

How a roadside tea stall became **Rahul Gandhi's** centre stage in Chhattisgarh

In an era dominated by mega-rallies and digital campaigns, Rahul's Raipur detour served as a vivid reminder of his preferred political currency: the unscripted, everyday human connection.

RAIPUR.(Agency)

In a refreshing interval from tight security protocols and formal political gatherings, Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi's impromptu tea break instantly transformed the humble roadside stall into a hub of political camaraderie in Raipur. On a quiet Sunday evening on Mana Road, just outside Chhattisgarh's capital, a humble roadside tea stall was suddenly transformed from a sleepy pitstop into the epicentre of high-profile political affinity. The Congress leader's innate inclination for personal connection broke through. Spotting a young boy and girl standing nearby among the gathering crowd, Rahul paused his schedule to speak with them casually, asking about their lives and stories. Moments later, noticing a local family, he leaned down to lock eyes and giggle with a wide-eyed toddler.

He and his colleagues snacked on local biscuits, sharing lighthearted laughs with onlookers and a crowd of pleasantly stunned locals who had gathered to watch the spectacle.



In an era dominated by mega-rallies and digital campaigns, Rahul's Raipur detour served as a vivid reminder of his preferred political currency: the unscripted, everyday human connection. It is his distinct, casual style of

public engagement that often defines his political persona, and Sunday was no exception. While en route to the Swami Vivekananda Airport, he asked his convoy to halt, stepped out of his vehicle, and walked right into a local tea stall.

Rahul wrapped up an intense, four-hour session at the Congress party's intensive training camp, "Sangathan Srijan Abhiyan," in Abhanpur, roughly 30 kilometers from Raipur. Inside the closed doors of the camp, the atmosphere had been strictly business.

He spent 40 focused minutes huddling with the state's senior heavyweights before opening the floor to a sprawling, interactive brainstorming session with city and district unit presidents.

It was an exercise in pure organisational architecture—mentoring grassroots chiefs, refining regional strategies, and charting out a blueprint for ground-level mobilisation. But for Rahul, the real work of politics doesn't end when the official meeting adjourns.

Karjan Mining Scam: Unholy Nexus Between Politicians, Bureaucracy, and Mafia Exposed

SDM admits defeat as 100+ dumpers hollow out Karjan daily

Mahanagar Metro Desk
Pawan Mekan

Karjan/Vadodara: A massive illegal sand and soil mining scam in Karjan taluka has exposed a dark nexus between politicians, corrupt administration, and the mining mafia. The blatant plundering of natural resources in Pingalwada village has laid bare the inaction of top officials sitting in air-conditioned offices and the alleged complicity of local leaders. Over 100 dumpers and 15 heavy excavators are operating relentlessly, day and night, causing massive royalty losses to the state treasury. Locals allege that MLA Akshay Patel and Taluka Panchayat member Gokul Bharwad, also known as Ghughha, are the primary masterminds behind this syndicate. While the MLA is accused of amassing immense proxy wealth through his political influence, Bharwad allegedly controls the administrative machinery using illicit funds. Despite numerous evidence-backed complaints to the Gandhinagar and Vadodara Mining Departments, Mamlatdar C.R. Padhiyar, and SDM Shivam Baria, no concrete action has been taken. Villagers allege a massive monthly bribery ring keeps officials silent. Furthermore, the main accused, Gokul Bharwad, has a notorious criminal



record, which includes previous arrests involving illegal firearms and the kidnapping and attempted murder of an honest Karjan police constable, Laxman Ahir. When questioned, SDM Shivam Baria deflected responsibility, stating that stopping illegal mining falls strictly under the Mining Department's

jurisdiction. Shockingly, he admitted that their raids only catch small fish, confessing that untouchable big crocodiles like Bharwad are entirely beyond an SDM's reach. Residents are furious at MLA Akshay Patel, who switched from Congress to BJP, mocking him as having been washed clean in a political washing machine. The public is now demanding a swift and impartial Anti-Corruption Bureau probe and the attachment of disproportionate assets belonging to both leaders. Mahanagar Metro raises a direct question: Will the Chief Minister deploy a legal bulldozer against these mafias, or will political patronage bury the issue? The fight to save Karjan's rivers from these white-collar criminals continues.

Omar Abdullah Was Asked About His Phone's Wallpaper. His Reply

As the conservation continued, Omar Abdullah scrolled through his phone, explaining that he uses different wallpapers for different focus modes.

Bandipora.(Agency)

Sir, if it is not too forward of me to ask. Could you show us your phone's wallpaper?" a student asked Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah during a candid conversation with college students in north Kashmir's Bandipora district.

"Oh, sure," Omar Abdullah replied, quickly pulling his phone out of his pocket. "Thank God it is nothing embarrassing," he added, drawing laughter from the students. Omar Abdullah shared the video on his official Instagram account. As the conversation continued, Omar Abdullah scrolled through his phone, explaining that he uses different wallpapers for different focus modes. "Right now - believe it or not - it's just clouds with lightning from Bandipora," he said.

"I do have other wallpapers as well. The other one is just a map - nothing interesting. Do I have any photographs as my wallpaper? Honestly, no," he said. Omar Abdullah also shared that he uses a privacy screen guard on his phone because so many people want to see what is on his phone. "My fitness wallpaper is just a meme," he added.

"My wallpaper is so boring because all the time somebody is peeping over me. That's why I have a privacy screen guard for my phone - so people around me cannot see what's on my phone," he said. The Chief Minister said even during flights, any person sitting next to him always tries to peep into his phone. "So I make sure there is nothing embarrassing on it - nothing that someone could take a screenshot and put it on social media, something I would later have to apologise for," he said.



BJP's aim is to change Constitution by breaking parties, claims **Aaditya Thackeray**

New Delhi.(Agency)

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray on Monday accused the BJP of attempting to engineer defections within his party to secure the numbers required in Parliament to amend the Constitution, amid reports that six Shiv Sena (UBT) MPs are set to join the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena.

Addressing a press conference, Thackeray alleged that the BJP was trying to weaken opposition parties after falling short of a majority in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

"Today they are breaking our MPs and MLAs as they are willing to change the constitution of Babasaheb Ambedkar. Voters prevented them in 2024, and they got only 240 MPs, but now they are trying that again by breaking parties; their main aim is to change the constitution," he said. His remarks come amid growing speculation over a fresh split in Shiv Sena (UBT), with six of the party's nine Lok Sabha MPs reportedly preparing to switch allegiance to the Shinde faction in what has been dubbed "Operation Tiger".

Thackeray criticised the rebel MPs, arguing that they owed their electoral victories to the collective efforts of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) alliance and were now betraying the mandate given by voters. "All these people were elected on Shiv Sena (UBT) with the help of MVA allies, and now they are switching to the other side against the people's mandate," he said.

He further contended that voters in the concerned constituencies had rejected the NDA's ideology and questioned the decision of the MPs to align with the ruling alliance. Launching a broader attack on the BJP, Thackeray said, "BJP can riot in the country, put things on rampage, can campaign, but one thing is sure that BJP doesn't know how to rule. We are seeing this in BMC in Mumbai and PMC in Pune."

He also alleged misuse of public resources to facilitate political defections. "These people don't have money for salaries of employees and welfare schemes, but they have money to buy MPs," he claimed.



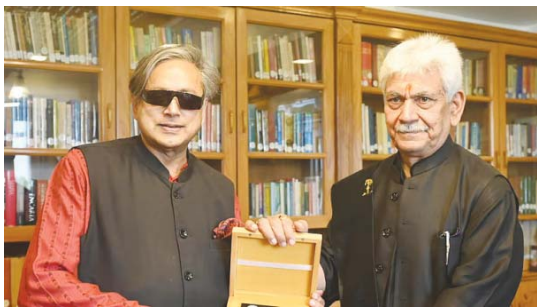
J&K congress, youth leader criticise **MP Shashi Tharoor's** 'normalcy' remarks after meeting LG Sinha

SRINAGAR.(Agency)

In an usual move, Jammu and Kashmir Congress has slammed the remarks of party's senior leader and MP Shashi Tharoor that "there was encouraging progress towards normalcy" after his meeting with Lt Governor Manoj Sinha in Srinagar. Congress MP Shashi Tharoor met J&K Lt Governor Manoj Sinha at Lok Bhavan in Srinagar yesterday.

In the post on X, Tharoor said, "In Srinagar! Had the honour of an excellent meeting with Lieutenant-Governor Shri @manojsinha_ at Lok Bhavan today".

"We discussed the situation in the state and the encouraging progress towards normalcy. When I arrived he was chatting to the President of the Kashmiri Writers' Association and the Women's Organisation — a positive outreach that I



welcomed. Many challenges remain and much remains to be done, but I left the meeting feeling more positives than I have felt for a while," he further said. Surprisingly, the office of LG did not issue any official statement about the meeting. J&K Congress spokesman Ravindra Sharma took to X to hit back at Tharoor over his remarks.

"People of Kashmir too were expecting you to meet them to have a better understanding of the ground realities. Atleast could've spared sometime to meet own partymen fighting for statehood snatched from us 7 years ago (sic)," Sharma said.

Youth leader and J&K Students Association national convener Nasir Khuehami also slammed Congress MP saying it is deeply disappointing that a parliamentarian of Tharoor's stature chose not to engage in any meaningful dialogue with the people whose voices have been consistently sidelined. "Kashmir deserves more than symbolic visits and carefully curated interactions".

According to Khuehami, "India today is grappling with serious challenges; paper leaks, recruitment scams, examination fraud, rising unemployment, shrinking democratic spaces, and institutional

erosion. Kashmir has, unfortunately, become a laboratory where many of these injustices have been experienced in their most acute form. Thousands of young people have seen their aspirations shattered by recruitment irregularities, scams and prolonged delays in public examinations, and the absence of meaningful political and democratic engagement."

"Many Kashmiris genuinely hoped that your visit would provide an opportunity to listen to these concerns firsthand. We expected you to meet students, unemployed youth, civil society representatives, opposition leaders, and other stakeholders who continue to struggle with the realities on the ground. Instead, your interactions appeared selective, avoiding those who could have presented a more nuanced and uncomfortable picture of Kashmir," he said.

Shashi Tharoor met J&K LG Manoj Sinha in Srinagar, calling their meeting at Lok Bhavan "excellent" and encouraging.

News box

Man thrashed, car smashed after row over giving way

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A man on his way back home was allegedly chased for several kilometres, cornered at a busy traffic signal and attacked after a dispute over overtaking. By the time the assault ended, his car windows had been smashed, his face was bloodied, and stunned commuters had gathered around the wreckage.

Abhishek Chaudhary, a resident of CR Park in Delhi, had come to Gurgaon for a meeting on Sohna Road and was heading back when the confrontation began.

According to his complaint, a Scorpio trailing his MG Windsor repeatedly tried to overtake and cut into his lane as both vehicles moved towards Delhi. Abhishek told police he continued driving within traffic rules and did not give way.

That, police said, triggered the confrontation. The SUV driver allegedly tried to force Abhishek to stop by blocking his path. He managed to move ahead, but the vehicle kept chasing him through traffic. The pursuit continued up to Rajiv Chowk, one of the city's busiest junctions.

At the red light, with nowhere to move, Abhishek's car came to a halt. That is when the SUV occupants got out, surrounded his vehicle and began smashing its front windscreen and side windows with a stick. Police said the accused also tried to physically assault him during the attack. Abhishek suffered injuries to his face and was later taken to a hospital, where his medico-legal case was prepared. The attack, carried out in broad daylight, drew the attention of passersby. As a crowd began gathering and Abhishek started recording the scene on his phone, the attackers fled.

Fellow resident chases, thrashes feeder with stick in Noida's Gaur City 2 over stray dogs

Noida.(Agency)

A Gaur City 2 resident suffered a fractured index finger and sustained injuries to her legs and back from an assault by a fellow resident of the township when she was on her way to feed community dogs on Saturday evening.

Bhavna Kapoor alleged she was attacked with a wooden stick -- the kind security guards use -- by Deepak Chauhan while his wife Tinu allegedly threatened to run her scooter over her.

This is the second time, Bhavna alleged, that Chauhan has been involved in an attack on her. In Feb 2024, Chauhan and a section of residents had protested against Bhavna for feeding dogs. Though an FIR was filed then, Bhavna said there was no followup action by police and no effort by the Noida administration or Greater Noida Authority to sensitise residents and protect those who help feed community dogs.

Following Bhavna's latest complaint, Chauhan was taken into custody after an FIR was registered at Bisrakh police station. Munendra Singh, SHO of Bisrakh, told TOI the case was registered against Chauhan and Tinu under sections 115 (2) (voluntarily causing hurt), 351 (3) (criminal intimidation) and 352 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of peace) of BNS. "We have arrested Deepak and further investigation is under way," he said.

Bhavna as well as animal rights activists, however, said compared to the gravity of the assault, Chauhan was slapped with a lighter charge and asked why police had not invoked Section 117 (grievous injury and assault using a dangerous weapon). Section 115 is invoked for minor injuries.

Truck on wrong side rams lead car in MLA convoy, cop dies

Noida.(Agency)

A sub-inspector died and a head constable was grievously injured after a truck driving on the wrong side crashed into the lead escort vehicle of BJP MLA Rajesh Chaudhary's convoy near Noida International Airport on Sunday afternoon.

The accident took place around 1pm on the link road connecting Yamuna Expressway with the newly inaugurated airport in Jewar. Chaudhary, the MLA from Mant in Mathura, was heading to the airport to catch a flight to Hyderabad when the convoy was hit.

Rajendra Singh Yadav, the sub-inspector who died, was posted at Mathura police lines and deployed on the MLA's security detail. Head constable Sultan Singh, who was travelling in the same vehicle, is battling critical head injuries.

Ravi Shankar Nim, DCP (Greater Noida), said the dumper truck collided head-on with the police vehicle leading the convoy.

"As the convoy entered the airport link road, the truck speeding down the wrong side crashed into the lead vehicle. The MLA's car was immediately behind it. Police from Jewar reached the spot as soon as information came in," the DCP said.

Both injured policemen were rushed to a nearby private hospital, where doctors declared Yadav dead. Sultan was wheeled into the emergency ward.

The truck driver, Aneesh from Jewar, was arrested on the spot and the vehicle seized. An FIR was lodged under BNS sections 281 (rash driving) and 106 (causing death by negligence). Senior officers said heavy vehicles have been using unauthorised cuts to access Yamuna Expressway because the main connecting road is still incomplete. "Such shortcuts are increasingly becoming a risky passage," an officer said.

During questioning, the truck driver allegedly claimed the vehicle's jack had malfunctioned and he was on his way to a mechanic when the crash occurred.

He said he was speeding and lost control after spotting the convoy. He swerved left when he should have turned right," the officer said.

The accident comes barely a week after another fatal crash on an under-construction airport link road. A 45-year-old hospital manager from Faridabad died last week after his motorcycle plunged into a 7ft pit near Dankaur while travelling towards the airport corridor.

New buildings, boundary walls found on protected forest land in Anangpur despite SC curbs

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Fresh construction activity has surfaced in Anangpur village's protected forest belt, with a site visit revealing newly built structures, extensive boundary walls and signs of ongoing development in an area that falls under the Punjab Land Preservation Act (PLPA) and has long been at the centre of legal battles over encroachments in the Aravalis.

During a visit, TOI found a large multi-storey building in an advanced stage of construction, freshly plastered compound walls enclosing sizeable parcels of land and evidence of recent building activity, including masonry work and construction material. The land record of the location indicated that the structures fall within a PLPA-notified area.

The fresh construction comes despite repeated Supreme Court interventions

and findings by multiple agencies highlighting large-scale encroachments in the protected landscape.

Following a 2022 court order, the Haryana govt surveyed and found 6,793 illegal structures — mostly banquet halls and residential settlements — on protected land across four Faridabad villages. A majority were in Anangpur (5,948), with the rest spread across Ankhir, Lakkarpur, and Mewla Maharajpur.

The scale of the problem resurfaced last year when Supreme Court-appointed Central Empowered Committee (CEC) reported at least 5,800 houses had come up over 168 acres of forest land in Anangpur alone. The committee had been directed to review compliance after the apex court noted that implementation of its directions had been "very slow".



The significance of the latest construction lies not in the buildings themselves but in the legal status of the land. The affected areas fall under sections 4 and 5 of PLPA, which prohibit non-forest activities. Courts have repeatedly treated land notified under these provisions as equivalent to "forest", bringing it under a protective legal regime aimed at conserving

ecologically fragile landscapes.

Environmental experts say the fresh structures signal continuing pressure on the Aravali ecosystem despite decades of judicial oversight.

"The issue is no longer just about isolated buildings. Every new boundary wall fragments the landscape further and signals the conversion of open ecological spaces into private real estate," said ecologist Sunil Harsana.

