

Amit Shah meets President Murmu as buzz over Union Cabinet reshuffle grows

Union Home Minister Amit Shah met President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan on Thursday. The meeting has sharpened speculation over an imminent reshuffle of the Union Council of Ministers.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday called on President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan amid speculation over a reshuffle of the Union Council of Ministers.

The meeting came two days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi called on the President. The developments have drawn attention as the BJP has not renominated some ministers to the Rajya Sabha and has given some others key organisational roles in their states.

The President's office shared a picture of Shah's meeting in a post on X. "Union Minister for Home Affairs and Cooperation Shri Amit Shah called on President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan," the post said.

On Tuesday, PM Modi had also met President Murmu. The meetings assume significance amid the buzz that a reshuffle of the Union Council of Ministers is imminent.



Veteran BJP leader from Kerala, George Kurian, recently resigned from the council of ministers after his Rajya Sabha term expired. The 65-year-old was Minister of State for Minority Affairs and also for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying.

The BJP decided not to renominate Kurian, whose term in the Upper House ended on June 21.

Minister of State for Railways Ravneet Singh,

whose Rajya Sabha term also ended on June 21, has also not been renominated by the BJP to the Upper House.

Singh, who had been a Rajya Sabha member from Rajasthan since August 2024, also holds charge as Minister of State for Food Processing Industries. A few Union ministers have also been given key organisational responsibilities in their home states, adding to the buzz over a possible reshuffle.

BJP national president Nitin Nabin on May 28 appointed Union Minister of State for Road Transport and Highways and Corporate Affairs Harsh Malhotra as Delhi BJP chief. In December last year, Union Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary was made the new president of the BJP's Uttar Pradesh unit.

With Shah and PM Modi meeting the President, and changes involving some ministers' Rajya Sabha terms and party responsibilities, speculation over a possible reshuffle of the Union Council of Ministers has gathered pace.

Karnataka govt creates Praja Seva Department by merging key citizen-service wings

The Karnataka government has created the Praja Seva Department by merging three citizen-service wings. The move brings administrative reforms, grievances and Sakala functions under one umbrella.

Bengaluru.(Agency)

In a major administrative restructuring aimed at improving governance and public service delivery, the DK Shivakumar-led Karnataka government has created a new Praja Seva Department by bringing together key citizen-service and reform-oriented wings under a single administrative framework.

The decision was approved by the state Cabinet and formalised through a government order issued on June 24.

The newly created department will function as the nodal agency for public grievance redressal, administrative reforms, process simplification and citizen-service delivery across the state. As part of the restructuring, the government has merged the Administrative Reforms wing, the Public Grievances Division and the Sakala Mission into the new department. Officials said the Praja Seva Department will also oversee flagship public outreach and service initiatives such as Janaspandana and Sakala with the objective of ensuring faster and time-bound resolution of public complaints and service requests.

To support the new structure, the state government has sanctioned 73 posts and consolidated officers and staff from the merged entities under one administrative setup.



TMC crisis reaches grassroots: Leaders not answering calls, workers directionless

Kolkata.(Agency)

Nearly two months after its rout in Bengal, the Trinamool Congress appears to be in a state of disarray. Even as attention remains focused on MPs leaving the party and the battle over its sign and symbol, unrest is brewing among its grassroots ranks. A survey across several districts has suggested that the Trinamool Congress's rank-and-file workers are facing confusion and a lack of direction, with many saying their leaders are no longer taking their calls, reported Aaj Tak Bangla.

While complaints about organisational collapse, missing leaders and internal fragmentation came up repeatedly, several leaders said grassroots workers were still aligned with Mamata Banerjee.

In Nadia, a veteran Trinamool leader told Aaj Tak Bangla that the party's organisational disarray had already been reflected in the election results.

He alleged that a culture of intimidation had spread across the district and claimed that former state minister Manas Bhunia and Pratap Nayek had been given responsibility by the TMC's Camac Street office in Bengal to collect money.

He also said Nayek had been given that responsibility because his mother used to cook at Abhishek's parents' house. The leader added that senior TMC leaders Shankar Singh and Jishu Singha had disappeared from the scene, and said that nobody was now doing organisational work in the district and that workers were directionless. In North 24 Parganas, former district Trinamool president Nirmal Ghosh said he had stayed with the workers and that his main responsibility was to bring forward the party's honest workers. On whether there was a split in the district unit, he said Trinamool Congress meant Mamata Banerjee and no one else, and that everyone was loyal to her.



Karjan Turns into an Illegal Mining Hotspot Allegations of Massive Sand Scam Reach Gandhinagar

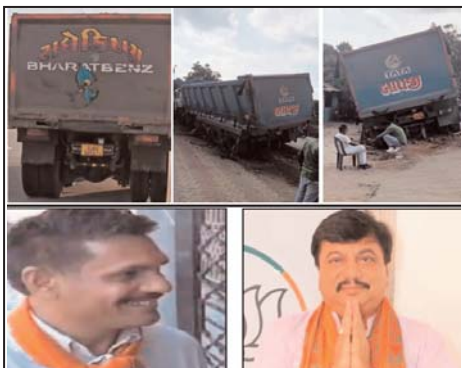
Pawan Makan escalates alleged mining scam to top authorities.

Mahanagar Metro Desk

Pawan Makan

BARODA/KARJAN: A series of serious allegations concerning illegal sand and soil mining in Gujarat's Karjan taluka have escalated to senior state authorities. Complaints submitted by Pakko Gujarat Group Editor Pawan Makan allege that large-scale illegal mining has been taking place along the banks of the Narmada River in Pingarwada village, resulting in significant losses to the state exchequer and environmental damage. According to the complaint, documentary evidence has been submitted to the Commissioner of the Mines and Minerals Department, along with the department's Flying Squad, seeking an immediate investigation. The complaint also alleges inaction by local officials and claims that the issue has not received adequate administrative attention.

The complainant states that written representations have also been submitted to the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), the Enforcement Directorate (ED), and the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). Ad-



ditionally, the Vadodara District Collector has been requested to conduct an official survey in the affected area to determine the extent of alleged royalty losses and illegal excavation. The complaint contains allegations against Karjan MLA Akshay Patel, municipal member Gokul Bharwad (Ghugha), and other individuals, claiming they are linked to an organized network involved in illegal mining and unauthorized transportation of sand and soil. It also alleges that transport companies operating under the names Bhopji Transport and Radhe Krishna Transport were used in the alleged operation. These allegations have not

been independently verified, and no official findings establishing wrongdoing have been announced.

The complaint further alleges that large-scale excavation using heavy machinery has damaged the Narmada riverbed, lowered groundwater levels, and caused ecological harm. It also claims that excavation has continued beyond legally permitted hours and that protected grazing land has been affected. The complainant has urged the Gujarat Government to order an immediate inquiry, initiate legal proceedings if violations are established, and recover any loss of government revenue. It has also stated that, if no action is taken, a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) may be filed before the Gujarat High Court, seeking a court-monitored investigation by a Special Investigation Team (SIT). As of now, the concerned public representatives and government departments have not publicly responded to these allegations, and the matter remains at the complaint stage pending any official investigation or findings.

Gurugram Police are set to question two Punjab Police officials over an alleged fake forensic report in the Bhagwant Mann video case. Their answers could widen the probe and lead to arrests if investigators find concrete evidence.

Gurugram Police traces Punjab officers in Bhagwant Mann video report case

Gurugram.(Agency)

Gurugram Police have obtained CCTV footage and hotel entry records showing two Punjab Police officials visiting a hotel in the city to allegedly arrange a fabricated forensic report linked to a controversial video allegedly involving Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann in the sacrilege row, officials said on Thursday. The two officers are set to be summoned for questioning, and police said they could be arrested if concrete evidence is found against them. The case has surfaced amid a political row over an alleged objectionable video, after the Akal Takht, the supreme temporal body of Sikhs, issued an edict against Mann on June 15.



Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Kuldeep Singh Gargajj had claimed that the video, purportedly showing a man resembling Mann, was found to be authentic by two forensic laboratories.

Mann has rejected the video, calling it "false propaganda" aimed at defaming him, while the Punjab AAP has said forensic tests by two labs showed the man in the video was not the chief minister. Officials said Gurugram Police have collected CCTV footage and details from the hotel register where the two Punjab Police officials recently stayed. A senior police officer said investigators do not believe their presence was merely coincidental and suspect it may be part of a larger conspiracy. "These two officers from Punjab will soon be summoned formally to join the investigation. We want to clarify the purpose of their visit to the hotel and determine whether they have any connection to the accused arrested in this

case," the officer said.

"A decision on naming them as co-accused in this case will be taken based on the responses and the evidence obtained during their questioning. If concrete evidence is found against them, they could also be arrested," the officer added.

The complainant, Jaspreet alias Jassi, has been moved to a safe house, where senior officials are questioning him, officials said.

According to the FIR registered in Gurugram, Jaspreet, a resident of Haryana's Sirsa, alleged that he was pressured, threatened and coerced into arranging forensic reports with a predetermined conclusion that the video had been created and manipulated using artificial intelligence and that the person seen in it was not Mann.

News box

MCG warns pet owners of criminal action under BNS for dog attacks, negligence

Gurgaon.(Agency)

MCG has issued a fresh enforcement order linking existing dog registration rules with stricter controls on breeds classified as dangerous and ferocious, warning that owners may face criminal proceedings under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) for dog attacks, bites, intimidation, injuries or negligent handling of pets. The order, issued by MCG commissioner Pradeep Dahiya on Wednesday, states that any incident endangering public safety may invite action under Section 291 (negligent conduct regarding animals) of BNS in addition to proceedings under municipal laws. It has come into force with immediate effect.

Registration of pet dogs is already mandatory under the Haryana Municipal Corporation (Registration and Proper Control of Dogs) Bye-Laws, 2008. MCG said it was issuing the fresh directive after receiving complaints regarding dog-bite incidents, attacks by pet dogs, free movement of dogs in public spaces and violations of statutory provisions by some pet owners, posing a threat to public safety and public health.

The order imposes additional obligations on owners of breeds identified by an expert committee under the Centre's department of animal husbandry and dairying as dangerous and ferocious — Pitbull Terrier, Tosa Inu, American Staffordshire Terrier, Fila Brasileiro, Dogo Argentino, American Bulldog, Boerboel, Kangal, Central Asian Shepherd Dog, Caucasian Shepherd Dog, South Russian Shepherd Dog, Japanese Tosa, Akita, Mastiffs, Rottweiler, Rhodesian Ridgeback, Wolf Dogs, Canario, Akbash Dog, Moscow Guard Dog, Cane Corso, Bandog and their mixed or cross-breeds.

All pet owners within municipal limits have been directed to register their dogs, ensure registration tokens are worn at all times, use leashes outside private premises, clean up excreta immediately, vaccinate against rabies regularly and prevent pets from intimidating or attacking any person or animal. Owners of ferocious breeds face heightened obligations — strict physical control at all times, and leashes, chain leads and muzzles whenever dogs are taken outside. The order also invokes Section 311 of the Haryana Municipal Corporation Act, 1994, warning that non-compliance will attract action without further notice. However, experts have flagged significant legal and constitutional concerns with the order. Chetna Joshi, honorary animal welfare officer, Animal Welfare Board of India, said that while MCG is entitled to enforce registration and control requirements under municipal law, Section 291 is a negligence offence, not a municipal compliance provision.

Auto driver stabbed to death over 8-month-old dispute in Ghaziabad

Noida.(Agency)

An eight-month-old fight over a game of gilli-danda turned out to be fatal for a 24-year-old auto-rickshaw driver. He was allegedly stabbed in Vijay Vihar Colony on Tuesday. Police said nearly eight months ago, Aftab was playing gilli-danda with Nadeem, Shyam and their friends at Vijay Vihar Colony. He had a dispute with Nadeem, following which he had thrashed him. The tensions between the two remained unresolved. On Tuesday night, Jeevan Gate Colony resident Aftab had gone to the neighbourhood for some work, where he met Nadeem and Shyam. They started quarrelling again and it soon escalated into a violent confrontation. During the dispute, the men allegedly attacked Aftab with knives, stabbing him multiple times. Hearing the commotion, locals rushed towards the spot, prompting the attackers to flee. A seriously injured Aftab was rushed to a nearby hospital. However, doctors declared him dead upon arrival. Aftab's family members have demanded strict action against those responsible for the murder. They alleged that Nadeem and Shyam previously threatened Aftab and were determined to settle old scores. Officers reached the scene after receiving information and initiated an investigation. Forensic and technical evidence is being collected, while teams have been formed to track down the suspects. Assistant commissioner of police (Ankur Vihar) Amardeep Maurya said preliminary investigations indicate that the murder was the result of a longstanding enmity between them. "The individuals accused of carrying out the murder are currently absconding. Police teams are conducting raids to locate and arrest them at the earliest," he said.

Eraser stuck in 4-year-old's lung for 2 days, saved after airflow surgery

Noida.(Agency)

A four-year-old boy from Ghaziabad was saved after an eraser remained lodged in his airway for two days, causing severe breathing difficulties and the collapse of his left lung. On June 15, the child had accidentally swallowed a piece of eraser while playing at home. Initially, the incident went unnoticed, but he soon developed breathing difficulty, persistent coughing and respiratory distress. As his condition worsened, he was taken to a local hospital, where a CT scan revealed a foreign body lodged in the left main bronchus — one of the two primary air passages leading to the lungs — resulting in airway obstruction and collapse of the left lung.

He was subsequently referred to Yashoda Medicity for specialised treatment, where doctors performed an emergency bronchoscopic intervention on June 17. According to doctors, the case was particularly challenging because of the child's age and the narrow diameter of his airway.

Director of respiratory medicine and interventional pulmonology Dr Rajesh Kumar Gupta said, "A multidisciplinary team comprising respiratory medicine, interventional pulmonology, anaesthesiology and paediatrics specialists undertook the procedure using a flexible ultrathin bronchoscope and cryoprobe. After a 90-minute intervention, the foreign object was successfully removed." He said the process was challenging because the child's airway measured only about 4 mm in diameter.

All India Hindu Kranti Sena Expands Organization; Ganpat Singh Dulawat Appointed Rajasthan State President

Mahanagar Metro Desk

Beawar: The All India Hindu Kranti Sena has announced a major organizational expansion by appointing Ganpat Singh Dulawat as the Rajasthan State President. The appointment was made by the organization's National Patron, Bhanwar Singh Palada, during a ceremony held in Beawar. On the occasion, Bhanwar Singh Palada honored Ganpat Singh Dulawat by presenting him with a traditional safa (turban) and expressed confidence in his leadership. National President Anand Soni and National Vice President Yogesh Paliwal also felicitated the newly appointed State President with a saffron stole and extended their best wishes for his new responsibility. In another key organizational decision, former Rajasthan State President Saurabh Singh Shekhawat was promoted to



the post of National Secretary in recognition of his long-standing service, dedication, and active contribution to the organization. Party leaders and workers congratulated him on his elevation and wished him success in his new role. Several office-bearers, including State In-charge Manish Paliwal, Surendra Singh,

Rishabh Singh Kharwa, Dungar Singh Devda, Pawan Tank, Pawan Rana, and Dhanpat Singh, were present at the event. Participants reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening the organization and working for the interests of society while promoting its nationalist ideology. Addressing the gathering, National Patron Bhanwar Singh Palada said that responsibilities within the organization are assigned on the basis of dedication, hard work, and commitment. He expressed confidence that Ganpat Singh Dulawat and Saurabh Singh Shekhawat would play a significant role in strengthening the organization at both the state and national levels. The event concluded with a felicitation ceremony for the newly appointed office-bearers, followed by discussions on future organizational activities and expansion plans.

Tatkal appointments among Haryana's new digital reforms for property deals

Noida.(Agency)

Haryana has introduced a host of digital reforms, including passport-style tatkal appointments for property registration, aimed at simplifying land transactions. The upgraded system will enable citizens to complete most registration-related formalities online, reducing paperwork and visits to govt offices. Aadhaar-based e-KYC has been made mandatory for both parties, and digital signatures, biometric authentication and QR code verification have been integrated in the process to improve transparency and curb fraud. Citizens will be able to track applications online and upload additional documents digitally. The system also removes the need for separate submissions for certain departmental clearances, with verification taking place electronically.

The system was introduced in Ladwa tehsil of Kurukshetra in Sept 2025 and implemented across the state from Nov 2025. Paperless Registration 2.0 has now been initiated based on suggestions

received from stakeholders over the last eight months. The second phase also includes mutation. Under the new system,



the application form for registry has been made simpler and more user-friendly. If any individual, company or institution cannot be present, they will now be able to appoint more than one person as their representative. Citizens can fill the deed themselves or through a deed writer, advocate or helpdesk.

