west Metro," he said. But then Supriyo concluded his post with another dose of confusion, this time appearing to jab Trinamool MPs over their decision to jump ship after the party's heavy poll defeat. Recalling his 'orange peepul tree' jibe - a phrase he used to mock politicians switching loyalties to join the BJP - he said: "I have nothing personal against anyone... everyone has the right to decide for themselves. (But) I find it amusing and hilarious that ALL of them want to attain 'enlightenment' under a huge orange peepul tree, ON or AFTER the evening.

**Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha MP Babul Supriyo criticises corruption within the Mamata Banerjee-led party and hints at political shifts, but denies plans to join the Bharatiya Janata Party or leave Bengal soon.**

## News box

## Families of inmates to get legal, welfare, psychological aid

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Families of jail inmates struggling financially, facing psychological distress or difficulties in accessing govt welfare schemes can now seek assistance from the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA). The initiative aims to strengthen support systems for families and facilitate a smoother reintegration of prisoners into society after their release. Under the programme, families of inmates nearing completion of their sentences as well as undertrials who have spent more than a year in jail will be eligible for support. The DLSA will provide legal, educational, social, psychological and welfare assistance to dependents of prisoners. Nisha, chief judicial magistrate-cum-secretary, DLSA Gurgaon, said an initiative was launched for the effective implementation of the SPRUHA Scheme, 2025 (Supporting Potential and Resilience of the Unseen, Held-back and Affected). "The jail administration has been requested to facilitate interaction between inmates and DLSA officials, panel advocates and para-legal volunteers so that eligible beneficiaries can be identified and linked with various welfare measures. Special focus will be given to children, women, senior citizens, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable dependents of inmates," Nisha said. Narender Sura, district and sessions judge-cum-chairman, DLSA Gurgaon, said access to justice is not confined to courtrooms, and families of inmates should not be deprived of their legal rights and welfare entitlements because of circumstances beyond their control. And Jyoti Hospital was also terminated recently.

## Dust storm lashes Gurgaon after hot day, thunderstorms and rain likely over next four days

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Strong dust-laden winds swept across the city on Tuesday evening, reducing visibility in several areas and prompting weather warnings from India Meteorological Department (IMD), which has forecast thunderstorms, lightning and gusty winds across parts of Haryana over the next four to five days. Around 5pm, residents from several parts of the city reported strong winds accompanied by dust clouds that engulfed roads and open spaces. The gusts swept through residential sectors and arterial roads, creating a loud howling sound, residents said. Some parts of the city also witnessed a faint drizzle. The sudden change in weather followed a hot and dry day. According to IMD, the city recorded a maximum temperature of 43.1 degrees Celsius at the NorthCap University observatory and 42.1 degrees Celsius at the Gurgaon AWS station on Tuesday. The minimum temperature was 24 degrees Celsius, around 3 degrees below normal. IMD had issued a nowcast for Tuesday, warning of thunderstorms accompanied by lightning, gusty winds and brief spells of rain in parts of Haryana, including Gurgaon. Wind speeds were forecast to range between 40 kmph and 60 kmph, with isolated areas likely to witness stronger gusts of 60-80 kmph and hail. Private weather forecaster Navdeep Dhaiya said heat-induced thunderstorms developing over central Haryana were moving towards Delhi-NCR and were expected to affect Gurgaon during the evening. Residents reported swaying trees, flying debris and reduced visibility on several stretches. The dust storm also brought temporary relief from the intense heat that had gripped the city over the past week. IMD has placed several districts under yellow and orange alerts till June 13, with wind speeds of up to 50-60 kmph expected during thunderstorm activity.

## Alert driver brakes in time and saves child, ends up being assaulted by family

Noida.(Agency)

A car driver was assaulted by a couple in Sector 17 after their child suddenly came in front of his car. While he promptly applied the brakes and prevented the child from being hit, the parents accused the driver of endangering the kid, beat him up and damaged his car. Police are trying to identify and arrest those involved. According to the police, the incident occurred on Monday outside the JJ Colony in Sector 17. The child unexpectedly ran onto the road and came directly in front of the vehicle. The driver swiftly applied emergency brakes and stopped the car from hitting the child. The child did not suffer any injuries in the incident. However, tensions escalated immediately after the incident. Family members of the child, who were present nearby, allegedly became enraged and confronted the driver. The situation soon turned violent, with the relatives assaulting him and causing



damage to the vehicle. During the altercation, the car's window was smashed and the driver sustained minor injuries. A police team from the Sector 20 police station rushed to the spot and dispersed the crowd. The injured driver was taken to a nearby hospital for medical treatment. Subsequently, a case was filed under sections 115 (voluntarily causing hurt), 324 (mischievous), 352 (intentional insult) and 351(3) (criminal intimidation) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Meanwhile, a 37-second video of the incident was shared on various social media platforms. The footage shows the damaged car parked on the roadside near the DND stretch, with a crowd gathered around the vehicle.

## RWAs directed to clean and test rainwater harvesting systems before monsoon, run mock drills

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

Haryana's principal advisor for urban development, DS Dhese, on Tuesday directed housing societies to clean, maintain and test rainwater harvesting systems and check their stormwater runoff capacity. During a review meeting with facility managers from group housing societies, GMDA officials, the irrigation department and the district town planning department, Dhese asked RWA representatives to address any deficiencies in their rainwater harvesting infrastructure and ensure that recharge pits and associated structures are free from silt and other obstructions so that rainwater can percolate efficiently into the ground. Representatives from over 3 resident associations were directed to channelise rooftop runoff into rainwater harvesting pits to maximise utilisation of the installed infrastructure and enhance groundwater recharge. "The effective functioning of rainwater harvesting systems within residential

complexes could help curb the discharge of excess rainwater onto city roads and contribute towards the city's overall monsoon resilience," Dhese said. To assess the operational readiness of the systems, RWAs were instructed to carry out mock drills by releasing water into the pits and observing whether the structures facilitate proper infiltration. The exercise, officials said, would help identify bottlenecks and allow corrective action before the onset of the monsoon. Hydrologist Dalvir Rana said, "A properly designed and maintained rainwater harvesting system has the potential to facilitate infiltration of nearly 25 litres of water per second, reducing surface runoff and easing pressure on the city's stormwater drainage network." This



irrigation department and hydrologists would be conducted in a selected group housing society to demonstrate the process and establish a standard operating practice that can be replicated by other RWAs," district town planner, GMDA, RS Batth said. "Most group housing societies are now taking the issue seriously and are working to ensure that their rainwater harvesting systems remain functional before the monsoon. While these systems may not completely eliminate waterlogging, they can certainly help in groundwater recharge if they are properly maintained. In our society, we have 29 rainwater harvesting pits. Following the previous meetings, we undertook their cleaning, desilting and maintenance work, and they are now ready for the rainy season," said Mayank Tiwari, secretary of Tata Primanti in Sector 72.

## Patriotism and Public Service to Echo Across Rajasthan on June 24

## Massive Welfare Campaigns Planned on Bhanwar Singh Palada's Birthday

**Mahanagar Metro Desk Beawar:** The Akhil Bharat Hindu Kranti Sena has announced that June 24, the birth anniversary of its National Patron Bhanwar Singh Palada, will be observed across Rajasthan as "Rashtra Samarpan Evam Seva Sankalp Diwas" (National Dedication and Service Day). Special programs will be organized at the district, tehsil, and village levels throughout the state. According to organization leaders, thousands of volunteers and workers will participate in public welfare and nation-building activities to spread the message of service and social responsibility. Planned initiatives include blood donation camps, tree plantation drives, cow

protection and welfare activities, water distribution services, food assistance for underprivileged families, installation of water pots for birds, cleanliness campaigns at religious places, and awareness programs promoting patriotism and Sanatan cultural values among youth. The organization stated that Bhanwar Singh Palada's life has been dedicated to the ideals of nationalism, social service, and cultural values. Under his guidance and leadership, the organization has actively participated in various social and public welfare initiatives across the region. Inspired by these ideals, members will celebrate his birthday not merely as a commemorative occasion but as a

large-scale campaign of service, dedication, and community engagement. Preparations for the statewide events have already begun, with local units intensifying coordination efforts and public outreach campaigns. Enthusiasm among workers and supporters is said to be high, with plans underway to make the occasion a landmark event. With the resolve of "Nation First, Society Above All," the organization aims to spread the message of service, values, and patriotism to every corner of Rajasthan on June 24 through a series of meaningful and community-oriented activities.



## Ahmedabad Smart City Mission Gets Media Support

## High-Level Meeting Held Between Group Editor Pawan Makan and AMC Leadership



Mahanagar Metro Desk

**Ahmedabad:** In a significant step towards accelerating Ahmedabad's Smart City Mission and strengthening collaboration between the media and civic administration, a high-level meeting was held at the Municipal Commissioner's Office in Ahmedabad. The discussion focused on enhancing urban development initiatives and ensuring the effective implementation of key public welfare projects across the city. During the meeting, Pawan Makan, Group Editor of CN24 News Channel, Pakko Gujarat News, and Mahanagar Metro News, met with senior office-bearers of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC). The meeting was attended by Ahmedabad Mayor Hitesh Barot, Deputy Mayor Anju Shah, and Standing Committee Chairman Kamlesh Patel. Discussions centered on the city's future development roadmap and measures aimed at improving civic infrastructure and public services. Focus on Smart City Projects and Urban Development The deliberations covered several critical areas, including infrastructure development, traffic management, smart public transportation, and green energy initiatives. Particular emphasis was placed on the timely and transparent execution of projects being undertaken under the Ahmedabad Smart City Mission. Representatives highlighted the importance of ensuring that citizens receive es-



sential services efficiently and without inconvenience. The need for greater public engagement, accountability, and effective project monitoring was also discussed during the interaction. Commitment to Collaborative Development Speaking after the meeting, Group Editor Pawan Makan stated that Ahmedabad is a city of pride and immense potential. He emphasized that media organizations have a dual responsibility—not only to highlight public concerns but also to encourage and support constructive governance and development initiatives. He noted that collaborative efforts between civic authorities, citizens, and responsible media institutions can play a vital role in making Ahmedabad one of India's most advanced, livable, and citizen-friendly



smart cities. Appreciation for AMC Officials and Staff At the conclusion of the meeting, Pawan Makan expressed gratitude to the officers, engineers, and employees of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation for their dedication and continuous efforts in managing a rapidly growing metropolitan city. He acknowledged the round-the-clock work carried out by AMC personnel in maintaining urban services and supporting the city's ongoing transformation. Officials and media representatives expressed optimism that such constructive engagement would contribute positively to Ahmedabad's future growth, accelerate developmental projects, and enhance the quality of life for residents across the city.

# Complainant in POCSO FIR against Avimukteshwaranand does a U-turn: 'Was pressured into filing a fake case'

Accuses Mahant Ramchandra Das of hatching 'conspiracy', claims several officials also involved

**Lucknow. (Agency)**

Months after he lodged a case of sexual assault on two minors allegedly by Swami Avimukteshwaranand Saraswati and his associates during Magh Mela in Prayagraj, the complainant, Ashutosh Brahmachari, has claimed that he was misled and pressured into filing a fake case.

In a video statement, Brahmachari alleged, "The conspiracy to get a false case lodged against Avimukteshwaranand was hatched by Mahant Ramchandra Das (who he claimed lives in Chitrakoot ashram). I was pressured and misled by him. Several officials were also involved in this." "I have WhatsApp chats and phone call recordings of Das telling me how to lodge the case," he added. On February 21, the Prayagraj police had registered the case on charges of sexual

assault on minors hours after the Special Judge (POCSO) Act, Prayagraj, issued an order to file a case. While Das is the successor of spiritual leader Swami Rambhadracharya, Brahmachari is also a disciple of him. When contacted by The Indian Express if he would withdraw the FIR against Avimukteshwaranand, Brahmachari said, "We will hold discussion and take a decision on this soon." Both Avimukteshwaranand and Das belong to Pratapgarh district, Brahmachari claimed. Brahmachari went on to allege that Das may even get Swami Rambhadracharya murdered in an attempt to grab his ashram and other assets. Meanwhile, Rambhadracharya issued a statement, rejecting Brahmachari's claims and demanded legal action against him. He also claimed threat to his life from

Brahmachari. The FIR against Avimukteshwaranand, Mukundanand Brahmachari of Sheshnath Ashram, Badrinath Dham, Uttarakhand, and two-three unidentified persons was filed under Section 351 (3) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Sections 51, 6, 3, 4 (2), 16, 17 of the POCSO Act. In the FIR, the time of occurrence of offence is between January 13, 2025, and February 15 this year.

However, the accused secured anticipatory bail in the case from the Allahabad High Court on March 25. They face charges of aggravated penetrative sexual assault on a child under POCSO provisions for which the punishment ranges between 7 years to life imprisonment. Under the BNS section, the accused face charges of aggravated criminal intimidation.



## Short news

**PIL in Calcutta HC seeking stay on notice of demolition in Narkeldanga**



**Kolkata. (Agency)**

A public interest litigation (PIL) has been filed in Calcutta High Court seeking a stay on the notice regarding demolition of alleged unauthorised structures at Narkeldanga by Kolkata Municipal Corporation.

The PIL has been filed before the Division bench of Chief Justice Sujoy Paul and Justice Partha Sarathi Sen by local residents of Narkeldanga. The petition has been admitted and is likely to be heard on Thursday.

According to the petition, there was an allegation that unauthorised structures had mushroomed at Kosaipara off Narkeldanga, following which the Kolkata Municipal Corporation has issued a demolition notice.

The petitioner alleged that the KMC has already started demolishing some of the structures and issued notice on some of them. The petitioners who filed PIL in High Court claimed that the KMC was carrying out demolition without giving them any opportunity to air their viewpoints.

**Heritage will be visible from intersections to ponds in Kashi, with Mahakal pillars to be built on VIP routes**

**Varanasi. (Agency)**

The Varanasi Municipal Corporation has prepared a grand action plan to modernize the city while preserving its ancient and historical sites. The project outlay has been estimated at Rs 48.88 crore. This plan will not only strengthen the infrastructure at important religious sites, but also enhance its global identity by renovating public spaces in the traditional Banaras style.

City Municipal Commissioner Himanshu Nagpal stated that the beautification of 15 major intersections and crossroads in the city has begun with Mint House and Nadesar intersections. Heritage-style traffic booths and a large antique clock have been installed there, reflecting the ancient architecture of Banaras. In the first phase, the Kachari, Police Line, Sundarpur, and Bhikharipur intersections have been renovated at a cost of Rs 3.10 crore.

Furthermore, the VIP routes leading into the city from Babatpur Airport Road will be developed as a "spiritual gateway." Grand Mahakal pillars will welcome passersby along this route at a cost of Rs 2.35 crore. The Godaulia Road, stretching from Maidagin Square to Church Square, will be illuminated with heritage lighting at a cost of ₹3.98 crore, enhancing the grandeur of Kashi at night.

This master plan directly addresses the city's biggest problems: traffic and parking. A large, modern automated (sliding/puzzle) parking lot will be constructed in Samath, a major tourist destination, which will technologically enhance the city's traffic system. In addition, to manage the uncontrolled congestion near the Manikarnika Ghat, the cremation ground, plans are underway to streamline the local vegetable market and create a dedicated two-wheeler parking lot. In view of the huge crowd that gathers every year at Pisachmochan Kund, a major centre of religious faith, during Pitru Paksha, festivals and special pujas, the Municipal Corporation is going to make arrangements for toilets, pure drinking water and better accommodation at a cost of Rs 2.34 crore.