The Aravalis in Faridabad and Gurgaon have remained vulnerable to encroachment despite legal protections and a ban on stone quarrying. Court-appointed panels and environmental groups have repeatedly documented how illegal roads and access tracks are carved through forested areas, becoming conduits for mining, dumping of construction waste, and further land grab.

No water supply for days in tail-end areas in Gurgaon, 100 families left high and dry

Gurgaon.(Agency)

More than 100 families in Sector 57 have been facing severe water shortage for the past two months, with many households relying on private water tankers to meet their daily needs. It has been four months since a new water pipeline was laid in the area, but the delay in connecting it to the underground reservoir (UGR) has prevented any improvement in supply.

Residents said Sector 57 has witnessed rapid growth over the years, but the water infrastructure has not kept pace with it. "The water supply system in Sector 57 was designed more than two decades ago. Today, the population has multiplied, but the infrastructure remains the same. Several pockets located at the tail end of

the distribution network receive inadequate supply because of low pressure," said Bhagat Ram Ghanghas, a

household activities around tanker deliveries," Ghanghas said.

President of Sector 57 RWA, Roshan Lal

Yadav, said, "We urge authorities to immediately connect the new pipeline to the UGR or allow us to have a borewell."

Another resident, Azad Singh Jangra, said the dependence on tankers has become a financial burden. "Residents are forced to arrange private tankers.

During peak summer months, demand rises sharply, and so do tanker costs. Earlier, a tanker cost Rs 1,000; now it costs Rs 1,200, sometimes Rs 1,500. Water is a necessity, and people should not have to struggle for it every day," he said.

Meanwhile, Sandeep Sihag, executive engineer of MCG, said, "I will check the matter, and the needful will be done to address the problem."



Delay in garbage collection turns area near key Gurgaon market into dumpsite

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Residents of Sector 9A have flagged deteriorating sanitation conditions in the area, citing irregular road sweeping, inadequate deployment of sanitation workers and prolonged delays in lifting garbage from collection points.

According to residents, internal roads in the sector are being cleaned only once every seven to 10 days, resulting in the accumulation of dust, garbage and debris. They also pointed to overgrown vegetation along road edges and on vacant plots, which they said has worsened the condition of public spaces.

Residents alleged that the sanitation contractor has deployed an insufficient workforce, resulting in inconsistent cleaning operations across the sector. They said the



problem becomes more severe during summer, when accumulated waste and dust create unhygienic conditions. "Only a few sanitation workers are seen in the sector, and sweeping is not carried out regularly. Dust remains on roads for days, while garbage collected from different locations often lies

unattended for weeks. Public money is being spent, but the expected level of cleanliness is missing. The situation is affecting both sanitation and public health," said Lalit Bhola, general secretary of the Sector 9A RWA.

Residents also flagged delays in the transportation of collected waste. They claimed that a shortage of vehicles for lifting garbage has resulted in waste remaining at temporary collection points for several days. "The area opposite the Sector 9A market has unfortunately become an unauthorised dumping spot because waste is not being cleared on time," said resident Rakesh Kapoor. The residents have written to the MCG commissioner seeking intervention and stricter monitoring of sanitation services. They have demanded periodic verification of workforce deployment and better oversight.

Pari Chowk to Bisrakh, Greater Noida to get 45 bus stands

Noida.(Agency)

With the city bus service now operational, Greater Noida Authority has decided to develop 45 bus stands to strengthen public transport infrastructure and improve commuter facilities, under the build-operate-transfer (BOT) model.

A private agency will be responsible for construction, operation and maintenance of the stands and a tender will be floated on Monday. The agency is expected to be hired within a fortnight.

The stands will come up at key locations including Gaur Chowk, Ek Murti, Bisrakh, Pari Chowk, Surajpur, Collectorate, Swarn Nagari and other areas already covered under existing bus routes. While new shelters will be constructed at several sites, existing structures at others will be upgraded. The stands will be equipped with mobile charging points, CCTV surveillance and route information displays.

The move follows the launch of the city bus service on June 12 with 45 buses, which was expanded to a fleet of 100 by June 15, coinciding with the start of commercial flight operations at Noida



International Airport. Of the total fleet, Noida Authority has been allotted 50 buses and Greater Noida and Yamuna Authority 25 each.

The three development authorities — Noida, Greater Noida and YEIDA — have already finalised routes. Buses currently run between 4am and 6pm, but timings are expected to extend to late

night from July 1 as IndiGo expands connectivity from Noida International Airport to additional cities.

In Noida, buses originate from Botanical Garden and serve Noida International Airport, Gaur Chowk, Surajpur Collectorate, Ghaziabad Bus Depot and Anand Vihar in Delhi.

In Greater Noida, routes connect Gaur

Chowk, Surajpur T-Point, Pari Chowk, Noida International Airport, GIMS, Swarn Nagari and Gautam Buddha University.

YEIDA region is served by buses linking the airport with Rabupura, sectors 18, 20 and 21, Gaur City (Yamuna), Salarpur underpass, Galgotias University, Noida International University, Gautam Buddha University, GIMS, YEIDA office, Pari Chowk, Jagat Farm and Surajpur Court.

Last week, Greater Noida Authority also invited resident feedback via a Google Form on new routes, modifications and service frequency. Officials said the responses would feed into an ongoing route rationalisation exercise.

This is the second attempt at a city bus service in the region. In 2016, Noida Metro Rail Corporation introduced feeder buses on 11 routes across Noida, Greater Noida and Greater Noida West. The service was suspended after the Covid-19 outbreak in March 2020 and formally discontinued in December that year, with authorities citing low ridership and mounting operational losses.

Ram Mandir donation row: UP Police probe puts temple chief, trust under scanner

The probe into alleged irregularities in Ram Mandir offerings has put Champat Rai under scrutiny. Its findings could shape accountability within the trust and decide whether its structure is recast.

Lucknow. (Agency)

The spotlight is now firmly on Champat Rai, general secretary of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, as the investigation into alleged irregularities involving offerings at the Ram Mandir enters a crucial phase. The much-awaited Special Investigation Team (SIT) report is expected to determine whether Rai will receive a clean chit or face questions over the alleged mismanagement of donations at the temple.

Rai, who has been at the centre of the Ram Mandir construction process, is facing scrutiny because of his position and influence within the trust. While he has long been credited with overseeing the temple's construction, questions are now being raised over whether accountability for alleged irregularities in temple

operations also falls on him.

For decades, Rai, a full-time RSS pracharak associated with the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), has been regarded by supporters as a disciplined and committed figure who devoted his life to the Ram Mandir movement. His supporters describe him as a person known for simplicity, integrity and dedication. However, his critics have often accused him of being rigid and unwilling to accommodate opposing views, especially when it came to decisions related to the temple project. Rai's growing influence in Ayodhya came after years of involvement with the Ram Mandir movement. Over time, he developed close ties with several



saints, mahants, akhadas and religious institutions in the city. However, several old associates of the movement later alleged that many traditional stakeholders were sidelined when the trust was formed and the temple construction process began.

OLD GUARD RAISES QUESTIONS

The formation of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust had triggered resentment among some saints and leaders associated with the Ram Mandir movement. Many felt that those who had participated in the movement for decades, faced arrests and protests, and contributed to the campaign for the temple were not given adequate representation in the trust's functioning. Although Mahant Nritya Gopal Das of the Maniram Chhawani was appointed as the trust president, critics claimed that the key decision-making powers remained concentrated with Rai. Several mahants and religious leaders in Ayodhya expressed dissatisfaction with the arrangement, though many remained silent due to Rai's strong position within the trust.

Short news

UP family dispute turns deadly as teen kills brother, sister-in-law and nephew



Gorakhpur. (Agency)

A 16-year-old boy was detained in Uttar Pradesh's Gorakhpur district after he allegedly hacked his elder brother, sister-in-law and their three-year-old son to death. The incident took place around 3 am on Monday. Prima facie, the killings appear to have been driven by a family dispute.

According to the police, the juvenile allegedly attacked the three family members with a sharp-edged weapon while they were asleep in their room. The victims have been identified as Amit, his wife Ranjana, and their son Reyan. The accused's parents were sleeping in another room at the time. The minor's father heard screams and rushed to the room, where he found Amit, Ranjana and Reyan lying in a pool of blood.

He allegedly saw his younger son coming out of the room with the weapon in his hand. The man immediately informed his neighbours, before alerting the police. Senior officials reached the spot and launched an investigation upon receiving information about the killings.

The teenager was detained from an upstairs room where the police allegedly recovered the blood-stained weapon from his possession. Preliminary findings suggest that the triple murder may have been triggered by a possible dispute related to a family-run shop. A case has been registered on the complaint of the accused's father. Officers inspected the crime scene, collected evidence and questioned family members and local residents. The bodies have been sent for post-mortem examination.

12-year-old UP boy watches porn, kidnaps 9-month-old niece, rapes her

Gorakhpur. (Agency)

A 12-year-old boy allegedly kidnapped his nine-month-old niece from beside her sleeping mother and raped her after watching pornographic content, police said in a shocking incident from Uttar Pradesh's Gorakhpur.

The accused, who is the infant's maternal uncle, allegedly took the child away from her home in the middle of the night and abandoned her in an injured and unconscious state inside a tin shed in a nearby field. The girl was found the next morning with serious injuries, following which she was rushed to a hospital.

According to the survivor's mother, she was sleeping with her nine-month-old daughter on Friday night when she woke up around 2 am and realised that the child was missing.

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Another Nihang leaves Uttarakhand gurdwara as standoff with management continues

Dehradun. (Agency)

One more Nihang came down from the roof of a gurdwara in Uttarakhand's Rudrapur on Monday, leaving five members of the group still stationed on the terrace as the administration continued talks to end the standoff.

The district administration said the situation was under control and expressed confidence that the matter would be resolved soon. Officials also warned against the circulation of misleading information, saying the incident was an internal dispute between the gurdwara's sewadars and the Nihangs. During discussions with the administration, the Nihangs have so far not mentioned the Karnaprayag clash, which had led to the arrest of four members of their sect, officials said. The standoff began on Saturday evening when a group of Nihangs allegedly entered the gurdwara, armed with weapons including swords, spears, axes and kirpans. According to police, they vandalised parts of the premises and took



an elderly Sikh devotee hostage on the rooftop.

A large police force was deployed after the incident, with officials from the district administration and the gurdwara management committee holding continuous talks with the group. Rudrapur Superintendent of Police Niharika Tomar said the dialogue had shown positive progress, with one of the Nihangs coming down from the roof to interact with officials and police. Talks with the remaining members are continuing. District Magistrate Vishal Mishra said the Nihangs had locked the

third floor leading to the terrace, where the elderly man was allegedly being held. The gurdwara management claimed that the Nihangs had demanded 50-60 rooms to accommodate supporters expected to arrive for a proposed protest against the arrest of four members of their sect following a clash in Chamoli's Karnaprayag area. When the request could not be fulfilled, the group allegedly resorted to violence and took control of the upper floor of the building.

The incident is linked to a June 16 clash in Karnaprayag market, where a group of Nihangs returning from Sri Hemkund Sahib allegedly got into an argument with locals over parking near a hotel. Police said the confrontation escalated, with swords allegedly being used, leaving four locals injured. A Nihang was also injured in the clash.

Four Nihangs from Mohali in Punjab were later arrested in connection with the incident. The Uttarakhand government has ordered an inquiry into the Karnaprayag clash.

Muzaffarpur woman, 70, shot dead; third killing in family in 5 years, SIT formed

Muzaffarpur. (Agency)

A 70-year-old woman was shot dead by unidentified assailants in Bihar's Muzaffarpur district late Saturday night, marking the third murder in the same family in the past five years and prompting police to constitute a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the case.

The victim, identified as Marchhiya Devi, wife of Baldev Pandit, was killed in Ramtohma village under the Panapur OP police station area.

According to police, unknown attackers opened fire on her late at night, killing her on the spot. The incident triggered panic in the village and drew senior police officers to the crime scene. DSP East-1 Alay Vats,



Rural SP Rajesh Singh Prabhakar and Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Kantes Kumar Mishra visited the spot to oversee the investigation. Police recovered a spent cartridge from the scene. Investigators said the killing is the

third murder involving members of the same family since 2021.

In January 2021, a family member, Rameshwar Pandit, was murdered. Nearly three years later, in December 2023, Sunita Devi, the wife of Marchhiya Devi's grandson, was also killed. With the latest shooting, three members of the family have been murdered in separate incidents over a five-year period.

The series of killings has left residents shocked and raised concerns about a possible connection between the crimes. SSP Mishra said the latest murder was carried out by unidentified assailants and that an SIT has been formed to investigate the case and identify those responsible.

Bus fares may rise in Karnataka as transport firms grapple with Rs 6,000 crore dues

Karnataka's four state-run transport corporations have sought a 10-12% fare hike from the government. The move follows rising diesel and salary costs, pending arrears and weaker cash inflows under the Shakti Scheme.

Bengaluru. (Agency)

Bus travel in Karnataka may soon become costlier, with all four state-run transport corporations proposing a 10-12% fare hike, citing rising fuel costs, higher employee expenses and mounting financial liabilities.

The proposal has been submitted to the Karnataka government, which is yet to take a final decision on the recommendation. According to officials, the transport corporations are facing a series of financial challenges that have put their operations under strain. A recent 12.5% salary hike for employees is expected to impose an additional burden of Rs 873.64 crore. At the same time, an increase of Rs 7.81 per



litre in diesel prices is projected to add another Rs 395 crore to their expenditure. The corporations are also struggling to clear pending employee salary arrears. They require Rs 1,271 crore to settle outstanding dues, but only Rs 450 crore has been released so far, leaving Rs 821

crore still unpaid.

Officials pointed out that passenger fares were last revised on January 5, 2025. Given the rise in diesel prices and employee-related expenditure since then, the corporations have sought permission to increase fares by 10-12% to improve their financial position.

The transport bodies have also flagged the impact of the Shakti Scheme, which allows women to travel free on state-run buses. According to official data, the share of non-Shakti passengers — primarily male commuters who pay fares — has declined from 48% to 36% since the scheme was introduced. Officials said this has led to a reduction in

cash inflows, creating challenges in meeting day-to-day operational expenses.

Collectively, the four transport corporations are estimated to be carrying liabilities of around 6,000 crore. These include dues related to provident fund contributions, diesel payments, gratuity, retirement benefits and other pending obligations. The corporations have argued that the proposed fare revision is necessary to address rising operational costs, improve cash flow and ensure the continued functioning of public transport services across the state. The Karnataka government is expected to examine the proposal and the financial condition of the transport corporations before taking.

The future lies in India's old cities and their renewal

Anshuman Tripathi

The idea of Tier I to VI cities was originally developed by the government to calculate employee benefits such as house rent, dearness allowance based on the population size of settlements. Though this classification is no longer officially used, the categories continue in real estate and development circles, where they are defined by land value and population. The seven metropolitan cities remain Tier I, while many smaller state capitals and towns are classified as Tier II, reflecting their investment and land-value potential. Housing markets are a key driver of this hierarchical categorisation, which has since extended into development finance and real estate planning. In its present form, the category of Tier II cities is largely defined by exclusion, emerging from a hierarchy anchored in metropolitan centres. Land markets, investment recovery potential and flexible negotiation environments characterise Tier II and Tier III cities. When land markets become saturated in big cities, investment shifts towards Tier II cities, driving infrastructure growth through wider road networks, metro systems, and new investments in hospitals, hotels and housing. Growth is driven not by the needs of these cities but by external capital pressures, including global financial flows. Local administrations are often ill-equipped to manage these pressures, while the political class is eager to facilitate land-use changes and land transactions. The master planning process has been practised in India for decades and is ideally based on extensive local surveys, public hearings and people's participation. Needs are assessed through planning standards and regional plan provisions. Tier-based hierarchies are never a criterion in plan preparation. Plans are not driven by financial considerations and typically follow similar physical patterns from city to city, with ring roads, designated industrial land use and broadly density-driven housing. In most cases, external pressures for housing and infrastructure fall outside the planning framework, resulting in forced land-use changes and new movement networks. Participatory planning and public hearings are often undermined by these externally driven capital pressures. Though the 74th Constitutional Amendment clearly lays out a method for plan preparation, investment decisions follow a different logic, detached from the priorities of elected local bodies. When the Constitution vests development planning in local government, an externally generated hierarchy such as the Tier II city construct works against a locally rooted, need-based model of development. Instead of neighbourhood health centres across the city, what gets built may be a super-specialty hospital; instead of tot lots, a large stadium. Available land becomes the basis for new housing, when what is needed is a strategic programme of inner-city renewal. The relationship between Tier I and Tier II cities remains colonial, as impatient capital continually seeks new pastures. Barring Chandigarh and Gandhinagar, almost every Tier II city contains an embedded old city, pre-industrial in origin and part of settlement networks shaped by functional needs rather than investment hierarchies. Centuries-old urban centres are classified as Tier II and Tier III, from which migration to larger cities has long been the norm. Human Development Index scores remain low, social amenities are inadequate and environmental degradation grows, while land remains underutilised. Former pilgrimage centres, abandoned capitals, trading hubs, and centres of traditional learning, music, performing arts, toy-making and painting are languishing across India in the absence of an equity-based urban development strategy. Relegation to a lower hierarchy only deepens this neglect.