At the time of registry, information about which part of the land falls under the prime category and which under non-prime will be automatically displayed. If Section 7A of Haryana Stamp Rules is applicable, this information will also be shown. In case of any kind of irregularity, an auto-hold system will come into effect.

"These changes will help curb land-related fraud as buyers will be made aware of the status," said a revenue officer. Biometric authentication, digital signatures and Aadhaar-based e-KYC will also ensure 100% verification of identity, the officer added. A QR code-based system has been implemented for verification of documents. Any decision on verification will have to be communicated to the applicant by the third attempt. A facility to add additional e-stamps is available. Separate documents will not be required for DTP and NOC, and the entire process of departmental verification will be online. The work of Registration Clerk-1 and Registration Clerk-2 has been combined to one level which will save time.

Rapid cancer diagnosis facility starts at ChildPGI

Gurgaon.(Agency)

The Postgraduate Institute of Child Health (PGICH), Noida, has commissioned a fully automated immunohistochemistry (IHC) analyser, a facility expected to speed up cancer diagnosis and improve diagnostic accuracy in children and adults alike.

The state govt funded the Rs 50 lakh project, making it Noida's first such facility. Dr Jyotsna Madan, head of pathology, stated the new system identifies specific tumour protein markers, enabling precise cancer classification for targeted treatments, making it more efficient than microscopy, which only confirms the presence of a tumour. The analyser comes amid rising demand for specialised cancer diagnostics. Besides malignancies, the technology can diagnose benign

disorders like Hirschsprung disease in children and cytomegalovirus infections in tissue samples. PGICH has extended the



diagnostic service to external hospitals and non-institute patients. The cost of testing varies by case and ranges from Rs 450 to Rs 4,000. Until now, the process was

performed manually, making it labour-intensive and time-consuming.

"The manual procedure could take an entire day, requiring continuous supervision from a technician. With the automated analyser, one batch of tests can be completed in about 3.5 hours, allowing us to run two to three batches a day depending on demand," Dr Madan said. She added that the machine uses barcode-based tracking, software-controlled dispensing of reagents and temperature regulation, ensuring more precision and consistency.

Officials said the facility will also reduce dependence on referral laboratories, making advanced cancer testing more accessible and cost-effective for patients.

Illegal access points over stormwater drains under scanner in Gurgaon

Noida.(Agency)

Illegal use of stormwater drain infrastructure as access roads in parts of the city has come under the scanner of GMDA, which has identified multiple unauthorised access points being used by residents and commuters. One such stretch is in Sector 102 along Leg-3 drain, also known as Badshapur drain, where commuters have been using the 900-metre-long drain corridor to travel between Upper Dwarka Expressway and Dhanwapur Road. Officials said residential complexes and commercial establishments have created unauthorised access points over the drain, effectively turning a critical stormwater channel into an unofficial transit route.

A similar situation was found along the drain near Sector 99, where commuters continue to use the corridor as an access route despite restrictions imposed earlier by the authority. Repeated vehicular movement has damaged portions of the concrete slab covering the drain, with reinforcement bars exposed at several locations and cave-ins reported in some stretches. According to GMDA, the drain was constructed as part of the city's stormwater management network and was



never designed to support vehicular traffic. Officials said continuous movement of vehicles is damaging the structure and could compromise its integrity.

In Jan this year, GMDA blocked an unauthorised access route to Dwarka Expressway over the Badshapur drain by installing jersey barriers in Sector 99. The move followed damage to concrete slabs caused by the movement of trucks and dumpers operating from nearby ready-mix

concrete plants. However, some barriers were later removed and vehicles resumed using the route, officials said.

GMDA warned that continued misuse of the drain infrastructure could affect its ability to safely carry stormwater and increase the risk of waterlogging and flooding during heavy rainfall. Officials also raised concerns over public safety, as the concrete slabs covering portions of the drain are not designed to withstand

sustained vehicular loads. Badshapur drain is one of the city's three major stormwater channels and plays a crucial role in carrying runoff during the monsoon season. It serves a catchment area of nearly 24,100 hectares from Ghata village to the Najafgarh drain.

"We have issued notices to entities in Sector 102 that have created unauthorised access over the drain. We plan to close these points and are preparing estimates for boundary walls to permanently prevent illegal access and protect the infrastructure," a GMDA official said.

Residents, however, said the routes emerged because of inadequate connectivity and urged authorities to provide alternative access before restricting movement. "If these access points are closed, residents should be given a practical alternative route. We understand the safety concerns and illegality of using these stretches, but thousands of people depend on them for daily travel. Even the revenue road in Sector 99, which links the sector to Dwarka Expressway, is currently impassable," said Santosh Singh, a resident of Pareena Laxmi Apartments.

Ganesh idol industry in Raigad hit as West Asia conflict raises costs, delays exports

Manufacturers say freight, raw material and storage costs have surged by up to 25 per cent in the famous idol-making hub as export consignments face month-long delays on disrupted shipping routes.

Mumbai. (Agency) The conflict in West Asia has cast a shadow over the Ganesh idol industry in Maharashtra's Raigad. Manufacturers and exporters of the famed, GI-tagged Pen idols are reporting delays in overseas shipments, rising freight charges and a spike in raw material and packaging costs ahead of the Ganesh festival season in September.

The country's largest hub for Ganesh idol-making, Pen, currently supports more than two lakh people engaged in idol-making and allied businesses. Pen's idols, which officially received their Geographical Indication (GI) tag in 2023, are supplied across India. Around 25 per cent of the orders come from foreign countries, including the United States, the United

Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Poland, Mauritius, Singapore, Thailand, Fiji and the UAE. Deepak Kala Kendra's Nilesh Deepak Samel, who exports nearly 18,000 Ganesh idols annually to different countries, said the West Asia conflict had delayed exports and escalated costs. Export costs, he estimated, had risen roughly 25 per cent, with freight charges contributing to the steepest increase. "One shipping container that earlier cost roughly Rs 3 lakh now costs between Rs 5 lakh and Rs 6 lakh per day," he added.

By the time the idols reach customers abroad, the retail price will be at least 30-35 per cent more than the cost quoted before the war began, said Samel,

with manufacturers now worried about shrinking profit margins.



Srikant Deodhar, president of the Shree Ganesh Murtikar Aani Vyavsayik Kalyankari Mandal, said the export of

idols, which was usually done by March or April, had extended well into June this year and would continue into July. "Because of disruptions in shipping routes and rising fuel costs, many consignments are still being dispatched. During the conflict, vessel movement slowed, and business became stagnant for a period. The ripple effect was felt across the supply chain," he said.

The cost of raw materials, such as clay, plaster of Paris and paint, increased significantly. "Usually, prices rise by around 10 per cent annually due to inflation, but this year the increase has been higher, touching 25 per cent," said Deodhar.

Short news

Rs 5,000 charged for Rs 250 slot: Bengaluru civic body flags crematorium fraud

Bengaluru. (Agency)

The Bengaluru North City Corporation (BNCC) has lodged a police complaint against several websites for allegedly duping people by charging exorbitant rates to book slots at the two electric crematoriums under its jurisdiction.

There are two electric crematoriums in the BNCC limits: Hebbal and Medi Agrahara. The Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) has fixed the cremation charge at Rs 250. However, according to the BNCC, certain unauthorised websites and intermediaries were misleading citizens and charging Rs 3,000 to Rs 5,000 to book a slot.

Rajendra, Executive Engineer, BNCC, said the alleged fraud came to light when people arriving at the crematoriums mentioned paying thousands of rupees to book a slot. "Upon checking, we found that these websites were fleecing money and booking on behalf of the public. The public can book slots for Rs 250 at the official website," he added.

BNCC officials approached the North CEN police station on June 19 and lodged a complaint. The non-cognizable report listed websites like 'beleiv.com', 'heavengate.in', 'swargayatraa.com', etc.

Funeral service packages

There are 12 GBA-managed electric and traditional crematoriums in Bengaluru and around 20 private or trust-run grounds. An official said that besides websites, agents and middlemen also provide funeral service packages, working with crematorium staff to book desired slots.

Meanwhile, funeral service providers approached by The Indian Express admitted to offering packages priced between Rs 15,000 and Rs 50,000, which include ambulance services, dead body carriers, priests for rituals, and even airlifting bodies from other cities.

Class 9 Gujarat girl attacks classmate with knife in fight over pickle

Surat. (Agency)

A 15-year-old Class 9 student at an ashram school in Gujarat's Tapi district was apprehended for allegedly attacking her friend and classmate with a knife after she did not pass a pickle bottle during dinner on Wednesday evening, the police said.

The incident occurred at a school in Ambach village. The two girls, who had joined the school 10 days ago, were having dinner in the school's dining hall. When one of the girls stood up to get rice, her friend asked her to bring a pickle bottle from the nearby table. She allegedly refused.

According to the police, the minor allegedly chased her friend into the bathroom, where she was washing her hands. She attempted to strangle her and then attacked her with a knife taken from a nearby table, the police said.

The victim sustained injuries to her hand and cried for help. The school warden and other staff rushed to the spot, found her, and shifted her to a private hospital in Surat, where doctors have reported her condition as stable.

Attempt to murder case

Following the incident, the school authorities lodged a complaint of attempt to murder at the Valod police station. The minor was apprehended and produced before court. "The victim's condition is stable. The minor has been sent to a children's remand home in Vadodara," M M Gilator, Police Inspector, Valod police station, said.

Ignoring warnings, group enters river Cauvery for photos; 4 of family die

The Mandya police said the victims first entered shallow waters and then ventured into a deceptively deep area to take photographs. When one member slipped into the strong current, the others tried to rescue her, resulting in five deaths.

Bengaluru. (Agency)

A family outing to a temple ended in tragedy when five people, including four women from the same family, drowned in the Cauvery River near Muthathi in Karnataka's Mandya district Wednesday evening. This was after a desperate rescue attempt went wrong in an area marked by deceptive depths and strong underwater currents.

The victims, Chaitra, 20, Shwetha, 38, Vijayamma, 50, Priyanka, 28, and Mahesh, the driver of the rented vehicle they had travelled in, were natives of Channapatna and residents of Bengaluru's Byadarahalli area. According to the police, six family members, including a four-year-old child, travelled to Mandya district for a pilgrimage. The group first visited the Kabbalamma Temple and later reached the Muthathiraya Temple at Muthathi around 4 pm. After offering prayers, they went to the

nearby Cauvery River, said the police.

Speaking to The Indian Express, Shobha Rani, Superintendent of Police, said the group entered the water after the temple visit, believing it was shallow. Home



Guards stationed at the spot reportedly warned them not to venture further into the river.

"They entered the water and were taking pictures. The water was only around knee-deep at the edge, and they ventured further,

underestimating the depth and the strength of the current," Rani said.

The police said Vijayamma was the first to slip into a deeper section of the river and began struggling in the current. Chaitra and the others reportedly rushed in to rescue her, but they, too, were caught in the strong current and swept away.

Another family member, Ravi, attempted to save the victims but was pulled out by local residents and survived. The four-year-old child escaped unharmed, said the police. Fire and Emergency Services personnel, assisted by local residents, launched a search operation and recovered all five bodies by around 7.30 pm. The bodies were later shifted to Mandya Institute of Medical Sciences (MIMS) Hospital for post-mortem examinations.

The police from the Halagur station registered a case and initiated an investigation. Further inquiries are underway.

A strike scare, 2,100 applicants, 650 new drivers: HRTC's hiring rush shows government job appeal

Shimla. (Agency)

The rain had been falling steadily through the morning. Under a giant shed at the Himachal Road Transport Corporation's Tara Devi depot, about 7 km from Shimla, more than 85 men waited patiently. Some sat on old benches. Others perched on discarded bus tyres. A few crouched in small groups, balancing files on their knees as they hurriedly complete paperwork.

The destination they hoped to reach was not printed on any bus timetable. It was a government job. Among those waiting were Madan Lal, 37, from Arki in Solan district; Rajneesh Thakur, 28, from Chail; Ankush, 23, from Shimla's Annandale area; and Piyush Verma, 29, from Tattapani in Mandi district. Like hundreds of others across Himachal Pradesh, they had answered a last-minute call from HRTC for



walk-in interviews to recruit temporary bus drivers.

The urgency was driven by a looming crisis. Around 5,500 HRTC drivers and conductors, under the banner of the HRTC Employees' Association, had threatened to go on strike from midnight on Wednesday. Anticipating disruption to public transport services, the state government invoked the

Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA), while HRTC rushed to create a backup workforce.

For many applicants, the advertisement appeared almost overnight.

"I saw the notification on Facebook late last night while scrolling through my phone," said Madan Lal. "Tara Devi is closer to Arki than Solan, so I came here." For Madan, the journey has been much longer than a single night's notice. A Class XII pass candidate with an ITI diploma in Driver-cum-Mechanic trade, he has spent eight years trying to secure an HRTC driver's job. He has appeared in recruitment tests three times, clearing the driving test twice but failing to make the final cut. His most recent attempt came in 2023, when HRTC advertised 336 posts before the recruitment process was later shelved.

legs and forehead. Important evidence has been collected from the crime scene and other related locations, based on which further investigation is progressing," the statement read.

Meanwhile, Forest and Environment Minister Arjun Modhwadia said it is a suspected case of poaching.

"An FIR has been registered in the case and the process is on to trace and nab the suspect. Motive behind the killing could be known after catching the suspect," Modhwadia said.

"The post-mortem was completed at the Sakkarbaug Zoo by a panel of three veterinarians. The report has confirmed the severe physical injuries on the cub's body. Detailed information regarding the exact cause of death will be available based on the post-mortem report and other corroborating evidence," the forest department statement added.



Local train killing: Who is Roshan Suvarna, and how police tracked him down

Suvarna, who was arrested from Panvel on Wednesday afternoon, is a resident of Mira Road and worked at a cargo handling facility near Andheri Airport. According to investigators, he worked alongside his father and elder brother at the company.

Mumbai. (Agency)

For nearly 15 hours after a 22-year-old commuter was stabbed to death inside a moving local train, Roshan Suvarna (30) remained on the run, travelling from Borivali to Mira Road and then to Panvel as police teams fanned out across the suburban railway network to trace him.

Suvarna, who was arrested from Panvel on Wednesday afternoon, is a resident of Mira Road and worked at a cargo handling facility near Andheri Airport. According to investigators, he worked alongside his father and elder brother at the company.

During interrogation, Suvarna told police that he had completed his shift on



Tuesday evening and consumed nearly an entire bottle of rum before attempting to return home.

"He was in Andheri East and initially planned to return home by cab. However, due to heavy rain and difficulty getting a cab, he changed his plan and boarded a local train from Andheri railway station,"

said a police officer who was part of the team that apprehended him at Panvel railway station.

Police said Suvarna has no previous criminal record. Investigators have also learnt that the knife allegedly used in the attack was purchased from a friend a few days before the incident and had remained in his bag since then.

"We will question the friend and ascertain why the accused felt the need to carry a knife," an officer said.

According to investigators, after allegedly stabbing Mayank Lohar inside the first-class compartment of a Churchgate-Nalasopara fast local, Suvarna jumped off the train as it approached Platform No. 6 at Borivali station and disappeared into

the crowd.

With the accused having fled and no immediate identification available, the Borivali Government Railway Police launched an extensive search operation involving multiple teams.

Officers began examining CCTV footage from stations across the Western Railway corridor, attempting to piece together the suspect's movements before and after the crime.

The investigation soon expanded into one of the largest CCTV scans undertaken in a railway crime case in recent months. Police reviewed footage from nearly 400 cameras installed at railway stations and adjoining areas between Churchgate and Nalasopara.

The spectacular self-goals of Trumponomics

Satyajit Das

Apologists for the US administration claim that it is seeking to 'disrupt' existing geopolitical and economic norms for the good. Yet the last 17 months have made a convincing case for the nostalgic advantages of status quo. Inverting Shakespeare's Polonius, if the Trump administration's measures be method, there is madness in it. The administration wants lower inflation, but wars, tariffs, trade restrictions and sanctions are pushing up costs and increasing price pressures. It wants lower energy prices, but initiating hostilities in the Gulf, which reduced oil and gas supplies, was unhelpful for that aim. While war is good for US energy exporters, it overlooks that the US imports certain oil products. American prices have actually gone up at a higher rate than in other countries because they have greater flexibility to manage rises—for example, by reducing fuel taxes.

The Trump administration is talking up the prospects of increasing US oil production. But shale oil producers, the main source of new supply, have proved reluctant, wanting greater certainty about future prices. They require a price between \$60 and \$80 a barrel to drill profitably. Given Trump's desire to get prices down to reverse sliding approval ratings and assist the Republicans in the upcoming mid-term elections, producers have chosen not to invest and use the windfall profits to reduce their debt or reward shareholders.