## Mohali mayoral poll exposes AAP-BJP's tacit understanding: Congress Councillors' leader Ranghi

**Congress leader Narpinder Singh Ranghi alleged that BJP councillors backed AAP candidates in the Mohali mayoral election, claiming the outcome exposed a hidden political understanding between the two parties.**

**Chandigarh. (Agency)**

Leader of the Congress Councillors' Group Narpinder Singh Ranghi on Wednesday alleged that the results of the mayoral election of the Mohali Municipal Corporation exposed a "tacit understanding" between the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). "BJP councillors openly backed AAP candidates during the mayoral election, indicating an underlying alliance between the two parties. As AAP portrays itself as a political opponent of the BJP in Punjab, seeking the BJP's support to capture power in Mohali exposes its double standards," he said.

The Congress leader further alleged that Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and other AAP leaders frequently criticise BJP

policies and governance, but rely on the same party when it suits their political interests. "The Mohali mayoral election has



clearly shown that AAP is functioning as the 'B-Team' of BJP," Ranghi claimed. He said AAP had come to power promising

transparency, accountability and principled politics, but had compromised those commitments in its pursuit of political power.

"The people now understand that the difference between AAP and BJP is confined to public statements, while in reality both parties are willing to work together for political convenience and mutual benefit," he added. Reiterating the Congress's stand, Ranghi said, "Congress has consistently upheld democratic values and safeguarded the interests of the people."

He added that Mohali residents were closely watching the political developments surrounding the mayoral election and would give an appropriate response at the right time."

## Caught on CCTV: Gym trainer shot dead in Haryana, attackers fire even after he falls

**Chandigarh. (Agency)**

A 25-year-old gym trainer was shot dead at point-blank range in Haryana's Hansi on Thursday morning, the police said, adding that his wife sustained pellet injuries in the attack. Kapil, the victim, was from a village in Jind. He had married Shikha just days ago, the police said, adding that it was an inter-caste marriage.

The incident occurred near Fountain Chowk around 6 am. A video of the incident shows two men arriving at the spot on a motorbike, wearing caps and masks. The pillion rider, who had a backpack, gets off the bike and opens fire. The rider also shoots at Kapil. The first few bullets hit Kapil in the head and upper body, and he collapses. The

attackers keep firing before speeding away on their motorbike.

At least six people exercising with Kapil on



the staircase witnessed the incident. "Kapil was holding a training session outside his gym in the morning. Two masked men

arrived there on a motorbike and opened fire at him. Shikha also sustained pellet injuries, although prima facie, it seems that she was not the target. The assailants sped away after firing around 10 rounds," a police officer on the investigation team said.

Deputy Superintendent of Police Vinod Shankar told the media that Kapil had been running the gym for the past three years and was his parents' only son. His family has denied that there were any objections to his inter-caste marriage. Police teams, including Crime Branch officials, reached the spot and began investigations. Forensic teams also inspected the site and collected evidence for further investigation.

## Teacher suspended days after she joined 'Cockroach Janta Party' protest in Delhi

**According to an order issued by the District Elementary Education Officer, Rohtak, on June 10, guest teacher Sulekha Dalal was placed under suspension with effect from June 8.**

**Chandigarh. (Agency)**

Days after a guest teacher from a government school in Rohtak participated in a protest organised by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) at Jantar Mantar in Delhi, the Haryana Education Department suspended her from service.

According to an order issued by the District Elementary Education Officer, Rohtak, on June 10, guest teacher Sulekha Dalal was placed under suspension with effect from June 8. The order stated that she would not be permitted to leave her headquarters without prior approval from the

competent authority, but did not specify the reasons for the action.

Dalal had come into the spotlight after a video of her speaking at the June 7 protest went viral online. In the clip, she is heard saying: "This is a fight; this time it is a fight of do or die. Now the mother of the cockroach has stepped into the field. We are with our children. One mother is the mother of the entire nation."

When contacted, Dalal said that she only spoke as a concerned parent. "I had just made a request being a mother whose son is also preparing for competitive exams," she said.



## Many colours in kaleidoscope of democracy

Shiv Visvanathan

Democracy is a political discourse built on the poetics of difference. Everything, from a cliché to a policy of monoculture, tends to defeat both diversity and democracy. A philosopher friend of mine remarked that while the slogan 'liberty, equality, fraternity' may be critical, it is not complete. It needs a second triangle: 'diversity, difference and dialogue'. To turn democracy into an everyday affair, of late, the logic of number has embodied an electoralism that has diminished the idea of difference. Electoral democracy has become a pursuit of majoritarianism and authoritarianism. Difference suddenly seems to have acquired a sense of impotence. But one has to emphasise that the difference provides both the identity and dynamics of democracy. Two stories illustrate the power of difference, the logic of variety. The first is about the scientist K S Krishnan, the first director of the National Physical Laboratory. I remember he had come home to visit my parents when I was 8. My younger sister sat regally on his lap in a pavada. Krishnan asked her quietly, "What colour is your pavada?" She quickly replied, "Red". He smiled and said, "Red is a convent school colour. Sivappu encompasses more nuances, more shades than the standard Indian red can visualise." He emphasised that when colour provided the gradient of difference, it came impregnated with multiple meanings. Standardising colour was not the answer to difference. Colour, in the sense, is not just a nominal difference. It implicates the social and adds a sense of responsibility. This was brought out brilliantly by the scientist CV Seshadri. He pointed out that obsolescence threatened diversity. That natural indigo disappeared with the emergence of the synthetic dye. But Seshadri showed how Uzamma and the Dastkar group reconstructed the original dye by working with craftsmen's memories. The dye, they explained, were a set of relationships, a way of work, of livelihood, and a life-world of relationships. The dye from memory became a reinvention. Colour added its own political implications. One wants to emphasise that both these anecdotes show the critical life-giving nature of difference and diversity. Difference creates a gradient of possibilities that makes new alternatives possible. It is in this context that one remembers the legend of Nikolai Vavilov, one of the pioneering scientists of genetic diversity. For Vavilov, diversity was both life-giving and critical. Stalin condemned him ideologically for it and sent him to a gulag, where he was tortured over 400 times. But in immaculate clerical style, his briefcase was sent back to his office. When his office staff opened it, they found a new set of plants that had never been classified. For democracy, thus, difference and diversity were not just formal properties but life-giving parts of evolution.

A second set of points on a more cultural angle was made by the Kannada author U R Ananthamurthy, who pointed out that translation mediated difference. The author pointed out an interesting riddle. A book like the Ramayana exists in over 300 variations. In fact, translation here expresses the poetics of difference and the geography of vernacular imaginations. The solution doesn't lie in producing a Tulsidas Ramayana. One must produce multiple Ramayanas to capture the differences. Ananthamurthy stated that's how the power of the vernacular and the local returns to story-telling. The standardised no longer expresses an affinity to truth. The second great emphasis on difference and diversity came from the logic of memory. Memory is not an item of the past. It is an inherent part of living rhythms in most cultures. Orality is still crucial today and memory can blind one. During the independence movement, Anand Coomaraswamy argued that Indian nationalism must fight a guerilla war against the museum.

## Fix ESIC, don't sell it

A revitalised employees' insurance scheme can become a model for broader social health protection in India

Ajit Ranade

THE latest Sample Registration System data should worry every policymaker. In 2024, nearly half of all recorded deaths in India occurred without medical attention from a trained professional. This is up from 18% in 2020. The proportion was even higher in rural India, and in states such as Bihar, it was close to two-thirds. These are not merely mortality statistics. They are a measure of how far formal healthcare remains from the lives of ordinary Indians. This is the background against which we must examine the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC). There is discussion about reforming it. Reform is overdue. But it must not become a coded word for privatisation, outsourcing or handing over a social security institution to private insurers and hospital chains. The ESIC is often misunderstood as just another health insurance scheme. It is much more than that. It is a social insurance system for low-income workers in the formal economy. It combines medical care with income protection. It covers sickness, maternity, disability, workplace injury, dependants' benefit, unemployment support and lifelong pension in cases of permanent disablement. For a worker earning Rs 15,000 a month, the annual contribution is about Rs 7,200, split between employer and employee. For that, the worker and family receive medical care without monetary ceilings, plus cash benefits that no ordinary private insurance product provides. Workplace injuries remain seriously under-reported and under-addressed. An ESIC system that ensures quick treatment, wage compensation, rehabilitation and disability support prevents injured workers from falling into poverty. It also helps them return to work sooner. Workers' health is productive capital. The scale is large. The ESIC covers about 3.84 crore insured persons and, with their families, nearly 14.91 crore beneficiaries — one-tenth of India's population. It has a large hospital network, medical colleges, land assets and a corpus exceeding Rs 1 lakh crore. It is one of the most under-used public social infrastructure assets. Its intellectual history is also worth recalling. Britain's National Health Service emerged from the Beveridge vision of social security. In India, Prof BP Adarkar designed a similar framework for industrial workers in the 1940s. The ESIC Act of 1948 came

from that vision. The NHS became a respected public institution. The ESIC, despite a similar foundation, has suffered from neglect, weak governance and poor user experience. That is a failure of execution. The weaknesses are real. Workers complain of queues, poor information, lack of medicines, slow referrals, indifferent staff and long delays in cash benefits. Safe in India (SII) Foundation's work with injured workers in Haryana and Maharashtra shows how serious the problem is. Among more than 8,000 injured workers, it assisted, 73% waited more than six months for temporary disability benefits and 78% waited more than a year for permanent disability benefits. In Manesar, many workers had to pay privately even for basic diagnostics such as ultrasounds.



But this is exactly why the ESIC needs repair, not surrender. The case for privatisation rests on attractive words: choice, efficiency, competition and scale. But for low-wage workers, "choice" is often illusory. Many workers are migrants, on short contracts, poorly informed and dependent on employers for registration. SII's experience shows that 16% of injured workers were registered with the ESIC only after an accident, and 64% received ESIC cards only after injury. Mandatory registration must be properly enforced. Nor can private insurance replicate the ESIC's benefit basket. A private family floater of Rs 5 lakh may cost Rs 15,000 to Rs 30,000 a year and usually covers only hospitalisation, with exclusions, waiting periods and sub-limits. It does not cover outpatient care, wage loss,

maternity wage replacement, disability pension or occupational disease. A worker disabled at 28 may need support for 40 years. A disease like silicosis may appear decades after exposure. These are not risks that private insurers will carry at affordable premiums. They require a statutory, mandatory, pooled system. Experience with private healthcare should also caution us. Even under publicly funded schemes, private providers can cherry-pick profitable cases, induce unnecessary procedures, dispute reimbursement rates and leave patients with out-of-pocket costs despite cashless promises. The reform agenda should be practical. First, simplify the worker-facing process. Accident reporting, claims, referrals, disability assessment and benefit-tracking must be redesigned around the worker. Second, publish enforceable service standards: claim-to-payment timelines, medicine availability, waiting time, referral turnaround and facility-wise performance. Third, strengthen primary care in every major industrial cluster so workers do not bypass the system out of frustration. Fourth, fix human resources: doctors, specialists, nurses, technicians and managers must be available where workers live and work. Fifth, deploy digital tools for appointments, health records, telemedicine and real-time claim tracking. But digital literacy should not become a new barrier. The ESIC must become more accountable to workers, and also employers, especially MSMEs. Its boards and state bodies need stronger representation of workers, including contract workers, along with employers, government and independent health experts. There should be independent performance audits, social audits, actuarial reviews and public dashboards. Employer compliance must be enforced: every worker should be registered, must receive an e-Pehchaan card and have accidents reported on time. The wage ceiling should be raised and indexed periodically to inflation. Coverage should extend to construction, gig and platform workers. The ESIC corpus must be used for workers' promised benefits and not diverted elsewhere. India's healthcare crisis is caused by too little effective public provision. When nearly half of all deaths occur without trained medical attention, the answer cannot be to weaken one of the few statutory systems meant for workers. The answer is to make it work. Fix the ESIC. Professionalise it. Make it transparent. Use private expertise where necessary, but on the ESIC's terms. Preserve the public character of the scheme. A revitalised ESIC can become a model for broader social health protection in India.

## Fault lines: INDIA bloc's search for relevance

Its central weakness is that it remains united largely by opposition to the BJP rather than by a shared governing vision

THE Monday meeting of the INDIA bloc was intended to project Opposition unity. Instead, it highlighted the challenges of holding together a coalition of parties with competing regional interests and political ambitions. The alliance faces the tough task of proving that it can offer a credible alternative to the BJP-led NDA. The meeting's decisions - including holding consultations more frequently, jointly raising concerns over the SIR of electoral rolls, seeking Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation over examination controversies and coordinating parliamentary strategy — reflect an effort to remain politically relevant. However, these issues alone cannot sustain a national coalition. The bloc's central weakness is that it remains united largely by opposition to the BJP rather than by a shared governing vision. While criticism of the ruling party can bring diverse groups together, voters eventually seek answers on employment, inflation,



agricultural distress, economic growth and federal contradictions are equally apparent. In West Bengal, the Congress and the Trinamool Congress are rivals. In Punjab, the Congress and the AAP compete fiercely. In Kerala, the Congress-led UDF and the CPI(M)-led LDF are political adversaries. Such state-level contests inevitably complicate national cooperation. While the presence of Mamata Banerjee and Akhilesh Yadav lent weight to the gathering, the absence of the DMK and AAP underscored the difficulties of maintaining cohesion in a coalition of diverse interests. Yet the coalition should not be written off. It played a significant role in preventing a BJP landslide in 2024 and remains an important platform for opposition coordination. If it hopes to endure, it must move beyond symbolism and develop a clear policy agenda. Without greater cohesion and a shared vision, the alliance risks being taken seriously by the electorate.

relations. On these issues, the alliance has yet to articulate a coherent common programme. Its internal

and a shared vision, the alliance risks being taken seriously by the electorate.