Where have all the dragonflies gone

One hopes our governments, National Green Tribunal, courts get some sense of biodiversity

Avay Shukla

Biodiversity is perhaps the most unacknowledged component of the natural environment, and the attention of policymakers rarely goes beyond trees and animals, if even that. But biodiversity is much more than just trees and animals. It is the building block of nature, without which there would be no nature, or a habitable planet. Biodiversity is the extraordinary variety of all living things on earth. It encompasses plants, animals, micro-organisms, fungi and even pathogens, the genetic information they carry, and the complex eco-systems they create. I've learnt this the hard way, and am only just beginning to understand it. When I acquired my half acre of land in Purani Koti village (Shimla) in 2002, there were only two houses here; the landscape comprised rolling, grassy hillsides with a few apple trees and some deodars and blue pine. My own plot was carpeted with wild daisies, buttercups, lilies and primroses. The place was practically overrun with bees, butterflies, cicadas and dragonflies, and there was a continuous buzzing sound on sunny days.

The birds formed the next level on the food chain, and were in turn subordinate to the feral cats and pine martins. Purani Koti was a biodiversity hotspot! Not any more. Most of the land in the village has been built over, the trees felled, the buzzing of dragonflies replaced with the rasping of jack hammers and saws. To compensate, I have planted more than 200 trees on my land, of the fruit and jungle varieties. But, to no avail, as trees alone on just one plot cannot create biodiversity. For, the lowest tier of natural growth in the area — the grasses, bushes, ferns, wild flowers, creepers — have all gone, the soil has lost its capacity to store rain and snow or to retain moisture. With the disappearance of this living building block of nature, the insects that depended on it have also started vanishing. A few, very few, butterflies and bees still delight us, but I have not seen any dragonflies this year. I fear their niche has disappeared and they are gone forever. In a year or two, the bees and butterflies will also abandon this biodiverse wasteland. Which, along with global warming, probably explains why we can no longer grow the fruits — apple, pears, apricot, cherries — that we used to: with the biodiversity gone, there are no insects left to pollinate their flowers or birds to spread the seeds. This loss of precious biodiversity is rarely factored in during our planning and developmental processes. What is reluctantly considered (at most) is forest or green cover — i.e. the number of trees to be felled. These are quantified and valued, the amount paid by the project proponent and twice that number planted as compensatory afforestation. The loss of biodiversity is



completely ignored and never compensated for. Himachal's forest area is 37,000 sq km (37 lakh hectares), and a 2024 study by the Bhopal Institute of Forest Management quantifies its biodiversity value at Rs 33,000 crore per annum. In other words, the biodiversity contribution value of every hectare of the forests is Rs 89,000 per annum.

Working out its net present value over a typical 25-30 year life cycle of any project, the state should be charging at least Rs 30 lakh for every hectare of forest diverted for non-forest use. But this is not done because no value is attached to biodiversity. This may, however, be changing globally, even as we in India continue to axe millions of trees every year on grandiloquent schemes that will displace the livelihoods of thousands of forest-dependent communities, but enrich crony oligarchs by a few trillion dollars more. Peru, for example, has become the first country to give legal protection to insects (in this case, its famous stingless bees). Recognising the ecological importance of these tiny pollinators of the Amazon forests which pollinate 80 per cent of the Amazon's tropical fruits, just this month it has enacted a law that recognises their right to exist, to a clean and intact habitat, to regenerate, and to receive legal representation if pollution, deforestation and projects threaten their survival.

Anyone who threatens these rights can be sued and

prosecuted. Similarly, in Wales, the river Wye has received legal protection of its "rights of nature" from its catchment to the sea. The new charter recognises the river as a living ecosystem with an intrinsic right to exist, i.e. the right to flow, the right to its biodiversity, the right to be free from pollution, the right to regenerate and to a healthy catchment. Any citizen can now go to court to enforce these rights. New Zealand, too, has given legal status to the Whanganui river.

Mount Taranaki has been given legal guardianship through an eight-member Guardian Council consisting of four government experts and four tribal representatives: no project, government or private, can be sanctioned there without the approval of this Council. In India, the Uttarakhand High Court in 2017 recognised the Ganga as "a living entity" with legal rights but the ruling was inexplicably stayed by the Supreme Court, and the matter continues in limbo.

The Peru and Wales laws are small beginnings in realising the importance of protecting ecosystems and biodiversity as a whole, not just trees and forests in isolation. One hopes our governments, courts and the NGT take note of these developments, dispel their sense of omniscience, and rouse themselves from their slumber, sloth and lack of understanding of ecological issues. Then, and only then, will the dragonflies perhaps return to Purani Koti and reclaim what is rightfully theirs.

Right to walk

Cities must put people before vehicles



pedestrian rights strikes at the heart of vehicle-centric

urban planning. For decades, road projects have prioritised traffic flow while treating footpaths as an afterthought. The consequences are visible in rising fatalities and shrinking public spaces. According to the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways' 2024 report, 36,526 pedestrians were killed in road crashes, accounting for 20.6% of all road deaths. Equally significant is the court's call for a dedicated legal framework to protect pedestrian rights. Existing laws are fragmented and poorly enforced. A comprehensive law could establish standards for footpath design, accessibility, maintenance and accountability. Municipal authorities must enforce anti-encroachment rules, improve urban design and invest in accessible infrastructure. A city becomes truly modern not when it accommodates more cars, but when it allows every citizen to walk safely and with dignity. The Supreme Court has shown the way; governments must now follow.

Touchstones: Burying unpleasant Partition memories

Our food, our languages, clothing and crafts belong to a past that refuses to stop haunting our stories and storytellers. How many wars will it take for peace to return

Ira Pande

Like so many people in the country, I have almost stopped going to a movie hall to see a film. Recently, miserable and fed up of being homebound, I ended up seeing two films in as many weeks. One was a popular Hollywood film, 'The Devil Wears Prada 2', and the other that had got great reviews, 'Main Vaapas Aaunga', set in the Punjab and a reminder of what Partition did to both countries. Before I actually talk about the films, let me tell you about the experience. The theatre was in a new mall that has come up nearby and many neighbours had been there to shop, eat or see a movie. When we went for an afternoon show, there were all of nine persons in the hall — a bunch of giggly girls and the three of us greybeards. Imagine the cost of running the air-conditioning, the staff and all that for just nine persons. No wonder many shows are cancelled for the lack of sufficient audiences and most don't even make it beyond a week. People prefer to watch them at home when they are beamed on the streaming platforms. Since there is now a limit on what such theatres charge for a ticket, the owners have resorted to charging huge amounts for a tub of popcorn or the junk food available for the hungry. The cost of a large tub of popcorn is almost the same as the ticket! The above description is of the Hollywood movie, but the desi one was much better attended. The hall was almost three quarters full, including a wailing child whose parents had brought him to see a film at a time when he should have been in bed. Where the Hollywood movie was mercifully over in less than two hours (and a huge disappointment after its first version), the Hindi movie was almost twice as long and ended long after that poor child was fast asleep. In terms of the story and acting, 'Main Vaapas...' was very engaging. How can one go wrong with the great Naseeruddin Shah as the old grandfather and Rajit Kapur as his son? The newcomers and Diljit Dosanjh rose to the roles they were given with great sensitivity and aplomb.



My problem was with the length. For some reason, the very talented writer-director Imtiaz Ali allowed the film to become almost maudlin before bringing it to a close. Why is it that our filmmakers stretch a plot to a stage where it becomes tiresome? Is it because they want the audience to get full paisa vasool? Or is it because we are so accustomed to fast-forwarding movies on our home screens that we have lost the patience to see a film, no

matter how bad, to the end? It's not as if the films of my youth and childhood days were any better — I recall the silly romantic capers of the 1960s, with long song sequences and costume changes in the middle of a scene. Yet we suffered these long, boring films with improbable plots because we knew how to deal with boredom. In the world before action speeded up and where stories and plots were no longer discussed for days, where we

munched cheap peanuts and shared stories about films others had seen, and when everything was rationed and allowed only as a special monthly treat, we had a respect for cinema (however bad) that may be difficult for this generation to understand. And now for a short comment on Partition and why — almost 80 years after it took place — we have started to understand the trauma that it has left on all those who were affected by it, or who had been told stories by their parents and grandparents. Strangely, it has been only in the past few years that we have created a Partition Museum for people to actually see the evidence of this cruel act perpetrated by the departing British government to drive a permanent wedge between two faiths, communities and neighbours. Burying unpleasant memories is perhaps the only way to deal with such cataclysmic events, yet it puzzles me why nobody tried to tell the truth in the intervening decades. Two remarkable serials come to mind: Manohar Shyam Joshi's 'Buniyaad' and Bisham Sahni's 'Tamas'. MS Sathya's 'Garam Hawa' also shook us when we first saw it and it must be acknowledged that it takes a really sensitive writer and director to take up this challenge. We also forget that since many of us do not read novels in languages other than English, we have missed Dharmvir Bharati, Krishna Sobti and Amrita Pritam's deeply painful novels and short stories. One of my favourite short stories written by my mother Shivani, 'Lal Haveli', about a tragic love tale of that time, awaits a film. One day, I hope someone will fulfil my wish. Finally, do read Sam Dalrymple's deeply researched book on the many partitions of India. We often forget that India, Ceylon, Burma and Afghanistan were once part of this great subcontinent. The civilisational memories of those ruptured limbs and blood ties are there for us if only we could rise above India-Pakistan binaries. Our food, our languages, clothing and crafts belong to a past that refuses to stop haunting our stories and storytellers.



In many ways, the Indian palate is completely bizarre. On one hand we find it hard to resist the deep fried, crispy-crunchy American fast food, and on the other, we're constantly searching for the familiar whenever we go out to eat. The Indian obsession with our classic, undoubtedly cliched, and much-adored flavors follows us even as we open a pack of Lay's Magic Masala; so don't think that the fast food chains haven't noticed.

They definitely have, which is why a simple glance into the menus in our favorite joints reveals variants that really can't be found, (or even dreamt of) anywhere else in the world. These are blends of all that we hold dear - mangoes, curry, paneer and even Chinese ingredients!

Here's a guide to 5 of our most popular fast-food chains and their hybrid options for your reading (and drooling) pleasure:



1. McDonald's

Yes, we all have tried the McAloo Tikki, McVeggie, and Maharaja Mac, but there are tons of other fusion variants that have been wonderfully Indianised by this burger chain. Around the release of Kung Fu Panda 3, McDonald's introduced their Snackilicious Chinese Menu. This offers the McVeggie and McChicken Scheszwan burgers - these are succulent, fiery, and layered with spicy scheszwan sauce, dotted with black sesame and topped with red onions, bell peppers and iceberg lettuce.

You can also go for the Chilli Paneer Pockets, a creation that has its roots in the chilli potatoes you can find with almost any street vendor in North India.

More Tadka: Masala Grill burger (both veg and non-veg), McSpicy Chicken, McSpicy Paneer, Spicy Paneer Wrap, and Fanta McFloat.

2. Dominos

Mixing Italian pizzas with Indian ingredients is no joke, and this is why

Dominos has set up a whole pizza lab dedicated to trying new recipes in the country.

The Peppy Paneer pizza is not as popular as the Veggie Supreme or the Margherita, but it isn't funny. With spiced, large chunks of paneer and capsicum, a slice of this pizza is sure to give you paneer tikka flashbacks. There's also the extremely hot Keema Do Pyaza which has toppings of fresh keema,

jalepenos, and crisp onions.

More Tadka:

A while back, Dominos rolled out its weirdest innovation - Spicy Banana Pizza, a south Indian alternative to the pineapple loaded Hawaiian pizzas. Later declared too unusual for the Indian market, this pizza got the boot.

3. Dunkin Donuts & More

Every Diwali, Dunkin brings out its hidden weapons to compete with sweetmakers like



Bikanervala and Haldiram's - the festive Indian doughnuts. This range takes Indianisation to a new level, and the unique creations are stuffed, topped, glazed with

everything from sticky mango to saffron to laddoo crumbs.

The foodie favorites are Kesar Badam Donut with saffron cream, blanched almonds, and crushed pistachios, Milk Cake Donut with rice pudding filling, and Soan Papdi Donut coated with chickpea flour.

More Tadka: Even when the festive season is not around, Indians can rejoice in the Too Much Double Mutton Burger. Completely loaded with mutton, this burger is confident, non-show-offy, and with the



eater's enjoyment in mind at all times.

4. Subway

The Aloo Patty Sub is quite good, but the true star for vegetarians at this sandwich joint is the Chatpata Chana Patty with its crunch filled chana filling, chaat masala dressing, and ridiculously tasty coating.

Non vegetarians have the luxury of choosing from Subway's amazing chicken options - Chicken Tikka Sub, Chicken Seekh Sub, and Chicken Tandoori Sub. All of these have the textural combo of creaminess from the meat and crunch from the perfectly toasted bread.

More Tadka: Paneer Tikka, Hara Bhara Sub, Green Peas Patty, Veg Shammi Sub - it has an authentically made dal kebab, and intense flavors of garlic and onion.

5. KFC

When KFC finally arrived in India, this fried-chicken chain did something unthinkable - it introduced a vegetarian menu called SoGood. The best part about SoGood is the Rice Bowlz; a complete meal in a bowl, it's filled with aromatic basmati, flavorful gravy and crunchy strips of veggies.

For lovers of KFC Krushers, there's also the Alphonso Burst, it has creamy yogurt that enrobes shards of

light Alphonso chunks, and blobs of ice dairy slush. The drink tastes like a creamier, richer, fruitier version

of lassi, and is one of the best things you can have in the summer heat.

More Tadka : In 2012, KFC started offering a limited edition version of fried chicken; Indian style. Called Curry Crunch, this dish incorporated crunchy, juicy chicken, but cooked in rich desi spices, and served freshly sprinkled with roasted curry leaves.



Recipe

Mutton biryani

This one pot recipe is one of India's favourite rice recipes. Biryani is made differently in many parts of the country, the most famous being Hyderabad biryani. Biryani is a staple during the festival of Eid. During the month of Ramadan, biryani is one of the most popular and mouth watering street foods, and you also find different variations of like chicken biryani, fish biryani and vegetable biryani. Other Ramadan specials are Haleem and Keema Samosa. Biryani goes best with raita and mirchi ka salan.

Ingredients:

To marinate meat:

Mutton — 1 1/2 kg

Cloves — 7 to 8

Cardamom — 10 to 8 pods

Cinnamon — 4 sticks

Shajeera (caraway seeds) — 1 tsp

White jeera — 1/2 tbs

Saffron (kesar) — 6 to 7 strings

Nutmeg — 1/4 tsp

Mace — 1/4 tsp

Ginger, garlic paste — 2tbsp

Yogurt — 400 g

Lemo

n — 1 medium sized
Haldi — 1 tsp
Red chilli powder — 1 tsp
Potatoes — 1/2 kg
Brown onions — 250 g



A pinch of garam masala
Ghee — 1/2 kg
Salt to taste
Rice for biryani — 1 kg
Kneaded atta for dum

Method:

-Mix all the above ingredients and set it aside for an hour or more.

-Put this into a vessel. Now, put some ghee on top of it.

-Par boil the rice and keep aside.

-Now, fry onions until they brown and put this on top of the marination.

-Remove some marinated mix and keep aside.

-Take 1/4 quantity of the parboiled rice and put it on top of the first marination. Then add the rest of the meat marination that you had kept aside.

-Again layer the rest of the cooked rice on top.

-Mix the saffron in water and sprinkle on the top of the rice. This gives it soft texture and flavour.

-Pour the remaining ghee evenly on top of the rice.

-Seal the lid of the vessel with kneaded

wheat flour.

-Place of high flame till the steam comes out.

-Reduce flame and place the vessel on the tawa for an hour.

-Serve with mint leaves and onions.



Gujarati Recipe: How to make Moong Daal Dhokla

Dhokla is one of the most popular Gujarati recipes. Moong dal dhokla, makes for a great snack recipe and is best enjoyed with a cup of hot tea.

Served with kadhi, green chillies and onions, it becomes an ideal snack for all those who prefer diet food during monsoon and are looking for low calorie recipes.

Ingredients:

1 katori moong dal

Salt to taste

Green chillies

2-3 strands of garlic

Eno powder

Method:

- Soak the moong dal for about 2 hours. Then grind it in a mixer. Add salt, crushed pieces of garlic, ginger and green chillies in the mixture. Stir well. And see that the ingredients are added properly.