Trump expects the Gulf Cooperation Council members to invest in the US and finance his Peace Board. But the war and lower oil prices, if they hold, are damaging to their economies and reduce available surpluses. The US is also pursuing an intermittent trade war with Mexico and Canada, its largest sources of crude imports, ignoring that US refineries are set up to process these grades and would need alternative suppliers or costly retooling its operations. The 'build-in-America' campaign seeks to replace cheaper foreign supply with more expensive domestic production across a range of items. Given the evolution of supply chains over decades, this is proving difficult. De-industrialisation of the US means shortages of workers with the required skills. The attempt to onshore chip production has seen lengthy delays, cost overruns, exposed cultural and regulatory differences and ultimately required the use of foreign workers. The plants will not produce state-of-the-art chips or use the latest technology. Higher tariffs, President Trump's favoured non-kinetic weapon, means more resources directed to producing lower-end essential goods, which could be imported at cheaper prices, reducing available capacity for more advanced manufacturing activity resulting in higher prices and disruptions of supply chains. The administration's actions on fiscal and monetary policy are revelatory. The proposed tax cuts are illusory, being a continuation of the expiring regime and will be offset by the rising inflation. Channelling the sentiment of Lewis Carroll's Humpty Dumpty—"when I use a word... it means just what I choose it to mean"—the White House spokesperson stated tariffs are "a tax cut for the American people", something new to economic theory. The tariffs, even if they are implemented as they were deemed illegal, will not help correct America's growing budget deficit. The revenue from tariffs cannot replace individual and corporate tax receipts of over \$2 trillion. Given the base amount of imports of \$3.4 trillion, it would require a punitive tariff rate that, if levied, would reduce imports by making them prohibitively expensive, limiting the revenue raised. During Trump 1.0, 92 percent of revenues from agricultural tariffs ended up funding subsidies to unhappy farmers. Instead, the tax cuts, eliminating taxes on social security, tips and overtime as well as reinstating state and local tax deductions will reduce revenues by around \$900 billion a year.

Job guarantee is dead, not the degree

The labour market must create roles that reward updated skills

Julio Ribeiro

Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) V Anantha Nageswaran has done a great service by saying something many parents, students and policymakers do not want to hear: the old automatic premium attached to software degrees and MBAs is vanishing.

The globalisation-era formula was simple. Get an engineering degree, learn coding, do an MBA, if possible, and enter a white-collar growth track. That formula is no longer reliable. AI is changing the economics of routine cognitive work. One experienced employee, assisted by AI tools, can now do what earlier required dozens of freshers. The first impact may not be mass layoffs. It may be the silent closing of entry gates. Witness the recent drop in hiring by IT companies.

But the CEA's warning should not be read as an obituary for engineering or management education. India does not need fewer engineers. It needs different engineers. Civil engineering, for instance, will remain central to India's future. A country that is still building roads, bridges, ports, railways, water systems, housing, logistics parks and climate-resilient cities cannot say that engineering is finished. If anything, demand for good engineers will rise. The real question is: what kind of engineering? A civil engineer of tomorrow cannot merely learn old formulae for concrete and surveying. She must understand climate risk, water stress, urban flooding, green materials, GIS (geographic information system) mapping, project finance, procurement and lifecycle maintenance.

Mechanical and electrical engineers must understand robotics, precision manufacturing, storage, grids and renewable integration. Computer engineers must move beyond routine coding to systems thinking, data architecture, cybersecurity and AI applications in real sectors. The same applies to MBAs. India does not need fewer people with analytical and managerial skills. It needs many more, but in places where they are rarely found today. Every district needs people who can analyse data, prepare investment plans, evaluate projects, monitor outcomes, improve procurement, manage public assets and coordinate across departments. If India is serious about bottom-up planning, the district cannot remain merely an administrative unit. It must become a planning, data and execution unit. Why not strengthen district planning offices with young professionals trained in economics, management, public finance, statistics, GIS, infrastructure planning and social sector delivery? Instead of producing generic MBAs who chase the same corporate jobs, we could create district development

analysts, municipal finance associates, procurement specialists, health systems managers, education data officers and climate adaptation officers. Such teams could transform local governance and create meaningful public-purpose jobs.

This is where curriculum reform and job design must go together. It is not enough to tell colleges to update syllabi. The labour market must create roles that reward updated skills. If colleges teach climate-resilient construction but public works departments recruit as per the old criterion, nothing will change. If MBA students learn data analytics but district administrations have no posts for outcome monitoring or GIS mapping, the skill will be wasted. Education reform without job reform becomes another certificate factory.



The CEA is also right to ask India to take skilled trades seriously. Welding, plumbing, carpentry, electrical work, caregiving, nursing, hospitality and culinary skills involve human presence, judgment, dexterity and trust. These are not easily replaced by AI. But here too we need to be careful. You cannot change social attitudes just by exhortation. A middle-class parent who has spent two decades telling a child to become an engineer or do an MBA will not suddenly celebrate welding as an equally attractive option. In India, a degree is not merely a credential. It is prestige, marriage value, caste mobility, migration possibility and insurance against manual precarity. This is why comparisons with Germany, Switzerland, Japan or South Korea must be made carefully. Skilled trades are respected there because institutions made them respectable. Europe has had guilds, chambers, apprenticeships, licensing norms and wage-bargaining institutions for more than a century. A master electrician, machinist or carpenter has certification, progression, bargaining power and social identity. The guild did not merely teach the trade. It

protected standards, restricted exploitation, shaped pride and helped secure decent wages.

India has no comparable ecosystem. We have excellent individual craftsmen, but no strong professional guilds for plumbers, electricians, welders, carpenters or repair technicians. We have ITIs and skilling schemes, but weak social prestige. We have certificates, but often not employer trust. Most importantly, India's labour force is still overwhelmingly informal or unregistered. In such a market, a trade skill does not automatically translate into dignity or income security. It can just as easily mean casual work, no written contract, no insurance, no pension, unsafe conditions and arbitrary wages. By contrast, German law requires compulsory labour representation on company boards.

The recent unrest among industrial workers in the Noida and Gurugram-Manesar belt is a reminder. Many workers in automotive, garments and allied manufacturing reportedly protested for basic monthly wages of around Rs 20,000 or more. These were not software engineers complaining about appraisal cycles. These were factory workers saying that wages were below survival level. The IT sector emerged as a relatively formal, globally linked labour market. Industrial and trade workers often remain trapped between informality, contract labour and weak collective voice. The deeper problem is India's graduate unemployment crisis. Millions of young graduates are not working, earning or acquiring experience, but preparing for competitive exams. The government job has become a lottery ticket; the coaching class has turned into a waiting room. This is not irrational behaviour. It is a rational response to a labour market where private entry-level jobs are poorly paid and insecure, while government jobs offer a decent salary, status, security and social insurance.

The same logic applies to universities. They have been declared dead, attributed to the Internet, MOOCs (massive open online courses), bootcamps, the pandemic and now AI tutors. Yet higher education has expanded massively. The real issue is whether universities will use AI as a partner in learning, and not merely treat it as a cheating device. The CEA's warning is well taken. But the policy message must be not to bury the degree but redesign it. Trade skills need to be formalised and bestowed with social dignity. India's job crisis will not be solved by replacing one social obsession with another. It will be solved when a young Indian can become a civil engineer, coder, nurse, chef, welder, district planner, technician, teacher, entrepreneur or civil servant — and each path carries dignity, income, security and mobility.

Broken screens: Sukhpuri's fight laudable, but too simplistic

Ram Mandir case must be probed transparently

Frustrated by the growing association of their region with cybercrime, residents of Sukhpuri village in Haryana's Nuh district have chosen a dramatic path to signal change. Their decision to smash 55 smartphones and switch to basic phones sends a clear message: technology should not become a tool for deception and illegal gain. The trigger for the move is understandable. Nuh has frequently made headlines for cyber fraud, sextortion and online scams. Community leaders fear that easy access to smartphones and the Internet has lured many young people into unlawful activities. By publicly destroying their devices, the villagers hope to break this cycle and reclaim their village's reputation. Yet, while the symbolism is powerful, the solution appears overly simplistic. Smartphones are not merely gadgets for entertainment. They are gateways to education, banking, government services, employment opportunities and communication. In rural India, digital connectivity is increasingly essential for social and economic advancement. A



blanket rejection of smartphones risks isolating the very youth whose future the village seeks to protect. The real issue is not the device but its misuse. Cybercrime flourishes where unemployment, lack of skills and the lure of quick money combine with weak awareness of legal consequences. Removing smartphones may temporarily reduce opportunities for fraud, but it does little to address these deeper causes.

What Sukhpuri has demonstrated is the power of collective action and social accountability. That spirit deserves praise. However, the next step should be digital responsibility rather than digital withdrawal. Villagers, educators and authorities must work together to promote cyber literacy, create employment opportunities and strengthen community oversight. The challenge before Nuh is not to disconnect from the digital world but to engage with it responsibly. True reform will come not from breaking phones, but from building opportunities.

How much does it take to win an election

Without winning the trust of India's richest, Rahul Gandhi has very little chance of putting up a fight in 2029

Aunindyo Chakravarty

Let me begin with a provocative number — Rs 50,000 crore. That is how much Rahul Gandhi needs to be in the running to be Prime Minister in 2029. To understand why, we need to take a temporal detour back to October 2024, the day before the counting in Haryana. I had accompanied a friend to a property broker's office in Gurugram. The man had been playing hooky for a couple of weeks, fixing and then cancelling appointments with my friend. He said he had been busy helping a relative of his who was a contestant for the seat of an MLA.

The broker claimed that his politician-relative had spent more than Rs 250 crore on the elections, and he hinted that a part of the budget was the money he had to pay to get the party ticket since he was an outsider. The man didn't show even a bit of embarrassment in telling us about this jaw-dropping figure. He assumed that we shared his view that electoral politics was all about who had more money. Even if the broker's claim was an exaggeration, it is an open secret that candidates from larger parties spend Rs 80-100 crore on an Assembly election. A large part of it involves greasing the palms of key officials, power brokers, panchayat and caste elders, distributing money to local dasas and even simply distributing cash to potential voters. Then there are the publicity expenses — handbills, posters and hoardings. Political rallies cost big money, not only on hiring tents, chairs, speaker systems and setting up the dais, but also on hiring buses to take people to the rally



venue and providing them with food and cash. Elections also involve door-to-door outreach with voters, hiring local muscle to be able to enter areas controlled by rivals, the cost of transport and refreshments for party workers and volunteers and many other sundry expenses. If this is how much it costs to contest an Assembly

Congress party contested 328 seats. I assume that in 2029, it will put up its own candidates in the 325-335 Lok Sabha constituencies. At Rs 150 crore per seat, the total expenditure will come to around Rs 50,000 crore; at Rs 200 crore per seat, it will rise to roughly Rs 65,000 crore.

Let us look at these numbers from another direction. The Centre for Media Studies (CMS) has estimated that the 2024 Lok Sabha elections had cost Rs 1.35 lakh crore. This included the expenditure by the Election Commission, the Centre and the states. It would be fair to assume that at least Rs 1 lakh crore out of this was spent by the political parties. Only a tiny fraction of this was done directly by the political parties, through their own bank accounts. Most of the expenditure would have been done by fronts for parties and their candidates and by their well-wishers and rich supporters. Since we don't have a party-wise break-up of this unofficial expenditure, I will use the official, audited numbers as proxies. Out of the official expenditure, the BJP spent about 45 per cent. It is likely that the party's share of the overall, unofficial election expenditure was higher, but we will stick with this figure: 45 per cent of Rs 1 lakh crore is Rs 45,000 crore. The BJP got 23.6 crore votes in 2024, which means it had to spend an average of Rs 1,900 to win over each voter to its side. I repeat, this is not direct, official spending — it includes all the money spent through proxies and well-wishers. If everything else

remains the same, inflation will increase this cost to Rs 2,400 per voter. Keep this figure in mind.

If Rahul Gandhi wants to be in a position to lead a coalition government in 2029, the Congress will need at least a 30 per cent vote share. If we assume a steady population growth, and take the same turnout as 2024, 30 per cent works out to 21 crore actual votes. At Rs 2,400 per vote, that works out to a total expenditure of more than Rs 50,000 crore. So, whichever way you look at it — from the direction of the cost of fighting each Lok Sabha seat, or in terms of the cost per voter — the Congress will need at least Rs 50,000 crore to win 2029. But this is money needed for spending in just the last few months before voting takes place. The Congress will also need to raise a lot of funds to fight the various Assembly elections scheduled over the next three years.

The first of these is likely to be Punjab, where the AAP has indicated that elections could be brought forward to this winter. It is a rich state, with even richer politicians. At a conservative Rs 50 crore per Assembly seat, the Congress will need about Rs 5,800-6,000 crore for Punjab alone. Then there will be Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand in early 2027. Both of these will cost big bucks.

In reality, the Congress needs much more than this because of the nature of the party. Unlike the BJP, it is not an ideologically-driven political entity. This makes it difficult for it to centralise all fund-raising. So, money given to the Congress leaks into the coffers of individual leaders, much more than it does in other parties.

The funding hurdle is something that Rahul Gandhi has to address immediately. And for that, he will either have to mend bridges with India Inc, or empower party leaders who already have more business-friendly images than he does. The CM choices in the South suggest that the Gandhis are aware of this. In any case, without winning the trust of India's richest, Rahul Gandhi has very little chance of putting up a fight in 2029.

7 Relationship tips you can give your Child



As parents, advising kids on important matters of life is integral. While most parents have plenty of career advice for kids, not many sit them down for a sensible chat on relationships.

Parents in our country still find it difficult to discuss love with their children. If you are one of them, help is at hand. Here are seven basic relationship tips that every parent should give their children...

Learn to initiate

Gone are the days when you would endlessly wait for the other person to understand your feelings and take the first step in the relationship. Times have changed and how! We all live in such a fast-paced world that feelings change every now and then. So tell your kids to not wait for the other person to make the first move. If they like someone, it's completely fine to walk up to them and express their emotions.

Give your best

Always tell your children to never stop trying — be it their career or relationships, everything deserves their best efforts. No matter how the partner behaves, make sure your son/daughter gives his/her best to the relationship. This will either make

the relationship work, if not, it will save them the regret of not having worked hard towards it.

Trust your intuition

As parents, you know that your intuition can never go wrong. Similarly, tell your kids to believe in their gut instincts. It will help them take the right decisions. Also, it's your duty to set aside crucial 'reflection time' when your child is getting into a relationship. Obviously, you don't want to use the 'I told you so' line on them!

Never lose your individuality

Be it among friends, family or their partner, ensure your son/daughter never gives up on his/her individuality. Teach them to respect themselves, only then will other people do the same. Respecting their desires and needs when it comes to relationships will only help them become better.

Break-ups are not fatal

Tell them that break-ups are not the end of the world and they will survive this, too. It might seem unbearable in the beginning, but talk to your child of ways to get over his/her ex. Everyone is allowed to make a few mistakes while on their way to find their perfect match. Remind them that the best is yet to come.