## Cooling Epic Fury despite Bibi

The Israeli PM dragged Tehran back into confrontation on the 100th day of Operation Epic Fury by defying the US President to bomb Lebanon. Although Trump is desperate to get the Strait of Hormuz reopened, his focus on the issue may not stay sharp

R Swaminathan

Sunday, the hundredth day of Operation Epic Fury—the joint military campaign launched by the US and Israel against Iran—turned out to be one of dramatic developments. It started with Israel attacking a stronghold of Hezbollah in Beirut in response to earlier missile and drone attacks on northern Israel. Iran, which had forewarned Israel, responded with measured missile attacks on northern Israel. The day ended with a stern telephone call from President Donald Trump to Prime Minister 'Bibi' Netanyahu not to retaliate. But Netanyahu defied Trump to attack Tehran, Isfahan and Tabriz on Sunday night. Reciprocal strikes continued the next day, with the Houthi forces escalating their involvement. However, later in the day, Iran officially announced the end of its military operations against Israel following a public push by Trump for a ceasefire, but confirming it would respond with severe strikes if Israel continued its offensive operations. It is significant that while Iran had earlier warned that it would escalate by striking both US and Israeli assets, not only did it confine its attacks to Israel, but also heeded Trump's call to stop the attacks. The hopes for ending the war, which had seemed imminent two weeks ago, were dashed by Israel's major military attacks in southern Lebanon. When Netanyahu ordered Israel Defense Forces in southern Lebanon to advance towards Beirut, Iran immediately suspended the exchange of messages with the US for concluding a memorandum of understanding, insisting that a ceasefire across all fronts including Lebanon was a prerequisite. Tehran also threatened it would also close the Bab-el-Mandeb at one end of the Red Sea. As Iran's decision would further delay

opening of the Strait of Hormuz, which has become an urgent priority for Trump, he immediately forced Netanyahu to stop bombarding Beirut. The US also hosted trilateral negotiations early this month where Israel and Lebanon agreed on a truce, contingent on complete cessation of fire by Hezbollah and its evacuation from South Lebanon. They also agreed to establish pilot zones in South Lebanon where the Lebanese Armed Forces would assume full control. This, however, was immediately rejected by Hezbollah, demanding full withdrawal of the IDF from South Lebanon, roughly 10 percent of the nation's territory. The Israeli ground invasion of Lebanon in recent days is deeply reminiscent of its 1982 campaign. Both military interventions were launched by Israel under the banner of 'national security' with the stated goals of neutralising cross-border threats, protecting northern Israeli communities, and establishing a buffer zone in southern Lebanon. Much like the 1982 Operation Peace for Galilee, which culminated in a brutal three-month siege of Beirut, the current conflict has witnessed massive aerial bombardments of the Lebanese capital, catastrophic infrastructure damage, and the displacement of more than one million civilians—amounting to roughly one-fifth of Lebanon's population. Historically, while the 1982 invasion forced the exit of Palestinian militants, it ultimately trapped the IDF in a costly, low-intensity war against a newly emerged Hezbollah. This occupation ended only in May 2000 when, facing rising casualties, Israel executed a hasty, unilateral withdrawal that left a strategic vacuum that Hezbollah rapidly filled. History may not repeat itself. Although Israel remains focused on

its long-term objectives of neutralising Hezbollah and toppling the Iranian regime—as evidenced by Netanyahu's public defiance of Trump to ensure his own domestic survival and sabotage an MoU Israel considers counter to its interests—the reality remains that without a continuous supply of US interceptors, Israel cannot sustain its defensive or offensive capabilities with



impunity. In addition to ceasefire in Lebanon being a major stumbling block, the prerequisites for a US-Iran peace pact as detailed by Secretary Marco Rubio during his congressional testimony last week remain a hurdle. He specified that the MoU with Iran would establish a two-phase approach: first, the US would lift its naval blockade in exchange for Iran unconditionally reopening the Strait of Hormuz. Under this first phase, Iran must also pledge to

negotiate a denuclearisation plan; however, any actual economic sanctions relief or the unfreezing of Iranian assets will remain linked to Iran's concrete actions to dismantle its nuclear program during the second phase. Notably, Rubio did not list the curtailment of Iran's missile programme or its regional proxy support as explicit prerequisites for lifting sanctions. What Rubio conveyed to the US Congress was similar to Trump's April 8 ceasefire announcement. However, unlike the April announcement which established a temporary two-week window to halt hostilities and initiate talks, discussions under the current framework will be based on a formal two-phase understanding. The US's concession to Iran's insistence for a two-phased peace deal is notable. In return, Iran has relented on its demand for a total cessation of hostilities as a mandatory prerequisite for entering the second phase. Further, on the issue of Iran's insistence to unfreeze at least half of its \$12 billion assets held in Qatari banks, Doha has successfully negotiated a complex via media to grant a \$6 billion Qatari line of credit restricted to Iran purchasing humanitarian and civilian goods. Despite a severe economic crisis, Iran can sustain the status quo for several more months, given its well-established resistance economy. But if the stalemate at Hormuz drags on for another month or two, energy analysts project that oil prices could hit \$120-150 a barrel; if the Houthis close Bab-el-Mandeb, the price may shoot up further. Thus, it is essential for Trump to resolve the Lebanon imbroglio to conclude the MoU.

# 5 Ways to make your Kids wiser

## with the ways of the World

Being extra cautious with your kid can be harmful for their growth and development. The world is moving at a fast pace and it is important to not let them remain cocooned in a world in which they believe everything is hunky-dory.

The recent instance of a Gujarati diamond merchant asking his only son to earn a living or the US president Barack Obama's 15-year-old daughter working at a seafood restaurant are proof enough that life skills, besides education, are important to help children face life's challenges. Here are a few ways by which you can prepare your child to be confident and independent.

### Introduce them to public transport

Sunday evening, Sneha Naik, whose son was celebrating his second birthday, took a BEST bus along with her husband. She says, "Whenever we step out, Aarush (her son) keeps looking at the bus until we move away from it. We thought it was time we took him in one and what better day than his birthday? When he grows older, we will make sure that he makes use of public transport."

Though you may want to limit your children to the comfort of your car, it is equally important to acquaint them with modes of public transport. "It becomes all the more important in a city like Mumbai, where commuting gets difficult," adds Sneha. You

can plan short trips and vacations and use public transport for that, too. Ensure that they are looking around, observing their surroundings. Also teach them about basic traffic rules — especially when you are behind the wheels, and street etiquette.

### Teach them how to say no

It may sound simple, but refusal skills are hard to learn. The world wants us to work according to them and in such a scenario, saying no requires a lot of gumption. But asking kids to learn this early on helps in a lot of areas. For

starters, anyone acting inappropriately, irrespective of their power and position, needs to be ignored. Saying no to something that you don't wish to do or wish to be boosts your self-confidence and ensures that no one takes you for granted. Being assertive goes a long way — be it bullying, succumbing to peer pressure, lying or falling in someone's trap.

### Home Alone

parents, this may sound too much to handle. But with safety at hand (read:

neighbours, CCTV camera, your phone calls, etc), you can be at ease. Write down emergency numbers on a sheet of paper and teach them how to switch off the gas' regulator. Tell them the importance of keeping bottles of phenyl, pesticides and other objects away. More importantly, ask them to use the peephole before opening the door. Varsha Dubey, mother of a 10-year-old, says, "I've to step out at times for some bank work or to purchase groceries on days my daughter is at home. So, I've told her to not open the door to delivery boys or any stranger. Secondly, if someone calls on our landline, I've advised her to say that I'm busy and she should take



something that could help them grow because of your own inhibitions. Ask them to choose their own books or let them spend time with friends. Don't influence them because they have to make bigger, and more important decisions without any hesitation in the future. Amit Gajbhiye, father of a 14-year-old, says, "Ever since my son was seven, I asked him to get print-outs from the shop below our building and even encouraged him to participate in the overnight educational trips that his school organised. Not only is he more independent than most kids his age but he's also become more street-smart and good with communication skills."

Give them solutions for 'What If' situations. At different stages in life, it is necessary to make your kids accident-proof by practising 'what if' situations. Preeti Mishra, mother of two kids, aged eight and six, respectively, says, "Since my husband and I both work, and our kids are at the creche, I've made sure that they know the emergency numbers as well as remember numbers of our relatives who stay close by with the help of tunes of popular songs, so they may remember it better. Many a times, it so happens that whenever the song plays, they start reciting the numbers." Similarly, warning them about strangers, informing them about unsafe spots around important landmarks near their house are also important, too. While they need to follow the protocol, under careful supervision, you could also test them to keep a check on them.

the message." This helps kids to understand how to utilise their time better and gradually, they can get used to managing chores on their own.

### Allow them to explore and experience

Be it reading comics, watching movies and cartoons (suited for their age), or letting them step outdoors for treks and camps, don't say no to



## Ways to parent an Introvert child

According to child therapist Jayashree Nair, it is extremely necessary for parents to ensure that their children voice out their thoughts and opinions from a young age. She says, "Even though schools do encourage children to speak up in class and let their teachers know what they think, I believe parents should also do the same at home. It is only when they start talking and expressing their concerns will they become confident in life."

However, if your child is shy or feels intimidated by the thought of opening up, here are a few ways you can make the process easy for him/her.

### Know there is nothing unusual about being an introvert

There are many children who find it extremely difficult to open up not only to their teachers and friends at school but also to their parents. And there is absolutely nothing wrong with that. As a parent, the least you can do is understand what your child is trying to communicate with you without speaking much.

### Introduce your child to new people and surroundings

### gradually

Do not rush into anything. Take your time to acclimatise your child to new situations and people. Make sure that you even communicate this with those who are meeting your kid for the first time. You don't want your child growing up feeling awkward and hesitant while meeting others.

### Help your child cultivate his/her passion

The only way a child can start socialising is when he/she moves out of the four walls of the house and makes new friends. This can either happen in school or in hobby classes. Make sure that your child is participating in extra-curricular activities and takes up a hobby. Apart from keeping your child busy through the day, it will also ensure that he/she is mixing around with other kids in the class.

### Point out when they starts enjoying what they were initially scared of

To make sure that your child feels confident about himself/herself, point out whenever he/she starts doing something that they were previously scared of. This could be anything — from starting a conversation with a neighbour to playing outdoors with friends.



## Keep your child safe near water

According to statistics, drowning is one of the major causes of accidental death in children. A little lazing around in a mini bathtub may sound tempting, but not many parents realise that if necessary precaution is not taken, the results could be grievous. Apart from the ultimate life threat, young ones also risk sustaining injuries when diving from a height or contacting contagious diseases due to the bacteria in water. So, parents must be very aware while letting their kids near water bodies. Here are some tips to keep in mind... Know potential threats

It's not just swimming pools or beaches where you must be cautious. Even bathtubs at home, ditches and drum filled with water can be hazardous. Keep the cans covered and empty water if you are not using them. They are a breeding ground for mosquitoes and flies.

### Ensure an adult is always around

Children shouldn't be allowed near water bodies without supervision. "There's a reason why beaches and swimming pools where adults practise are equipped with lifeguards — to help in case of emergency. So, make sure that either you or an adult — your spouse, family members or your kid's friends' parents — is always present at an arm's length away from the child," says physical education trainer Mathew Moses. He adds, "In swimming jargon, this is called touch supervision." Have family and friends on standby, and tell them how to react in case of an emergency. Write out all the important phone numbers as well. And when you are watching the kids, do only that. Don't get distracted by the smartphone.

### Learn first aid

Knowing life-saving techniques like CPR is always important. Life coach Shekhar Kekan says, "When you see someone is drowning or choking in the water, follow the four-step rule — reach to them using towel, rod or by lying down flat near the water body, throw a safety

ring around them, swim to reach them or get a rescue boat if need be. Once you get them out of the beach, pump their stomach to get the excess water out of their body. Knowing how to react in case someone has a heart attack or is choking is also important. However, remember that the first instinct of anyone who is drowning is to catch hold of whatever or whoever is near them."

### Set firm rules

Radhika Kanwalkar, a housewife and mother of a two-year-old son, says, "Before we took him to the beach, he had ingrained in his mind the following rules — don't run near water, don't push others into the water, and never go out of our sight. When you are strict with rules, there is little chance of accidents."

### Use life jackets

Life-saving jackets are not replaceable with inflatable toys. Yes, they provide support for your child to stay afloat, but they stand the risk of getting deflated. Moses says, "If you are going to the pool, ask the authorities for life jackets. I would suggest, invest in one, because most beaches in our country don't have such facilities. If your little one is using floaties or inflatable toys, he/she can easily slip off them. Life jackets in the right size will not come off once they wear it. Also, remove all the toys from the pool when not needed, because they can tempt kids to jump into the pool."

### Familiarise kids with the surroundings

When you take children to the beach, for a boat ride or to the pool, show them around first and make them familiar with the new surroundings. Ravi Raghav, a marketing manager, says, "The first thing that I did when I took my four-year-old daughter for swimming lessons was to teach her the layout of the pool. I told her where the deep and shallow ends were. Even if she was under the care of the coach, I wanted her to know the risks." Shekhar adds, "Another important lesson that parents can impart to kids while teaching them how to be safe near water is to show them the importance of teamwork. Tell them how they can keep a watch on each other and always be on the lookout of those who need help."



## Read your baby's

# Body Language

Newborns communicate with grown-ups long before they can speak their first words. Babies are born with the ability to express several emotions, including distress and contentment. Reading their body language cues helps you respond quickly to their needs. Here are some general principles that apply to most babies.

**STARING**

Babies take time to grasp things since their brain is still developing. They may stare at walls or other objects that fascinate them just to get a feel of the surroundings.

**WHAT TO DO:** Let your baby stare at things to figure out colour, shapes and distance. Don't meddle in her personal stare time by coming in the way.

**KICKING HIS LEGS**

He could be kicking his legs due to gas, a soiled nappy or feeling cramped in the cradle. It could also mean that he's happy and wants to play.

**WHAT TO DO:** Read your baby's facial expressions to understand if he is in distress. If not, and he wants to play, then share in the fun. If one of your funny acts set him kicking, do it more often.

**OUTSTRETCH ED ARMS**

A toddler with her arms outstretched and open fingers is

relaxed and happy. Pay attention to her facial expressions for a clear indication of what your child is trying to tell you.

**WHAT TO DO:** This is your chance to take the baby window shopping or to visit your relatives in a stroller. Offer her a toy, if you aren't going to step out.

**BANGING HIS HEAD**

A baby who bangs his head against the cradle or the wall is naturally a cause of concern. However, a lot of toddlers do this seemingly without harming themselves or feeling pain, because they like the rhythm of going back and forth.

**WHAT TO DO:** If the head banging continues far too long, check with the doctor.

**ARCHING HER BACK**

Newborns arch their back in reaction to pain or heart burn. It could be a direct sign of an acid reflux - a condition in which the backward flow of acid from the stomach irritates the foodpipe. Your baby will arch her back to try to relieve the discomfort.

**WHAT TO DO:** If your baby is sleeping well, there is no need to panic. However, if the case is severe and both of you are spending sleepless nights, then take her to a

paediatrician who may be able to provide medication to reduce the acids caused in her stomach.

**HANDS ON EYES**

If your baby places his hands on the eyes, it could mean that he wants to play a game of peek-a-boo. Their worlds revolve around their line of vision right now. Babies love to obstruct their vision and then see if the person in front of them is still around.

**WHAT TO DO:** Join your baby in the game. Take a thin blanket and start the game of peek-a-boo. Hide in the blanket and surprise your baby with the trick.

**RUBBING EYES OR EARS**

Toddlers rub their eyes and ears with their hands when they tire. Before they turn six months old, they rub their faces against something if they are tired. After that, they could discover the ear by accident and take comfort in rubbing it since ears are sensitive.

**WHAT TO DO:** Start your bedtime routine as soon as your baby begins rubbing his ears and eyes. If your baby is rubbing his ears and is also running a temperature of over 101 degrees, he may have an ear infection. Consult your paediatrician in such cases.

**ROOTING**

Does your baby automatically turn the face toward your finger and make sucking motions with the mouth when you touch his cheek or lip? This is called the rooting reflex and is a survival tactic to help the baby find food. The reflex disappears after the first few weeks.

**WHAT TO DO:** While your baby figures out feeding, a simple touch of the cheek will help him find the breast or bottle.

**COOING, BABBLING AND LAUGHING**

Babies start to match the pitch and variation of the parent's tone of voice when they are two-three months old. By four to six months, newborns experiment with their voices - they start babbling, putting consonant and vowel sounds together and cooing. The voice is a clear indicator of the emotion - happy, mad, irritated, protesting, eager or content.

**WHAT TO DO:** Talk to your baby as you go through the day, pausing to let her babble back at you. Encourage her to react by mimicking the sounds she makes. These are the first conversations you are having with your child.

**Decipher your newborn's non-verbal cues and learn how to respond to each one of them with our quick guide.**

## 4 ways to save money when single

Are you among those who desperately wait for their salaries to get credited, so that they don't have to struggle to manage their daily expenses?



Many people have a tough time during the month end, not because they don't earn enough. It happens mostly because people don't manage their finances well. Here are a few simple steps to put into practice, especially if you are single.

### 1. Start a recurring deposit account:

The right time to start a recurring account is when you open a salary account. The agreed

amount automatically gets transferred from your salary. Also, you won't be able to withdraw money from this account midway. So, once the amount matures, you will have a bulk sum at your disposal.

### 2. Write down your expenses:

When you don't have any idea about the expenses, you tend to splurge. Therefore, you end up spending more than what you earn. Once you make a note of the expenses for the month, you can prioritize and later, adjust the budget depending on how much you earn.

### 3. Have small parties at home:

Instead of heading out to a hotel or a pub to celebrate your birthday or any other special occasion, invite friends home. Apart from cutting down on food expenses, it also assures great fun as one can indulge in activities like cooking together, setting the table or a game of cards after the meal. These may not be possible if you go out.