- Now take the dhokla vessel (a specially made dhokla cooker that cooks dhokla, idlis etc) and put a tablespoon of mixture in the small plate. Spread it properly on all sides and sprinkle a bit of red chilli powder on it.

- Take another plate and do the same.



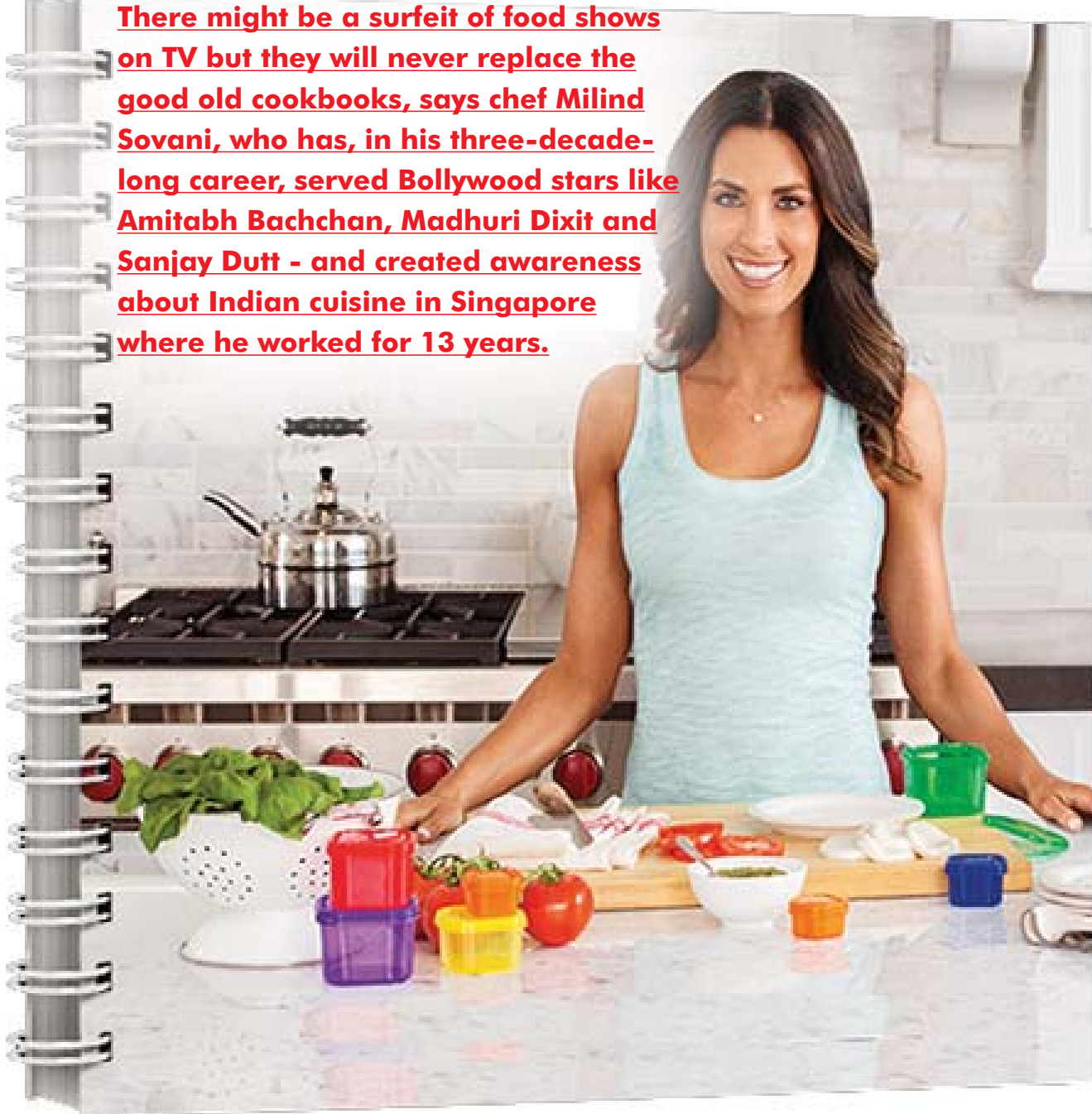
Put the two plates in the dhokla vessel after adding water to the vessel. Don't forget to spread oil on the plates before you spread the mixture. Close the vessel and wait for 5-7 minutes.

- Open the lid and poke the mixture with a spoon to see if its cooked. If it's cooked remove the plate from the vessel and cut the dhokla into diagonal pieces.

- After you have removed both the vessels and made the dhokla pieces, take a small kadhai and put some oil on it. Add mustard seeds, curry leaves and add the dhokla pieces to it.

- After the tadka, sprinkle some coriander leaves on it, and serve the dhokla hot with chutney or kadhi.

There might be a surfeit of food shows on TV but they will never replace the good old cookbooks, says chef Milind Sovani, who has, in his three-decade-long career, served Bollywood stars like Amitabh Bachchan, Madhuri Dixit and Sanjay Dutt - and created awareness about Indian cuisine in Singapore where he worked for 13 years.



TV shows will never replace Cookbooks

"In the time of internet and TV, printed cookery books are facing a challenge of existence...but, no, things are not all that bad yet. We have to accept the forces of change, but still there are many positives in owning and using cookery books - and of course writing them too," Sovani told us in an e-mail interview.

"Cooking with the help of a cookery book in the kitchen is always the best help around. You can keep it on your table, you do not

require electric connections, or WiFi and the like. You can always mark some points on them, make earfolds for important pages, make small notes on them for your future reference and pass them down to the next generation or even share them easily with friends," added Sovani, who has worked with establishments like New Delhi's Hotel Samrat and Hotel Jaipur Ashok. Then, books are always handy to keep, loan and borrow and have good mobility.

This apart, "in a country like India, where internet or TV signals are not widely or easily available, books can be of great help in any place and location. The visual charm of using a cookery book, which is attractively and artistically printed with appetizing photos, is always a delight. Coffee table books also look good on your book shelves," Sovani maintained. Elaborating on the theme, Sovani said: "While cooking using a cookery book, your imagination is also at work and you tend to draw from the

experience and skill of the writer. Books can be handed over from one generation to another, especially books rich in traditional and regional cooking for newly-wed brides. Books are a rich source of history tradition and culture too.

"Lastly, but most importantly, I feel cookery books are more trusted than the cookery shows on TV or internet recipes. As these books are written by experts or chefs, they are also considered more authentic and accurate too," Sovani explained.

Now, he is penning an autobiography to inspire others with his journey. Writing a book on his life has been on the mind of the 52-year-old for the last five years, but it was in 2012 when he returned to India from Singapore that he gave it a serious thought.

"I have been working on it for a year and half now. I want to share with readers, especially youngsters, about the journey of a chef, the hardships faced and the sweet success moments. I wish to do this to inspire people and also spread awareness among the masses. Recipes... anyone can write, but the experiences I have and can share are unique," Sovani said.

To be available on stands after six months, the book "will be a very good read for everyone". "It covers stories of my celebrity interactions, glorious moments, mega banquets, international experiences, my cookery tips, guidance to aspiring chefs and more," he said. The chef often travels to Singapore as he has his own consultancy firm, Hospitality

Innovations Pvt Ltd, which works for innovations in restaurants and cuisines. He was even honored with the 'Culinary Trail Blazer of Singapore' award by 'Michelin Star Guide' for his work of transforming the image of Indian cuisine from a mundane, ordinary five-to-seven-dollar-cuisine to a modern high-end one.

Asked how one can popularize Indian food in other countries, he said: "Firstly, you need to be honest with your roots and have in-depth knowledge of Indian cuisine.



"Secondly, understand the market need of that country, the current perceived image of Indian cuisine and how you can develop the taste buds of the local population towards Indian cuisine. Open Indian restaurants which can offer good, healthy and modern food."

But, as of now, he has plans of increasing the number of branches of his restaurant April Rain, which has two outlets in Pune. "I plan to take this brand pan-India and the next outlet would surely be in Mumbai," said the Mumbai-based chef.

Hot corn tastes great in the monsoon. Here's how to cook with it in these two easy ways...

CORN SALAD

Yield:

Ingredients: Corn kernels - 1 cup Red bell peppers - 1 tbsp Onions and spring onions chopped - 1 tbsp each Chopped Kairi- ¼ tsp Celery stalk, diced - 1 tbsp Cherry tomatoes - 5 Pineapple diced - 1 tbsp Parsley - 1 tsp Cilantro leaves - 1 tsp Basil - 3 leaves Avocado, diced - ½ each Olive oil - 1 tbsp Lemon juice - 2 tsp Black salt - to taste Tacos - 3 shells

Method: Blanch the corn in hot water with salt. Do not overcook it. Drain and set aside. Now, cut the onions, peppers, pineapple, kairi (raw mango), celery and avocado. Also dice the cherry tomatoes and add the herbs like basil, parsley and cilantro basil to the vegetables. Season this. Add the lemon juice and olive oil. Toss it well and serve it in the shells with herb buttered rice on the side.

Corn broth

Yield:

Ingredients: Onions, chopped - 1 Leeks, chopped - ½ cup Celery, chopped - ½ cup Potatoes, diced - 1 cup Corn kernels - 2 cups Yellow peppers, chopped - ½ cup Garlic, chopped - 1 tbsp Vegetable stock - 1 litre Milk - a cup Parsley - 1 tsp Chives - 1 tsp Cream - ¾ cup Olive oil - 1 tbsp Butter - to taste

Method: Heat a pan and drizzle the butter into

Two quick ways to cook corn



it. When it melts add some of the oil and the onions, chopped potatoes, leeks, celery plus the yellow bell peppers and corn kernels, taking care not to over cook it. Add the garlic and saute too. Add the milk and vegetable stock. Cook till the vegetables turn soft. Blend this and add cream plus the seasoning, as well as the chopped herbs. Serve hot with garlic bread.

Gourmet products you must use in your

kitchen



Don't be scared by the word Gourmet. Here we list some fancy ingredients along with easy ways to use them at your next party at home.

Vanilla Beans

The sweet aroma of vanilla can live up the most bland dish and that hold true even more for toothy desserts. You might have tasted vanilla in the form of artificial essences and now its turn to upgrade and treat yourself to the real deal. Even though a bit expensive vanilla beans can be used in desserts such as ice cream or waffle syrup and they will make you feel like you've seen heaven! Look for whole vanilla beans that are about 6 to 8 inches in

length for best results. Glossy dark brown in colour and ever so slightly moist are the best ones.

Fish Sauce



Just the mention of fish sauce makes people rethink altogether. They probably imagine their dish soaked in fish liquid. The truth being much different, first fish sauce should be used in mild quantities. It is tangy in nature that adds zest to the preparations. Here are a few ways to include fish sauce in your food:

You can use a spoon of fish sauce in the marinade of a large chicken waiting to be grilled. Use a drop or two in pastas and salads. Be careful not to use more than required as it may ruin your dish. For all Thai food lovers, a pinch of fish sauce can add a punch to your gravy.

Exotic Salts

You cannot even imagine any dish without salt. If normal salt can add such value to your food imagine what different gourmet salt can take the level of your food onto. Gourmet salt is mostly used to finish the dish and therefore sprinkled just before serving the dish. Some of the top gourmet salts are Black salt, Himalayan Pink salt, Sea Salt, Kosher Salt and Fleur de sel. Here are a few **useful tips:**

Flake salts do wonders to salads.

Japanese salts are ideal for fish preparations.

Hawaiian Black Salt makes meat even more delectable.

Flavored Vinegars

Well, this ingredient may not be considered as gourmet but can definitely add X factor that will turn an ordinary dish to extraordinary. Balsamic Vinegar is best for Italian preparations. You can also whip it along with salad dressings and you're good to go.

Wine Vinegar is also a result of fermented wine and does wonders to prep up a dish. Use it in sweet and sour dishes, pickles and even chutneys.

The many delectable avatars of

Momos

The history of dumplings, it is said, dates back to the 16th century during the time of the Ming Dynasty. Today, dumplings can be found in dozens of versions, from the street food variety to the more nuanced, fine dining ones.

We take a look at some of the avatars.

From classic Chinese dim sum to Italian ravioli, Japanese Gyoza and Tibetan momos, these little pockets of heaven have seen many transformations. Filled with meat, veggies and adequately flavoured with aromatics, the succulent wraps are everyone's comfort food.

From crab fillings to spinach dumpling skins, you'd be surprised that the city has an array of dumplings to offer. We scoured around looking for the most unique options available. Siu Mai Siu mai originated in China. Unlike wontons, these deceptively simple dumplings are wrapped but left open-faced and served as dim sum. Traditionally filled with pork and shrimp, dim sums are styled like a flower and served as appetizers. If you do not eat pork, choose from chicken or fish filling.

Har gow Essentially prepared with minced shrimp meat stuffed inside almost-transparent dumpling skin with multiple pleats. The lump of shrimp mixed with scallions and water chestnuts is sauteed and flavoured with salt, pepper, garlic and sauces of your choice and steamed in a bamboo steamer. Juicy prawns wrapped in succulent wheat wrap — what's not to love?

Momos

These originated in Tibet and migrated to

Nepal. Filled with veggies, meat (chicken, mutton, pork) and flavoured with spices, the dumplings are snugly folded and served steamed, fried or pan-fried. Momos are typically served with a red chilli and garlic sauce known as sephen and chicken or vegetable stock. Gyoza Dim sum's Japanese counterpart, the gyoza, is a delectable dumpling wrapped in a thin wonton wrapper, filled with finely minced meat, veggies, scallions, celery and served with a dipping sauce. The wrapper of a gyoza is thicker and chewier than other dumplings. Served as

steamed fried, deep fried or pan grilled, a platter of gyoza is typically served with a gyoza sauce (made with soya sauce and chilli oil) and salad. Wontons Some 2000 odd years back, wontons were simply known as dumplings. It was only during 618-912 that it got its name and has been on everyone's mouth ever since. A staple in China, wontons are dumplings filled with meat, fish or shrimp. Here is a variety of wontons available in and around the city — Chinese cabbage and pork wonton, chicken wonton dumped in clear soup, fried wontons served as appetizers with a puddle of zesty sauce and the classic steamed wontons served alongside. chicken broth or stock.



45,000 students and parents benefit from Delhi's NEET support facilities

The medical entrance exam was held smoothly across the city, with free DTC travel and cooling zones set up outside 97 centres.

New Delhi.(Agency)

The National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) was conducted peacefully across Delhi on Sunday. The special arrangements made by the Delhi government for the convenience of candidates and their parents received an overwhelmingly positive response. Nearly 45,000 parents and candidates benefited from these facilities provided by the government.

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said the

feedback received on the day showed that the arrangements provided considerable relief to students and their families. She said the Delhi government had introduced a new initiative by extending special attention not only to candidates but also to their parents. Gupta also appreciated the coordinated efforts of several government departments that made these arrangements possible.

According to the CM, efforts were made to ensure that no candidate faced transport-related difficulties in reaching examination centres and that parents did not have to endure discomfort in the intense heat. Free travel in DTC buses was provided to all NEET candidates, while cooling zones were set up outside all 97 examination



centres across the city.

She said a large number of students availed themselves of the free DTC travel facility by presenting valid admit cards. Students noted that the initiative

reduced transportation-related concerns and helped them focus better on the examination.

The cooling zones were equipped with seating arrangements, clean drinking

water, ORS, shikanji, tea and first-aid facilities. Parents said these arrangements made the long waiting hours more comfortable.

According to official information, nearly 45,000 candidates and parents who visited the centres benefited from these facilities.

The CM said that competitive examinations are an important milestone in the lives of young people.

CM hails efforts of departments for arrangements

The CM said the Delhi government had introduced a new initiative by extending special attention not only to candidates but also to their parents. Gupta also appreciated the coordinated efforts of several government departments that made these arrangements possible

Delhi CM, LG join Yoga Day events as thousands participate across the capital

New Delhi.(Agency)

Lieutenant-Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu and Chief Minister Rekha Gupta marked International Yoga Day on Sunday by performing yoga asanas at separate locations, as Sandhu lauded women's leadership in the movement. Gupta joined Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa and senior Delhi government officers at Neeli Jheel in Asola Bhati wildlife sanctuary.

Thousands of citizens, students, youth, women and senior citizens participated in Yoga Day events, promoting healthy living and community participation. In a post on X, Sandhu said yoga has evolved into a global movement under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. "I joined fellow participants in the yoga session. It was particularly heartening to witness women taking a leading role in this movement, while also seeing growing participation from senior citizens, for whom yoga serves as a powerful means to lead active, dignified and healthy lives," the Lieutenant-Governor said.