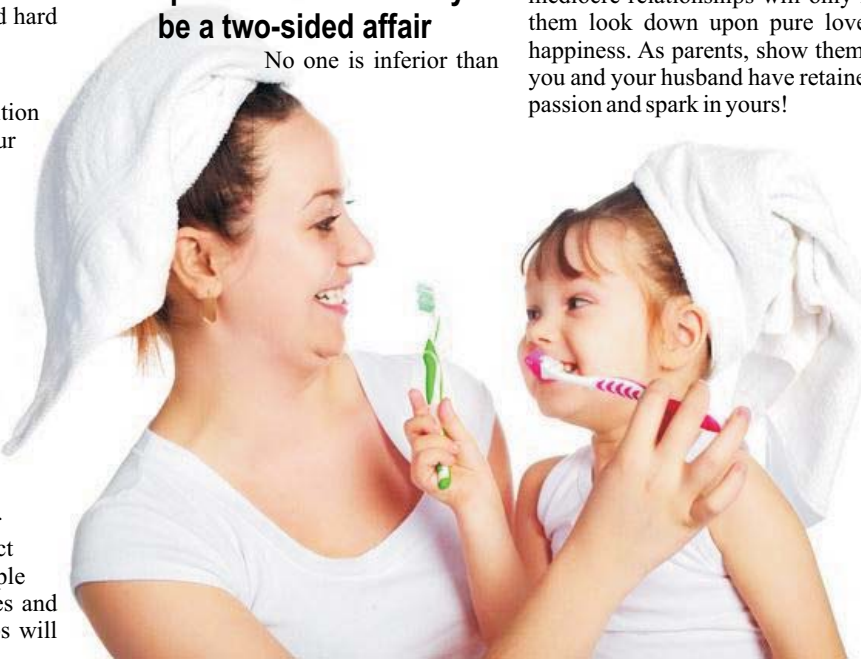
Compromise should always be a two-sided affair

No one is inferior than

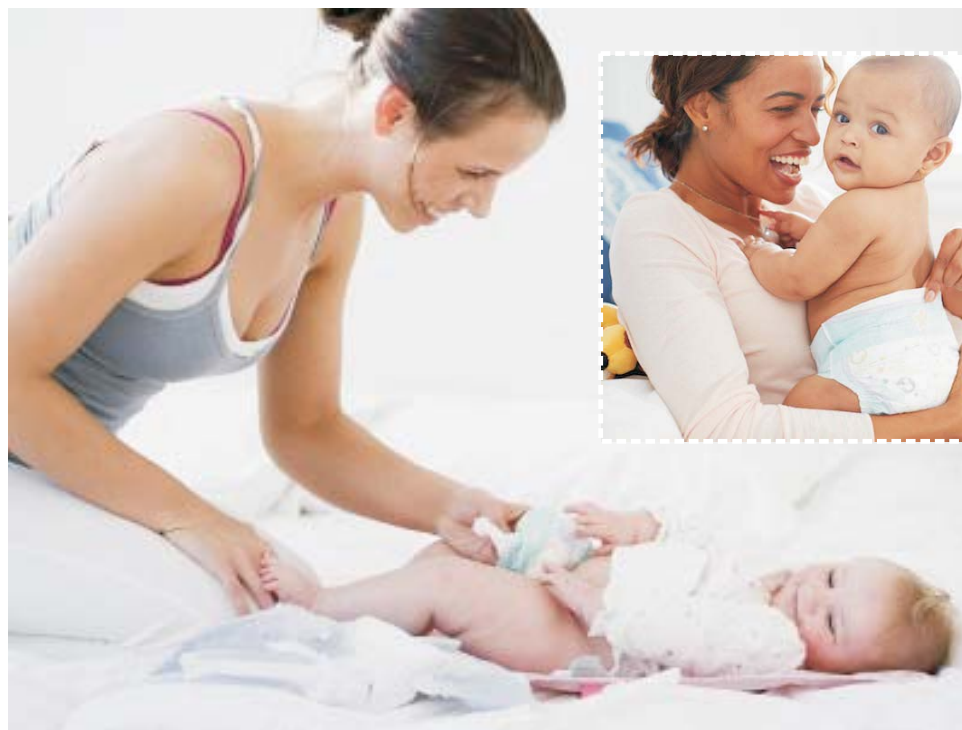
their partner in a relationship — make them understand this mantra. Compromises, adjustments and responsibilities should be shared, and this way, they will know that the other person is always there for them in need.

Never settle for mediocrity

Teach them to be in a relationship not because it's the only option available, but because it's wonderful. Settling for mediocre relationships will only make them look down upon pure love and happiness. As parents, show them how you and your husband have retained the passion and spark in yours!



Are you diapering your baby correctly?



appalled) at how quickly you'll exhaust your diaper supplies. Also, check if a specific brand suits your baby's delicate skin. At times, certain materials used in diapers may cause a rash or simply not be comfortable enough for your baby. Try out a few brands before you settle down with a particular brand.

- Don't let your baby's incessant crying get to you. Be calm while changing the diaper because the more your fumble, the more your baby will get aggravated. It's okay to be slow and steady — your baby will stop crying the moment it is clean and dry.

- Allow your baby to go diaperless for a few hours daily. This is because skin needs to breathe and constantly putting on a diaper will cause your baby's bottom to turn red and cause a rash.

- It is also important to ensure that the diaper fits snugly. Too tight and your baby will wail due to discomfort and too loose and you will have a poop disaster on your hands. Use your fingers to check the snugness around your baby's waist.



The most common mistake made (by both moms and dads!) while changing a diaper is putting it on backwards or off centre. But worry not. Once you know the technique, you'll be able to change diapers within seconds.

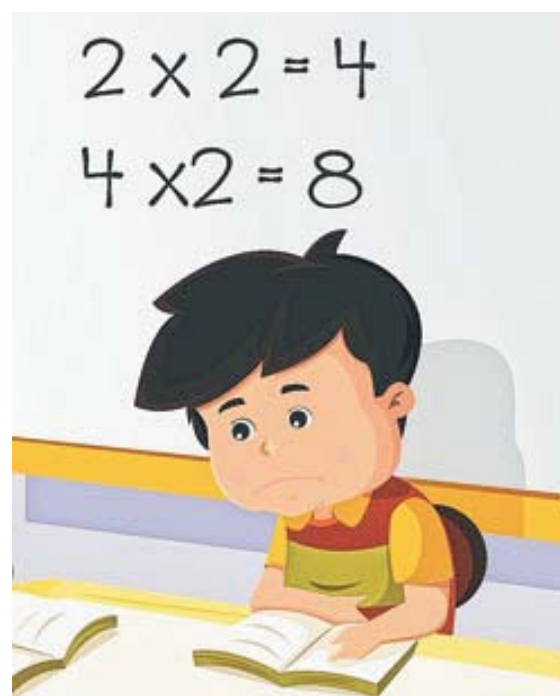
- The first thing to do is to get yourself organised. Keep all your paraphernalia together — baby powder, wet wipes, tissues, napkin, diaper rash cream and, of course, the diapers — in a small bag. This way, when the need arises, you won't go scrambling all over the house looking for things.

- Always keep plenty of stock handy — you'll be amazed (and

Life is never the same after a baby. Sleepless nights, bouts of crying, colic and dirty nappies are just some of the things that new parents go through. While most parents use cloth nappies in the first few weeks of their baby's life, the real trick starts when they start using diapers.

Tutoring can relieve math anxiety in kids

A one-on-one math tutoring programme can relieve anxiety about doing math problems in your kids, says a study by Indian-origin researchers.



"The most exciting aspect of our findings is that cognitive tutoring not only improves performance, but is also anxiety-reducing," said the study's senior author Vinod Menon professor of psychiatry and behavioural sciences at Stanford University School of Medicine in California, US.

"It was surprising that we could, in fact, get remediation of math anxiety," Menon noted.

Even if they are good at math, many children feel anxious about doing math problems.

For some, the anxiety persists throughout life, discouraging them from pursuing advanced math and science classes as well as careers that rely on mathematical

expertise. The study included 46 children in third grade. Before receiving tutoring, each child took a test that assessed his or her level of math anxiety.

The brain scans of the children with high levels of math anxiety showed activation in the brain's fear circuits and so-called "fear centre", or amygdala, before tutoring.

Children then participated in an intensive, eight-week tutoring programme consisting of 22 lessons involving addition and subtraction problems.

Tutors gave the lessons to each child individually. All of the children performed better on addition and subtraction problems after tutoring.

The children who started the study with high levels of math anxiety had reduced anxiety after tutoring, while those in the low-math-anxiety group had no change in their anxiety levels.

After tutoring, the fear circuits and amygdala were no longer activated in children who had begun the study with high math anxiety, confirming that tutoring ameliorated the anxiety itself, rather than providing the kids with a coping mechanism that relies on other brain circuits.

"It is reassuring that we could actually help these children reduce anxiety by mere exposure to problems," the study's lead author Kaustubh Supekar from Stanford University noted.

Relationships

8 Ways to stay happy at Work

Here are some simple tips to keep the negativity at bay.

If you are employed, chances are you often spend more time at office than home. And so, it's very important that you are happy and relaxed when at work. But that's easier said than done. A tyrant boss, backstabbing colleagues, poor pay packages, office politics, unequal distribution of work, favouritism — there are countless reasons to put one off work. Job stress can take a huge toll on your mental and physical health. Changing jobs constantly is not a solution, especially in today's economic scenario. So, here's how to make the most of what you have.

Eat out

Forget home-cooked food and that boring canteen fare. It's a great idea to step out for lunch with your colleagues. It will help you bond with them. If you hate going out, order take-away. And if you are the kind who always eats out, get a home-cooked dish sometimes. Good food will uplift your mood.

Be optimistic

Whatever the nature and number of problems you face at work, they're not going to disappear at the snap of your fingers. You need to be optimistic that the situation will improve slowly and steadily. Do not fall prey to negative thinking. If you find it tough to be optimistic, fake it. With time, your fake positivity will turn real. All you need is a little practice.

Change your attitude

Even if you hate your job, make the most of it. Analyse how you can improve yourself — make fewer mistakes and increase your efficiency. Whenever you leave a job, you should know that it has enhanced your skills, even if it is in a minor way.

Be friendly with colleagues

A friendly atmosphere makes a huge difference. If you're aloof, chances are you will feel left out at some point of time. We're not asking you to go shopping with them and share details of your personal life, but be cordial.

Take a chill pill

Slogging for 12 to 16 hours a day will leave anyone grumpy, stressed out and unable to concentrate. So, small 15-minute breaks are a must in between. Take a nap, read jokes or play games online, listen to music or chat with a friend. If napping and playing games online are prohibited, listen to some good

music to pep up your mood.

Be grateful

Typing furiously on the keyboard, slamming the phone, and pushing the drawers of the cabinet forcefully may help you vent anger, but think about how lucky you are. In the current market scenario, there are many unemployed people who would love to be in your shoes.

Be assertive

Nobody likes to be bullied and harassed at work. If your detractors are under the impression that you can't speak up for yourself, it encourages them to trouble you even more. So, stand up for yourself.

Ask for feedback

It's important to ask for a feedback from your boss. Good communication will give you a clear idea of what's expected of you.



A good boss is like having a good neighbour. If you are not lucky enough to have such a boss, then it can be incredibly damaging to your health and quality of life.



Bad bosses damage health, quality of life

According to health experts, abusive bosses who humiliate, insult employees and isolate them from co-workers not only harm company's growth but also affect performance and overall life of co-workers.

Psychiatrist, Dr Manish Jain, says, "There are three types of personality groups which generally a boss falls into. In the first category are those, who mistrust co-workers, the second one has those who wants assigned work to be done anyhow and the third ones are those who are insecure and anxious about how they and their co-workers work." He added saying that such personality trait are harmful for company as well as the employees. Workplace stress increases the risk of heart disease and stroke, increases risk of insomnia, depression and anxiety, weakens immune defence and can cause chronic muscle pains and migraines. Another doctor Manoj Jain said, "Problems in professional life affect brain activity. It causes stress and affects quality of life. Professional issues looms all the time and managing family and spending time with them gets difficult. Irritation, high blood pressure and diabetes occurs in such cases."



Recently, a survey conducted by Assocham also revealed that 69% of corporate employees who quit their jobs complained about the indifferent attitude of their bosses or immediate supervisor while remaining move to a new position in the same company. Survey also found that around 42% of employees have been a victim of workplace bullying and almost 56% are bullied by their boss. About 82% of respondents said that a good work environment was often much more important than their current pay level. Workers are quitting their jobs and even switching to another career because they're fed-up with their current boss, adds the survey.

Meanwhile, human resource professionals believe that they are careful in selecting employees and managers but predicting personality trait is a difficult task. Prateek Balbhadra, a human resource professional said, "Employees selection is a critical decision of HR professional as they have huge impact on the retention and turnover of the organisation. But, understanding personality of employees sometimes gets difficult and once the mistake is done it cannot be undone."



Teach kids budgeting

One of the biggest task for any parent is to teach their kids to use money right. This requires the parents to teach this idea right from an early age. Both spending and saving habits can be taught right from an early age.

The first step is by showing them how you prepare the home budget and taking them to banks. You can also ask your child to help you find and read the unit price numbers at the grocery store in order to find the best bargains. This way, they are active participants in the home budget.

You can also give them a budget and ask them to come up with a grocery shopping list. While shopping, hand them a calculator to see how close you are to your budget as you add more items to the shopping cart.

Buy a piggy bank for younger children so they have somewhere to keep their money temporarily. Make them use this to come up with a budget to suit their needs.

Government launches AIR SUVIDHA 2.0 amid Ebola outbreak concerns

The Civil Aviation Ministry and Delhi airport have rolled out AIR SUVIDHA 2.0 for international arrivals. The contactless portal is meant to speed screening and flag Ebola-linked risks early.

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Civil Aviation Ministry and Delhi International Airport Limited on Thursday launched an upgraded, contactless passenger health self-declaration portal to strengthen public health surveillance at points of entry amid the Ebola disease outbreak in parts of Africa.

Developed with the Directorate General of Health Services under the Union health ministry, the AIR SUVIDHA 2.0 portal allows international arriving passengers to submit a mandatory online health self-declaration before immigration clearance. The form covers 21-day travel history, exposure history and related symptoms, if any.

The health ministry said the portal allows real-time data sharing with the Airport Health Officer, Bureau of Immigration, IDSP and State Surveillance Officers. It



said this would help in the quick identification and referral of at-risk travellers while keeping the arrival process seamless and contactless, with no physical forms to be filled after landing. The Aairsuvidha Self Declaration Form can be

completed up to 24 hours before arrival in India. "Passengers are requested to fill the forms before boarding of the flight, during web check-in for swift clearance on arrival and only required to show the downloaded SDF at the International Travel Health Desk or Immigration counter," the statement said. The portal has been launched after the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Ebola/Bundibugyo Virus Disease outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda a public health emergency of international concern on May 17 under the International Health Regulations, 2005.

The current outbreak has been confirmed as Bundibugyo Virus Disease, and countries bordering Congo and Uganda, including South Sudan, have been assessed as high-risk for transmission. The new portal is aimed at strengthening screening and surveillance for international arrivals.

200 structures gutted as fire erupts near Udyog Bhawan

New Delhi.(Agency)

A massive fire broke out in a cluster of temporary tin-sheds made for labourers near Delhi's Udyog Bhawan in the early hours of Wednesday, gutting around 200 structures, officials said on Wednesday.

The Delhi Fire Services (DFS) received a call at 3.02 am informing about fire in an electric panel near the labour jhuggis close to Udyog Bhawan. According to a DFS official, the blaze quickly spread through the densely packed tin-shed rooms, prompting a major firefighting operation.

As part of the Centre's ambitious redevelopment



programme, work has commenced on the demolition of Udyog Bhawan, one of the prominent governments office complexes in the Central Vista area. The dismantling of Udyog Bhawan, constructed in the late 1950s, follows the demolition of neighbouring Nirman Bhawan.

According to fire officials, the incident was initially attended by two water tenders, but the scale of the blaze led to upgrades, with 19 fire-fighting vehicles, including water tenders, water bowers and other specialised units, being pressed into service. The fire was brought under control at around 5.30 a.m. No injuries or casualties were reported from the incident.

IIT to conduct study for construction of Yamuna flood protection wall

New Delhi.(Agency)

Irrigation and Flood Control Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh has said that Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Delhi will be roped in to carry out a study for the construction of a new flood protection wall along a 4-km stretch of the Yamuna. Works on building the flood protection wall along the Yamuna to protect flood-prone areas will be taken up next year after a detailed study.

"For now, we will repair the existing wall along the Yamuna River to protect vulnerable areas, including the Yamuna Bazar. The new project will be taken up next year after a detailed study by IIT-Delhi," Singh said.

The Yamuna Bazar area near Kashmere Gate has been identified by the authorities concerned as one of the key waterlogging hotspots in the city. "In 2023, despite the protection wall, inundation reached eight to 10 feet in the area. It is the first area to get flooded during the high tide of the Yamuna in the monsoon season," the minister added.

From the devastating floods of 1978 to more recent episodes in 2023 and 2025, this stretch has remained particularly exposed.

A 4.72-km wall will be built from Majnu Ka Tila to the Old Railway Bridge, with a target to complete the project before the next monsoon season. CM Rekha Gupta has said the decision, formally cleared as part of the budget, is rooted in the city's struggle with floods.

The wall is expected to provide a strong layer of protection to vulnerable localities such as Civil Lines, Kashmere Gate, Yamuna Bazaar and Majnu Ka Tila, areas that have been hit by rising water levels.

Rs 658 crore set aside to make 270 kms of Delhi roads durable

The government said the project would make the capital's roads safer, more durable and of better quality.

New Delhi.(Agency)

The Delhi government has taken a major step towards strengthening the Capital's road infrastructure. At a meeting of the Expenditure Finance Committee chaired by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Wednesday, projects worth Rs 657.99 crore were approved for the strengthening of 270.63 kilometres of roads, officials said.

The government said the project would make the capital's roads safer, more durable and of better quality. The decision will improve the condition of several key roads across East, North and South Delhi and help strengthen road infrastructure in line with modern standards.