### 4

### Follow the 30 day rule:

Haven't heard about that? It's simple. If you feel that you are in need of something, wait for 30 days and reconsider your decision to buy it. If you manage without that for the first 30 days, you may even decide not to buy it at all as your urge to possess it would have passed.

**Did you know that having a dog around while growing up boosts a child's self-esteem and social skills, apart from making them more co-operative as grown-ups? Dog trainers say the best way to have a family-friendly dog is to ensure it's a breed that considers every human member of the family as its pack leader. Here are the breeds most suitable for the city.**

**Beagle**

Think of a Beagle and the first association that comes up is the witty Snoopy from the cartoon strip, Peanuts. However, Beagles are far more sincere and equally entertaining. This short-haired hound loves living with a family and gets involved in the day-to-day things that constitute a household routine. Watch him follow your little ones around the house and at the same time, keep an eye on them. All he needs is gentle training from the parent since he's naturally curious and has a larger-than-life image of himself.

**Mutt**

Consider adopting a rescued mixed breed and you'll be making a wise decision. Not only will you be taking a homeless puppy off the mean streets — or worse, the pound — you'll also bag yourself a pet who has better immunity than any store-bought pure breed and has lower chances of falling prey to illnesses. Mutts are lovable balls of energy, grateful at being loved and ever-ready to adapt to any situation.

**Cocker spaniel**

Although it comes from a hunting background, the Cocker Spaniel is one of the cuddliest dogs on the planet. He is a blend of a tough hunting dog and a kind house dog. Cocker Spaniels will keep your kids on their toes. They love playing with toys and being around people, and are usually the centre of attention. They are fast learners and obedient students as they easily trust owners.

**Irish Setter**

A better choice for families with yards because of their energy, Irish Setters are great with children, as they're playful and energetic. One warning, though — their lifespans are among the shortest for larger breeds, so you should only choose it if you

## Child-friendly dogs you can keep at home



want to teach those inevitable life lessons while your children are in middle school.

**Bulldog**

Slow and sturdy wins the race for the lumbering Bulldog. He's perfect for small families with kids. It's a dignified dog breed, so expect an even temper and agreeable habits. Bulldogs forge strong bonds with kids because of their naturally protective yet gentle nature.

**Pug**

This toy breed zoomed to the top of the city's favourite pet list a few years ago, thanks to an ad campaign series that displayed his affectionate and caring attitude towards kids. Don't go by his size. The Pug packs tonnes of personality in a tiny frame. Easygoing and playful, they are best for households with quiet, sensible children who don't treat the Pug like a plaything.

**Labrador Retriever**

If you have a swimming pool and active kids, you'd be a fool not to consider the Lab. The water-loving Labrador Retriever will get back anything you throw in the water. They come in black, chocolate and yellow colours, all equally friendly towards kids. They do well in a house with kids since they crave playtime and exercise, especially with respectful human beings.

**Golden Retriever**

With a long, shiny coat and a bright smile, the Golden Retriever is a sporting dog. An average hound would weigh between 25-30 kg and could come in any shade of golden — dark to light. For a Golden Retriever, there is no such thing as a stranger. They make fast friends with every youngster and are forever ready to play — a game of catch, swimming in the sea, hiking or bouncing around the grass. continued on page 3

**Australian Shepherd**

Active and intelligent, the Australian Shepherd is a people's dog. Happy travellers, they will gladly join your kids in playing ball, trips to the beach and run-throughs around the backyard. The Aussie is a wonderful and gentle companion dog for kids, teaching them respect and good manners in his own quiet way.

**Boxer**

Handsome as they come, Boxers are immensely loyal and carry themselves with a certain amount of dignity, even when they've been up to mischief! Boxers are known for high levels of energy. Spend time teaching your Boxer how to be around people, and he will jump at the opportunity of acting silly with your tweens and teenagers. Gentle though he is, his heavy built might come in the way when he's interacting with tiny tots.



CMYK



# Homemaker too small a word: SC says women running households are nation builders

**The Supreme Court said homemakers' domestic work and caregiving must be recognised in accident compensation cases. It said unpaid labour sustains families, shapes future generations and cannot be erased by marriage.**

New Delhi.(Agency)

In a significant ruling, the Supreme Court has said that describing women who run households merely as "homemakers" understates their contribution, noting that their role extends far beyond domestic chores to shaping families, nurturing future

generations and contributing to nation-building. A bench led by Justice Sanjay Karol said the domestic work and caregiving services performed by homemakers carry undeniable economic value and play a critical role in raising future generations, strengthening families and contributing to human development.

"Instead of calling her a homemaker, she should be called a nation builder," the court said, underlining that the impact of a woman's work at home reaches well beyond the four walls of a household. The observations came while the court was laying down principles for calculating compensation in cases involving the accidental death of homemakers.

**MARRIAGE DOESN'T MEAN HIRING**



should not be viewed as an arrangement where a woman assumes sole responsibility for household work.

"Marriage does not mean hiring a maid," the

bench observed, stressing that domestic responsibilities are shared obligations of both spouses.

The court further said that a woman's aspirations and professional ambitions cannot be sacrificed merely because she is married.

If a woman wishes to pursue a career as a doctor, professional or in any other field while ensuring a stable environment for her children, such choices cannot be construed as cruelty towards her husband or in-laws, it said. "A woman's identity does not end after marriage," the court added.

**RECOGNITION BEYOND THE KITCHEN**

The Supreme Court also acknowledged that homemakers make significant personal sacrifices that often go unrecognised.

The bench observed that women who devote their time and energy to running households

contribute substantially to family wealth and stability, and their efforts should be appropriately recognised both socially and economically. It further said that homemakers deserve equal consideration in jointly acquired family assets, given the invaluable contribution they make through years of unpaid labour and caregiving.

**HOMEMAKERS' WORK HAS ECONOMIC VALUE**

The Supreme Court noted that unpaid domestic labour has long remained invisible in conventional economic calculations despite being essential to the functioning of families and society. The bench said a homemaker's contribution is not limited to cooking, cleaning or managing household affairs.

She also plays a central role in raising children, nurturing values, supporting family members and shaping the next generation.

## KMP Expressway corridor set to become NCR's biggest growth hub under 2041 plan

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Kundli-Manesar-Palwal (KMP) Expressway is poised to emerge as the most intensively developed corridor in the National Capital Region (NCR). Sources said the Draft Regional Plan-2041, which is scheduled to be discussed at the National Capital Region Planning Board (NCRPB) meeting on June 16, has officially designated the belt comprising the KMP and Eastern Peripheral Expressway as the Central NCR (CNCR) and assigned it a distinct economic identity as the 'Golden Ring of Opportunity.' It may be recalled that the Draft Regional Plan-2041 had received in-principle approval at the NCRPB's 41st board meeting, which was held on October 12, 2021.

The Golden Ring is one of five policy zones identified across the NCR, alongside National Capital Territory (NCT) Delhi, highway corridor zones with transit-oriented development (TOD), natural conservation zones and the rest of NCR.

The CNCR has been accorded the highest-intensity development mandate, featuring dense mixed-use development, maximum floor area ratios, TOD clusters around transport nodes and priority infrastructure investment. Under the plan, the CNCR extends beyond Delhi to areas lying up to five kilometres outside the Eastern and Western Peripheral Expressways.

Sources said this framework effectively paves the way for five new cities. The Haryana government has already proposed developing areas along the KMP Expressway as Panchgrams, a cluster of five greenfield townships that will be detailed in the sub-regional plan.

Under the project, urban centres and new industrial townships spread across 2.5 lakh hectares will be developed within a belt extending two to six kilometres on either side of the expressway loop and will be governed by a dedicated Panchgram Development Authority. The Manesar-Bawal Investment Region, a Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC)-linked national industrial priority zone anchoring the southern stretch of the KMP, will also be integrated into all state sub-regional plans.

## Make sprinklers, smoke detectors mandatory in buildings: DFS

New Delhi.(Agency)

Amid a surge in fire incidents across the national capital, the Delhi Fire Services (DFS) has written to the government recommending that smoke detectors and sprinkler systems be made mandatory in all residential buildings, saying the move could reduce fire-related deaths by up to 97%.

The recommendation comes even as a foreign national who sustained severe burn injuries in the fire at a hotel in south Delhi's Malviya Nagar succumbed during treatment on Wednesday, taking the death toll in the tragedy to 23. In an official statement, Max Hospital said a total of nine patients are currently admitted at its Saket facility.

"Of these, seven patients are planned for discharge on Thursday. At present, one patient is receiving care in the ICU, while eight patients are admitted in the wards. All admitted patients are clinically stable. The patients continue to show satisfactory recovery and are being provided comprehensive care and continuous monitoring to ensure the best possible clinical outcomes," the statement said.

Meanwhile, the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Delhi is likely to conduct a structural and fire-propagation analysis to determine the cause behind the rapid spread of the blaze at the hotel, sources said.

According to fire officials, temperatures rise significantly across north India during the summer months, leading to a corresponding increase in fire incidents every year. This year, the number of fire-related calls received so far is around 1,000 higher than during the corresponding period last year, continuing a trend that is observed annually, officials said.



## 3 Indian sailors missing after US strike on tanker off Oman confirmed dead

New Delhi.(Agency)

Three Indian seafarers who had gone missing after a US military strike on a tanker in the Gulf of Oman have died, Union Shipping Minister Sarbananda Sonowal said on Thursday. The sailors went missing following the strike carried out by the United States military on the tanker off Oman.

According to the US, its military conducted a "precision" strike on the vessel after it failed to follow instructions. The US also said the tanker was carrying oil from Iran.

**INDIA LODGED STRONG PROTEST**

Meanwhile, after the deadly strike, New Delhi summoned the US deputy chief of mission and lodged a "strong protest" over the strike. Nagaraj Naidu, Additional Secretary (Americas) in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), summoned Jason Meeks, Charg



d'Affaires of the United States, following the strike on the tanker Settebello.

Following the incident, India strongly condemned the attack and expressed concern over the safety of Indian nationals on board the vessel. In an official statement, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said, "We condemn the attack on the commercial vessel Settebello off the coast of Oman, earlier today."

The ministry stated that 24 Indian crew

members were on board the ship at the time of the strike. It said 21 Indians had been rescued.

**US CONFIRMED STRIKE ON SETTEBELLO**

The United States said its military carried out a "precision" strike on the vessel after it allegedly failed to follow instructions from American forces. The US also said the tanker was carrying oil

from Iran. The US Central Command later confirmed that it targeted the Settebello at 11:14 pm on June 9 as part of its ongoing maritime blockade

against Iran. According to the statement, "US Central Command disabled Palau-flagged M/T Settebello as it transited the Gulf of Oman." It added that "a US aircraft fired precision munitions into the ship's engine room" after the crew repeatedly failed to comply with instructions issued by American forces.

## Private school women teachers entitled to childcare leave like govt staff: Delhi HC

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Delhi High Court has ruled that women teachers working in private schools are entitled to Child Care Leave (CCL) on par with their counterparts in government schools, describing the benefit as part of the fundamental right to equality.

A division bench comprising Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela overturned the decision of a single-judge bench and held that recognised private schools cannot deny female employees Child Care Leave for matters related to the care, education and illness of their children. The court said that under Rule 111 of

the Delhi School Education (DSE) Rules, employees of private schools are entitled to the same leave benefits as government employees. The bench disagreed with the earlier single-judge

ruling and affirmed that the right to Child Care Leave forms part of the principle of equality. In accordance with the Central Civil Services (CCS)

Leave Rules, a woman employee can avail a maximum of 730 days, or two years, of Child Care Leave during her entire service period. The leave can be taken for the care of her first two surviving children, including for their upbringing, examinations, illness and other related needs.

The rules also provide that Child Care Leave must be taken for a minimum period of 15 days. A female employee cannot avail this category of leave more than three times in a calendar year. With the ruling, women teachers employed in recognised private schools will now be eligible for Child Care Leave benefits similar to those available to government school teachers.



## Great Nicobar project won't displace tribals, critics ill-informed: Lt Governor DK Joshi

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands' Lieutenant Governor Admiral DK Joshi has strongly defended the controversial Great Nicobar Island Development Project, dismissing opposition to the mega infrastructure plan as "ill-informed" and asserting that no tribal communities will be displaced by the project.

In an exclusive interview with India Today, Joshi - a former Navy chief, former Commander-in-Chief of the Andaman and Nicobar Command and Vice Chairman of the Island Development Agency - said due process had been followed in securing environmental and statutory clearances for the project, which he described as critical to India's long-term strategic and economic interests.

"No tribals will be displaced because of the project," Joshi said, pushing back against allegations that the development

would threaten indigenous communities and the island's fragile ecosystem.

The remarks come amid a growing political row over the Rs 81,000-crore Great Nicobar Island Development Project, which includes a transshipment port, a greenfield airport, power infrastructure and township development aimed at transforming India's southernmost island into a major maritime and strategic hub.

**PROJECTION OF COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL POWER**

Joshi argued that the project should not be viewed solely through the lens of security or economics. "It is not about security or economy alone. It is about the projection of comprehensive national power," he said, stressing that Great Nicobar's

location near major international shipping lanes gives India a unique strategic advantage.

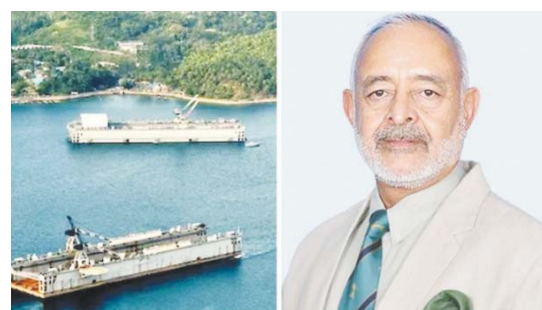
Great Nicobar lies close to the Six Degree Channel and the western approaches of

According to Joshi, India's geographical

position gives it a natural advantage in the region, and the Great Nicobar project would strengthen the country's influence while also benefiting neighbouring countries. "Not only India, regional countries will benefit from the project," he said.

**FRESH FOCUS AFTER AIRPORT DECISION**

Joshi's comments come days after the government decided to build a new Rs 13,000-crore greenfield civil-military airport at Chingen near Galathea Bay instead of expanding the existing INS Baaz naval airfield at Campbell Bay.



## IndusInd Bank credit card rules changing from 15 June 2026: Check late payment charges and other details

Mumbai.(Agency)

IndusInd Bank has announced that effective from 15 June 2026, there will be changes with regards to credit card payment charges. IndusInd Bank credit cardholders across several product categories will be impacted by the changes that pertain to late payment, fuel transaction fee, Dynamic Currency Conversion fee and Transaction fees on Transport. IndusInd Bank has said that if a card member has been making partial payments, but in the current month has paid in full on or before the due date, the closing balance as per the previous statement will continue to accrue interest until the date of payment. This interest will be collected in the following month's statement. Card members will only benefit from the interest free period once the following month's statement has been paid in full, it added. "Assuming the card member has not made payment in full for the statement dated 18 November, payment made in full for 18 December statement on 8 January will result in the closing balance of the previous statement continuing to accrue interest until the date of payment. This interest will be collected in the following month's statement," cited IndusInd Bank as an illustration.

Fuel Transactions fee

The IndusInd Bank will levy 1 percent fee + GST on cumulative fuel spends above Rs 30,000/ Rs 50,000 (based on card variant)

Dynamic Currency Conversion fee (DCC)

IndusInd Bank said that 1 percent Mark-up Fee + GST or 2 percent Mark-up Fee + GST will be charged, based on card variant. Transaction fees on Transport excluding Air MCC1% Fee + GST on cumulative spends above Rs 40,000 (Air MCCs - 4111, 4112, 4784, 4131) will be charged by IndusInd Bank.