Gupta said yoga is a priceless part of India's cultural heritage and noted that International Yoga Day, proposed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the United Nations in 2014, has gained worldwide acceptance. She said yoga promotes balance between the body, mind and soul and has become a way of life for millions across the world.

Priceless part of India's cultural heritage: CM

CM Gupta said yoga is a priceless part of India's cultural heritage and noted that International Yoga Day, proposed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the United Nations in 2014, has gained worldwide acceptance. She said yoga promotes balance between the body, mind and soul.

Bath water splashes on biker, triggers violent clash in Bihar; 9 arrested



New Delhi.(Agency)

A minor dispute over water splashing escalated into a violent clash between two communities in a village in Bihar's Begusarai district, leading to the arrest of nine people. A video of the incident has also surfaced, showing people throwing bricks and stones during the violence.

According to officials, the conflict began on Friday, June 19, when water accidentally splashed onto a motorcycle rider while a person was having a bath in the open. While the incident did trigger an argument, it did not lead to any major escalation that day.

However, the next day, on June 20, violence broke out between two groups over the matter. At least five people were injured in the clash. Following the violence, the police arrested nine individuals from both sides. The District Magistrate (DM) and the Superintendent of Police also visited the village to assess the situation. Additional police presence has been deployed in the area to maintain law and order. Officials said the situation is completely under control, and raids are being conducted to arrest the remaining accused.

Past in the present: Delhi's lost heritage cries for revival

New Delhi.(Agency)

Delhi can be said to be as old as history itself, with every nook and corner of the city breathing a legacy lost in time. One can casually pass by a tomb and not know how many battles were fought to inherit that piece of land.

Dynasties after dynasties fancied Delhi, and each emperor left his mark etched in time—some of which now lie in neglect. From the Mahabharat to the Mughals to Mahatma Gandhi—City of Djinns has regenerated itself no matter how many times it was destroyed.

The centuries old broken heritage seeks repair as tombs gather dust and legendary parks have been reduced to resting spots. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) is set to begin a phased restoration and preservation exercise for eight Grade



I heritage structures, with conservation work expected to start next month. The Grade I category denotes monuments classified as being of the highest historical importance.

Lost legacy of Zamrudpur

As you drive through the manicured lanes of South Delhi, where bougainvillea spill over gates and luxury bungalows demand a second

glance, it is easy to believe the city is neatly composed, its past carefully curated. But then, without warning, a left turn breaks that illusion. The road narrows and fractures.

The road further gives way to a broken stretch dotted with cycle repair shops, a modest grocery store, and a small stall serving chapatis with aloo sabzi under an old peepal tree. The air changes.

So does the rhythm. You are in Zamrudpur now—a part of posh South Delhi that feels like a pocket of rural Uttar Pradesh. Two young boys, idling in the heat, cigarette smoke curling lazily around them, offered directions with an ease that came from belonging. "Yahan ke hi hain," they said with quiet pride. They led us not to monuments framed by ticket counters and plaques.

Delhi University science labs face funding gap as faculty flag shortage of equipment funds

New Delhi.(Agency)

Concerns over inadequate funding for science laboratories at Delhi University have resurfaced, with faculty representatives highlighting what they describe as a significant gap between departmental requirements and available financial allocations.

Speaking on the issue, DUTA Secretary Bimalendu Theerthakar pointed to the challenges faced by science departments in purchasing and maintaining laboratory equipment used for teaching and practical training. He said inadequate funding could adversely affect the quality of science

education and the learning experience of students.

The concerns have also been linked to the objectives outlined in the

infrastructure, including laboratories, libraries, classrooms, and technological resources."

Faculty representatives also claimed that while some science departments require several crores to upgrade and maintain laboratory infrastructure, the funds allocated are substantially lower than the projected requirements. Jha cited the example of a department that reportedly requires around Rs 7 crore for laboratory equipment but received only about Rs 60 lakh. He also raised concerns about the overall budget available for equipment purchases. Theerthakar said inadequate funding has made it difficult for departments to maintain and upgrade laboratory facilities.



National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

Professor Rajesh Jha said, "The NEP emphasises the importance of creating an optimal learning environment through quality

Gurgaon's pedestrian problem: Why only fraction of roads have safe footpaths

New Delhi.(Agency)

The right to walk safely on well-demarcated footpaths is a fundamental right, the Supreme Court ruled on Friday. This right, the top court underlined, shall have priority over motorised vehicles on demarcated paths and it forms part of the right to movement guaranteed under Article 19 (1) (d) and other fundamental rights including Article 21 (right to life and liberty).

In Gurgaon, the ruling has cast fresh spotlight on concerns over the need for necessary infrastructure for citizens to walk about safely.

As per the Comprehensive Mobility Management Plan (CMMP) prepared for the Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) in

2020, walking accounted for a massive 33% of all daily intra-city trips. Yet, the Millenium City's average Walkability Index, which measures safety and security, convenience, and degree of policy support, stood at a dismal 0.68 (out of 5).

Pedestrian facilities, including footpaths and safe road-crossing mechanisms, have been "grossly inadequate" and "deficient not only in quantity but also in quality," making pedestrians highly vulnerable, the CMMP highlighted.

Is walking in Gurgaon dangerous?

A closer look at the city's baseline infrastructure explains the poor walkability score. Before recent interventions began, only 28% of the



city's total road network was covered by footpaths, amounting to a mere 153.6 km, the CMMP noted. Across the city, footpaths span 153.6 km, primarily in the inner core area and parts of New (East) Gurgaon like MG Road and HUDA City Centre. However, it is common to see parked vehicles or

vendors occupying the space.

This forces pedestrians on roads, which makes the walking experience unsafe and highly inconvenient and gives lesser space to vehicles to move.

Some pockets that are being developed — Badshahpur and sectors beyond the Dwarka Expressway — are said to be completely devoid of footpaths.

To align the city with sustainable active transport goals, the Transport Planning Department of the School of Planning & Architecture, Delhi, conducted a walkability analysis as part of the CMMP, which identified a staggering 800 km of the city's road network as currently lacking essential pedestrian infrastructure.

Tata Sierra CNG spotted testing near Pune plant - Here's when it could launch

HYDERABAD.(Agency)

Tata Motors launched the Sierra last year and began deliveries earlier this year with three powertrain choices: a naturally aspirated petrol, a turbo petrol, and a turbo diesel. An electric version is also on the way, with a grand debut scheduled for June 30, 2026. But now, a fourth option appears to be joining the lineup.

Spotted: Siera With Emission Testing Kit

A new Sierra test mule has been spied near Tata Motors' plant on the outskirts of Pune, fitted with emission testing equipment. This strongly suggests the Sierra i-CNG is now in active testing, alongside a rumoured all-wheel drive version that's also reportedly under development. Interestingly, this particular test mule was spotted in a brand new blue shade, similar to the Royal Blue colour seen on the Safari. But the bigger story here is the emission testing kit, which points clearly toward CNG development.

Why CNG Makes Sense for Tata

Tata Motors has been keen to bring a CNG option above the Nexon, and the two obvious candidates are the Curvv and the Sierra. Both are reportedly under development right now.

Even though the Curvv and Sierra are both C-segment midsize SUVs, their petrol engines are quite different. The Curvv uses a pair of 1.2-litre three-cylinder turbo engines. The Sierra, on the other hand, uses a pair of 1.5-litre four-cylinder engines, one naturally aspirated and one turbocharged. It's not yet clear which of these two engines will get the CNG treatment on the Sierra. The naturally aspirated 1.5-litre petrol seems like the more likely candidate, though the turbo-petrol version hasn't been ruled out entirely.

What to Expect From Sierra i-CNG

Whichever engine gets chosen, the Sierra i-CNG is expected to use a twin-cylinder CNG tank setup in the boot. This layout typically eats into less luggage space compared to a traditional single large tank.

Rupee slips to 94.48 against dollar as global currency pressures weigh

MUMBAI.(Agency)

The rupee depreciated 15 paise to 94.48 against the US dollar in early trade on Monday, weighed down by the strength of the American currency in the overseas market. Forex traders said the rupee witnessed volatility as steady debt and deposit inflows pulled the domestic currency in one way, while a nervous Middle East and a firm dollar pulled it the other way.

At the interbank foreign exchange market the rupee opened at 94.42, registering a decline of 9 paise from its previous close. In initial trade it also touched 94.24 against the American currency.

On Friday, the rupee pared most of its initial gains and settled higher by 7 paise at 94.33 against the US dollar. "Technically, the 94.00-94.20 zone continues to act as a key support area, while 94.80-95.00 remains the immediate resistance band. With debt inflows showing signs of improvement and oil prices staying relatively contained, the bias remains mildly in favour of rupee appreciation, with USD/INR potentially drifting towards the 94.00-93.80 zone," CR Forex Advisors MD - Amit Pabari said. On the global front, high-level Iran war talks in Switzerland ended on Monday with lower-level talks planned for the rest of the week as Iran and the United States agreed to create a "de-confliction cell" to address the fighting in Lebanon. The talks marked the start of a 60-day diplomatic process that seeks to reach a permanent deal to end the Iran war.

Meanwhile, Iran insisted it had again shut the Strait of Hormuz over the weekend, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf crucial to energy shipments, while the US said traffic continued.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading at 100.87, amid hawkish FED and the fragile US-Iran trade deal. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading lower by 1.28 per cent at USD 79.54 per barrel in futures trade.

India gets defence boost as US clears \$428 million Apache and M777 Howitzer package

New Delhi.(Agency)

The US has formally notified the proposed sale of sustainment support services and related equipment for India's Apache helicopters and M777A2 Ultra-Light Howitzers at an estimated cost of USD 482.2 million. The Defence Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), which administers the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) programme of the US, issued the arms sales notification in the Federal Register on June 17. India inducted the M777A2 Ultra-Light Howitzers, procured from the US under the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) route, to bolster its artillery capabilities, particularly in mountainous terrain.

Strengthening US-India strategic relations

According to the notification, India has requested long-term sustainment support for its M777A2 Ultra-Light Howitzers, reported news agency PTI. "The following non-major defence equipment items will be included: ancillary items; spares; repair and return; training; technical assistance; field service representative; depot capability; and other related elements of logistics and programme support. The estimated total cost is USD 230 million," it said.

The Department of Defence said India has sought AH-64E Apache sustainment support services, US government and contractor engineering, technical and logistics support services, technical data and publications, personnel training, and other related logistics and programme support.

Pentagon backs India deal

The Apache helicopter support package is expected to cost USD 198.2 million. The government stated that Boeing and Lockheed Martin will be the main contractors for the Apache services, while BAE Systems, based in Cumbria, UK, will take care of the M777 howitzer support program.

Could you get an income tax notice by June 30? Don't panic, here's how to respond

Major Indian IT stocks fell sharply after Accenture lowered the upper end of its annual revenue growth forecast. The sell-off has renewed concerns over weak discretionary spending, slower deal conversion and the pace of demand

New Delhi.(Agency)

Many taxpayers are currently focused on the upcoming income tax return filing deadline. But there is another important date that deserves attention, i.e., June 30. While it may not matter to everyone, it is significant for those who have already filed their returns and could be selected for scrutiny by the Income Tax Department. Receiving a tax notice can sound worrying, but it does not automatically mean you have done something wrong. In many cases, the department simply wants to verify certain details mentioned in your return. Understanding why a notice is

issued and how to respond can help avoid unnecessary stress.

WHY IS JUNE 30 SIGNIFICANT FOR TAXPAYERS?

June 30 is the last date by which the Income Tax Department can issue a scrutiny notice under Section 143(2) for returns filed during FY 2025-26. A scrutiny assessment begins when tax officials want to examine specific details in a taxpayer's return. This may include checking income disclosures, deductions claimed, tax payments, or certain financial transactions. The purpose is to ensure that the information provided in the return is accurate and complete.

WHO IS MORE LIKELY TO RECEIVE A SCRUTINY NOTICE?

A notice may be issued when the assessing officer finds discrepancies or unusual patterns in a taxpayer's return. One of the most common reasons is a mismatch between the income reported in the return and the details available in Form 26AS or the Annual Information Statement (AIS).

In some cases, turnover reported in GST records may not match the figures disclosed in tax filings. Taxpayers who claim deductions that appear unusually high compared to their income may also attract attention. The tax department may



also seek clarification if high-value transactions reflected in official records have not been reported in the return. Similarly, property sale transactions recorded with registration authorities but missing from the tax return can trigger scrutiny. With the increasing use of technology, the department now has access

to a wide range of financial and digital transaction data. Advanced analytics and artificial intelligence tools are being used to identify returns that may require closer examination.

Meanwhile, mistakes can happen while filing tax returns. If you discover an error after submitting your ITR, it does not necessarily mean a scrutiny notice will follow. Taxpayers have the option of correcting certain errors by filing an Updated Return (ITR-U), subject to applicable conditions and additional tax liability. Tax experts often suggest fixing genuine mistakes voluntarily rather than waiting for the department to raise questions later.

HOW CAN YOU RESPOND IF YOU RECEIVE A NOTICE?

A scrutiny notice is usually sent to the taxpayer's registered email address and may also be delivered to the registered postal address. Taxpayers can also check for notices by logging into the income tax e-filing portal.

Jio IPO is a milestone for Reliance. But will it unlock massive value for investors?

New Delhi.(Agency)

The announcement of Jio Platforms' IPO has given Reliance Industries shareholders plenty to cheer about. After years of speculation, Mukesh Ambani confirmed at Reliance Industries' 49th Annual General Meeting that Jio Platforms has approved its draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) and filed it with market regulator Sebi. The proposed issue, expected to be worth Rs 35,000-40,000 crore, could become the biggest IPO in India's history. For many investors, the immediate assumption is straightforward: if Jio gets listed at a premium valuation, Reliance Industries shares should surge. But several analysts believe the reality may be more complicated.

THE VALUE-UNLOCKING STORY ISN'T NEW

For years, investors have argued that Reliance's telecom and digital businesses are worth more than what is reflected in the parent company's stock price. The Jio IPO is expected to provide a market-determined valuation for one of India's largest telecom and digital platforms. On the surface, that sounds like a major positive for Reliance shareholders. However, analysts say much of that optimism may already be reflected in Reliance's valuation. Over the past decade, Jio and Reliance Retail have transformed Reliance from a traditional oil-to-chemicals company into a consumer and technology-focused conglomerate. Consumer-facing businesses now contribute roughly half of the group's EBITDA, meaning investors have already been assigning significant value to these businesses. **THE HOLDING COMPANY DISCOUNT PROBLEM**

One of the biggest reasons analysts remain cautious is something known as the "holding company discount." In simple terms, markets often value a subsidiary more richly than the parent company that owns it. According to brokerage Nuvama Institutional Equities, even if Jio lists at a premium valuation, Reliance shareholders may not receive the full benefit because Jio sits within a larger conglomerate structure. The brokerage continues to apply a 20% holding company discount while valuing Reliance's digital and retail businesses. That means even if investors place a very high valuation on Jio after listing, Reliance Industries' share price may not rise by the same magnitude. **RELANCE DOESN'T OWN ALL OF JIO**

Another factor is ownership. Unlike in Jio's early days, Reliance no longer owns 100% of the company. Global investors including Meta, Google, Silver Lake, KKR and several sovereign wealth funds own minority stakes in Jio Platforms.

Sensex opens 300 points higher, Nifty above 24,100; IT stocks gain

The S&P BSE Sensex gained 404.20 points, or 0.53%, to 77,207.10 in early trade, while the NSE Nifty 50 rose 117.25 points, or 0.49%, to 24,130.35.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Benchmark indices opened higher on Monday, extending last week's gains as easing concerns over the West Asia conflict and lower crude oil prices lifted investor sentiment. The S&P BSE Sensex gained 404.20 points, or 0.53%, to 77,207.10 in early trade, while the NSE Nifty 50 rose 117.25 points, or 0.49%, to 24,130.35. The rally came as progress in US-Iran peace talks reduced fears of a fresh escalation in the region, helping Brent crude remain below the crucial \$80-per-barrel mark. Brent crude futures were down 1.5% at \$79.36 per barrel, while WTI crude traded at \$75.63. **LOWER CRUDE, STRONGER RUPEE SUPPORT MARKETS**



Investment Strategist at Geojit Investments Limited, said the market is taking comfort from the fact that Brent crude remains below \$80 despite mixed headlines emerging from the West Asia negotiations. "Despite the confusing news coming from the West Asia talks, Brent crude is trading below \$80. This

How can employees claim HRA if the landlord refuses to provide PAN card? Explained

GUWAHATI.(Agency)

Salaried employees receiving a House Rent Allowance (HRA) as part of their salary can claim HRA exemption if they pay rent for their accommodation. An HRA exemption lowers the taxable salary either wholly or partially. Under the current system, salaried employees claiming HRA are required to provide rent receipts and furnish the landlord's PAN if the annual rent exceeds the prescribed limit. In the absence of a PAN, an employer can deny the benefit of HRA while deducting tax on salary income. HRA exemption can be claimed by employees who receive HRA as a part of their salary structure. The taxpayer should live in a rented accommodation to claim HRA exemption and those living in their own house cannot claim HRA. HRA is exempted under the old tax regime under section 10(13A) for salaried individuals. However, this exemption is not available in the new tax regime. Rent agreement and rent receipt to claim HRA exemption

The HRA amount deduction features in Part B of Form 16 provided by the employer as it is part of the salary. A rent agreement and rent receipt are necessary



to claim an HRA exemption. Rent receipts are important as they serve as proof that the employee has paid the rent as specified in the agreement. The income tax authorities might reject the HRA claim due to lack of rent receipts and evidence of actual payments.