A total of Rs 147.08 crore would be spent on strengthening 58.292 km of roads in the East Maintenance Zone, Rs 247.31 crore on 104.42 km of

roads in the North Maintenance Zone and Rs 263.61 crore on 107.92 km of roads in the South Maintenance Zone. To achieve this objective, the road strengthening works will be



carried out on a zone-wise basis.

The project will include cold milling, Dense Bituminous Macadam (DBM), Bituminous Concrete (BC), road markings, road furniture, tack coat application and kerb channel works aimed at improving road

quality, safety and durability.

The Chief Minister said that, for the first time, Delhi is adopting a zone-wise composite tendering system in place of the conventional road-wise tendering model. This will help make project execution, quality control and monitoring more effective. It will also enable better use of modern machinery and technology, ensure closer monitoring of work quality and ensure accountability for post-construction maintenance. She said the Delhi Government is focusing not only on construction but also on quality and transparency. All projects will have a five-year Defect Liability Period. Notably, if a pothole develops on any road during the liability period, it will be repaired within 48 hours.

'Foreign travel a fundamental right': Delhi court allows Thailand trip of accused

New Delhi.(Agency)

A Delhi court has said that travelling abroad is an integral facet of fundamental rights. The court observed, while allowing a woman accused in a money laundering case to visit Thailand because of her children's ongoing summer vacations.

Vacation Judge Rajesh Malik granted the relief to Reena Goel, the accused.

Goel, who was granted bail in December 2025 on the condition that she could not leave the country without the court's prior nod, had moved the application, seeking permission to travel to Thailand for her children's summer vacations from June 25 to July 2. The court said it needed to balance the right of the



accused to travel abroad against the grounds for refusing such permission. "The primary and most compelling ground for denial would be credible apprehension that she will flee from justice. Such apprehension can either be shown from the evidence or it can be gathered by drawing inferences from the other facts," the judge said in an order

passed on July 19. The ED, however, has not shown any evidence or facts to show that she may flee from justice, the judge said.

"It is not the case that she is making investments in foreign countries to settle abroad. Mere being an accused does not suffice to stop her from travelling abroad. Further, there is a plethora of judgments of the constitutional courts of India, thereby recognising that travelling abroad is an integral facet of the fundamental right under Article 21 (right to life and personal liberty) of the Constitution," the judge said. The judge granted the relief on furnishing an FDR of Rs 10 lakh, while directing the accused not to tamper with the evidence, and providing..

investigating more than a dozen cases linked to mob protests and the illegal detention of judicial officers during the SIR exercise ahead of the West Bengal Assembly polls.

The NIA said its investigation found that Chowdhary was a key accused in the illegal detention of judicial officers at BDO Office Block-II on April 1, 2026. He was allegedly part of a mob that caused "disruption of law and order" and attacked police personnel on official duty. The agency said nine police personnel were injured in the attacks.

According to the NIA, Chowdhary had delivered a speech in front of the BDO office a day before the incident to instigate people to take part in violent protests. The agency also alleged that he had conspired with other co-accused and actively participated in unlawful assemblies that resorted to violence, intimidation and obstruction during the SIR exercise.

The NIA said it is trying to identify and track all those involved in various cases of pre-poll violence in West Bengal as part of its probe into the larger conspiracy behind the incidents. It began investigating these cases on the directions of the Supreme Court, which had taken suo motu cognisance of the April violence in Malda.



Why police verification for passport if it proves nothing? big questions

An MEA official reiterated that a passport is a "travel document" and not a "citizenship document". The clarification settles one debate about the passport, but opens up five larger questions about verification, ownership, surrender, and citizenship itself.

New Delhi.(Agency)

A senior official of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Wednesday said that the Indian passport is just a "travel document" and not a "citizenship document". The remarks were made while speaking at an event held to highlight the expansion of passport services across the country on the 14th Passport Seva Divas.

Since then, people have flooded social media platforms, debating what a passport stands for and why there is so much vetting if it is just a travel document.

The remarks of the MEA official shouldn't come as a surprise. "A passport is largely an identity and travel document issued



to the state's own nationals," the government's passport manual states. Then there have been court rulings, too. The reason for such uproar is clear. From extensive paperwork, and queues at Passport Seva Kendras (PSKs) to police verification and payment of fees, obtaining an Indian passport involves a

lengthy process. The passport attests the nationality of Indians when they are abroad, but it isn't a document of citizenship, officials clarified in response to a query. However, a passport has never been a document that proves citizenship. The statement by the MEA official is in the spotlight after people and Opposition leaders started questioning, "Which document then is proof of citizenship?" There are five questions, and an answer.

1. Why do people need to surrender their Indian passport after acquiring foreign citizenship?

India does not permit dual citizenship under the Citizenship Act, 1955. Once

an Indian citizen voluntarily acquires the citizenship of another country, Indian citizenship automatically ceases. Retaining or using an Indian passport thereafter is unlawful and can attract penalties under the Passports Act, 1967.

The government says surrendering the passport helps update official records, cancel the document, and issue a Surrender Certificate or a Renunciation Certificate. These documents are often required for obtaining an OCI card or an Indian visa. The argument seems fair. But the question that naturally comes up is that if a passport is not considered conclusive proof of citizenship, why is there such urgency in taking it back? If it is merely a travel document, what exactly.

Rupee rises 31 paise to 94.24 against US dollar in early trade

New Delhi.(Agency)

The rupee rose 31 paise to 94.24 against the US dollar in early trade on Thursday as global crude oil prices continued to decline and went below levels seen before the start of the West Asia conflict.

A weaker greenback and positive sentiments in the domestic equity market further supported the local unit while heavy FII outflows prevented a sharper rise, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 94.30 against the US dollar and strengthened further to 94.24, up 31 paise from its previous close. The rupee appreciated 21 paise to settle at 94.55 against the US dollar on Wednesday.

"The rupee opened stronger at 94.30 against the US dollar, supported by a sharp decline in global crude oil prices, which fell below levels seen before the Iran conflict. Brent crude is down more than 10 per cent this week and above 21 per cent for the month, easing concerns over India's import bill and supporting the domestic currency," Pinky Yadav, Commodity Fundamental Analyst at Choice Broking, said. However, gains in the rupee remained capped as the US dollar hovered near a one-year high around 101.5 amid expectations that the Federal Reserve could maintain a tighter monetary stance," Yadav said. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading at 101.50, lower by 0.10 per cent. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading lower by 1.72 per cent at USD 72.47 per barrel in futures trade. On the domestic equity market front, Sensex climbed 440.23 points to 77,435.76 in early trade, while the Nifty rallied 137.80 points to 24,147.60.

Stock markets rally in early trade tracking drop in oil prices, positive trends in Asian equities

MUMBAI.(Agency)

Market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty rallied in early trade on Thursday, tracking a decline in crude oil prices and a positive trend in Asian equities.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 440.23 points to 77,435.76 in early deals. The 50-share NSE Nifty went up by 137.80 points to 24,147.60.

From the 30-Sensex firms, InterGlobe Aviation, Maruti, Mahindra & Mahindra, UltraTech Cement, State Bank of India and Hindustan Unilever were among the major winners. Power Grid, Titan, Infosys and Bharat Electronics were among the laggards.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, traded 1.70 per cent lower at USD 72.49 per barrel.

"The biggest positive for India is Brent crude falling to below USD 73 level," VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Limited, said. In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi jumped over 5 per cent, Japan's Nikkei 225 index traded nearly 4 per cent higher and Shanghai's SSE Composite index quoted marginally in the green. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index quoted lower.

US markets ended on a subdued note in the previous trade. "Crude oil prices have extended their recent decline. Oil has now erased most of the gains recorded during the recent Middle East conflict as concerns over supply disruptions have eased, geopolitical risk premiums have unwound and global supply conditions have continued to improve," Ponnudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth-tech firm, said.

Gold loan: Factors to remember before applying for one

Kolkata.(Agency)

Since gold prices are rising, more and more people are rushing to apply for gold loans. People are finding it easy to obtain loans by offering idle gold in times of need. However, it is important to understand some important factors before applying for a gold loan. Thanks to the elevated gold price, there has been a boom in the gold loan market in India. In FY26, the total portfolio surged by about 50% to Rs 19.4 lakh crore. This surge was largely driven by soaring gold prices and new RBI's loan-to-value (LTV) rules, which switched from a flat to a tiered one. The net result, with higher prices, borrowers could get a higher loan by offering the same amount of gold as collateral. Let's have a look what these factors are.

Loan amount

The price of gold always plays a crucial role in securing a gold loan. The higher the ruling price of gold, the higher can be the loan amount. Banks and lending financial institutions value gold based on standards set by the IBCA or recognized exchanges, rather than the current market rate. Therefore, be sure to check the gold rate in your city before applying. The price of gold varies every day both globally as well as in India and even inside the country it can be different in different cities. So checking the price of gold is important.

Purity of gold

The loan amount depends not only on the weight but also on the purity of the gold. Jewellery is usually made of 22 karat gold. However some light jewellery these days are also made of 18 karat gold. But bars and coins are made from 24 karat gold which is of highest purity. If jewellery is studded with stones or other embellishments, the lender will only consider the value of the gold.

LTV ratio in different tiers

According to Reserve Bank of India regulations, a maximum loan-to-value ratio of 85% applies in the case of gold loans. In other words, if the gold is worth Rs 1 lakh, the borrower can get a maximum loan of Rs 85,000. Therefore, one must take note of this LTV and work out the maximum amount of loan that one is eligible for. The LTV ratio is different for different tiers. If the loan is up to Rs 2.5 lakh the LTV is the maximum 85%. For loan amounts between Rs 2.5 lakh and Rs 5 lakh, the LTV is 80% and for loan amounts exceeding Rs 5 lakh, the LTV set by RBI is 75%.

Before applying for a gold loan, one can use an online gold loan calculator to understand the amount that he/she will be eligible for.

Amazon to invest \$48 billion in India by 2030, CEO Andy Jassy meets PM Modi

According to Jassy, the company aims to support 3.8 million jobs in India by 2030 and help generate \$80 billion in cumulative e-commerce exports.

New Delhi.(Agency)

India continues to attract some of the world's biggest technology investments. In a major boost for the country's digital and artificial intelligence ambitions, Amazon CEO Andy Jassy has announced an additional investment of \$13 billion to expand AI and cloud infrastructure in India by 2030. The announcement came after Jassy met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on June 25, where the two discussed Amazon's future plans and growing presence in the country.

AMAZON DEEPENS ITS INDIA COMMITMENT

Following the meeting, Jassy shared details

of Amazon's long-term plans for India in a post on X. He said the company remains committed to supporting customers, sellers, developers, start-ups and enterprises across the country. Jassy said that Amazon has been operating in India for more than a decade and believes there is still significant room for growth. He said the company plans to invest a total of \$48 billion in India over the next five years.

ADDITIONAL \$13 BILLION FOR AI AND CLOUD INFRASTRUCTURE

The latest announcement builds on Amazon's earlier commitment made in 2025, when it pledged to invest \$35 billion across its businesses in India. With the additional \$13 billion investment, Amazon's planned spending will rise to \$48 billion. The company said a significant part of the investment will go towards expanding artificial intelligence and cloud

infrastructure.

Amazon Web Services (AWS) plans to increase data centre capacity in Mumbai and Hyderabad. The expansion is expected



to provide businesses, start-ups and government organisations with greater access to advanced cloud services, AI tools, custom AI chips and secure digital infrastructure.

FOCUS ON JOBS, EXPORTS AND

SMALL BUSINESSES

Amazon has also outlined ambitious goals for the coming years. According to Jassy, the company aims to support 3.8 million jobs in India by 2030 and help generate \$80 billion in cumulative e-commerce exports.

The company also plans to bring AI-powered tools and services to 15 million small businesses across the country. In addition, Amazon intends to provide AI education and learning opportunities to around 4 million government school students.

INDIA REMAINS A KEY MARKET FOR AMAZON

During his meeting with Prime Minister Modi, Jassy highlighted

India's growing importance in Amazon's global business strategy. The company currently operates across several sectors in India, including e-commerce, cloud computing, artificial intelligence and entertainment.

EPFO portal shutdown from June 26-28: How it will affect your EPF claims

New Delhi.(Agency)

If you were planning to submit an EPF claim this week, you may need to wait a few days. The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has announced that several services on its member portal will be temporarily unavailable from June 26 to June 28 due to a major system upgrade.

The move is aimed at improving service quality and making claim processing faster and more efficient in the future.

WHY IS EPFO SHUTTING SERVICES TEMPORARILY?

According to a notice displayed on the EPFO member portal, the organisation is carrying out a planned database consolidation and software upgrade for its claims processing system. EPFO said the exercise is intended to improve processing efficiency, strengthen system performance and provide a better experience for members using its



online services. As a result, some key services will not be accessible during the migration period.

WHEN WILL SERVICES BE UNAVAILABLE?

The temporary shutdown will begin at 12:00 am on June 26, 2026 and continue until 11:59 pm on June 28, 2026. EPFO expects all services to be restored from 00:00 hours on June 29, 2026.

WHAT WILL BE AFFECTED?

During the three-day period, members will not be able to submit new claim requests through the EPFO portal. Claim processing services will also remain unavailable. This means users planning to apply for provident fund withdrawals, transfers or other claim-related services through the portal will have to wait until the upgrade is completed.

WHAT ABOUT EXISTING CLAIMS?

EPFO has clarified that claims submitted before the migration period will not be cancelled or rejected. However, their processing may be delayed. The organisation said these pending claims will be taken up once services resume after the upgrade is completed. Meanwhile, the retirement fund body has apologised for the temporary inconvenience and requested members to be patient during the transition.

Skoda unveils flagship Peaq EV globally: Will it come to India? Here's the full story

Skoda Peaq: The dashboard features a dual-tone layout with a 13.6-inch touchscreen, a 10-inch digital driver's display, and a heated two-spoke steering wheel carrying the brand wordmark.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Skoda has officially unveiled the Peaq as its new global flagship model, and it's aiming squarely at full-size electric SUVs like the Kia EV9, Hyundai Ioniq 9, and Volvo EX90. Here's what makes this interesting for India: Skoda is actively considering bringing the Peaq here, even though none of its current pure electric models, the Epic, Elroq, and Enyaq, are sold in the country yet.

Battery, motor and performance Internationally, the Peaq comes in three variants. The base 60 gets a 63 kWh

battery with a single rear motor producing 204 hp and a claimed range of 459 km. Step up to the 90, and you get a bigger 91 kWh battery with a more powerful single rear motor making 286 hp, claiming a range of 647 km. At the top sits the 90X, which pairs the same 91 kWh battery with a dual-motor all-wheel-drive setup, producing 299 hp and a claimed range of 613 km. Performance scales up nicely across the range too. The 90X is the quickest, accelerating from 0 to 100 kmph in 6.7 seconds, followed by the 90 at 7.1 seconds and the 60 at 8.6 seconds. Charging is fast across the board. The bigger 91 kWh battery goes from 10 to 80 percent in 28 minutes on a 199 kW DC fast charger, while the smaller 63 kWh unit takes 27 minutes on a 160 kW charger. The Peaq rolls on 19 to 21-inch aero-optimised alloy wheels, depending on variant.

Inside the cabin

The dashboard features a dual-tone layout with a 13.6-inch touchscreen, a 10-inch digital driver's display, and a heated two-spoke steering wheel

carrying the brand wordmark. Most controls live on the touchscreen, but Skoda has kept a few physical buttons on the centre console, split into two sections. The top section handles lock, hazard, and volume controls, while the bottom section has three climate toggles, with the outer ones for temperature and the middle one for fan speed.

Other highlights include a 16-speaker Sonos sound system, dual wireless phone chargers, a panoramic sunroof, and USB ports across all three rows. The Peaq also supports bidirectional charging, meaning it can power external appliances or even a home electrical setup. It's also the first Skoda to offer a digital key feature, letting you lock and unlock the car using your phone or smartwatch. An optional augmented reality head-up display is available too. For those wanting extra comfort, Skoda offers a Relax Package with AGR-certified massage seats, power-adjustable leg rests, front seat pillows, a foldable table, and a wellness app with six modes including relaxation, stretching, and re-energising.

Rebound in tech shares pushes world markets higher, while oil prices fall

BANGKOK.(Agency)

World shares were mostly higher Thursday, led by tech-driven gains in Japan and South Korea as major computer chipmakers' stocks surged following upbeat earnings reports from U.S. giants like Qualcomm and Micon Technology. Oil prices slipped closer to where they were before the war with Iran began. Qualcomm's share price surged nearly 7% in afterhours trading after the company announced it had raised its forecast for revenue this year to \$40 billion from \$22 billion. It also announced a new computer chip for data centers called Dragonfly C1000 CPU that Meta plans to use. Micon Technology's shares jumped 18.5% in afterhours trading after it upgraded its forecast and exceeded analysts' estimates. The future for the S&P 500 gained 0.8%, while that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average edged 0.1% higher. Germany's DAX advanced 0.5% to 24,859.99. The CAC 40 in Paris was up 0.2% to 8,398.21 and Britain's FTSE 100 added 0.1% to 10,473.69.