## Sukanya Samridhi Yojana: Why is 5th of the month important for SSI investment?

New Delhi.(Agency)

Although several deadlines are pegged to a financial year (ending March), many very crucial investments are also date bound. If you are a subscriber of Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, the date deadline is significant for you. For Sukanya Samridhi Accounts, the Rate of interest 8.2 percent per annum calculated on yearly basis, yearly compounded. For Sukanya Samridhi Accounts, minimum Rs 250 and Maximum Rs 1.5 lakh can be deposited in a financial year. Subsequent deposit in multiple of Rs 50 deposits can be made in lump-sum. There is no limit on number of deposits either in a month or in a Financial year. Sukanya Samridhi Yojana: Why 5th of the month is crucial for your investment?

In other words, if you deposit the money by the 5th of month, your investment earns interest for that same month. If you make the deposit on the 6th of the month or later, your investment earns zero interest for that particular month. The interest portion kicks in only from the next month. However, all your monthly earnings are combined and added to your account just once a year on March 31st. The compounded interest is credited once a year on March 31st. Let's assume, you invest Rs 5,000 per month for 21 years in Sukanya Samridhi Account. By the end of completion of 21 years, how much difference in money can you see if you invest on or before 5th of every month and after 5th of every month? Here's the chart, explaining difference in interest earned by the end of 21 years.

## Rupee slumps 32 paise to 95.57 against US dollar in early trade

MUMBAI.(Agency)

The rupee plunged by 32 paise to 95.57 against the US dollar in early trade on Thursday following a rise in global crude oil prices as hostilities between the US and Iran continued. Heavy FII outflows, weak domestic equity market and a marginally stronger greenback further weighed on the local unit. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 95.55 against the US dollar before dropping further to 95.57. The local unit appreciated 16 paise to close at 95.25 against the US dollar on Wednesday, amid likely intervention from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to curb excessive volatility and prevent a further slide in the domestic unit. "The rupee had a weaker opening with oil prices climbing after Iran and the United States



traded strikes. INR has support due to dollar selling by state-run banks, likely on behalf of RBI. "Apart from oil prices, the rupee will have to contend with a tepid risk environment, following a further sell-off in US equities. While US inflation rose to 4.2 percent year-on-year, the highest level in more than three years, the core measure increased less than expected, leaving near-term Federal Reserve rate expectations largely unchanged," Aamir Makda, Commodity & Currency Analyst, Commodity Technical Research at Choice Broking, said. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading at 99.95, up 0.01 percent. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading higher by 1.65 percent at USD 94.64 per barrel in futures trade.

# Gold and silver are falling from their peaks. 3 things investors must do now

**The shine appears to be fading, at least for now. After soaring to all-time highs earlier this year, gold and silver prices have come under pressure, leaving investors asking a familiar question: is it time to buy more, hold on, or head for the exit?**

New Delhi.(Agency)

Just a few months ago, gold and silver seemed unstoppable. Gold was touching fresh record highs almost every week, while silver was enjoying one of its strongest rallies in years. Investors rushed to precious metals, hoping to protect themselves from global uncertainty, inflation worries and market volatility. Both gold and silver prices have been under pressure in recent weeks, slipping from their all-time highs. On Thursday, gold and

silver prices on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX) traded lower, extending their recent losses. While many investors are wondering whether the rally is over, experts say several factors are currently weighing on bullion prices. So, what is pulling bullion prices lower? And more importantly, what should investors do now?

**WHY ARE GOLD AND SILVER FALLING?**

**Investors Are Booking Profits After a Massive Rally** One of the biggest reasons behind the recent decline is profit booking.

Gold and silver delivered strong returns over the past year, prompting many investors to lock in gains. After a sharp rise, some cooling off is considered normal in commodity markets. When prices climb too quickly, traders often sell a portion of their holdings to secure profits, leading to short-term pressure on prices. Stronger Dollar and Global Market Sentiment Gold and silver

generally move in the opposite direction of the US dollar. In recent weeks, expectations around global monetary policy and economic data have supported the dollar, making precious metals relatively less



attractive. A stronger dollar also makes gold and silver more expensive for buyers using other currencies, which can reduce demand. At the same time, investors are closely watching global economic developments, causing shifts in investment

flows across different asset classes.

**Rising Oil Prices Are Creating New Market Uncertainty** Crude oil prices have remained firm in the \$91-93 per barrel range. Higher

oil prices raise concerns about inflation and increase import costs for countries like India. While inflation worries can sometimes support gold, rising energy prices can also create broader market uncertainty and affect investor positioning across commodities. As a result, traders have become more cautious, contributing to volatility in precious metals.

**WHAT THE CHARTS ARE INDICATING**

According to Ponnudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, gold remains under pressure after slipping below an important psychological level. "MCX Gold opened with a gap down and has slipped below the key Rs 1,50,000 psychological mark, reflecting cautious to negative price action amid persistent volatility," he said.

## From PAN, TDS to tax regime: 7 Form 16 checks you can't miss before filing ITR

New Delhi.(Agency)

Every year, as soon as Form 16 lands in our inboxes, many of us breathe a sigh of relief. After all, it contains our salary details, tax deductions and the calculations prepared by the employer. It feels like the perfect document to simply upload and file the return.

**But that assumption can be costly.**

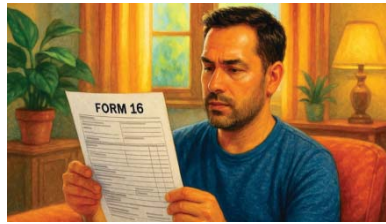
I have come across several cases where taxpayers received notices, lost out on deductions or ended up paying additional tax because they overlooked small details hidden in Form 16. A wrong PAN, a mismatch in TDS, income missing from the return, or even choosing the wrong tax regime can create problems later. So, I spoke to tax experts to understand the common mistakes employees make and the checks they should undertake before filing their Income Tax Return (ITR) for Assessment Year (AY) 2026-27.

Here's what they had to say.

**DON'T JUST READ FORM 16. UNDERSTAND ITS TWO PARTS**

Many employees treat Form 16 as a

single document. It isn't. According to Mrinal Mehta, Joint Secretary at Bombay Chartered Accountants' Society, taxpayers should view Form 16 as two separate documents. "Part A is the TDS certificate generated from the



TRACES portal, while Part B is the annexure prepared by the employer containing salary details and tax computation," he explained. In Part A, employees should verify their PAN, the employer's TAN and whether the TDS shown matches what was deducted from their salary. In Part B, they should check the salary break-up, exemptions, deductions and taxable income

calculation.

**CHECK YOUR PAN, ASSESSMENT YEAR AND SALARY FIGURES**

This may sound basic, but experts say it is one of the most overlooked areas.

Anita Basur, Partner, Direct Taxation, Sudit K. Parekh & Co LLP, said employees should verify that the PAN, assessment year, gross salary and TDS figures are correctly reflected. Imagine discovering after filing that your PAN was entered incorrectly. The tax deducted by your employer may not get linked to your account properly, potentially affecting your tax credit. Employees should also ensure that the gross salary mentioned in Form 16 matches their payslips and annual salary records.

**ENSURE TDS WAS NOT JUST DEDUCTED, BUT ALSO DEPOSITED**

Many taxpayers only check whether tax was deducted from their salary. However, experts say the more important question is whether the employer deposited that tax with the government.

## HDFC Bank raises FCNR deposit rates for 3-5 year tenors — Check latest rates

New Delhi.(Agency)

HDFC Bank announced to increase interest rates on its Foreign Currency Non-Resident (FCNR) deposits. The (FCNR) deposits for three years to five

years tenors and above have been hiked to 6 percent. The latest rates are applicable from 10 June 2026, HDFC Bank website says. It must be noted that HDFC FCNR deposit booked for 3 to 5 years tenure will have a lockin period of 1 year. This will be applicable to deposit booked between June 10, 2026 to September 30, 2026. Further, HDFC Bank mentions that existing FCNR deposits booked under GBP, EURO & JPY currencies for the tenor 1 year 1 day to 5 year and which are due for auto renewal will be auto renewed for 1 year tenor by default. No interest will be paid if the FCNR Deposit is prematurely withdrawn before 1 year.

No Penalty will be levied on premature closure of FCNR Fixed Deposit. With effect from July 22nd, 2023, the interest rate applicable for premature withdrawal including Partial Withdrawal on FCNR



Deposits will be the rate on the date of deposit booked for the period for which deposit remained with the bank and not at the contracted rate," HDFC Bank website says. Swap Facility for FCNR

(B) Deposits

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had on June 8, introduced a US Dollar-Rupee Forex Swap Facility for fresh FCNR (B) deposits, mobilised for a minimum tenor of three years and maximum tenor of five years. RBI has said that the Swap Facility comes into effect immediately and will remain open up to October 16, 2026 for deposits mobilized between the date of this circular and September 30, 2026. The swap facility will be available to the AD Category I banks for fresh FCNR(B) deposits mobilized in any freely convertible currency, including deposits that are

renewed upon maturity, for a minimum tenor of three years and maximum tenor of five years. However, the swap facility with RBI will be available in US Dollars only," said the RBI circular.

# No E30 at pumps yet, so why has India exempted higher ethanol petrol from tax?

**India has exempted E22, E25, E27 and E30 petrol blends from excise duty despite no retail rollout yet. The move sets up a policy framework for higher ethanol fuels as questions persist over vehicle compatibility and costs.**

New Delhi.(Agency)

India has given a tax break to petrol blends that most motorists cannot buy today. Through a recent Central Excise notification, the government has exempted petrol containing 22%, 25%, 27% and 30% ethanol from excise duty. The move has sparked an obvious question: if India has only recently completed its shift to E20 petrol, who exactly is this new tax exemption meant for? The latest notification does not mean E22, E25 or E30 petrol will immediately become available at fuel stations. There is currently no widespread retail sale of petrol with ethanol

content beyond 20% in India. Instead, the move creates a tax framework for future higher ethanol blends as the country prepares for the next stage of its plan to reduce dependence on imported crude oil.

**WHY IS INDIA PREPARING FOR HIGHER ETHANOL BLENDS?**

India achieved its target of 20% ethanol blending in petrol in 2025-26, six years ahead of the original 2030 deadline. The country imports nearly 87% of its crude oil requirement, and ethanol blending is seen as a way to replace a part of those imports with domestically produced fuel. The government also sees ethanol as a way to support the domestic sugar and grain industries and improve India's long-term energy security.

The push towards higher blends has already started on the regulatory front. In May 2026, the Bureau of Indian Standards notified IS 19850:2026, which lays down technical specifications for E22, E25, E27 and E30 petrol blends. The standards cover fuel composition, blending procedures, impurity limits, testing methods, safety requirements and quality benchmarks for these fuels. Oil marketing companies are

also upgrading storage, blending and distribution systems to support higher ethanol blends and specialised fuels for flex-fuel vehicles, which can operate on fuels ranging from E20 to E85.

**WHO WILL USE E30 PETROL?**

The biggest question is whether existing



vehicles can run on these fuels. India's current vehicle fleet was largely designed for lower ethanol concentrations such as E5 or E10. Industry estimates suggest nearly 80% of vehicles sold over the past 15 years were originally designed for lower ethanol fuels. While automobile manufacturers have developed E20-compatible vehicles in recent years, higher blends such as E30

may require further changes in engine design, fuel systems and material compatibility. This is why the immediate beneficiaries of the new tax exemption are likely to be oil companies, fuel suppliers and manufacturers developing future ethanol-compatible vehicles rather than ordinary motorists. Countries such as Brazil already use much higher ethanol blends through flex-fuel vehicles, and India appears to be building the framework for a similar ecosystem.

**THE E20 EXPERIENCE HAS NOT BEEN WITHOUT QUESTIONS**

India's move towards higher ethanol blends comes even as some vehicle owners continue to report concerns after the E20 rollout. A LocalCircles survey conducted among over 50,000 owners of petrol vehicles manufactured in 2022 or earlier across 301 districts found that one in two owners reported a reduction in mileage since early 2025. Among 24,710 respondents who answered the mileage-related question, 25% said their vehicle's fuel efficiency had dropped by more than 20%, while 13% reported a decline of 10% to 15%.

## Short news

**Empty train rakes come in close proximity near Bhubaneswar; No casualties or service disruption: ECoR**



**Bhubaneswar.(Agency)**

East Coast Railway (ECoR) on Thursday clarified that two empty train rakes came into close proximity during a shunting operation near Bhubaneswar railway station, with no casualties, injuries, or disruption to train services reported. According to ECoR sources, the incident occurred while an empty rake was being moved for scheduled maintenance activities. During the low-speed shunting operation, the moving rake came close to another stationary empty rake. Railway officials and technical personnel immediately reached the spot, secured the rolling stock, and assessed the situation. ECoR stated that both rakes involved were empty at the time of the incident, and no passengers were affected. The railway administration further confirmed that train operations on the main line and all passenger services continued normally, with no impact on scheduled train movements.

**Odisha: Dreaded criminal injured in police encounter in Bhadrak**

**Bhubaneswar.(Agency)**

A dreaded criminal was injured in an exchange of fire with Bhadrak Rural Police in the early hours of Thursday in Odisha's Bhadrak district.

The injured criminal, identified as Prafulla Mallik alias Pappu, sustained a bullet injury to his right leg during the encounter.

He was initially admitted to the Bhadrak District Headquarters Hospital and was later shifted to a hospital in Cuttack for security reasons, police sources said.

The encounter took place near the Law College area in the Nuasahi forest when Mallik and one of his associates were allegedly planning to commit a crime. Acting on a tip-off, a police team conducted a raid in the area. On spotting the police personnel, Mallik allegedly opened fire and fired two rounds at them. The police retaliated, leading to an exchange of fire in which Mallik was injured.

His associate managed to escape from the spot and is currently absconding. Police have formed a special team to trace and apprehend the fleeing accomplice.

A firearm and an empty cartridge case were seized from the encounter site. Further investigation into the incident is underway.

**Rajpur—Sonarpur councillor held in extortion case; relief materials seized in separate probe**

**Kolkata.(Agency)**

A Trinamool Congress (TMC) councillor of the Rajpur—Sonarpur Municipality on the southern fringes of Kolkata was arrested on extortion charges.

Bibhas Mukhopadhyay, popularly known as Monu and the councillor of Ward Number 4 of the Rajpur—Sonarpur Municipality, was arrested from a hotel in Garia by a police team, a senior officer of the Baruipur Police District said. The police team that arrested him also took him to his residence and office and carried out searches at several locations. According to police sources, Mukhopadhyay had faced allegations for several years of forcibly collecting money from various persons, including traders and businessmen in his ward and its adjoining areas.

The allegations against him include threatening property developers for money, facilitating unauthorised construction and involvement in the illegal filling of wetlands, particularly in the Garia. His arrest is the third involving a councillor of the Rajpur—Sonarpur Municipality since the BJP government came to power in West Bengal.

The cops have also recovered substantial quantities of tarpaulins and other relief supplies from the house, ward office and a party office linked to Ward Number 23's councillor Chandra Ghoshal.

The recovered items reportedly included tarpaulins, rice, buckets and other articles intended for distribution as government relief. Police launched the operation after receiving allegations that relief materials meant for residents had been stockpiled at multiple locations. Chandra Ghoshal's husband, Soumen Mohan Ghoshal, is being questioned regarding hoarding of the relief materials.

A Trinamool Congress leader from Ward Number 2 of the municipality was arrested earlier by the police on similar charges levelled against Mukhopadhyay.

## For years, a village walked 3 km for water. An Express report changed that

**Days after The Indian Express reported cases of uterine prolapse, miscarriages and chronic pain among tribal women carrying water over long distances, district authorities begin tanker supply; residents say permanent solution still awaited**

**Mumbai.(Agency)**

"We have become so habituated to fetching water since we were little girls that now it feels abnormal not to go." Bajubai Dhoma Vadvi, 40, lives in Vadvi Pada, a rocky hillside hamlet in Nandurbar's Khadkapani village, where girls and women have routinely carried 7 to 10 kg steel pots of water on their heads while walking nearly three kilometres one way every day. For the past five days, a water tanker has been arriving in the hamlet between 9 am and 10 am, sparing women that daily trek.