PAN card necessary for claiming HRA exemption

The PAN of the landlord is mandatory for HRA exemption in case the rent per annum of the employee exceeds Rs 1

lakh which is Rs 8,333 per month. The PAN of the landlord is not required if your annual rent payment is below Rs 1 lakh. If this annual rental amount exceeds Rs 6,00,000 then the tenant has to deduct 10 percent TDS from the rent amount every month.

What if landlord PAN is not available?

The Income Tax rules require an employee to mandatorily furnish Form 12BB mentioning the name, address and details of the PAN of the landlord if rent paid during the year exceeds Rs 1 lakh as evidence towards the HRA claim. In case of failure to produce the PAN, the employer can deny the benefit of HRA while deducting tax on salary income.

Even if you are unable to provide the PAN of your landlord, you may still be eligible for HRA exemption. If the landlord does not give the PAN, they must provide a written declaration, including their name and address. This requirement helps the government verify the rent payments mentioned in receipts.

New Delhi.(Agency)

As the income tax return (ITR) filing season gathers pace, many taxpayers are once again asking the same question: should they stick with the old tax regime or move to the new one? While choosing the right regime can help reduce tax liability, many people are still unsure about one important rule, i.e., how often can they switch between the two? The answer depends largely on the source of your income. For some taxpayers, switching is quite flexible. For others, the rules are much stricter and can have long-term implications.

NEW TAX REGIME REMAINS THE DEFAULT OPTION

The government made the new tax regime the default tax system through the Finance Act, 2023. It offers lower tax rates and a higher rebate but removes most exemptions and deductions that were available under the old regime. With income up to Rs 12 lakh becoming effectively tax-free under the new regime from FY 2025-26 due to the enhanced rebate, many taxpayers may find the simplified structure attractive. For salaried individuals, the tax-free threshold

rises to Rs 12.75 lakh after accounting for the standard deduction. However, the decision becomes more complicated for those who claim deductions on investments, insurance premiums, home loans and other tax-saving expenses.

SALARIED TAXPAYERS CAN SWITCH EVERY YEAR

The good news for salaried employees is that they enjoy considerable flexibility.

According to CA (Dr) Suresh Surana, "The Finance Act 2023 has made the new tax regime as default tax regime. However, individual taxpayers can switch between old and new tax regime on a year-on-year basis." This means salaried individuals can review their income, deductions and tax-saving investments every financial year and choose whichever regime works best for them. For instance, if a taxpayer has made substantial investments eligible under Section 80C or is claiming home loan benefits in one year, the old regime may be beneficial. In another year, if deductions are limited, the new regime could offer greater savings.

DON'T FORGET TO INFORM YOUR EMPLOYER

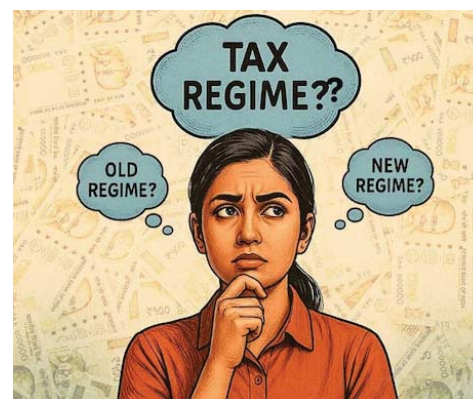
While salaried taxpayers can switch every year, there is one important step they should not overlook. Surana explains, "Such salaried employees are required to provide

In simple terms, if employees do not communicate their preferred regime to their employer, tax deducted at source (TDS) will generally be calculated under the new regime. However, taxpayers still get another opportunity to make their final choice when filing their income tax return." Nevertheless, the final choice of tax regime can be made by the employee at the time of furnishing the tax return," Surana adds.

RULES ARE DIFFERENT FOR BUSINESS OWNERS AND PROFESSIONALS

The flexibility available to salaried employees does not apply to everyone. Individuals earning income from business or profession face tighter restrictions when it comes to switching tax regimes. Once such taxpayers opt out of the new tax regime under Section 115BAC and move to the old regime, they cannot freely switch every year.

According to Surana, taxpayers with business or professional income who have exercised the option of opting out of the new regime can exercise the option of returning to the new regime only once.



intimation regarding their choice of tax regime to employers in the beginning of the financial year. Failure of same will result in deduction of TDS according to the default tax regime, i.e., the new tax regime."

Short news

Sai Krishna disappearance case: Supporters oppose suspended inspector Nagaraju's arrest

VIJAYAWADA.(Agency)

Mild tension prevailed in Ajit Singh Nagar on Saturday as a large number of women and supporters gathered to prevent the anticipated arrest of suspended Krishna Lanka circle inspector (CI) SSVV Nagaraju in connection with the Gade Sai Krishna disappearance case.

Upon learning about the incident, Ajit Singh Nagar police personnel rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control after supporters attempted to obstruct law enforcement officials.

According to sources, Nagaraju, who is an accused in the Sai Krishna case, has reportedly been staying at the residence of a court head constable for the past three days.

Information that police were likely to arrest him on Sunday morning led to a large gathering of supporters at the location. The development has raised further questions and suspicions over Nagaraju's stay at the court constable's house.

On the other hand, residents of Krishna Lanka, youth and women organised a candlelight rally in Krishna Lanka in a display of support for the suspended officer. Participants claimed that Nagaraju had taken a tough stand against rowdism and criminal activities after assuming charge at Krishna Lanka police station. They credited him with curbing ganja-related offences and taking strict action against those harassing women.

Sluggish monsoon leaves western Odisha parched, sizzling

BHUBANESWAR.(Agency)

Even as the met office has predicted advancement of the southwest monsoon in the state, its prolonged pause has left large parts of western Odisha dry with scorching heat and high humidity making life miserable.

Currently, Odisha has recorded a 48 per cent rain deficit between June 11 and 17. With monsoon experiencing a sluggish phase, the state recorded 78 pc deficit rains between Saturday and Sunday morning. About 27 districts remained in deficient, large deficient or no rains category during the period.

The monsoon's tardy progress over the state since June 15 has triggered a severe dry spell with maximum temperatures in western and interior districts such as Jharsuguda, Sambalpur and Boudh consistently crossing 39 degree Celsius mark.

As per the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the maximum temperature departure was in the range of 3 degree C to 6 degree C over most parts of Maharashtra adjoining Madhya Pradesh, north interior Karnataka, north Telangana, many places of Chhattisgarh, east Uttar Pradesh and adjoining Bihar as well as some parts of Jharkhand and western Odisha on Sunday.

Boudh recorded the maximum temperature of 40.6 degree C on the day, followed by Jharsuguda 40 degree C, Sambalpur 39.8 degree C, Hirakud 39.3 degree C, Sundargarh 38.5 degree C and Balangir 38.2 degree C.

Illegal mining of red sand rampant in Thoothukudi

THOOTHUKUDI.(Agency)

Environmentalists and the public have expressed concern about inaction against illicit miners of red sand from 'theri' forests and other areas in the district. It has been found that smugglers misuse the permission granted by Block Development Officers to divert theri sand or red sand.

The red sand deposits in the red sand forest (theri kadu) or deserts are a unique landscape in Thoothukudi district, and are profoundly rich in garnet and other heavy minerals.

These forests are located in Tiruchendur and Sathankulam areas of Thoothukudi district. As the vast red sand patches are out of the protected zones, they have become the target of smugglers, catering to the high demand for red sand for various infrastructure projects or beautification due to its attractive crimson red colour, and also for nurseries.

Since the transportation of the red sand has been restricted, smugglers often divert red sand available on private patta lands close to the theri forests and other red sand patches near Sawyerpuram, Nazareth, Ottapidaram, Vembar and other hinterland areas. It is alleged that the smugglers get permission to excavate red sand from BDOs on the pretext of raising nurseries, and manage to shuttle hundreds of loads within a few days.

Recently, the Udangudi BDO granted permission to excavate 120 units of red sand from Arasoori in Nadunaalumoolaikinaru village near Tiruchendur for a nursery development project under the rural job guarantee scheme of the Sirunadar Kudiyiruppu and Mathavankurichi panchayats.

Why tracing threat emails has become a challenge for Mumbai police

Mumbai.(Agency)

When the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) received a series of threat emails last week warning of blasts at government offices, including the Chief Minister's Office, investigators found digital trails leading to five different locations across the world, from the European Union and the United States to India.

Police officials say those locations were almost certainly a smokescreen.

The IP addresses traced during the investigation are believed to have been masked using Virtual Private Networks (VPNs), making it increasingly difficult for law enforcement agencies to identify the actual sender.

The challenge is not new. In 2024, when a Facebook post claimed responsibility for the firing outside actor Salman Khan's residence in Bandra, investigators traced the IP address to Portugal. Officials later suspected that the original source had been concealed through



similar methods. The growing use of VPNs and encrypted communication platforms has emerged as one of the biggest hurdles in cyber investigations involving threat emails. The problem, according to investigators, begins once the trail reaches the VPN provider.

"We send emails on the IDs mentioned on their websites but we never receive a response," an officer said. "For most of these VPN companies, anonymity is their USP. Requests

coming from another country's police, can easily be stonewalled. Going through legal channels via the government using the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) is a time-consuming process that could take years."

As a result, several investigations stall at the VPN level itself. Sources said only those cases where the sender lacks the technical expertise to properly conceal their identity are eventually solved. One such instance involved threat emails sent to the Ambani family in 2024. Investigators were able to trace the messages to a 24-year-old accused after a brief glitch in the free VPN service he was using exposed his actual IP address. In the absence of any such glitches, it becomes difficult to track the sender or even find the country from which the email is sent. Sometimes the IP address is so well masked we suspected some foreign agency may be behind it," an officer said.

Karnataka may hike bus fares as Shivakumar says 'KSRTC should also survive'

Bengaluru. (Agency)

Karnataka Chief Minister D K Shivakumar has indicated that a hike in bus fares is under consideration because of rising fuel prices, but that any decision will be made with the people's interests in mind.

"The difference in diesel prices between private and corporation depots is around Rs 40. This is a shocking number. It was decided earlier that if the price of diesel increases, ticket prices should increase. This should be reviewed again," Shivakumar said following a Cabinet meeting on Saturday.

The Karnataka State Transport Corporation (KSRTC), which is offering government-subsidised free travel for women and is set to offer it to male students with bus passes—as announced by Shivakumar after taking over as the chief minister on June



3—is under additional financial pressure because of rising fuel prices.

"KSRTC should also survive. It should be suitable for the people. Because the prime minister himself has given guidance to use public transport to save fuel. This should be decided keeping in mind the interests of the people. Private companies are buying diesel from public bunkers instead of depots. I

have heard a report on this," Shivakumar said.

Last year, the government hiked bus fares by 15 per cent in January to cover rising operational costs following the launch of the Shakti scheme of free travel for women in 2023. Last year, the government cited the "non-revision of ticket price for the last five years," the increase in average daily diesel expenditure from Rs 9.16 crore to Rs 13.21 crore due to fuel price rises, and the "increase in staff cost due to 15 per cent wage revision during 2020-2023" as major factors for revising bus fares in the state. Then transport minister Ramalinga Reddy argued last year that the government bus fares in Karnataka were lower, even after the 15 per cent hike, when compared with those in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Maharashtra, "in terms of paise/km currently charged"

14-year-old boy rapes 9-month-old in Gorakhpur, tells police he was drunk

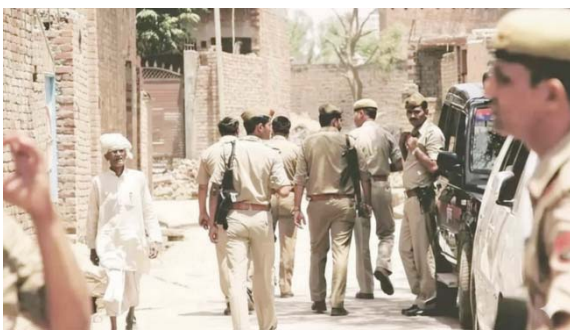
Lucknow. (Agency)

A 14-year-old boy has been apprehended for allegedly kidnapping and raping a nine-month-old girl, a relative, in a village in Gorakhpur district of Uttar Pradesh. Police said the teenager claimed he was under the influence of alcohol when the incident occurred.

The boy allegedly took the baby from her home while she was asleep beside her mother on Friday night. The family realised the child was missing the following morning and began searching for her in and around the village. After a frantic search, they found the child lying in a field nearly 500 metres from her home.

The child, who suffered severe injuries, was admitted to a hospital where she is undergoing treatment.

The police said the victim's medical examination confirmed sexual assault, while reports of other forensic and medical tests are still awaited.



Officers reviewed footage from CCTV cameras installed in the village and questioned locals to establish the sequence of events and identify the suspect.

The police zeroed in on the baby's 14-year-old relative who had returned to the village only last week. He was

subsequently detained for questioning.

"During interrogation, the juvenile confessed to the crime and admitted that he had taken the infant from the house while she was asleep beside her mother," said Patil Nimish Dasharath, Additional Superintendent of Police, Gorakhpur.

He added, "The teenager claimed that he was heavily intoxicated at the time of the incident and committed the offence under the influence of alcohol."

Boy joined search for victim

The boy allegedly took the child early on Saturday morning, left it in the field after sexually assaulting it, and returned home. According to the police, the boy joined the victim's family members and neighbours in searching for her after she was found missing on Saturday morning.

Communicable diseases claimed 186 lives in Kerala this year, 48 in June

KOCHI.(Agency)

Raising serious public health concerns, communicable diseases have so far claimed a total of 186 lives in the state this year. Of these, 48 deaths were reported in the first 20 days of June, while 55 fatalities were reported in May.

With monsoon setting in and cases of Shigella, influenza, dengue fever and other illnesses on the rise, health experts warn that the situation may worsen in the coming months, urging immediate remedial measures.

Amoebic meningoencephalitis claimed 34 lives this year. It was followed by hepatitis A and leptospirosis, with 27 and 24 deaths, respectively. In 2024 and 2023, the state reported 543 and 570 deaths due to communicable diseases, respectively, with more than 220 hepatitis A deaths reported in both years. In 2026, there has been an unprecedented rise in Shigella deaths, with six casualties so far.

Dr Anish T S, associate professor at the School of Public Health, Kerala University of Health Sciences, said the state experiences a surge in communicable diseases every year during the monsoon season. "The number of cases tends to rise in July. The annual surge in infections is closely linked to rainfall patterns. If the state receives more rain in August, we may experience more cases in September too," he said. Dr Rajeev Jayadevan, convener of the Indian Medical Association Research Cell, Kerala, said the state has historically reported more deaths in monsoon season.

"Many decades ago, several reasons, including communicable diseases, poverty, and starvation tied to seasonal loss of wages from agricultural cycles, were attributed to this situation.

Vadodara census worker alleges assault during enumeration, unidentified man booked

Vadodara.(Agency)

The Vadodara city police Sunday booked an unidentified man for allegedly assaulting the fiancé of a government-appointed census worker, abusing the couple and obstructing official census duties in the city's Manjalpur area. According to the complaint filed at the Makarpura police station, Rinku Damor, 32, an Anganwadi worker attached to the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) branch of the Women and Child Development Department in Jashoda Colony area, was assigned the area as a field enumerator for the ongoing census operation involving house-listing and building enumeration. Damor, who resides at the Pratapnagar headquarters, stated that she and her

fiancé, Prakash Baria, visited Dreamland Complex near Darbar Chokdi and Suncity Circle on Saturday at around 3 pm as part of the survey exercise. During the visit, Damor noticed that the shutter of Shop No. 23, operating as Angel Enterprise, was partially open. Following census protocol, she marked a census identification number outside the premises.

Accused demanded erasure of census identification number

Shortly thereafter, an unidentified man allegedly approached the pair and questioned why the number had been written on the shop. Despite being informed that the marking was part of a government census exercise, the man



allegedly became agitated and objected to the survey work, the complaint states.