In Asian trading, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index surged 4.6% to a record close of 72,366.34 as traders snapped up shares in technology companies. Chipmaker



Tokyo Electron's shares gained 7.8%, while chip testing equipment maker Advantest's shares soared 15%.

South Korea's benchmark, the Kospi, hit a new record, surging 5.4% to 8,930.30 after briefly topping 9,000. Samsung Electronics' shares gained 5.3% and SK Hynix leaped 13%. Elsewhere in Asia, gains were more modest.

Taiwan's Taiex climbed 0.5% and the Sensex in India was up 0.7%.

The Shanghai Composite index picked up 0.2% to 4,120.28, while Hong Kong's Hang Seng dropped 1.4% to 23,090.27.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 shed 0.7% to 8,748.70. On Wednesday, stocks wavered to a mixed close on Wall Street as losses for several tech giants including Microsoft weighed on the market. The S&P 500 fell 0.1% and the Dow Jones Industrial Average, which is less weighted with tech stocks, rose 10.4%. The tech-heavy Nasdaq composite fell 0.4%.

Microsoft lost 2.3% and Oracle slumped 4.6%. Many large tech companies have been behind Wall Street's record-setting run throughout the year, but analysts have warned their valuations may have become stretched. Google's parent company Alphabet slipped 0.2%. The company is replacing Verizon in the Dow on Monday. Its inclusion in the S&P 500 means more to investors, however, because 401(k) accounts are much more likely to include an S&P 500 index fund than anything tied to the Dow.

Will LPG cylinder facility be suspended on June 30 for THESE people? Check PNG, LPG rules

Malhotra said the RBI is keeping an eye on whether higher oil prices start affecting the prices of other goods and services across the economy. According to him, such broader inflationary pressure has not appeared so far.

New Delhi.(Agency)

As the government is emphasizing switching to PNG cooking gas, there is a possibility that the LPG cylinder facility might be suspended on June 30 for those who have not switched to PNG if such connectivity is available. In March 2026, the government announced a three-month timeframe to consumers to switch to PNG if such connectivity is available to them. The government said that gas connections would be cut if someone has PNG access but has not switched. The Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board had directed city gas distribution entities to expedite D-

PNG connections. Also, the National PNG Drive 2.0 was extended till June 30, 2026 to sustain momentum in PNG expansion. The PNG drive initiative aims to accelerate adoption of PNG for households, commercial and industrial users and CNG for mobility, reinforcing cleaner, safer and more reliable energy access. PNG removes the need for cylinder refills whereas CNG allows cleaner mobility.

Consumers with PNG connections to surrender LPG connections

Earlier, the government prohibited households with PNG connections from keeping or acquiring subsidised domestic LPG connections. In a notification issued on March 14, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas amended the Liquefied Petroleum Gas (Regulation of Supply and Distribution) Order. Under the amended provisions, LPG consumers who have PNG connections will have to apply for termination of the LPG connection within 30 days of obtaining a PNG connection.

The government also earlier issued an order according to which no person having both a PNG connection and a domestic LPG connection will be allowed to retain a



domestic LPG connection or take refills of domestic LPG cylinders. Such persons will be required to immediately surrender their domestic LPG connection.

Gas connections to be cut if someone has PNG access but not switched. The government has mandated that domestic LPG supply will be discontinued if consumers do not switch to piped natural gas if such connectivity is available. Hence, if you have a PNG facility in your area then you are required to switch to piped gas instead of gas cylinders. The government will stop after three months the supply of cylinders to households that have access to piped natural gas but have not taken a

connection. This order was announced in March and the deadline to switch to PNG completely was 90 days which ends in June.

What has government said?

Union minister for petroleum and natural gas Hardeep Singh Puri said on an X post, "Piped Natural Gas is the cleaner, safer and greener option as a cooking fuel. Inspired by PM Sh @narendramodi Ji's vision, a whopping 1,00,000 families across the country have given up their LPG connections and have opted for PNG connections! As more families will now be inspired to join this Jan Andolan, it will strengthen India's energy sector."

In an update on June 18, the Oil Ministry said, "CGD entities have been advised to prioritize PNG connections for commercial establishments such as hotels, restaurants and canteens across all their GASs, to address concerns regarding the availability of commercial LPG."

Latest government data showed that since March 2026, about 10.02 lakh PNG connections have been gasified and about 9.94 lakh customers registered for new connections.

Short news

Enough grounds for FIR in Ram Temple donation case: VHP

Lucknow.(Agency)

A day after the Special Investigation Team (SIT) submitted the preliminary report on the alleged misappropriation of funds and valuables donated at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) on Wednesday demanded an FIR and a day-to-day hearing of the case.

Following the controversy over alleged misappropriation of donations, the VHP has also postponed its annual management committee meeting scheduled to start in Ayodhya on Wednesday due to “inevitable circumstances”. All the top functionaries of the VHP participate in the meeting where key organisational decisions are taken.

Speaking to The Indian Express, VHP international president Alok Kumar said, “Based on the news that appeared in the media about extracts from the SIT report, it can be said that there are enough grounds to file an FIR in the matter.”

Kumar said that extracts of the SIT report that appeared in the media say that in the CCTV camera footage, some people can be seen embezzling money and their names, too, have surfaced. “So, no further fact-finding is required for lodging an FIR.

An FIR should be lodged earlier, investigation should be expedited and a chargesheet filed, and the case should be heard on a day-to-day basis in a fast-track court,” he said.

“Whoever has done this (embezzlement) should be punished. Ram bhakts will not get peace until the culprits are sent behind bars. We want maximum punishment for them,” Kumar said.

Stop Karnataka projects on Tungabhadra: BRS to CM

HYDERABAD.(Agency)

BRS leader and former minister T Harish Rao, in an open letter to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy on Wednesday, urged the government to protect Telangana’s rightful share of Tungabhadra river waters and stop Karnataka from proceeding with projects that could affect the state’s irrigation and drinking water needs.

He said projects being taken up by Karnataka upstream of the Rajolibanda Diversion Scheme (RDS) would significantly reduce water flows into Telangana, affecting irrigation under the scheme and putting thousands of farmers at risk.

Stating that the people of Palamuru had fought for water rights for decades, Harish said they would not remain silent if their interests were compromised. Protecting every drop of water in Telangana was the State government’s responsibility, he added.

Alleging that the Congress government had failed to safeguard Telangana’s water interests, he said it remained silent while Karnataka moved ahead with projects on the Tungabhadra river.

The BRS leader also sought clarity on whether Telangana had indirectly agreed to Karnataka’s proposed Kundi Lift Irrigation Scheme and the Chikkalaparvi and Chikkalamanchi bridge-cum-barrages, and whether approval for the proposed Kodangal Lift Irrigation Scheme had come.

Hotelier murdered in Odisha's Puri, one of four accused held after police shootout

PURI.(Agency)

A 25-year-old hotelier was allegedly murdered by four persons after a dispute over customer service in Baliapanda area of Puri on Wednesday.

The deceased was identified as Pabitra Nayak (25). He had taken a hotel on lease on Dhableswar road in the Baliapanda area. Hours after the crime, police nabbed the prime accused, Chandan Pallar (35), after shooting him in the legs near Shankarpur.

Police said Pabitra had contracted some of his rooms to an OYO-affiliated operation managed by Chandan. On the day, he reportedly visited the hotel over complaints regarding customer service. An argument ensued between him and Chandan. During the altercation, Pabitra informed the police while Chandan reportedly contacted his brother Chinmay. Before police could reach the spot, Chinmay arrived at the hotel along with two associates. The four accused allegedly murdered Pabitra with a sharp weapon and fled the scene.

Subsequently, police launched a chase and intercepted the suspects’ vehicle near Shankarpur. During the operation, Chandan reportedly attacked the cops. In response, police opened fire and injured him in the legs before taking him into custody. Chandan was later admitted to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack for treatment. Police said a murder case has been registered and Pabitra’s body sent to Puri district headquarters hospital (DHH) for postmortem. Puri SP Prateek Singh said efforts are underway to apprehend the remaining accused.

Lucknow blaze brings back memories of deadly 2019 Takshashila fire, Surat steps up safety checks

Surat.(Agency)

Seven years after a fire at a coaching centre operating in a shopping complex in Surat claimed 22 lives, the fire department has launched a drive to inspect schools and coaching centres in the textile hub following a similar tragedy at a coaching centre in Lucknow, where 15 people were killed on Monday.

Over 60 premises were inspected on Wednesday and notices were issued to educational institutions for failing to comply with fire safety rules.

On May 24, 2019, 22 students died of suffocation, burns or from jumping from the coaching centre after a fire broke out in the four-floor Takshashila Arcade in Sarthana area.

Textile businessman Dinesh Kevadiya lost his 17-year-old daughter, Yashvi, who was training in fine arts, in the tragedy. In December last year, Kevadiya filed a PIL in the Supreme Court seeking the Centre, National Disaster Management Authority, the



ministries of home affairs, Health and Family Welfare, Road Transport and Highways, Housing and Urban Affairs, and Power to be made parties praying for directions to prevent fire accidents and road accidents across the country, where a daily lot of innocent people lose their lives.

Speaking to The Indian Express, Kevadiya said, “The void of my daughter, my Lakshmi (a term used for daughters compared to the Goddess of wealth) will not be filled.

After her birth, my struggles ended and I made progress in my work, and later I started a

textile business.”

He added, “In the PIL with the Supreme Court, I represented myself in Hindi. I told the court that, day by day, road accidents and fire incidents take place across the country, and innocent people die.

After every such tragedy, a complaint will be filed and some low-ranking officials will be arrested and they too will be out on bail during the case proceedings. No higher authority will be made responsible for such incidents.

Somebody should take responsibility for such incidents. Something should be done, or a national policy should be framed to prevent such incidents.”

Justice delayed

The trial in the 2019 fire tragedy case is still underway and of the total 14 arrested accused including builders, occupants, officials of fire department, Surat Municipal Corporation and Dakshin Gujarat Vij Company Limited officials, 13 are out on bail while one, an engineer, has died.

Bullet train-linked transmission line: As MSETCL seeks nod to fell 847 mangroves, Bombay HC raises replantation concerns

Earlier, in December, 2022, the Bombay HC had allowed plea by National High Speed Rail Corporation (NHSRCL) in "public interest," for the felling of 21,997 mangrove trees in Mumbai, Palghar and Thane.

Mumbai. (Agency)

Hearing pleas by Maharashtra State Electricity Transmission Co. Ltd (MSETCL) seeking felling of 847 mangrove trees for a 132 KV transmission line from Dahanu to Ambesarai for the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project, the Bombay High Court on Wednesday orally remarked that the problem is about replanting of the trees, as the authorities, after construction of the project, do not turn around and check if the replanted trees are alive.

The petitioner MahaTransco, however, assured the Court of compliance with the requirements after the HC’s clearance and sought urgent disposal, stating that the inauguration by the Prime Minister is scheduled for October and the transmission line is required to be laid prior to it.



A bench of Acting Chief Justice Ravindra V Ghuge and Justice Gautam A Ankhad was hearing a plea by MahaTransco argued by advocate Amogh Singh seeking permission for diversion of at least 3.35 hectares of forest land containing 1.9656 hectares of mangrove forest land in its favour under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, for cutting nearly 847 mangrove trees within the construction zone in Dahanu Taluka of

Palghar district. The court was informed that of the 13.06 kilometres of the proposed line, certain segments were to traverse through forest lands in Dahanu Taluka. The plea claimed that while finalising the route for the proposed transmission line, MSETCL conducted a detailed survey to examine three alternative alignments. It added that the selection of the final alignment was made after “careful consideration, with a view to minimise impact on forest land” and “the alignment has been deliberately chosen to avoid dense forest patches, water bodies, habitations, archaeological or religious sites, and ecologically sensitive areas.”

“The forest land sought to be diverted constitutes the barest minimum required for the project and is interspersed within largely non-forest cultivated lands,” the plea claimed.

Gujarat government cuts tax rate on liquor served in GIFT city

The VAT rate on liquor served on designated premises revised to 25% from 65%, special fee of Rs 240/30 ml scrapped

Ahmedabad. (Agency)

A DAY after the state government slashed the Value Added Tax (VAT) on alcohol served in the Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City) in Gandhinagar, prices of a small peg (30 ml) fell by a range of 25-35 per cent (%) as the new rates kicked in on Wednesday.

A small peg served in the wine and dine area of GIFT City, priced at Rs 1,180 for the menu price of Rs 475, will now be available at nearly half the price – Rs 594.

The Gujarat finance department, through a notification issued June 23, revised the VAT for sale of alcohol within GIFT City. While the VAT has been reduced from 65% to 25%, officials said a “special fee” of Rs

240 on every 30 ml serving has also been abolished.

This is the second such relaxation as around six months ago, the state government lifted restrictions to



allow drinking anywhere in the hotels and restaurant premises inside GIFT City and allow visitors without liquor permits into the wine and dine areas. The government also raised the per employee guest permit

allowance from five to 25, in a notification issued in December last year, just before Christmas.

The new notification states that VAT has been reduced to “the extent to which the amount of tax exceeds 25 paise in the rupee.”

It adds that the “exemption is applicable to the foreign liquor served to the consumer for consumption in the approved area of wine and dine facility within the area of GIFT City Gandhinagar.”

One of the wine and dine areas at GIFT City swiftly announced the new prices on its bar menu, with the drop in rates ranging from Rs 213 to 156 for 30 ml serving to Rs 3,028 to Rs 1,994. The VAT was calculated both on the menu and the social fee thus hiking the price offered at the wine and dine facilities in GIFT City.

Kolkata warehouse collapse: Structural engineer among 5 arrested, SIT formed

Kolkata.(Agency)

The Kolkata police said Thursday they have arrested five people, including a structural engineer and a site supervisor, in connection with the Taratala warehouse collapse that left eight labourers dead, while transferring the case to the Detective Department and constituting a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe alleged construction flaws.

The police lodged a suo motu FIR under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), including those related to culpable homicide, attempt to commit culpable homicide, in connection with the Taratala warehouse collapse.

“We have so far arrested Gulzar Hussain, supervisor of Ayan Traders; Kamal Samanto, an iron structure fabricator; Sambhunath Behera, the lessee of the land; Dibakar Bhandari, a labour supplier and Trimex contractor; and Abdul Hamid, who allegedly acted as a broker for obtaining sanction plans from the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC),” a senior Kolkata police officer told The Indian Express. The first four were named in the FIR registered at the Taratala Police Station.

Rescue operations continue

An under-construction warehouse on P2 Transport Depot Road in Kolkata’s Taratala area collapsed around 12.05 pm on Wednesday, trapping several labourers under the debris. As of late Wednesday, more than people had been rescued from the debris. Of them, eight were declared “brought dead” at the hospital, while 20 sustained injuries.

7,000-sq-ft home, business family: Who is Lucknow fire accused Virendra Shukla?

Lucknow.(Agency)

In the densely populated Madheganj area of Lucknow stands the sprawling residence of businessman Virendra Prasad Shukla (62), the co-owner of the Aliganj building where a devastating fire claimed 15 lives on Monday.

Located about 800 metres from the main road in Madheganj, Shukla’s two-storey residence is among the largest properties in the neighbourhood. When The Indian Express visited on Wednesday, the main gate was found locked. The house, spread over nearly 7,000 square feet, has multiple entrances.

Several residents said they had not seen any members of the family since Shukla was taken into custody on Monday evening, and appeared reluctant to speak publicly about Shukla or his family.

“We are ordinary people. They are wealthy and beyond our reach. We know very little about them,” said Ravindra Kumar, a local grocery shop owner. “They usually travel by cars and go straight inside the house. It is rare to see family members standing outside or interacting with people in the neighbourhood,” he added.

Wealthy business family

Police said preliminary inquiries suggest that Virendra belongs to a prominent business family with interests in education and real estate. The family runs an educational institution in Lucknow that offers courses in engineering, management, pharmacy and polytechnic studies.

Police said members of the younger generation in the family have pursued



careers in fields such as medicine, education and law. Police have also learned that the family owns multiple properties, some of which are rented out. The Aliganj building which was gutted in the fire housed a pet clinic and shop on two floors and a company engaged in art production and game development on another. Police said records provided by

the Lucknow Development Authority (LDA) show the land on which the building stands is jointly owned by Virendra and his brother, Surendra Shukla.