The tankers are here because of a report. Days after The Indian Express first reported on June 2 how decades of carrying heavy water loads were contributing to uterine prolapse, miscarriages, chronic pain and a growing gynaecological health crisis among women in remote tribal villages of Maharashtra, district authorities have begun supplying water tankers

to several affected hamlets in Nandurbar. District Collector Mittali Sethi confirmed that the intervention followed discussions between the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti and the state

and explore immediate measures that could be taken to address the water crisis. We are also preparing a presentation to submit to the state government as part of our proposal for long-term water security interventions in the district," she said.

"We cannot express in words how unreal it feels that water is coming to us. For the last four days, we have not had to make that journey. We hope this blessing continues forever," Bajubai told this newspaper.

The June 2 report, Long walk for water: How scarcity is breaking women in Maharashtra's tribal belt, had documented what these women had lived with for years — doctors linking the burden of repeatedly carrying heavy water pots over difficult terrain to reproductive health complications including uterine prolapse, miscarriages, chronic musculoskeletal pain and a range of gynaecological problems.



government after The Indian Express' report came to the attention of the Centre. "Following the news report, a team from the Ministry of Jal Shakti held discussions with the state government last week to assess the situation

## Mumbai's newest flyover is 'melting'. But the outrage may not be justified

**Mumbai.(Agency)**

Mumbai's newly inaugurated Mrinaltai Gore The road surface on the flyover is made of mastic asphalt, which is a composition in which

high temperatures due to which the layer of bitumen on the road got melted. This is a very normal phenomenon," said Pankaj Joshi, architect and urban planner.



The gravel visible on the surface is also not a sign of poor construction. These are stone aggregates — chips deliberately laid over the bitumen surface to create friction and prevent vehicles from skidding. Once traffic starts, the chips gradually settle into the surface under pressure. "The purpose of these stone chips is to ensure the road is not very smooth and there is friction that would prevent vehicles from skidding," Joshi explained.

He added that it is possible the quantity of bitumen used was slightly more than required, which could explain the visible softening in the heat.

But is the outrage justified? Experts say the answer is more complicated than the videos suggest.

**What are the videos actually showing?**

bitumen is poured and set. In high temperatures, bitumen softens and can appear to melt. "At present, Mumbai is witnessing

softening in the heat.

## Rottweiler bites 9-yr-old boy in Ahmedabad housing society, owner booked

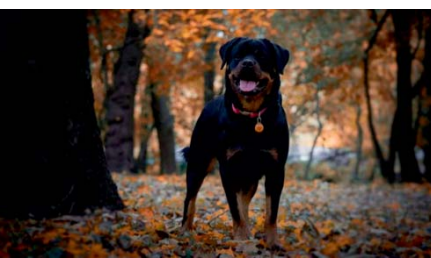
**Jammu.(Agency)**

The owner of a Rottweiler was booked by police on Tuesday after the canine bit a nine-year-old in the Vastrapur area of Ahmedabad city, causing head injuries to the boy. In May last year, a rottweiler had mauled a four-month-old baby to death and attacked her aunt in a residential society in Ahmedabad's Hathijan area. The latest incident took place about 10:15 am on June 9, when Dinesh Kantilal Raut, a housekeeper originally from Rajasthan, had gone to work at a bungalow in Lad Society, Vastrapur area of Bodakdev Ward.

The FIR, filed at Vastrapur police station, said that while Raut was working inside the bungalow, his 9-year-old son was playing on his mobile phone outside the premises when the dog attacked him.

Raut, who lives in Vastrapur Gam with his wife and four kids, told The Indian Express that his nine-year-old son suffered injuries on his head. "I was working inside a house and my son was sitting outside on my bike, playing a

game on my phone. The owners had taken the dog out for a walk and it was off-leash. It suddenly attacked my son, bit him, and dragged him around. He suffered head injury and received 14 stitches. They (the dog-owners) helped me take my son to the hospital. The boy



also had to take the anti-rabies vaccine, of which he has four doses remaining." Later, Raut filed a police complaint against the dog owner, identified as Alpa alias Anjali Hitesh Rajput. Rajput was booked under BNS sections 291 (failure to control an animal in their possession) and 119 (causing hurt). "The pet was registered with the AMC

on May 14, 2025, and it was vaccinated, valid till March 9, 2027. After the incident the owner has shifted the dog to a farmhouse outside the city so that it does not cause harm to others," said CNC Head of Department Naresh Rajput. On Wednesday, a Cattle Nuisance Control Department (CNC) of Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation team including veterinary doctors, sanitary inspectors and police visited the site.

**Earlier complaints** Chairman of Lad Society, Janak Shah, who is a lawyer, told The Indian Express the complaint was filed after they (office-bearers of the society) pushed him to do so.

"This issue has actually been ongoing for a while. We told them (dog owners) to at least chain their dogs but they don't do that. One of the dogs previously attacked a female resident of the society. The owners don't listen to our requests. Now they're angry with the office-bearers because we helped Dineshbhai file a complaint," Shah said.

## Gujarat Confidential: 'In-charge', in line

**Ahmedabad.(Agency)**

IN THE past 13 years, Gujarat saw at least five IPS officers as in-charge Director Generals of Police — the last one being KLN Rao who held charge for the last six months before 1993-batch officer G S Malik was appointed Head of the Police Force (HoPF). After the then DGP Amitabh Pathak's sudden demise in 2013, Pramod Kumar was appointed in-charge DGP. The same year, P C



Thakur was appointed full-time DGP but was 'shunted out' to the Centre in 2016. Thakur was succeeded by a string of in-charge DGPs. First among them was P P Pandey in 2016, who resigned after a year following a Supreme Court petition challenging his appointment. Geetha Johri was appointed as interim HoPF, till December 2017, the first woman to hold the top post and was succeeded by Pramod Kumar, who was appointed as in-charge DGP for the second time before his superannuation in March 2018. After three successive in-charge DGPs, the state police got three full-time chiefs in Shivanand Jha from 2018 to 2020, Ashish Bhatia from 2020 to 2023 and Vikas Sahay from 2023 to 2025. All three of these officers received extensions to their tenures.

## Uttar Pradesh panchayat polls: Over 12.58 crore to vote as final electoral rolls out

**Lucknow.(Agency)**

The State Election Commission (SEC) has released the final electoral roll for the upcoming three-tier panchayat elections, with the total number of registered voters across the state's rural local bodies rising to over 12.58 crore. The number of voters in last year's draft electoral rolls was over 12.29 crore.

The SEC data showed that during a revision process spanning over six months, authorities added over 2.32 crore new voters to the electoral rolls, while delisting over 2.03 crore electors. In effect, the total electorate this year has risen by over 29 lakh. The increase comes after the disposal of claims and objections and a fresh revision exercise carried out across all districts.

Officials said the revised rolls have been finalised after incorporating additions, deletions and corrections received during the verification process.

**Polling only after seat reservation**

The release of the final voter list comes against the backdrop of the expiry of the tenure of elected Gram Pradhans on May 26, five years after the last panchayat elections were held in the state in 2021. While the electoral rolls have been finalised, the elections will only be held after the government completes the reservation exercise for rural local bodies.

For this purpose, the state government has constituted a commission headed by retired Allahabad High Court judge Justice Ram Autar Singh to examine the reservation for



Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and recommend the distribution of reserved seats across Panchayati Raj institutions.

The commission has been tasked with gathering empirical data on backward classes and preparing recommendations in line with the Supreme Court-mandated "triple test" framework for OBC reservation

in local body elections. The panel is expected to study the representation of backward classes at various levels of rural local bodies and submit its report to the government. Based on its recommendations, the state government will issue the reservation notification, after which the SEC is expected to announce the election schedule. With the publication of the final electoral roll, one of the key prerequisites for the conduct of panchayat elections has been completed.

The reservation exercise now remains the final major step before the polling process can begin for the election of Gram Pradhans, Gram Panchayat members, Kshetra Panchayat members and Zila Panchayat members across Uttar Pradesh.

**Rs 1.77 cr recovered from Bengal school; police detain two staffers**

**Kolkata.(Agency)**

A massive cache of cash amounting to Rs 1.77 crore was recovered from a private English-medium school in West Bengal's North 24-Parganas district during a late-night search operation, fuelling a political storm and prompting a police investigation into the source of the money, police said on Thursday.

The search in the school located in the Kanchrapara area began on Wednesday night and continued till around 4 a.m. on Thursday.

Following inconsistencies allegedly detected during questioning, police have detained the school's cashier, Abhik Nath, and assistant accountant, Sayan Ghosh, for further interrogation.

According to sources, the cash was found stored inside an almirah in a room designated as the school's "sick room".

During the operation, investigators also reportedly recovered several packets of condoms from the same room, raising further questions about activities inside the institution.

Police, accompanied by Central Armed Police Forces personnel, reached the school after receiving information regarding alleged irregularities. Cash-counting machines were brought to the premises to verify the amount recovered. Initially, two machines were deployed, while a third was later brought in as counting continued through the night. By dawn, officials had counted approximately Rs 1.77 crore. The development comes close on the heels of the recent recovery of cash, weapons and contraceptive packets from a students' union office at Surendranath College in Kolkata, a case that had generated widespread controversy. Sources said BJP MLA Sudipta Das, who recently initiated a data-bank exercise covering educational institutions in the Bijpur Assembly constituency, was informed about alleged irregularities at the school by members of his team.

## NEWS BOX

## PV Sindhu's husband becomes an accidental coach. She has plenty to Sai about it

New Delhi. (Agency)

PV Sindhu walked onto court at the Quaycentre in Sydney on Thursday not feeling entirely herself. Something minor, she'd say later - but enough to want someone in her corner. The problem was the player across the net was Isharani Baruah. A compatriot. Calling her coach felt, to Sindhu, like tipping the scales. So she didn't. Venkata Datta Sai, a sports fanatic, data scientist, and as of Thursday, accidental badminton coach, arrived in the box as emotional support. He left having earned two warnings from the referee, having read Baruah's game point-by-point by the second game, and having been described by his wife, with some reluctance, as "annoyingly decent." Came in as emotional support, got two warnings from the ref, somehow escaped without a card, and by the second game was reading Isha point by point almost to the tee. Helps to have a complete sports fanatic as a husband sometimes," Sindhu said in a post on X. She needed 42 minutes to see off Baruah 22-20, 21-12, booking her place in the quarterfinals of the



Australian Open Super 500. It was not straightforward - particularly the first game, where the World No. 39 matched the third seed point for point and briefly looked capable of stealing it. Sindhu held her nerve in the closing exchanges, edging a tense opener that could have gone either way. From there, she took over. The second game had the look of a player who had settled something in her own head - Sindhu dictating rallies, opening up an early lead and never really allowing Baruah back in. The 21-12 scoreline flattered the margin.

The result continued what has been a quietly resurgent run. This was Sindhu's fifth quarterfinal of the year. Last week, she returned to the world's top ten for the first time in nearly three years - a milestone that arrived without fanfare but meant something. The title drought, stretching back to the Syd Modi International in 2024, remains. But the scaffolding of form is back. Next up is Chinese Taipei's Chen Su Yu in the last eight - a sterner examination than Thursday, and one where the coaching box will presumably be occupied by someone with fewer warnings on their record.

## Nikhil Chaudhary could become first Indian-born man to represent Australia since 1964

New Delhi (Agency)

Delhi-born all-rounder Nikhil Chaudhary is in line to become the first Indian-born man to represent Australia in international cricket since 1964 after being named in the country's squad for the upcoming T20I series against Bangladesh. The 30-year-old earned his maiden call-up after Australia drafted him into the squad as a replacement for Travis Head, who has been granted personal leave. While Chaudhary is yet to play international cricket, his performances for the Hobart Hurricanes in the Big Bash League and Tasmania in domestic cricket have pushed him into national selection calculations.

## WHO IS NIKHIL CHAUDHARY?

Born and raised in Delhi, Chaudhary began his career in India and represented Punjab in domestic cricket. He featured in 14 white-ball matches for the state side, sharing the dressing room with players such as Harbhajan Singh, Shubman Gill and Abhishek Sharma. He also



had a trial stint with Mumbai Indians before his career took a different direction. His move to Australia came during the COVID-19 pandemic. Chaudhary had traveled to Queensland to visit his uncle, but international travel restrictions extended his stay and opened up an opportunity to pursue cricket in Australia. Over the next few years, he worked his way through the domestic ranks and established himself as a regular performer for Tasmania and the Hobart Hurricanes. Chaudhary played a role in Hobart Hurricanes' BBL title-winning campaign and enjoyed his most productive season with the bat last summer. He scored 307 runs at an average of 30.70 and a strike rate of 153. While his bowling opportunities were reduced following the arrival of wrist-spinners.

## INTERVIEW | You have to look forward to success but also understand and be okay to fail: Shreyanka Patil has her eyes set on T20 World Cup title

→ In England for her second global event, the all-rounder opens up about the time away, her support system, comeback and more

New Delhi. (Agency)

Moments after India beat Australia in the first of the three T20Is at the Sydney Cricket Ground earlier this year, Shreyanka Patil found herself wandering into the dressing room alone. At least she thought she was. The rain-interrupted match ended in the favour of the visitors (21 runs (DLS method)), but Patil, on her comeback, had gone for 24 runs in two overs. After being out of the team for more than a year due to injuries, she had landed in Australia filled with hopes of a fairytale return. For her, it had felt like making her India debut all over again. The nerves were there, wearing the blue clothing again, but having done the hard yards and ticked all the boxes in the training leading up to the first T20I, she had hoped for things to go her way. When that did not happen, she did not know how to react. Disturbed and heartbroken, she entered the

dressing room not knowing Smriti Mandhana was there too. "When I went, I just saw Smriti and then I hugged her. And then tears started rolling down," Patil recalled in a conversation with this daily after the South Africa tour. As someone not afraid to be vulnerable, Patil wanted to let it all out. And in Mandhana, one of her close friends and Royal Challengers Bengaluru skipper, she found a shoulder to cry on. "She is someone who understands me very well. I cried in front of her. She was like 'I'm proud of you that you're here (doing) what you love doing. I know you will win games for India. There is no doubt about it'. She kept saying such things which genuinely came from her heart," she remembers. Soon after, Patil became calm and moved on. It is one of the many things she had been consciously telling herself during her time away from the game. "Be happy and grateful that you're just back on the field, doing what you love doing. Whenever you are fit, in that mental space, just enjoy yourself. Results will come one day. You will get fitter one day. You might get hit for 50 runs on another. You have to understand and be okay to fail. You always don't get the success you want. Yes, you have to look forward to that but also understand the setbacks, failure, and get out of it as soon as possible." Telling yourself that is one thing. But practising is a completely different challenge. And that did

not come easy, especially for someone who had seen nothing but success till the big injury setback in late 2024.

From the time she came through the ranks in Karnataka cricket, Patil has been the golden-eyed star. The young off-spinning all-rounder



who made one sit and up watch every time the ball left her hand. She moved up the ranks in India A, got picked by RCB in the 2023 Women's Premier League, made her India debut later that year, won the title with RCB before going to her maiden T20 World Cup in 2024. Then came the injuries, one after another every time she came close to playing again meant Patil was out of action between October

2024 and September 2025. With every setback, doubts and insecurities crept in. But in time, she made peace with the fact that she missed a season of WPL, and watched her teammates and friends lift the ODI World Cup trophy from afar. It helped that she had her close people around - from coach Arjun Dev to Mandhana, Jemimah Rodrigues, Arundhati Reddy, Kanika Ahuja and Renuka Singh Thakur - and she also got to interact with some of the male cricketers at the BCCI Centre of Excellence. In empathising with their journeys, Patil started to reflect on her own cricket, her limits, skills, strengths and how to react in certain situations and why she doesn't have to do everything all at once. "Cricket, I think more or less, I have kept it very similar to what I was doing before the injury phase because that has given me a lot of success.