The complainant alleged that the man demanded the number be erased and began hurling abuses. The confrontation escalated into a heated argument, during which he allegedly assaulted Baria by slapping him and continued behaving

aggressively with Damor as well. Nearby shopkeepers reportedly rushed to the spot and intervened, separating the parties and preventing the situation from escalating further.

Damor alleged that the incident disrupted census operations, a government exercise considered crucial for collecting demographic and housing data used in national planning and policy formulation. Based on her complaint, the Makarpura police registered an FIR under sections 115(2), (voluntarily causing hurt), 296(b) (use of obscene or abusive words in a public place), and 221 (obstructing a public servant in the discharge of official duties) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

NEWS BOX

ICC punishes England with 12-point WTC penalty after loss to New Zealand

New Delhi., (Agency)

England's hopes of reaching the World Test Championship (WTC) final suffered a significant setback after the International Cricket Council (ICC) docked the side 12 points for a slow over-rate during their 253-run defeat to New Zealand in the second Test at The Oval. The ICC confirmed the sanction shortly after England's loss on Sunday, ruling that the hosts were 12 overs short of the required target after time allowances had been taken into account. The players have also been fined 50 per cent of their match fees. The penalty leaves England on 38 points in the WTC 2025-27 standings. While they remain seventh in the table, their points percentage has dropped from 34.72 to 26.38. England vs New Zealand, 2nd Test Day 5: HIGHLIGHTS New Zealand's emphatic victory levelled the three-match series at 1-1 and boosted the visitors' position in the early stages of the WTC cycle. The sanction was imposed by ICC Elite Panel match referee Andy Pycroft under Article 2.22 of the ICC Code of Conduct, which deals with minimum over-rate offences. "In accordance with Article 2.22 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to



minimum over-rate offences, players are fined five per cent of their match fee for each over their team fails to bowl within the allotted time, with the maximum penalty capped at 50 per cent of the match fee," the ICC said in a statement. The governing body added that under Article 16.11.2 of the World Test Championship playing conditions, teams are penalised one point for every over short. "Consequently, 12 World Test Championship points have been deducted from England's points total," the ICC said. Stand-in captain Joe Root pleaded guilty to the offence and accepted the proposed sanction, removing the need for a formal hearing. The charge was levelled by on-field umpires Adrian Holdstock and Nitin Menon, third umpire Rod Tucker and fourth umpire Graham Lloyd.

Ignore the numbers? India back clutch Jemimah Rodrigues to defy the critics again

New Delhi. (Agency)

A miserable return of 32 runs from three innings, without a single score crossing 20, is the type of stark statistic that usually invites immediate selection scrutiny in the high-octane tournament like the T20 World Cup. Yet, in the wake of a damaging six-wicket defeat to South Africa on Sunday, India head coach Amol Muzumdar chose to shield his struggling number three by drawing on a very powerful, very recent memory. For Muzumdar, tournament statistics are merely background noise when weighed against proven big-match pedigree. Despite Jemimah Rodrigues' evident struggle for fluency in England so far, culminating in a laboured 12 off 14 balls that stalled India's momentum in Manchester, the coach remains entirely unfazed. The reason is simple: India have been here before with the 25-year-old Mumbai batter. Only last year, during the



home ODI World Cup, Rodrigues endured a similarly lean run before producing one of the greatest knockout innings in the history of the women's game. Dropped from the XI at one stage of that tournament, she returned to smash a magical, unbeaten 127 in Navi Mumbai, piloting India through a world-record chase of 339 to stun Australia in the semi-final. It is precisely that blueprint of late-tournament deliverance that the team management is banking on now. "You have thrown the stats just now on me, but nothing of concern as far as I'm concerned," Muzumdar said, launching an unflinching defence.

"Jemy is a clutch player for us. We know for a fact that if she comes good, she'll win us a game. The scores haven't reflected the talent that she has, but I'm sure, in the coming days, she'll come along." Maintaining that faith will test the management's resolve. Rodrigues' recent form line makes for grim reading, yielding just a solitary fifty-plus score in her last nine international outings.

FIFA World Cup 2026: Messi, Mbappe and Haaland return to action, chasing more history

FIFA World Cup 2026: As football's ultimate heavyweights return for their second group fixtures, Lionel Messi, Kylian Mbappe and Erling Haaland look to consolidate opening-day masterclasses and steer their nations toward early knockout qualification in North America.

New Delhi. (Agency)

The opening salvo of a World Cup often belongs to the collective-the scripted romance of the underdogs, the collective sigh of nervous heavyweights, and the pageantry of a tournament finding its rhythm. Yet, as the 2026 finals in North America transition into the high-stakes territory of the second round, the narrative has been forcefully hijacked by individual genius. The first week felt like a coordinated statement of intent from the

game's premium blockbusters. Lionel Messi celebrated a historic sixth finals appearance with a majestic hat-trick against Algeria in Kansas City, pulling level with Miroslav Klose's all-time World Cup scoring record of 16 goals. Hours earlier, Kylian Mbappe systematically dismantled Senegal with a decisive brace to become France's outright all-time leading scorer at just 27 years of age.

Not to be outdone, Erling Haaland translated his club-level inevitability onto the global stage, marking his long-awaited World Cup debut with a brutal physical double to hand Norway a thumping 4-1 win over Iraq.

Now, the focus shifts from introductory fireworks to cold, calculated consolidation.

MESSI EYES MORE HISTORY Lionel Messi's opening-night masterclass showed his magic remains intact. Lionel Scaloni's system still allows the Argentina captain to pick his moments, but after finding plenty of space against Algeria, he is likely to face a much sterner and more physical test against Ralf Rangnick's Austria. Austria entered the tournament on the back of

a clinical 3-1 victory over Jordan, showcasing the hyper-aggressive, synchronised counter-pressing that has become Rangnick's structural signature. They will not stand-off and admire the defending world champions; instead, Austria's midfield engine room will



attempt to suffocatingly close the pockets of space where Messi operates.

Key Tactical Battle: Look forward to the isolation of Messi against Austria's central block. Rangnick will undoubtedly deploy a designated screening midfielder to shadow

the Argentine captain. The tactical fascination lies in how Argentina's supporting cast, particularly Alexis Mac Allister and Rodrigo De Paul, exploit the spaces vacated when Austria attempt to double-team Messi. One more goal puts Messi out on his own in the pantheon of World Cup goalscorers. Expect a high-octane chess match where one moment of lateral genius could break Austria's rigid lines. **MBAPPE LOOKS TO IMPRESS** France vs Iraq at 2:30 am IST on June 23

Venue: Philadelphia Stadium

If Messi's performance carried the heavy weight of history, Kylian Mbappe's display in France's 3-1 opening victory over Senegal carried the terrifying threat of tournament inevitability. Didier Deschamps' side laboured during the first half, but the moment the match demanded elite intervention, Mbappe stepped through

the gears. His second goal, a blistering effort that killed off Senegal's late resurgence, highlighted his unique ability to separate statistical output from pure match-winning value.

A message to selectors? Sooryavanshi's post-match chat after 29-ball 94 goes viral

New Delhi. (Agency)

To most cricket fans, 15-year-old Vaibhav Sooryavanshi is a creature birthed entirely by the T20 revolution. He is the teenage prodigy who illuminated the Indian Premier League 2026 season, pocketed a senior India T20I call-up, and whose batsmanship is usually evaluated through the frantic lens of maximums and instant gratification. Yet, fresh from hitting a brutal 29-ball 94 that buried Sri Lanka A in the one-day tri-series final on Sunday, the young left-hander used his moment on the broadcaster's microphone to deliver a cheeky, viral reminder to those who have, well, misprofiled him. When asked by the presenter how he was adapting to the rhythms of the 50-over format after so much high-profile T20 exposure, Sooryavanshi did not quite appreciate the premise. With the deadpan confidence only a teenager could muster, he retorted: "Learnt a lot this series, but I've played a lot of 50-over cricket. Not sure people know about it." **THE KID IS RIGHT!**



For a boy who still requires special dispensation to skip school for international tours, "a lot" is entirely relative. But statistically, the kid is right. While his fame rests on 34 explosive T20 appearances across two IPL seasons, his foundational bedrock is 50-over cricket. He has quietly accumulated 38 senior and youth one-dayers, including 25 Youth ODIs where he stands as the most prolific under-19 run-scorer in Indian history with 1,412 runs and four centuries. That baseline of traditional white-ball cricket was vital in Dambulla, especially as Sooryavanshi arrived at the final under a cloud of rare technical scrutiny. A lean run during the league stages had raised whispers about his adaptability on tricky, stopping wickets.

"I hadn't thought of anything," Sooryavanshi said of his mindset ahead of the final. "Just wanted to execute what I planned in the first ten [overs] and take it forward from there. No pressure. I wasn't executing what I wanted [earlier in the series]. But after consulting with the coaches, I got it right. The challenge was to adapt to different conditions; it was nice to take it on." "Getting it right" proved an understatement of terrifying proportions.

Iran played beautiful game under worst conditions: Coach Amir Ghalenoei hails Belgium draw

Iran coach Amir Ghalenoei hailed his side's performance after a hard-fought 0-0 draw against Belgium in the FIFA World Cup, saying his players produced a "beautiful game" despite battling what he described as the "worst possible conditions" heading into the tournament.

New Delhi. (Agency)

Iran coach Amir Ghalenoei praised his side's performance after their goalless draw against Belgium at SoFi Stadium on Sunday, saying his players produced a "beautiful game" despite facing what he described as the "worst possible conditions" heading into the World Cup. The result left Iran on two points from two Group G matches after their opening 2-2 draw against New Zealand. Ghalenoei pointed to a demanding travel schedule, visa complications, and limited preparation time as some of the challenges his team have had to overcome during the tournament. "We came into the World Cup under the worst possible conditions," Ghalenoei told reporters. "And still we got a result against a

great team and a great manager

"We played a beautiful game."

Iran, who are based in Tijuana, Mexico, arrived in the United States on Saturday night, played Belgium on Sunday and were due to return to Mexico later the same day.



"We had two great games without losing," Ghalenoei said. "Tonight, we celebrate. Tomorrow, we focus on Egypt, which is a very strong team. We need to recover and then we have to fly back. We don't even have enough time to recover. Tomorrow, we will look at this game and look at the game with Egypt. The Iran coach said recovery would be crucial before Friday's final group-stage match against Egypt in Seattle. "Right now, we need recovery," he said. "Sixteen hours, two flights and a heavy game. I don't think anyone could have endured this. And our

players have given everything. What we need the most now is to recover." Winger Alireza Jahanbakhsh said Iran were only seeking fair conditions to prepare and travel with their full support staff. "That's just the fairness," Jahanbakhsh said. "I think for all the teams, and I don't think we are asking for much." The former Brighton player added that the difficulties had helped bring the squad closer together. "From the other side, this is part of our culture that in a difficult situation we perform better. I think that united us even more, and that's one of the things we showed today. We showed a great deal of character, and part of it comes from the situation we are in." Iran face Egypt at Lumen Field on Friday knowing a positive result could secure a place in the knockout stage for the first time in the country's history. "Hopefully, for the next game, we can go a bit earlier," Jahanbakhsh said. "Seattle is a different city, a different place and further from the place where we are staying in Tijuana." Ghalenoei and Jahanbakhsh both praised goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand, who made a series of important saves to help Iran earn a point. Beiranvand's best intervention came midway through the second half when he reacted quickly on his goal line to stop a dangerous ball from Kevin De Bruyne's cross.

FIFA World Cup: Egypt end 92-year wait for maiden win as Salah buries New Zealand

New Delhi. (Agency)

For generations, Egypt dreamed of a night like this. Ninety-two years after making their World Cup debut in 1934, the Pharaohs finally secured their first victory at the tournament, coming from behind to beat New Zealand 3-1 in Vancouver and move to the top of Group G. Mohamed Salah provided the decisive touch on a night that will rank among the most significant in Egyptian football history. The Pharaohs, who had gone winless in their previous World Cup appearances, recovered from a first-half deficit through goals from Mostafa Zico, Salah and substitute Mahmoud Trezeguet. The result not only strengthened Egypt's hopes of reaching the knockout stage but also ended a wait that had stretched across generations of players and supporters. After a relatively quiet first half that saw them trail at



the break, Egypt raised the intensity in the second period as Salah showed he remains capable of making the difference in key moments. "It's a great achievement for all the players. It's a great win. It's a great vibe. The next game is very important," Salah said as he took the plaudits among his teammates. Football occupies a unique place in Egyptian life, and World Cup success had long

remained an elusive milestone. Through decades of disappointment, near misses and unfulfilled promise, the dream endured. At BC Place, Egypt finally turned that dream into reality, producing a commanding second-half display after falling behind early in the contest. The result was about more than three points. It connected different eras of Egyptian football, from the pioneers who represented the country at the 1934 World Cup to the modern generation led by Salah. From Cairo to Alexandria and beyond, supporters had waited decades to witness a moment like this. The victory leaves Egypt top of Group G with four points from two matches following their opening 1-1 draw with Belgium. They will face Iran in their final group-stage fixture after Iran and Belgium played out a goalless draw earlier in the day.

Women's T20 World Cup 2026: Are India in danger of getting knocked out early?

Women's T20 World Cup 2026: India's defeat to South Africa has turned their Group A campaign into a qualification battle. The result leaves Harmanpreet Kaur's side needing wins over Bangladesh and Australia to stay in semi-final contention.

New Delhi. (Agency)

The margin for error has vanished instantly; India's World Cup campaign has plunged into qualification algebra earlier than most anticipated. It was always universally understood that navigating a group featuring both South Africa and heavyweights Australia would leave little room for slip-ups. However, by succumbing to the Proteas at Old Trafford, India have effectively triggered their own semi-final ambitions. The calculations now



become brutally clear: any further missteps against the remaining group opponents are entirely out of the question, and the final group clash against the Australians looms not just as a marquee fixture, but as an absolute, must-win rescue mission. Failing to defend a competitive 158 as the Proteas cruised home

with five balls to spare, Harmanpreet Kaur's side surrendered momentum just as the semi-final berths appeared within touching distance. Yet, a glance at the current standings offers a deceptively comforting illusion. India still occupy the second spot behind undefeated leaders Australia in Group A. The

defeat has triggered a ferocious three-way gridlock; while Australia sit comfortably on top with six points and a colossal Net Run Rate of +4.391, India, South Africa, and Bangladesh are all locked on four points, each possessing two wins and a loss.

For India, the reigning ODI World Champions, the stakes could not be higher. Having conquered the 50-over format so spectacularly last year, the ignominy of a group-stage exit in this shortest format is a nightmare scenario the team management desperately wishes to avoid. "It was a disappointing game for India because, had they won this, they would be on top of the table, and now they have no other choice but to beat Australia to get into the semi-finals. It was their game to win because it's a little tough road ahead," former captain Mithali Raj told JioStar after Sunday's defeat. But translating that 50-over pedigree into a T20 semi-final berth will now require navigating a treacherous, highly dramatic final week.

Samantha Ruth Prabhu

Expecting First Baby?; Dhanush And Mrunal Thakur Part Ways After Months Of Dating?

Samantha Ruth Prabhu is currently enjoying the success of her recently released film, *Maa Inti Bangaaram*. Helmed by Nandini Reddy, the film hit theatres on Friday, June 19, and opened to a positive response at the box office. Recently, Samantha was spotted celebrating the film's performance with her husband and filmmaker Raj Nidimoru and members of the team. Photos and videos from the gathering soon began circulating online, sparking speculation among fans. Many social media users wondered if she might be expecting. Dhanush and Mrunal Thakur, who were rumoured to be dating for a long time, have now reportedly parted ways. If a report by Filmfare is to be believed, the two actors have broken up. However, the reason for their breakup is not known as of now.

India's Got Latent Season 2: Samay Raina's hugely popular comedy show India's Got Latent has finally returned with its much-anticipated second season on Netflix and YouTube. Following the massive success of the first season, fans



had been eagerly waiting for the show's comeback. The wait is now over, as the premiere episode dropped a while ago, featuring Bollywood stars Alia Bhatt and Sharvari as special guests. Both actresses graced the show to promote their upcoming actioner, *Alpha*.

After decades of captivating audiences on screen with his unmistakable voice and commanding presence, Morgan Freeman is now turning his attention to a different form of storytelling. The Oscar-winning actor has announced a new project that celebrates a musical tradition deeply connected to his roots. All not well between Karan Wahni and Rithvik Dhanjani? A Reddit post has been circulating online, claiming that while the two continue to share happy pictures with each other on social media, it seems like the high-stakes competition has led to some cold vibes between the long-time friends. While neither Karan nor Rithvik has reacted to the claims, a Reddit post has alleged that a production member confirmed the news.