“We were informed by the LDA today that the building is jointly owned by Virendra and Surendra Shukla. Efforts are underway to locate Surendra as part of the investigation,” said Dhruv Kumar, Station House Officer of Aliganj police station. Police have sought reports from the District Crime Record Bureau (DCRB) regarding Virendra and Surendra to determine whether any of them has previous criminal record. Officials said there have been rumours linking Surendra to an earlier case but they have not been able to substantiate records to support those claims.

NEWS BOX

From accidental goalkeeper to India's best: Bichu Devi dreams of LA28 glory

New Delhi. (Agency)

Manipur may be the sixth-smallest state in India, but when it comes to hockey, it has consistently produced some of the country's finest talents. From Olympian and goalkeeping stalwart Nilkamal Pangambam to stars like Sushila Chanu, Nilkanta Sharma, Chinglensana Singh and Surajlata Devi, the state has built a rich legacy in the sport.

INDIAN HOCKEY: FULL COVERAGE

Now, Bichu Devi is carrying that tradition forward, emerging as one of the brightest stars in Indian hockey and rapidly establishing herself as one of the country's most dependable goalkeepers. Since making her India debut in 2022, the 25-year-old has enjoyed a meteoric rise. In a short span, she has gone from being a promising prospect to a key member of the national setup, winning a bronze medal at the Asian Games in Hangzhou and playing a pivotal role in SG Pipers' Women's Hockey India League triumph, where her shootout heroics in the final proved decisive. Her growth was evident once again at the FIH Women's Nations Cup in New Zealand, where India



lifted the title. Sharing duties with veteran Savita Punia, Bichu featured in all five matches as India conceded only six goals throughout the tournament and kept clean sheets in both the semi-final and final. The remarkable rise also earned her individual recognition. Bichu beat Krishan Pathak, Princedeep Singh and Suraj Karkera to claim the Baljit Singh Award for Goalkeeper of the Year 2025, underlining her status as one of India's leading goalkeepers at the senior level.

Yet none of this was supposed to happen.

Before the medals, the awards and the national team call-ups, Bichu had a completely different dream. Speaking to India Today, Bichu smiled as she looked back at a twist of fate that changed the course of her life forever. She never wanted to be a hockey player. Her dream was to become a footballer. "Whenever people ask me this question, I laugh because my story is a little different. I came into hockey by mistake."

"Actually, I wanted to play football. Since childhood, I used to play football with my brothers. I went to give football trials at SAI, but by the time I got there, the selections were over and the vacancies were full.

Neymar's son mistaken for pitch invader, Brazil star steps in to clear confusion

New Delhi. (Agency)

Brazil's commanding 3-0 victory over Scotland at Miami Stadium concluded with an emotional scene off the ball, as a tearful Neymar had to personally intervene when stadium stewards mistook his own son for a pitch invader. The poignant moment unfolded shortly after the final whistle of the FIFA World Cup Group C fixture. For Neymar, the evening was already charged with immense personal significance, marking his official return to the Selecao for the first time since sustaining a devastating anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injury in October 2023. After celebrating the crucial victory on the pitch with his teammates, the 34-year-old superstar walked over to one of the stadium enclosures where his 14-year-old son, Davi Lucca, had been cheering him on. Spotting his father approaching the touchline, Davi eagerly tried to get down from the stands to greet him. However, seeing a young fan attempting to cross the perimeter and enter the field of play without authorisation, two alert stadium security guards immediately intercepted the



teenager. Mistaking him for an over-zealous pitch invader, the guards stopped him in his tracks to prevent him from reaching the grass. Realising the immediate misunderstanding, Neymar quickly stepped in to clear the confusion. The Brazilian forward frantically signalled to the stewards, who promptly stepped back once they realised the boy's identity. What followed was a deeply emotional embrace between father and son on the sidelines. Visibly overwhelmed by the gravity of his long, gruelling 20-month journey back to the international stage, Neymar broke down in tears during the warm hug, capping off a night that clearly meant far more to him than just three points.

FIFA World Cup: Battling against the odds, South Africa achieve historic knockout qualification

➡ **South Africa scripted history at the FIFA World Cup after beating South Korea in their final group-stage match to qualify for the knockout rounds for the first time. Thapelo Maseko scored the decisive goal in the second half as Hugo Broos' side overcame a difficult start to the tournament.**

New Delhi. (Agency)

10 days before their first FIFA World Cup match against Mexico, South Africa did not know if they would even travel to the tournament. Administrative failures and visa delays had indefinitely grounded the team, sending their preparations into a spiral even before they reached the shores of North America. Once they finally arrived to the World Cup, the lack of preparation showed when South Africa played the tournament opener against Mexico. Two of their players were shown red cards - first Sphephelo Sithole

for a last-man challenge, and then Themba Zwane for striking a Mexican player in the face. The offence was deemed serious enough for FIFA to hand Zwane a three-match ban. In the very first game itself, South Africa's campaign seemed to be crashing down.

Instead of letting that result dictate their fate, Bafana Bafana, known for their fighting spirit, stood up and took stock of the situation. They put in two solid performances against Czechia and South Korea to achieve their first-ever qualification to the knockout stage of the FIFA World Cup. South Africa were not given much of a chance ahead of the tournament. Fair enough, many would say, given that they had not even qualified for the last three editions. But Hugo Broos' South Africa could not care less.

They dug deep against Czechia and earned a 1-1 draw, keeping their hopes of qualification alive. Bafana Bafana then showed their flair on Thursday, June 25, in their final group-stage game. Knowing that a win would send them into history, South Africa repeatedly



attacked down the right flank and looked threatening every time they moved forward. They were forced to survive a really energetic start from South Korea, who looked the more likely side to score early. Put under pressure, the Rainbow Nation slowed the game down in midfield, picked the pockets of opposition attackers, and launched heavy counter-attacks. After missing a host of chances, the breakthrough finally came in the 63rd minute when Thapelo Maseko dribbled into the box and calmly slotted the ball through the legs of

the Korean defender. South Africa finished with 14 shots, four on target, and gradually took control after the early pressure. Yaya Sithole, sent off in the opening game, returned to put in a really strong performance against Son Heung-min's side. South Africa reverted to a six-man defensive line in the closing minutes of the game, heading and clearing everything that South Korea threw into the box through their wing-backs. South Korea's star Son Heung-min came on at half-time but barely influenced the attack.

His short passing sequences lacked connection with the players around him, as Korea tried to dominate through pace on the wings and quick combinations through midfield. But in doing so, errors crept into their midfield structure, and they eventually lost control of the match. In the second half especially, South Korea showed a lack of urgency - something that was criticised by the commentators on the broadcast. With the defeat, Korea's fate now rests in the hands of other teams.

Food poisoning or what? Korean media tear into coach after shock World Cup defeat

New Delhi. (Agency)

South Korea manager Hong Myung-bo was torn apart by a hostile press after his side's 0-1 loss to South Africa on Thursday. South Korea failed to show urgency in their final group-stage game and now find themselves on the brink of an early exit from the tournament. It turned into a difficult watch for the large number of fans attending the game as South Korea failed to show the urgency and intent required to win. The Korean media arrived at the post-match press conference in a bad mood and wasted little time in questioning Hong.

PRESS ATTACKS KOREA COACH

One reporter even took a sarcastic swipe at the team management, asking whether the squad had suffered food poisoning because otherwise the performance made little sense. Reports suggest that South Korea's head coach does not enjoy overwhelming support back home, especially with the side struggling to produce results against stronger teams in recent years. Hong took the question calmly and insisted there were no external reasons behind the performance.

"The match content was not good, but there was absolutely no such issue within the team. I do not



want to attribute the reason to such things," he said. "It is true that we played our worst match among the three World Cup games," he added. WHY DID SON HEUNG-MIN NOT PLAY FULL GAME?

What did not sit well with the Korean press was that their footballing hero Son Heung-min was benched for the opening half. Easily the biggest star in the side, Son came on as a substitute in the second half but had little impact on the game.

Hong explained that the decision was tactical and aimed at preserving Son's energy so he could influence the match later. "We thought that when the opponents had a lot of energy it would be better to use Son later in the game, when they started losing energy and there was more space. We wanted to use him when they were weaker," Hong said.

Manika Batra's Asian Games doors remain firmly shut: Table tennis federation source

The Table Tennis Federation of India have shut the doors on Manika Batra's selection to the main squad for the Asian Games. TTFI sources claim that due process was followed during the selection process.

New Delhi. (Agency)

Manika Batra's hopes of making India's Asian Games squad remain firmly shut after the Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI) defended its selection process and made it clear that her omission was in line with the existing criteria. Responding to the multiple Commonwealth Games gold medallist's demand for clarification over her exclusion, TTFI stated on Wednesday that the selection committee had duly considered her candidature but selected the final squad strictly on the basis of the federation's policy. The federation maintained that the decision was not influenced by any single factor and instead came after a broader assessment of performances and team requirements. According to TTFI's selection



framework, 50 per cent weightage is given to national rankings, 40 per cent to international rankings, while selectors retain 10 per cent discretionary power.

WHY WAS MANIKA BATRA NOT SELECTED?

Manika, currently ranked World No. 51, missed out largely because she did not compete in domestic events and therefore did not carry a national ranking into the selection process. An automatic place would have been available only if she had been inside the top 50 of the ITTF rankings at the

time the squad was finalised on June 9.

A federation source said the final decision was taken after considering national performances, international results, comparative assessment of players, team balance, medal prospects and strategic suitability. Her candidature was duly considered. The decision was taken bona fide, in accordance with the governing policy and within the timelines set by the IOA," the source said. The source further revealed that while the first four women's spots were selected unanimously, voting was conducted for the fifth and final place in the squad. Sutirtha Mukherjee emerged as the preferred choice after receiving eight votes. Manika was subsequently placed among the reserves alongside Swastika Ghosh. The clarification comes days after Manika publicly questioned the transparency of the selection process and warned that she could explore legal options if she did not receive a satisfactory explanation from the federation. India's final entries for the Asian Games had to be submitted to the Indian Olympic Association by June 10.

FIFA World Cup legend Guillermo Ochoa gets storybook ending, retires at the Azteca

New Delhi. (Agency)

One of the most recognisable faces of the FIFA World Cup in recent years, Guillermo Ochoa got the storybook ending he had always dreamed of. Playing in front of an 80,000-strong Azteca crowd, Ochoa bid farewell to the fans in Mexico's final group-stage game of the tournament. Curly-haired and standing shorter than most elite goalkeepers in world football, Ochoa has, over the years, become a cult figure among fans because of his ageless heroics on football's biggest stage every four years. The 40-year-old could not have wished for a better send-off, coming on for the final 14 minutes of Mexico's 3-0 rout of Czechia, a result that sent the side into the Round of 32. The Azteca rose to its feet when the substitution was announced, and Ochoa soaked in every bit of the acclaim from the home supporters. The venue meant a lot to the legendary goalkeeper, who made his senior

debut for Club America at the same stadium back in 2004. Making his sixth and final World Cup appearance, Ochoa preserved the



clean sheet started by Raul Rangel as Mexico scored three times to finish top of the group.

"My first game, Azteca. My last game, Azteca. It's been a beautiful final chapter of my career," he told Mexican TV. Mexico will play again at the Azteca in the Round of 32, but barring a goalkeeping emergency, Ochoa

is unlikely to feature. The veteran keeper, instantly recognisable by his curls, appeared content with his role. Roared on by a crowd dressed in green, white and red, Mexico did not overwhelm the Czechs but remained worthy winners thanks to goals from Mateo Chavez, Julian Quinones and Alvaro Fidalgo. The entire stadium saluted Ochoa at the final whistle - a fitting show of respect for a player whose flying saves and one-man acts of defiance became part of Mexican football folklore. "He's an example for all of us. He's the first one in the gym and the last one to leave," left-back Chavez said after the game.

"This is the icing on the cake of a great career. He's an idol for us, he's helped guide the group with his experience, and I'm very happy for him." For supporters, everything followed the ideal script: a home World Cup, a perfect group-stage campaign, and a legend walking away with chants of his name ringing in his ears.

Meet Srabani Nanda: The 35-year-old sprinter who refuses to slow down

At 35, veteran Odisha sprinter Srabani Nanda is redefining longevity in Indian athletics, anchoring the national relay team to fresh continental success in China while championing a fierce, lifelong commitment to clean sport.

New Delhi. (Agency)

In a sport where a single decade can exhaust the human body, 35-year-old sprinter Srabani Nanda is currently redefining the rules of athletic longevity. Fresh off anchoring the Indian women's 4x100m relay team to a spectacular Gold medal finish at the Asian

Relay Championships in China, Nanda's career is stretching past its 24th year. The Indian quartet - comprising Nanda, SS Sneha, Sudeshna Shivankar, and Tamanna - clocked a season-best 43.85 seconds to clinch the top spot, turning them into fierce medal contenders for the upcoming Asian Games in Japan. But for Nanda, the true victory isn't just measured in gold or split seconds; it is measured in the purity of her journey. In an era where Indian athletics is frequently forced to battle the shadow of doping scandals, Nanda stands out as a beacon of clean sport. Speaking to the Press Trust of India, the veteran track athlete revealed that keeping her body free of any prohibited substances is her ultimate source of strength. "I will definitely say that it is very important to stay clean and that gives a lot of confidence. And you can focus on your competition," Nanda told. "We must change the mindset from 'we can't do without drugs' to 'we can do without drugs'. We have to make sure that we keep our body healthy and we should not play with our body. And naturally,



the prohibited drugs would even make your body deteriorate in the long run." Hailing from Tikabali in Odisha's Kandhamal district, Nanda's journey began in 2002 when she joined the Government Sports Hostel. The daughter of a local collectorate clerk and a school headmistress, her talent quickly propelled her into the international arena. By 2007, she was representing India at the World Youth Championships in Ostrava.

Over nearly two and a half decades, she has

quietly built a stunning resume. She secured a Commonwealth Games bronze in 2010, an individual Asian Championship 200m bronze in 2015, and standard relay medals including a silver in 2025. She even reached the pinnacle of sport, competing in the 200m sprint at the 2016 Rio Olympics. Yet, staying at the top for over 20 years requires a punishing physical toll. Nanda admits that the temptation to walk away has knocked on her door more than once. "There were so many times I thought of it. In training, it is so hard. Sometimes I vomit in the training but have to still get up and do the next repetition," she said. "I get so tired, so frustrated when at times I don't achieve the goal... but I have to hold myself up and think for the coming days."

To sustain her world-class speed, Nanda, who is currently employed by the Odisha Hydro Power Corporation, has traveled the globe to find inspiration. She has trained in South Africa and Australia, and during the heights of the 2020 pandemic, she relocated to Jamaica.

Alia Bhatt

Cheers As Indian Women's Hockey Team Wins Nations Cup: 'Keep Reaching For The Stars'

Alia Bhatt congratulated the Indian women's hockey team as they won the Nations cup. On Tuesday, the Bollywood actress took to the stories section of her Instagram handle shared a post which celebrated women's hockey team's big win. Alia also penned down a short note and sent wishes to the team. "Congratulations champions! Go strong and keep reaching for the stars. @hockeyindia," she wrote. Check out the screengrab of her Instagram story here: **About Indian Women's Hockey Team's Big Win**

The Indian women's hockey team was crowned champion of the FIH Hockey Women's Nations Cup New Zealand 2025-26 after defeating the hosts 2-0 in the final at Auckland on Sunday, June 21. Navneet Kaur gave India the early lead before Sunelita Toppo doubled India's advantage. The team produced a stellar defensive display to protect their lead and win the title, which also marked their return to the FIH Hockey Women's Pro League next season. This is India's second Nations Cup title, having won the inaugural edition of the tournament in 2022.



Alia Bhatt's Next Movie: Alpha

Alia Bhatt is currently gearing up for the release of her next movie, Alpha. The film is touted as the first female-led instalment in the YRF Spy Universe, which includes films like Ek Tha Tiger, Tiger Zinda Hai, War, Pathaan, Tiger 3 and War 2. Alpha, also starring Sharvati, Bobby Deol and Anil Kapoor, is directed by Shiv Rawail.

Recently, Alia Bhatt attended the News18 India Amrit Ratna Samman when she spoke about working with Bobby Deol and said, "I had the best time working with him because he's like a little student in this school of cinema, even today, after so many years. And we are all enjoying this new Bobby Deol with, you know, he's giving performance after performance. I hear he's fabulous in Bander. He was outstanding in Animal. And I think he's done something very special in Alpha," she added.