When you ask me about mentally, I think I am still wanting to be a little more calmer under pressure. Obviously, the decision making shouldn't go wrong. You can't be 100 per cent. Now, if I am 40 per cent, can I get to 70 per cent? That's again your personal choice, how badly you want it. Sometimes, I don't feel like doing it. But if you have to be the greatest all-rounder, you have to push in that extra yard. Mentally again, (Arjun) sir keeps putting me under pressure.

## LA 2028 working to avoid repeat of World Cup visa issues in US: IOC chief

IRVINE, Calif. (Agency)

Los Angeles 2028 organisers are working closely with authorities to avoid a repeat of the visa complications and entry denials that have already affected stakeholders at the FIFA World Cup co-hosted by the United States, IOC president Kirsty Coventry said on Wednesday. Speaking in Lausanne after a meeting of the IOC Executive Board, Coventry said the effort was aimed at ensuring the Olympic Games do not encounter the same access issues that have emerged around another major sporting event being staged in the country. The concern is far from hypothetical. Visa-related problems have already surfaced ahead of the World Cup, which begins on Thursday across the United States, Canada and Mexico. At the same Lausanne meeting, the IOC Executive Board also approved a proposal to add ski mountaineering to the 2030 Winter Olympics in the French Alps while deciding against the inclusion of crossover sports such as cyclocross for now. "I am confident that in two years we will

## FIFA World Cup arrives broken. Can football fix it again?

The wait is over. Football's grandest stage is set once again. Yet before the spotlight turns to Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo and a new generation eager to make its mark, the 2026 FIFA World Cup arrives under a cloud of scrutiny, carrying more off-field questions than any tournament would want on the eve of kick-off.

IRVINE, Calif. (Agency)

The World Cup is a true celebration of football and humanity."

Oh, Peter Drury. We have come a long way since 2010. Usually, the final few days before a World Cup are reserved for the important debates. Who are the favourites? Is this finally Lionel Messi's last dance? Can Cristiano Ronaldo somehow do it one more time? Which teenager is about to become football's next superstar? Which dark horse is about to ruin somebody else's summer? Until 2026. This

time, many supporters seem almost as concerned about what could go wrong around the tournament as they are about what might happen on the pitch. That feels like a



strange sentence to write about a World Cup. For generations, this tournament has been football's grand event that arrives every four years and sends the fandom into a frenzy. It is

usually the month when the game temporarily convinces us that nothing else matters quite as much as a perfectly weighted 90 minutes plus added time. Yet as the FIFA World Cup 2026 finally arrives, football's biggest celebration does so carrying a level of baggage that few editions before it have had to deal with.

At the centre of it all are geopolitical tensions that have steadily crept into the tournament's orbit. The ongoing conflict involving the United States and Iran has transformed what should have been a routine World Cup build-up into something far more complicated. Iran and other teams have had to navigate visa concerns, logistical uncertainty and even made teams relocate sites of their preparations, and questions around who can enter the host nation and under what conditions have become the bigger part of the build-up.

## Ja'Kobe Tharp smashes 110m hurdles world record at NCAA championships



LOS ANGELES (Agency)

Ja'Kobe Tharp clocked 12.75sec to smash the 110m hurdles world record during heats at the NCAA collegiate athletics championships in Eugene, Oregon, on Wednesday. Tharp wiped out the long-standing previous record of 12.80sec set by fellow American Aries Merritt in Brussels on September 7, 2012. The performance, run

with a legal tailwind of one meter per second sec, also shattered Grant Holloway's NCAA collegiate record of 12.98sec set in 2019. The 20-year-old Auburn University standout came into the meeting with a personal best of 13.01sec. He took more than a quarter of a second off that mark. "I knew I had that in my legs," Tharp told reporters. "But it wasn't on my bingo card before this meet, not at

## → The 20-year-old Auburn University standout came into the meeting with a personal best of 13.01 sec.

all. "Tharp said he felt like he was "going pretty fast". "The last three hurdles were kind of iffy," he said. "I was like, 'Whoa, I'm coming up kind of fast.' I thought maybe 12.97 or 12.98 and match the (NCAA) speed record. But to see that ... I'm speechless, seriously." While he did not have a world record in mind, Tharp said he "really wanted to make a statement". Having achieved that he can now focus on Friday's final, in which he'll try to become the first athlete since Olympic champion Holloway in 2019 to win a second straight NCAA crown in the event. "I'm trying to focus on what's here in front of me," he said.



be able to overcome a number of the challenges that the World Cup is facing right now. But I think that also takes collaboration and learning," Coventry said. IOC sports director Pierre Ducrey said dedicated teams within the Los Angeles organising committee were already working on the issue. "They have an office in Washington, there is a strong relationship they are building with the authorities, with the right agencies that will have to be involved in this process," Ducrey said. He added that part of the effort involved giving government agencies a clearer understanding of who would be traveling to the Games and the roles they would play. "I think it's also a lot about explaining who is going to be coming, the profile of the people, the role they have to play so that we can also spend a lot of time educating the agencies and make sure we are all on the same page regarding what is going to happen in 2028."

## India will play fearless cricket at T20 World Cup: Harmanpreet before Pakistan clash

New Delhi. (Agency)

India captain Harmanpreet Kaur has promised a fearless approach as her side prepares to begin its ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026 campaign against arch-rivals Pakistan at Edgbaston in Birmingham on Sunday.

With the warm-up matches done, the focus now shifts to the main event for Team India. Harmanpreet's side heads into the tournament after a mixed build-up, registering a convincing win over West Indies before suffering a narrow five-run defeat to hosts England in a last-over thriller. Despite the loss, the skipper believes the team has gained valuable confidence ahead of the tournament opener. "These two practice games have given us a lot of confidence. And even today, even though we lost the game, Richa's batting was a big positive for us. That's a big belief that if we stay on the pitch, we can turn the game anytime," Harmanpreet said after the England warm-up match. India came close to chasing down 172 against England thanks to a

blistering 68 off 36 balls from Richa Ghosh. While Harmanpreet felt the team fell short because of a lack of partnerships during the chase, she was encouraged by the wicketkeeper-batter's form and ability to change the course of a game single-handedly. "I think it's about partnerships and I think we missed them. Only Richa played a blinder. In T20 cricket, you need a few partnerships in the middle, which we missed today, but it's good to see how Richa batted," she said. The India captain also revealed that the team management had used the warm-up fixtures to ensure every member of the squad got an opportunity before the tournament began. "We wanted to give everyone a fair chance before the first game, and I think everybody got one," she added. India have been placed in Group A alongside Pakistan, Australia, South Africa, Bangladesh and the Netherlands, with the clash against Pakistan expected to attract a packed crowd at Edgbaston. Harmanpreet said the team was relishing the prospect of

starting its campaign in one of cricket's biggest rivalries. "What a way to start it. Pakistan in Birmingham. That is going to be a



sensational atmosphere. We are really looking forward to that," she said. The skipper made it clear that India would look to play positive cricket from the outset. "Hopefully, we'll play fearless cricket in our first game," Harmanpreet said. India enter the tournament still searching for their maiden Women's T20

World Cup title. Their best performance came in 2020 when they reached the final before losing to Australia. The 2026 edition is the biggest Women's T20 World Cup in history, featuring 12 teams for the first time. Hosts England qualified automatically, while India, Australia, South Africa, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, West Indies and New Zealand secured direct qualification through the rankings. Bangladesh, Scotland, Ireland and tournament debutants Netherlands advanced through the global qualifiers. A total of 33 matches will be played across seven venues in England. The semi-finals are scheduled for June 30 and July 2, while the final will be held at Lord's on July 5. INDIA SQUAD FOR WOMEN'S T20 WORLD CUP: Harmanpreet Kaur (captain), Smriti Mandhana, Shafali Verma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Bharti Fulmali, Deepti Sharma, Richa Ghosh, Shree Charni, Yastika Bhatia, Nandani Sharma, Arundhati Reddy, Renuka Singh, Kranti Gaud, Shreyanka Patil and Radha Yadav.

# Katrina Kaif

**Eyeing OTT Projects For Her Comeback After Son Vihaan's Birth? What We Know**

**B**ollywood actress Katrina Kaif is reportedly preparing for her return to acting and may be considering projects in the OTT space as part of her comeback after giving birth to son Vihaan Kaushal last year. According to a report in India Today, the actress has resumed reading scripts and is carefully assessing potential opportunities before committing to her next role.

**Katrina Kaif To Make Acting Comeback With OTT Project?**

India Today reports that Katrina, who embraced motherhood in November last year, is in no hurry to sign a project and is focused on finding a story that resonates with her current priorities. The actor is reportedly expected to return to film sets in the second half of 2027 and is exploring a range of options, including OTT projects.

"Katrina Kaif is back to reading scripts after embracing motherhood recently. The actress is reportedly planning to return to a film set by the second half of 2027 and is actively looking for the right script, something that is worth her time. For the same, she seems interested in exploring streaming projects that could provide better opportunities for actors," a source told the publication.

If a streaming project materialises, it would mark Katrina's OTT debut. Despite the growing shift among Bollywood stars towards OTT content, Katrina has yet to explore the long-format storytelling format.

**Katrina Kaif's Last Project**

Katrina Kaif was last seen in Merry Christmas alongside Vijay Sethupathi, which was released in theatres on January 12, 2024. The Hindi-Tamil bilingual received positive reviews, with Katrina Kaif

and Vijay Sethupathi earning praise for their performances and on-screen chemistry. Since then, she has largely stayed out of the spotlight, leading to continued speculation about her next professional move. Katrina married Vicky Kaushal in December 2021 in a traditional Hindu wedding ceremony in Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan, attended by their close friends and family members. The couple welcomed their first child, a son named Vihaan Kaushal, on November 7, 2025.



**Anshula Kapoor Gives A Sneak-Peek Into Sonam Kapoor's Birthday Brunch: 'The Amount Of Cake...'**



**B**ollywood actress Sonam Kapoor turned a year older on June 9 and her birthday celebration seemed to be a delightful mix of family bonding, delicious food and an impressive spread of cakes. Giving fans a glimpse into the intimate yet fun birthday brunch, Sonam's cousin and social media influencer Anshula Kapoor shared a series of cheerful pictures from the gathering. Sharing the pictures, Anshula captioned the post: "The amount of cake at this brunch suggests we were planning for a small village. No regrets though Happy birthday Sonam didi @sonamkapoor."

The pictures captured a warm family celebration attended by close friends and loved ones. One picture featured Sonam Kapoor posing alongside Anshula Kapoor, Arjun Kapoor and friends. Another picture showcased a lavish dessert spread with around five birthday cakes arranged. Sonam as the birthday girl looked radiant in a striking red-and-white printed kaftan-style ensemble.

The celebration also included candid family moments. One picture showed Sonam standing beside husband Anand Ahuja as he held their son Vayu just while cutting the cake.

Other pictures displayed an elaborate platter filled with fruits, cheeses, chocolates and dips, highlighting the lavish brunch menu prepared for the occasion.

In another picture shared by Anshula, Sonam can be seen posing with all her friends and family. From BFF Masaba Gupta to cousin Arjun Kapoor, everybody can be seen smiling for the picture.

On account of her special day, the actress received many birthday wishes from many of her industry mates along with family members too.

From her father and Bollywood star Anil Kapoor to BFF Kareena Kapoor Khan, all wishes the birthday girl through heartfelt captions on their respective social media accounts.

**Shraddha Kapoor Appears Irrked As Paparazzi Swarm Her, Politely Says 'Thoda Peeche Jaana Padega'**



**B**ollywood actress Shraddha Kapoor was recently spotted by the paparazzi in Mumbai. Known for her cheerful interactions and light banter with the paps, she appeared slightly irritated this time after photographers crowded around her, making it difficult for her to even open her car door. Despite appearing a little irked, she maintained her composure and politely asked the photographers to step back so she could open the car door.

**Shraddha Kapoor Asks Paparazzi To Step Back**

In a video shared by paparazzo Viral Bhayani, Shraddha can be seen struggling to open her car door as photographers crowded her space from all sides. The actress maintained her composure and addressed the photographers, politely asking them to step back so she could get inside the vehicle safely.

She was heard saying, "Aap log thoda peeche jana padega, yeh khul nahi raha hai," requesting them to move away as the door could not be opened properly due to the crowding. Though visibly slightly irritated by the situation, Shraddha kept her tone polite and calm throughout the interaction. She waited patiently as the photographers stepped back, making space for the car door to open. Check out the video below!

**Shraddha Kapoor's Work Front**

On the professional front, Shraddha Kapoor will next be seen in the biographical drama Eetha, directed by Laxman Utekar and produced by Dinesh Vijan. In Eetha, Shraddha will share screen space with Randeep Hooda for the first time, with Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub also playing a key role. Randeep is expected to portray the male lead and romantic interest, while Shraddha is said to be playing the role of folk artist Vithabai.

The film is inspired by the life of Vithabai Narayangaonkar, a celebrated Lavani and Tamasha performer known for her contribution to Maharashtra's folk arts. The film is all set to hit the screens on this Raksha Bandhan, i.e August 28.

On the work front, Shraddha was last seen in Stree 2, which turned out to be a major box office success alongside Rajkumar Rao.

# Adah Sharma

**Reacts To Janhvi Kapoor's Peddi Row, Says 'I Think Male Actors, Directors...'**

**A**ctress Adah Sharma has reacted to Janhvi Kapoor's scenes in Peddi being called out for being oversexualised. Ever since the release of Ram Charan and Janhvi Kapoor's Peddi, many social media users have slammed the film for its problematic representation of the actress. While many have questioned director Buchi Babu Sana and Janhvi Kapoor, Adah noted that the responsibility also lies with the male actor of the film.

Adah Sharma said, in a chat with Zoom, "I have never shied away from commenting on any question asked about a film I'm part of. Even during The Kerala Story, I answered

she did not directly comment on the film, she spoke about the accountability of actors.

The actress said that the responsibility lies not just with the actress but also the male actors and the entire crew. She added, "Not just female actors; I think male actors as well, directors, writers, and even the person selecting the fake moustaches and wigs. One bad choice and the whole nation suffers. Change doesn't arrive with a drumroll."

She added, "It's like eating vegetables - you don't notice the effect immediately, but one day everyone looks healthier. Women in real life are funny, scary, brave, confused, intelligent, dramatic and sometimes all before breakfast. I enjoy when I'm offered scripts where the female character doesn't have only one setting." Meanwhile, director Buchi Babu Sana has taken



responsibility for hyper sexualising Janhvi Kapoor and has apologised to cinema fans. He said that he will edit the problematic portions of the film and a new version of Peddi will be available soon. Neither Janhvi nor Ram Charan have reacted to the controversy.

everything. If there is a scene I am in, in a film of any language, and I'm asked about it, I will definitely answer pertaining to someone lusting for me or the other way around."

"I am not in Peddi and haven't watched the film yet. Also, my journey as someone who isn't from the industry will be very different from someone who belongs to the film industry, so I don't think my comment will be valid here," she added. While



NEWS BOX

**US military secretly helped 100 mn barrels of oil through Hormuz: Trump**

World. (Agency)

President Donald Trump said Wednesday that the US military secretly helped 100 million barrels of oil pass through the Strait of Hormuz, which Iran largely closed in response to US and Israeli attacks. "Last month, I directed our Great U.S. Military to execute a secret mission to support Oil Tankers and other Commercial Ships through the Strait of Hormuz," Trump said in a post on his Truth Social platform, claiming the US "controls" the waterway. "Today, I am pleased to announce that this effort has resulted in more than 100 MILLION Barrels of Oil making its way through the Strait, and into the Open Market," he said, adding that more than 200 commercial ships had gone through. The United States began a military operation -- dubbed Project Freedom -- to escort ships through the strait in early May, but scrapped it after just a day in what Trump described as a bid to end the Middle East war, which Washington and Israel launched on February 28. US media reported later in May that the effort had resumed, but US Central Command, which is responsible for American forces in the Middle East, said at the time that reports the Navy had resumed "escorting or assisting commercial vessels" were false.