Nora Fatehi

And Shilpa Rao Release Festive Track Ya Baba On World Music Day

Nora Fatehi and Shilpa Rao have come together for *Ya Baba*, a vibrant new track released on World Music Day. Presented by T-Series and Bhushan Kumar, the song is designed as a grand celebration of music, dance, culture and festivity, with veteran actor Rakesh Bedi adding warmth to the visual spectacle. Sung by Nora Fatehi and Shilpa Rao, *Ya Baba* blends Arabic influences with celebratory rhythms and an energetic soundscape. The song has been composed by Sanjoy, with lyrics by Nora Fatehi, Sanjoy and Vayu. The music video is now available on the T-Series YouTube channel, while the track is streaming across major audio platforms.

Nora Fatehi And Shilpa Rao Come Together For Ya Baba

Released on World Music Day, *Ya Baba* brings together Nora Fatehi's global performance appeal and Shilpa Rao's powerful vocals in a festive musical setting. The song is built around joy, togetherness and celebration, using music and dance as its central language. Nora not only features in the music video but also lends her voice to the track. Her vocals blend with the song's Arabic-inspired sound, adding a distinctive flavour to the number. Known for her dance presence and international musical

collaborations, Nora brings both glamour and energy to *Ya Baba*.

Shilpa Rao complements Nora's performance with her evocative singing. Her voice gives the song emotional weight while retaining its upbeat, festive pulse. Together, the two artists create a track that aims to cut across cultures and age



groups.

Ya Baba Music Video Brings A Grand Festive World To Life

The music video of *Ya Baba* has been directed by Adil Shaikh and unfolds against the backdrop of a lavish celebration. With vibrant décor, rich cultural aesthetics and a festive atmosphere, the video is designed as a larger-than-life visual experience.

Cocktail 2 Box Office Day 2: Shahid Kapoor, Rashmika Mandanna And Kriti Sanon Film Jumps To ₹29.75 Crore



The weekend appears to be working in favour of *Cocktail 2*. After opening to mixed reactions from audiences and critics alike, the romantic drama has managed to gather momentum at the ticket counters, showing encouraging growth on its second day in theatres. Featuring Shahid Kapoor, Rashmika Mandanna and Kriti Sanon in the lead, the film arrived in cinemas on June 19 as a spiritual successor to the 2012 hit *Cocktail*.

While the response to the film has been divided, its box office performance suggests that audiences are still turning up to watch the love triangle unfold on the big screen.

According to trade tracking website Sacnilk, *Cocktail 2* earned ₹16.25 crore on Saturday, improving on its opening-day collection of ₹13.50 crore. With the latest figures added, the film's total India net collection stands at ₹29.75 crore, while its India gross earnings have reached ₹35.70 crore. Interestingly, the mixed reviews haven't significantly impacted the film's social media buzz. Positive word-of-mouth from a section of viewers appears to be helping the film maintain its pace. All eyes are now on Sunday's performance, which could push the film towards a ₹50 crore opening weekend.

Directed by Homi Adajania, the film follows Kunal (Shahid Kapoor) and Diya (Rashmika Mandanna), college sweethearts who are deeply in love but remain uncertain about the idea of marriage. During a holiday in Sicily, they cross paths with Ally (Kriti Sanon), Diya's friend, who persuades them to abandon their original plans and join her instead.

What begins as a carefree getaway soon becomes emotionally complicated. Doubts creep into Diya's mind as she starts questioning whether Kunal is marrying her out of love or obligation. Hoping to find answers, she asks Ally to test his loyalty by flirting with him, setting off a chain of events that drives the story forward.

'Tu Mama Lagta Hai Mera?' Akshay Kumar's Hilarious Banter With Paparazzi Leaves Social Media In Splits



Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar is awaiting the release of his upcoming comedy caper *Welcome To The Jungle*, and he is currently busy promoting the Ahmed Khan directorial. Recently, the actor was seen heading to the airport when a paparazzo questioned him about where he was going, and his reply left social media bursting into laughter.

As Akshay Kumar made his way into the airport, a paparazzo questioned, "Sir, kahan jaa rahe ho?" (Sir, where are you going?). To this, instead of revealing his travel plans, Akshay dropped a hilarious reply, saying, "Kyun, tu mama lagta hai mera?" (Why? Are you my uncle?). This left the entire paparazzi group laughing. Meanwhile, Akshay later revealed that he was heading to Delhi to celebrate International Yoga Day.

The viral clip has left fans reacting to Akshay's humour. One said, "Comedy khoon mein hai uske (Comedy is in his DNA)." "Akshay and his one-liners are unmatched," wrote another. A third fan shared, "Raju mode activated." "Akshay at his best," a comment read.

About Akshay Kumar's upcoming movie

Welcome To The Jungle is scheduled to release in cinemas on June 26, 2026. Directed by Ahmed Khan, the film promises to bring back the trademark chaos and confusion of the *Welcome* franchise, but on a much bigger canvas.

The film aims to take the madness of the earlier instalments forward while introducing a new set of characters and situations. With its large cast and comic set pieces, *Welcome To The Jungle* appears designed as a full-blown theatrical entertainer.

Welcome To The Jungle trailer

The trailer opens with a high-energy introduction of the film's ensemble cast, setting the tone for a chaotic comedy filled with confusion, madness, and rapid-fire humour. Staying true to the spirit of the *Welcome* franchise, the trailer brings together multiple characters, overlapping situations, and a sense of comic disorder that has long defined the series.

NEWS BOX

Two suspects in custody after shooting at high school in Philippines kills three

MANIL. (Agency)

A: Two people opened fire in a high school in the central Philippines on Monday, killing three students and wounding another five, police officials said.

Two suspects have been taken into custody, police said, one of whom is a student at San Jose National High School in Tacloban city, where the shooting happened, according to police. Both are male and were armed with pistols. Police investigators were still trying to determine what sparked the shooting in the government-run school, which has more than 1,500 students. Police also deployed forces to beef up security. "We urge the public to remain calm, refrain from disseminating unverified information and cooperate with authorities by providing any information that may aid the ongoing investigation," the national police said in a statement. Crimes involving the use of firearms are prevalent in the Philippines, partly due to the proliferation of unlicensed firearms, but school shootings are relatively rare.

Protesters burn US flags, clash with police after Trump-backed candidate wins Colombia vote

BOGOTA (Agency)

Protesters in Colombia's third-largest city Cali burned American flags and clashed with riot police after a Trump-endorsed hard-right candidate won the presidential election by a razor-thin margin.

Police used tear gas to try to disperse a crowd of thousands, some of whom wielded bricks and bars in anger at the victory of Abelardo de la Espriella. With almost all polling centers reporting, De la Espriella won 49.66 percent of the vote versus left-wing Senator Ivan Cepeda's 48.70 percent. The 47-year-old's victory will likely improve strained relations with Washington and extends a wave of rightist candidates who have swept to power across Latin America. "Today Colombia won its most important game," the president-



elect said in a series of social media posts, adding he had spoken to US President Donald Trump, who offered congratulations and support.

Israeli Troops Uncover Hezbollah's Underground Drone Factory In Lebanon

World (Agency)

Israeli troops have uncovered what they describe as a large underground Hezbollah drone facility hidden beneath a mountain in southern Lebanon, close to the Israeli border. According to The Times of Israel, the site was being used both to assemble Iranian-made drones and launch them toward Israel. Israeli military officials said the facility was built over the past decade with direct support from Iran, including funding and planning.

The tunnel complex was found beneath the village of Majdal Zoun, around six kilometres from the Israeli frontier. Israeli forces captured the area earlier this month during operations in southern Lebanon. A Hidden Base Beneath The Mountain

Military officials who guided journalists through the site said the tunnel stretches several hundred meters inside the mountain and reaches depths of nearly 29 meters underground. The facility was protected by large steel blast doors and built to a much higher standard than other Hezbollah tunnels previously discovered in the region, according to the Israeli military. Inside, troops found rooms where drones were being assembled using components allegedly smuggled into Lebanon. Soldiers also discovered around 50 drones fitted with explosive warheads weighing roughly 30 kilograms each. Israeli officials said the drones appeared similar to those previously used in attacks against Israel. The military believes they had enough range to strike targets across the country.

One officer told The Times of Israel that the discovery marked the first time Israeli forces had gained access to fully intact drones of this type, offering valuable intelligence about Hezbollah's capabilities. Launch Shafts Pointed Toward Israel Military officials described the underground site as a drone factory and an "airbase" combined. On the southern side of the mountain, troops found special launch shafts that could be opened when needed.

"At the end of the tunnel, there are exits, four exits protected by blast doors on rails. They can be opened and allow launching of UAVs at Israel," a commander from the IDF's Yahalom combat engineering unit told reporters. The army also said it found around eight tonnes of explosive materials stored inside the facility. "These are drones that threatened the State of Israel throughout its length and breadth. We came here to deprive Hezbollah of these capabilities," the officer added.

What Happens Next?

According to the IDF, the site had previously been targeted by Israeli airstrikes during the 2024 conflict with Hezbollah. However, military officials believe the group later tried to restore the facility.

Qatar gas facility blast leaves 54 injured, 18 missing as workers restart operations

The Barzan plant had a capacity of almost 1.4 billion standard cubic feet of sales gas per day, which Qatar used primarily for local electricity generation and to power its crucial water desalination plants

DUBAI (Agency)

An explosion tore through Qatar's key natural gas export terminal Sunday night as workers tried to resume operations there after Iran bombed it during the war, causing a fire that hurt at least 54 people as another 18 were still missing hours later. The blast at the Ras Laffan industrial area could cause further chaos in global energy markets, particularly as Qatar remains one of the world's top natural gas producers. Qatar shut down its production after Iran's chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz meant it couldn't get shipments out to its clients.

With Iran loosening its grip on the strait as negotiations continue over a permanent end



to the war, Qatar began work to try to restart its export terminal. On Sunday night, that work sparked an explosion and fire at the Barzan gas supply facility, the state-run firm QatarEnergy said. The scale of the damage

remains unknown after the blast, with officials initially saying only a few people had been hurt. But hours later, Qatar's Interior Ministry offered the far-greater casualty figures. The Barzan plant had a

capacity of almost 1.4 billion standard cubic feet of sales gas per day, which Qatar used primarily for local electricity generation and to power its crucial water desalination plants in the desert reaches of the Arabian Peninsula.

Qatar owns nearly all of the plant, with a small share also held by ExxonMobil. The oil company did not immediately respond to a request for comment. In March, an Iranian missile hit Ras Laffan, sparking a fire that caused "extensive" damage before it was extinguished, authorities said. Qatar had already halted production there because of Iranian attacks. Qatar shares its massive offshore natural gas field in the Persian Gulf with Iran. That natural gas production has made Qatar wealthy. It has used that money to raise its profile worldwide through hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup, creating the Al Jazeera news network and funding its work as an international mediator, including the talks in Switzerland between Iran and the United States.

Russian strike on cargo ship kills one: Ukraine deputy PM

World. (Agency)

Russian drones set fire to a cargo vessel en route to Ukraine and killed one of its crew, Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister Oleksiy Kuleba said on Monday. Moscow and Kyiv have escalated attacks on each other in recent weeks, as US-led talks on ending Europe's deadliest conflict since World War II remain effectively frozen. "A drone strike set fire to a vessel sailing under the Panama flag. A crew member was killed -- a 58-year-old cook, a citizen of Egypt," Kuleba wrote on Telegram. He said that eight sailors, including citizens of Turkey and India, fled the attack on a life raft, and that the vessel "sustained significant damage and lost seaworthiness". The Ukrainian navy said that a "large-scale fire" broke out on the Turkish cargo vessel Victress, which was Panama-flagged, following the drone strike. "This incident once again demonstrates that the Russian Federation continues to violate the

norms of international maritime law and to pose threats to civilian shipping," the navy said in a Telegram post. Russians also attacked vessels sailing under the flags of Palau and Belize, with no casualties, according to



Kuleba. Regional authorities in Ukraine separately reported on Monday that Russian attacks killed two people, one in a missile strike in the port city of Odesa and another in a drone attack in Zaporizhzhia in the country's southeast. Three people have been

wounded, another woman remains trapped in a burning house following an enemy attack on Zaporizhzhia," Ivan Fedorov, head of the regional military administration wrote on Telegram on Monday. "Sadly, the death of the woman who was inside the house destroyed by the enemy drone has been confirmed," Fedorov wrote in a later update.

In Odesa, Ukraine's emergency service said that Russian attacks set fire to an agricultural enterprise. "One person was killed as a result of yesterday's missile strike on Odesa region's civilian infrastructure. A further three people were wounded," the emergency service said. In

Russia, aviation authorities briefly closed Moscow's four airports on Monday after a flurry of drones were intercepted. Russia's ministry of defence said on Monday morning that air defences destroyed 301 Ukrainian drones across the country overnight.

'Major progress' in Iran-US talks as Lebanon de-confliction cell is agreed

OBBUERGEN. (Agency)

High-level negotiations in Switzerland seeking a permanent end to the Iran war ended early Monday, with lower-level talks planned for the rest of the week as Iran and the United States agreed to create a "de-confliction cell" to address the fighting in Lebanon. A statement from mediators Pakistan and Qatar said the cell would include the Lebanese government and would "ensure the adherence of the termination of military operations in Lebanon". But it remains unclear whether that will be enough to stop fighting between the Iranian-backed militia Hezbollah and Israel, which occupies Lebanon and insists it must maintain a free hand to attack militants who are launching attacks into northern Israel. Iran's foreign minister early Monday praised Pakistan and Qatar for their mediation after talks in Switzerland, saying that they "delivered major progress". Abbas Araghchi wrote the message on X. Pakistan, Qatar and Iran all have

acknowledged the end of the first round of high-level talks. The US hasn't commented yet. In his message, Araghchi said the first real test of the



understandings reached would be a deconfliction method created over the fighting between Israel and the Iranian-backed militia Hezbollah in Lebanon. Iran has tied success in the talks to the end of the fighting there. Israel insists it will continue to occupy Lebanese territory and that it must have a free hand to fight Hezbollah, which has launched attacks into northern Israel.

The talks marked the start of a 60-day diplomatic process that seeks to reach a permanent deal to end the Iran war. But the fighting in Lebanon remains one of the key sticking points. Meanwhile, Iran insisted it had again shut the Strait of Hormuz over the weekend, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf crucial to energy shipments, while the US said traffic continued. Tense start to talks

The negotiations had a tense start Sunday in Switzerland, when Tehran took offence at US President Donald Trump's threat to attack and his warning that Iran's president should watch what he says. "Iran must immediately stop their highly paid PROXIES in Lebanon from causing trouble," Trump said on social media. "If they don't, we'll hit Iran very hard again, just like we did last week, only harder!!!" The comments from afar -- on social media and to news outlets -- complicated efforts by Vice President J D Vance and mediators Pakistan and Qatar to keep Iran engaged in discussions.

China sanctions 10 US firms over Pentagon blacklist

The 10 entities include Aveox, which holds aerospace defence contracts with the US military, and Oshkosh Defense, which produces military vehicle fleets.

World (Agency)

China imposed export controls on 10 US companies involved in defence and rare earths mining in response to Washington's blacklist of Chinese firms, Beijing said Monday. The move comes a month after US President Donald Trump visited Beijing, seeking to stabilise fraught relations during talks with Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping. Although the countries agreed to work towards reducing tariffs, ties have since been tested as both sides stunt the other in tech and defence. Washington released a new blacklist this month of 80 companies and their subsidiaries it said were aiding the Chinese military. That saw tech giants Alibaba and Baidu added, as well as electric



vehicle giant BYD, prompting Beijing to threaten retaliation. China's new export controls come "in response to the US government's egregious act of adding to its so-called 'Chinese military enterprise list'", the commerce ministry said in a statement, adding the move was also to "safeguard national security". The 10 entities include Aveox, which holds aerospace defence contracts with the US military, and Oshkosh Defense, which produces military vehicle

fleets. It also lists US rare earths producers MP Materials and USA Rare Earth. Exporters are prohibited from providing dual-use items to the listed entities, China's commerce ministry said, adding that "any relevant export activities currently underway must cease immediately". The ban also applies to "organisations or individuals in any country or region... transferring or providing dual-use items originating in China to said

entities", it said. China's finance ministry simultaneously announced a ban on agencies involved in public procurement from buying products made by 46 US firms, including Lockheed Martin, Raytheon and Boeing's defence division. Also listed were divisions of General Dynamics and Anduril Industries, which are major US military contractors, and several aerospace firms. Companies with US investments operating in China are excluded, according to a statement from the finance ministry, which said measures would take effect from Monday. China's commerce ministry had already sanctioned a number of those firms and their subsidiaries, both in 2024 and 2025 over US arms sales to Taiwan.

Taipei relies heavily on Washington's support to counter growing pressure from Beijing, which claims Taiwan as part of its territory and has not ruled out seizing it by force. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said this month a proposed US\$14 billion arms package to Taiwan was "under review". Since his meeting with Xi in May, Trump has sought to publicly present an image of strong bilateral ties.