**Philippine town seeks immediate airlift of food to ease hunger in quake-hit villages**

GENERAL SANTOS. (Agency)

The mayor of a southern Philippine town that was devastated by a powerful earthquake pleaded Thursday for helicopters to transport food to stave off hunger in several landslide-isolated villages.

The 7.8 magnitude offshore quake, one of the strongest to hit the Philippine archipelago in a half century, struck Monday off the southern province of Sarangani and has left at least 47 people dead and injured 688 with 31 still missing. More than 45,000 people remained displaced, about half in emergency shelters, after the quake damaged more than 12,600 houses in farming towns and cities. Many were still too traumatized to return home due to aftershocks, provincial officials said. Sarangani reported 20 dead from the quake, the highest toll from the affected provinces, mostly due to a landslide that buried houses in the coastal town of Glan, according to the government's Office of Civil Defense, which deals with major disasters. Glan Mayor Victor James Yap said power has not been restored to his province and 10 of 31 villages in his town of more than 100,000 people remained inaccessible mostly due to landslides. He asked the government to immediately deploy air force helicopters to deliver food and other aid to the stricken areas. "We need food and water but it's difficult to transport them to some of our villages which remain isolated," Yap told DZMM radio network. "Choppers are needed to transport food because people there are already very hungry." A key access road to the town has been reopened and will allow the delivery of fuel as early as Thursday, but the town remained without power and cellphone services were still spotty, according to Yap. Most of the deaths from the quake were caused by falling debris from collapsed buildings and landslides in Sarangani, the coastal city of General Santos, and the outlying provinces of South Cotabato and Davao Occidental.

**"Ruined his face": Looksmaxxing streamer Clavicular brutally roasted after unrecognizable surgery reveal**

World. (Agency)

:writing {variant="document" id="41852"} Clavicular built his internet fame by convincing young men they could engineer the "perfect" face. Now the controversial looksmaxxing influencer is facing a wave of backlash after revealing the results of his rhinoplasty, with social media users claiming the surgery erased the distinct features that made him recognizable in the first place. The 20-year-old streamer, whose real name is Braden Peters, recently shared before-and-after photos following a nose job performed by celebrity plastic surgeon Michael Salzhauser, better known online as Dr. Miami. The images spread quickly across X, TikTok and livestream communities, sparking intense debate over whether the procedure improved his appearance or damaged it.

Clavicular nose job photos divide the internet Criticism flooded social media almost immediately after the photos surfaced online. Many users argued that Peters looked more unique before surgery and accused cosmetic trends of pushing influencers toward the same polished appearance. "His face had character before now he looks generic," one person wrote. "Jesus Christ, he looked way better before," another user commented beneath the comparison photos.

Others questioned whether the final results were still affected by swelling following surgery. "This looks uncanny it doesn't fit his face," one critic posted, while another added, "Hope it's just swelling otherwise bro ruined his face..." Not everyone agreed with the backlash. Some supporters defended Peters and praised the transformation, with one fan writing, "He actually looks much better." Peters himself appeared unfazed by the criticism. Leaning into the online jokes, he uploaded a TikTok video standing beside a Michael Jackson impersonator and captioned it, "Who had a better nose job?" The debate has also renewed broader conversations around the "looksmaxxing" culture that exploded online over the last few years. Peters became one of the movement's most recognizable faces by teaching followers how to improve physical attractiveness through strict grooming routines, fitness changes and extreme body modification advice.

**US launches new strikes on Iran, which fires back at Gulf states and Jordan**

**The US Central Command said it had "completed" its latest round of airstrikes just before sunrise in Iran.**

WASHINGTON. (Agency)

The United States launched a second round of airstrikes on Iran into Thursday morning after President Donald Trump warned that Tehran would "pay the price" for stalled negotiations, and Iran responded with strikes targeting Bahrain, Kuwait and Jordan. The new U.S. assault across multiple Iranian cities came as efforts to negotiate an end to the war again appeared stuck, with Iran insisting it would maintain its chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz, which has disrupted global energy supplies and sent oil prices higher. It was the third time this week that back-and-forth strikes have tested a two-month shaky ceasefire. Trump has urged Iran to sign a deal to end the war and suggested earlier this week that an agreement could be reached in days.

But Iran has proved resilient despite weeks of heavy bombing. It is betting that its ability to effectively close the Strait of Hormuz — a crucial passageway for oil and natural gas — gives it a strong bargaining chip.

Iran's United Nations envoy said the U.S. should refrain from threats of force if it wants a deal. Still, both countries seem to be looking for a way to end the conflict — if they can manage to sell it as a win at home. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appears intent on pursuing goals that make compromise harder: the collapse of Iran's theocratic government, the elimination of its nuclear program, and the destruction of the Iranian-allied Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon. On Monday, Iran and Israel targeted each other. US strikes on Iran and Iran fires back at Gulf States. The U.S. Central Command said it had "completed" its latest round of airstrikes just before sunrise in Iran. The military command said the strikes came "in response to Iran's unwarranted and continued aggression" and targeted "Iranian military surveillance capabilities, communication systems and air defense sites." It did not

elaborate on the damage done by the strikes, which it said were carried out by the U.S. Air Force, Marines and Navy. Explosions from the strikes echoed around Iran's capital, Tehran, as well as the port city



of Bandar Abbas and other southern areas along the Strait of Hormuz. Iran responded by launching strikes on Bahrain, Kuwait and Jordan, and Kuwait closed its airspace as its air defenses fought off the attack. Kuwait's Directorate General of Civil Aviation said flights were being diverted to other airports, without elaborating. "This measure comes in light of the state of Kuwait being subjected to sinful Iranian aggressions and the potential risks that may result from this on

civil aviation traffic in the region," Kuwait said. Kuwait International Airport took a direct Iranian hit in recent days, killing one person and wounding dozens. On Wednesday, Iran responded to U.S. strikes with attacks on Bahrain, Kuwait and Jordan, all of which host U.S. troops. Israel early Thursday also warned residents in the north to seek shelter after the detection of suspected incoming fire from Lebanon, while the U.S. Embassy in Jordan issued a warning that "reports indicate missiles, drones or rockets are in Jordanian airspace." There was no immediate acknowledgment from Jordanian state media about the reports of missile fire, but Iran said it again targeted Jordan's Muwaffaq Salti Air Base on Thursday. Trump says US is sneaking oil past the Strait of Hormuz. Since the U.S. and Israel started the war with Feb. 28 attacks on Iran, the conflict has shaken the global economy, driven up energy prices worldwide, and made food and other basics more expensive. The international benchmark for crude oil traded above \$93 a barrel on Wednesday, up more than 25% since the start of the war.

**FBI Seizes 13 Websites Used By China To Target US Workers With Sensitive Information**

Washington. (Agency)

The FBI has seized more than a dozen websites that officials say were part of a Chinese effort to target American workers who have access to classified or sensitive government information, the Justice Department said Wednesday. The 13 websites purported to be affiliated with consulting companies that advertised job openings for current and former holders of security clearances. But the companies were all fakes and the job postings were a sham, officials said. The internet domain seizure is part of a broader effort by Western law enforcement and intelligence agencies to sound the alarm about alleged Chinese government plots to recruit workers who can be duped into disclosing sensitive information. Last week, for instance, the English-speaking Five Eyes intelligence-sharing alliance - Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the U.K. and the U.S. - issued a bulletin warning that China is targeting personnel from those countries on job websites to get access

to classified or sensitive information. he bulletin said spies for Chinese military intelligence have been posing as workers acting on behalf of private businesses or think tanks, advertising



for bogus jobs such as foreign policy or defense analysts and pressuring candidates to provide "non-public" information. According to an FBI affidavit filed in connection with the website seizure, the fake websites relied on fraudulent or stolen identities and AI-generated photographs to give them the appearance of legitimacy, and advertised generic "consulting" jobs

geared toward current or former U.S. government employees. "These websites are often linked or referenced within the entities' job postings on LinkedIn and other hiring platforms," the affidavit said.

Applicants and recruits were offered money for reports related to their work and for sensitive information, the Justice Department said. The operators of the plot, who officials allege to be tied to Chinese intelligence services, used cryptocurrency and online payment systems to hide their real identities, officials said. Law enforcement officials identified the websites through information from targets who came forward to report what they believed to be suspicious interactions. "A lot of this information came from doing interviews, interviews with people who came forward that something didn't seem right," Dan Wierzbicki, the special agent in charge of the counterintelligence and cyber division of the FBI's Washington field office, said in an interview.

**Number of forcibly displaced people dips to 118 million: UN**

GENEVA. (Agency)

The number of forcibly displaced people dropped for the first time in a decade last year, as more opted to return home despite often unsafe and unstable conditions, the UN said Thursday.

At the end of 2025, 117.8 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced from their homes, marking a decline of 5.4 million compared to a year earlier, the UN refugee agency said. The agency said the number of people who had been forced to flee due to war, violence and persecution remained "unacceptably high", urging action to dramatically reduce long-term displacement over the next decade. In its annual report, UNHCR explained that the declining displacement number was linked to "a sharp increase" in the number of refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) returning home. In all, 14.7 million displaced people returned

to their places of origin in 2025, said the report. They included 4.4 million refugees who crossed back into their home countries, marking the second highest number of refugee returns since



records began 60 years ago. Unsafe returns UN refugee chief Barham Salih told reporters in Geneva that "more than 90 percent" of refugee returns last year were concentrated in Afghanistan, Sudan and Syria. But, he stressed, "many of these returns occurred not

under conditions of safety and stability, but under pressure".

They had gone back to "countries where insecurity persists, where infrastructure has been damaged, and where basic services and economic opportunities remain scarce", he warned. "Returns that are not safe... are not a solution," he insisted. "They risk becoming the beginning of a new displacement cycle." Among those displaced at the end of 2025, 41.6 million were considered refugees, including nearly 5.4 million people who fled across borders to become refugees in the course of the year, Thursday's report showed. A full 60 percent of those new refugees fled from just eight countries, including nearly a million coming from war-ravaged Sudan alone, and almost 800,000 fled from Ukraine. The report also pointed to several crises driving mass displacement since the start of this year.

**Bill Gates Says Jeffrey Epstein Tried To Use His Extramarital Affairs To Pressure Him**

UNITED NATIONS. (Agency)

Bill Gates told a US congressional committee on Wednesday that Jeffrey Epstein attempted to use information about his extramarital affairs against him. The Microsoft co-founder made the remarks in a statement prepared for a closed-door hearing before the House Oversight Committee. At the hearing, Gates was questioned about his interactions with the disgraced financier. The committee is examining how the Justice Department handled investigations related to Epstein and his associates. "These affairs had nothing to do with my interactions with Epstein, but they were painful for my family," Gates said, according to a copy of his opening statement. "Epstein was working to use information about my infidelities — in addition to many lies that he layered on top — to pressure me to re-engage with him," he added. In his statement, Gates reiterated that he deeply regretted his association with Epstein, describing the relationship as a serious mistake. However, he maintained that he had never witnessed Epstein engage in criminal activity and denied any wrongdoing on his own part. "In the work I do, reputation is the basis for developing



partnerships that save lives. Meeting with Epstein was a grave error in judgment and put this work at risk," he was quoted as saying by The New York Times.

Gates said Epstein's behaviour was 'antithetical' to all his "efforts to contribute to a world where everyone has a chance to live a healthy and productive life." The relationship between the two began in 2011, several years after Epstein had pleaded guilty in Florida to charges involving the solicitation of prostitution from a minor. Gates acknowledged that he was aware Epstein had faced legal issues but said he had not fully understood the extent of the allegations and crimes linked to him at the time they were introduced. "I accepted the introduction without applying the scrutiny I should have," he added. He met Epstein on several occasions between 2011 and 2014, primarily to discuss the possibility of creating a charitable donor-advised fund. The proposed project ultimately never materialised, and discussions between the two had largely ended by late 2014. Gates told lawmakers that he later learned Epstein had allegedly sought to use his marital problems in an effort to acquire leverage over him. He said documents that have since become public, Epstein was "working to use information about my infidelities.

**US renews Iran attacks, Tehran closes Strait of Hormuz**

**President Donald Trump said that as the bombing was underway Iranian leaders called him directly in the White House Situation Room and asked him to halt the attack, Fox News reported.**

WASHINGTON. (Agency)

The United States launched a new wave of attacks against Iran on Wednesday night as efforts to end the three-month old war sputtered, and Tehran hit back saying it will target any ship going through the Strait of Hormuz. US Central Command said American forces began "additional self-defense strikes" at 5:15 pm Washington time, early Thursday in Iran, against multiple targets in Iran, in response to what it called Tehran's "unwarranted and continued aggression." Iranian media reported explosions across the country's south near the Strait of Hormuz, the same area where US forces had already bombarded air defense, radar and other sites on Tuesday. Iranian sources reported new

hits by "enemy projectiles" in Qeshm, Kargan and Sirik. The Iranian navy said it hit two ships trying to sail through the Strait of Hormuz, state television IRIB and the Mehr agency reported. Iranian media also reported that Iran had attacked the US Fifth Fleet in Bahrain, hitting communication antennas and radar facilities. After the new American air strikes "any vessel traffic through the Strait of Hormuz will be targeted," the Khatam al-Anbiya command said, according to Tasnim news agency. The strait is now closed "completely closed to all types of vessel," the command said. US Centcom denied this, saying "commercial ships are continuing to transit in and out of the Strait of Hormuz tonight." President Donald Trump said that as the bombing was underway Iranian leaders called him directly in the White House Situation Room and asked him to halt the attack, Fox News reported. Iran's Revolutionary Guards quickly denied Iran made such a request, the IRNA news agency said. Trump said US forces hit Iran with 49 Tomahawk missiles and some targets were as close as 40 miles (60 km) from Tehran, Fox said. If Iran does not accept US terms for ending the three-month-old war, "President Trump said, quote, 'We'll bomb the S out of them

tomorrow night," said Fox News reporter Trey Yingst, who spoke to the president.

'Playing us for suckers' The second straight day of US attacks followed Trump's complaint that Tehran's negotiators were taking too long and



"playing us for suckers." Earlier this week he had suggested a peace accord was just days away. "We hit them hard yesterday. We're going to hit them again hard today," Trump told reporters Wednesday morning. "We were really close to a deal, but they keep tapping us along." Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth suggested the strikes could extend into a third night, saying they would be "strong" and "clear." The escalation drew

international calls for restraint on the eve of the World Cup, which the US is co-hosting and Iran is participating in. UN chief Antonio Guterres cautioned against a return to "full war." Twenty-two countries including the United States and European nations also warned Iran on Thursday to stop attacking people "on our soil." Attempts to kill, kidnap, harass, intimidate, or otherwise attack people on our soil, undermines national sovereignty and international norms. These actions must stop immediately," they said in a joint statement.

Iran's UN Ambassador Amir Saeid Iravani, meanwhile, rejected Trump's threat, saying "no sustainable deal can be reached through threats, intimidation, or the use of force." But diplomacy had not collapsed entirely, with Qatari negotiators traveling to Tehran "to meet with the Iranians in an effort to bridge the remaining gaps," a diplomat with knowledge of the situation said. The war began with massive US-Israeli strikes on Iran, rattling the region and global markets before an increasingly shaky truce took effect. The conflict has driven energy prices higher since Tehran retaliated by virtually closing the Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly a fifth of global oil normally passes.