Ramayana's Lakshman Ravie Dubey Opens Up About The Epic Film: 'We Are Making It With Faith'



Actor Ravie Dubey has asked audiences to trust the process behind Nitesh Tiwari's Ramayana. The actor, who plays Lakshman in the much-awaited film, said the team is approaching the project with faith and a strong sense of responsibility as work continues on one of Indian cinema's biggest productions.

Speaking at the Himanshu Roy Legacy Awards 2026, Ravie shared his thoughts on the film and the expectations surrounding it. Without revealing much about his preparation, he stressed the importance of doing justice to a story that holds a special place in India's cultural history.

Ravie Dubey Opens Up About Ramayana

Talking about his experience on the film, Ravie said, "Bharat aur Ramyana ek dusre se alag nahi hai..they are one. As far as preparation is concerned, we will discuss that later. Yeh hamara ithihaas hai darohar hai..and the more we can work on it, the more we will try to do justice to it within our abilities. It has been an amazing experience."

He also teased fans about what they can expect from the film. "We are making the film with faith. You wait with faith."

Ravie Dubey On Playing Laxman In Ramayana

Calling the role, the greatest honour of his life, the actor wrote on his Instagram not long back, "हरि अनन्त हरि कथा अनन्ता ... It's the greatest honour of my life to be part of a story that has shaped generations. Welcome to the world of Namit Malhotra's Ramayana, the immortal story of Rama vs Ravana. Grateful to walk this path and to share it with all of you. Let's celebrate this moment and together, step into the @worldoframayana. Our Truth. Our History."

All About Nitesh Tiwari's Ramayana

Directed by Nitesh Tiwari and produced by Namit Malhotra, Ramayana is planned as a two-part film series based on the ancient Indian epic. The story follows Rama, believed to be an avatar of Lord Vishnu, and traces his journey from Ayodhya to exile and his battle against Ravana.

'Slowly Finding My Way Back': Alka Yagnik Reflects On 'Difficult' Health Journey After Receiving Padma Bhushan



Playback singer Alka Yagnik has opened up about her health struggles while expressing gratitude after receiving the Padma Bhushan for her contribution to music. On June 23, she received the honour from President Droupadi Murmu. A video of the 60-year-old singer being assisted onto the stage to receive the honour led many fans to express concern about her health. Now, in her note, Alka Yagnik revealed that she had largely stayed away from the spotlight over the past two years due to health challenges. The singer said she had avoided public appearances, however, she is slowly finding her way back and wanted to be there to accept the honor.

Alka Yagnik Shares Emotional Note After Receiving Padma Bhushan

In her note, Alka Yagnik opened up about her health struggles since the last two years. "For the last two years, I have stayed away from the spotlight, from public appearances, and from sharing much of my journey. Many of you knew I am going through difficult health and through it all, your love, prayers, messages, and unwavering support have stayed with me every step of the way," she wrote.

"Today, as I stepped out to receive one of the highest civilian honours in the country – the distinguished Padma Bhushan, I did so with a heart full of gratitude. This honour is deeply humbling, and while my name may be on it, it belongs just as much to every listener who welcomed my voice into their lives, carried my songs through generations, and stood by me through both the highs and the challenges," she further added.

Alka Yagnik Says She Wanted To Be There Despite Health Challenges

Having stayed away from the spotlight, she said she wanted to be there to receive the honour as she begins to slowly find her way back. "This moment feels especially meaningful because it marks not just a recognition of my work, but a reminder of the strength that comes from love, hope, and resilience. I am slowly finding my way back, and I wanted to be here today – not only for myself, but for each and every one of you who have been a part of this journey," she wrote.

Sharvati Wagh

Reveals Main Vaapas Aaunga Co-Star Vedang Raina And Rani Mukerji Have THIS Similarity

Sharvati made her Bollywood debut in Rani Mukerji and Saif Ali Khan starrer Bunt Aur Babli 2. She is now seen in Imtiaz Ali's Main Vaapas Aaunga with Vedang Raina, Diljit Dosanjh and Naseeruddin Shah. In a recent chat, she reflected on how she gets inspired when working with passionate actors. She also opened up about her experience of shooting Main Vaapas Aaunga.

Sharvati said, as quoted by Hindustan Times, "Anybody who is doing this, whichever generation they come from, people are so passionate about films, and I get inspired by that. Rani ma'am inspires you to want to do better every day because she is a powerhouse, and the same applies for even Vedang for that matter..."

The actress explained, "...Because even he's so passionate about what he wants to do. The most common thing that I've seen in everybody is that desire and fire to wanting to make it just amazing." Sharvati also opened up about what it was like to live in the world of 1940's India while filming Main Vaapas Aaunga.

Sharvati said, "It was beautiful and surreal. Even while we were shooting, ek sukoon tha.

There is something just very pure about that time. Whatever connections that you build, or even when we were playing our parts as Jiya and Keenu (played by Vedang Raina), I remember that whenever we did our scenes, it felt like the time had stopped and everything was still, when it wasn't, and there were so many people on set."

"I can count on my hand the times when we



were performing, and I felt like the time just stopped and we weren't really saying anything. We weren't even having conversations. They were just moments between two people, and it's really special to be able to feel something like that in that era. We were dressed up like that, the houses were like that. So, somewhere in our minds, even we were in that space," she said.

NEWS BOX

US promises to protect Gulf states' interests in Iran talks

KUWAIT. (Agency)

Secretary of State Marco Rubio promised the United States' Gulf allies that Washington would protect their interests as it seeks to hammer out a final settlement of the Middle East war in talks with Iran.

Rubio was on a regional tour to reassure the Gulf states, which were targeted by Tehran's missiles and drones during the conflict and saw their crucial oil and gas shipments effectively cut off by an Iranian blockade of the Strait of Hormuz. Tehran has emerged emboldened from the war, vowing not to relinquish control of the vital waterway and going so far as to call its initial deal with Washington to stop the fighting "a declaration of America's defeat".

During a visit to Kuwait City, Rubio said Washington would be on the same page as Gulf states as it wrangles with Iran over a permanent settlement to the conflict.

"We're going to be completely aligned with our partners in the Gulf. That's why we're meeting with all of them tomorrow," he said, adding the US would "engage them on conversations about every decision that's made with regards to this negotiation".

Rubio is due to attend a Gulf Cooperation Council meeting in Bahrain on Thursday after sitting down with the leaders of Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates on Wednesday. The initial US-Iran deal, which sets out a 60-day negotiating process aimed at reaching a long-term agreement, failed to address Gulf nations' long-standing concerns about Iran's missile programme and regional proxies. But Rubio insisted Washington was "not going to do anything that undermines the security of our allies". Tehran, however, has already portrayed the deal as a victory. Its top negotiator Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said on Wednesday that the agreement, reached with the help of Pakistani mediation, was "the result of the resistance and authority of the brave Iranian nation".

Jaishankar urges closer India-South Korea ties in defence and ship-building

World (Agency)

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday said India and South Korea must work more closely in areas such as ship-building, health, infrastructure and defence, as he underlined the need to deepen ties between the two countries.

He also called for greater capacity and opportunities for the Global South, saying this would create new drivers of global growth. Without naming any country, he said the interests of a few nations were being openly prioritised, while the costs to many were receiving less attention. Jaishankar, who is in South Korea on a two-day visit after travelling to Mongolia, was speaking at the Jeju Forum for Peace and Prosperity 2026. He stressed the importance of stronger economic and technology partnerships, political and strategic cooperation, and closer people-to-people ties between New Delhi and Seoul. "India and the Republic of Korea must cooperate more closely," he said. "We have complementarities in fields like ship-building, digital, health, infrastructure or defence just waiting to be exploited." He said influential nations must build "new understandings and closer relationships" to stabilise the global order and deal with issues through agenda-specific cooperation. "The Global South should be provided greater capacity and opportunities. This would also create new factors of global growth," he said. "As the interests of a few are openly prioritised, the costs to the many are less considered. This can only be countered by cooperation on more issues with greater players. At the end of the day, we will see whether multi-polarity really delivers."

Chinese Man Caught Breeding 300 Pythons In Flat After Power Bill Shock

world. (Agency)

A man in eastern China who lived alone has been jailed after his flat's unusually high electricity usage exposed a secret reptile breeding operation. According to a report by the South China Morning Post, police raided the property in Taizhou, Zhejiang province, and discovered 309 pythons packed into plastic boxes stacked high across the rooms.

The investigation originally began when an elderly resident found a large, exotic snake at the foot of a local mountain. Because pythons are not native to the area and are a protected species under Chinese law, authorities immediately suspected an illegal breeder was operating nearby. A reptile expert gave detectives a critical breakthrough by explaining that pythons require constant warmth and high humidity to survive. As detailed by the South China Morning Post, this meant the breeder's flat would be consuming vast amounts of electricity to keep the climate between 20 and 30 degrees Celsius. Acting on this tip, police screened local electricity bills and quickly identified a resident nicknamed Guo as their prime suspect. Guo was unmarried, unemployed, and had compressed all his personal furniture into a single bedroom. He used the rest of his flat, including the remaining two bedrooms and the living room, entirely for his massive snake collection.

Further investigations revealed that Guo and an accomplice had bought four pythons in 2014 and had since bred hundreds of them to sell online. Guo, who referred to himself as a creature creator, told officers he felt no fear towards the reptiles and loved engineering different colours. A local court has now sentenced Guo and two accomplices to prison. In an article by the South China Morning Post, it was revealed that the wider police operation successfully seized a total of 436 pythons worth an estimated 30 million yuan, which is approximately 3.3 million pounds. Under Chinese criminal law, illegally breeding or selling these protected animals carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison, and the rescued snakes have now been safely moved to a local zoo.

Back-to-back powerful earthquakes slam Venezuela, collapsing buildings in the capital of Caracas

CARACAS. (Agency)

Back-to-back powerful earthquakes slammed Venezuela on Wednesday evening, collapsing buildings in the capital of Caracas and leaving residents shaken.

The U.S. Geological Survey said the first earthquake had a magnitude of 7.1 and its epicenter was west of the community of Morón, located along the country's Caribbean coast, about 168 kilometers (104 miles) west of Caracas. The quake had a depth of 22 kilometers. The USGS reported an even larger 7.5-magnitude earthquake just a minute later. The second quake had a depth of 10 kilometers and its epicenter was 16 kilometers (10 miles) southwest of Morón.

The quakes are among the strongest to strike Venezuela in more than a century.

The earthquakes struck shortly after 6 p.m. local time. People evacuated swaying buildings in Caracas and remained outside, many visibly shocked as they saw entire walls that had collapsed, making furniture visible from the street. Dust columns could also be seen in two neighborhoods of the capital, where restaurants and other businesses are typically busy. People



remained on the streets after sunset. Some sat on the ground hugging their pets as dust gathered around them. "It started off gently and then gradually grew, and in the end, we all had to leave our houses, go outside and gather together," Caracas resident Hector Ricci said. Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello said the quake could be felt in several states. The Altamira neighborhood in Caracas had "alarming situations" with

collapsed homes and buildings, he said, suggesting people were injured in the earthquake and asking motorists to give way to ambulances and other emergency vehicles. "We understand that some people may be desperate, but we are acting according to protocols to activate aid and rescue efforts to help those who need it most," Cabello said on state television. "Be very careful with children and the elderly;

call each other and check that no one has been harmed." He also urged people to remain outside as aftershocks could further damage some structures.

"The building really shook from side to side. Unreal. The force was incredibly strong," Caracas resident Roberto Gamas said. "We were walking and it was tossing us around. Everything in the apartment fell. Well, thank God we were able to get out."

The U.S. Pacific Tsunami Warning Center issued a tsunami alert for Virgin Islands. Authorities in the Dominican Republic also issued one for the island. Another alert for Puerto Rico was quickly lifted.

Strong earthquakes are unusual in Venezuela.

While the country sits near multiple fault lines, its position straddling the South American and Caribbean plates makes earthquakes much less common than in other parts of Latin America. Along the Pacific coast — in Mexico and Chile, for example — earthquakes are frequent; the two countries sit along the seismically active tectonic belt known as the "Pacific Ring of Fire," responsible for 90% of earthquakes, according to the USGS.

As temperatures soar, Paris court set to rule on landmark climate change case

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (Agency)

A day after France hit record high temperatures, a court in Paris is set to rule Thursday on a landmark climate change case that could see energy giant TotalEnergies forced to reduce its oil and gas production. The lawsuit, brought by a group of NGOs and the city of Paris, argues the French corporation is violating a 2017 law that requires companies to prevent human rights abuses and environmental risks. It is the first time that the so-called corporate duty of vigilance law is being applied to climate change. Environmental groups Notre Affaire à Tous, Sherpa, ZEA, France Nature Environnement launched the proceedings in 2020. They claim that TotalEnergies is one of the largest historical emitters of greenhouse gas and have asked the court to require the company to reduce oil production by 37 percent and gas production by 25 percent by 2030. The lawsuit also asks

for a halt to all new fossil fuel projects. The decision comes as Europe is in the midst of a brutal heatwave. Punishing



temperatures extended to the United Kingdom and Spain, where weather agencies issued red alerts — like France — about the risks of extreme heat for tens of millions of people.

The iconic Eiffel Tower and the Louvre museum have been forced to restrict visiting hours and school and transportation schedules have been interrupted across the continent. Human-caused climate

change is tied to increasingly extreme weather, and U.N. climate agency projections say the next five years are likely to shatter more heat records.

Europe is the world's fastest-warming continent, with temperatures increasing twice as fast as the global average since the 1980s, according to the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service. Over the last four years, more than 200,000 people across Europe died from heat-related causes, and most of those deaths were preventable, the World Health Organization's Europe office said this month.

The decision will be the latest in a series of rulings in climate change cases. Last year, the United Nations' top court, the International Court of Justice, said countries could be in violation of international law if they fail to take measures to protect the planet from climate change. In 2024, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that countries must better protect their people from the consequences of climate change.

In France's historic heat wave, Paris' dreamy rooftops become a heat-trapping nightmare

PARIS. (Agency)

Before the heat struck, Amelie Kenney could boast that she almost had it all: a tiny but cheap top-floor apartment in Paris, with an enviable view from its minuscule balcony of the French capital's iconic gray roofs and even, when she leans out far enough, up to the Sacré-Cœur basilica atop Montmartre. But with a historic heat wave making attic apartments like hers potentially hazardous for health, the 23-year-old recent graduate isn't feeling quite so fortunate. "It's been the worst week that we've had in this apartment," she said this week as the capital and other parts of Europe roasted. "It's just baking in the whole afternoon and it's impossible to just get a respite." Many of Paris' buildings that look so picturesque from the outside are proving to be hostile, even dangerous for health, during the unrelenting record heat that is turning both the long summer days and short sweaty nights into battles. That's particularly true for

About three-quarters of Paris rooftops use sheets of zinc as covering, producing the city's magnificent gray vistas that have long inspired artists and filmmakers.

those living directly under the roofs of Paris — who often cannot afford larger, lower-floor apartments less impacted by direct sun. Extreme heat can make them deadly. A study of a record-breaking 2003 heat wave blamed for 15,000 heat-related deaths found that living in a Paris attic room directly under the roof increased the risk of death by more than fourfold, France's public health agency said in a report last year. And researchers who studied heat-related deaths in European cities for a study published in The Lancet Planetary Health journal in 2023 found that Paris

had the highest risks of heat-related deaths out of 30 European capitals they looked at. About three-quarters of Paris rooftops use sheets of zinc as covering, producing the city's magnificent gray vistas that have long inspired artists and filmmakers. The trade of its zinc roofers is recognized as a valued cultural heritage for humanity by the U.N. cultural agency UNESCO. Zinc is weather-resistant, malleable and can be recycled.

But as a metal, it also absorbs and conducts heat. "People find the rooftops of Paris charming. There's the image of the attic room. But in reality, when you look at who lives in these apartments, it's often students paying a great deal of money for a small room," said Maider Olivier, with The Foundation for Housing for the Disadvantaged campaign group.

"Not only are they extremely exposed to heat, but it's also impossible to create cross-ventilation to get rid of the heat at night."



complete and that a "complex" probe was underway.

The New York Times has previously reported that the school was hit by a US Tomahawk cruise missile, a weapon which Iran does not possess. CNN has also reported that the US was responsible for the attack.

Despite being in the minority, House Democrats filed impeachment proceedings against Hegseth in the wake of the attack. Last week Senate Democrats threatened to block his travel funds until he submits "unredacted civilian harm investigations," including for the Minab school.

An oil tanker navigates the Strait of Hormuz despite threats from Iran's Revolutionary Guard

DUBAI. (Agency)

A Liberian oil tanker made its way out of the Strait of Hormuz on Thursday despite threats to shipping from Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard and using a new route close to Oman's shore that has been promoted by a U.N. maritime agency. The transit of the Stoic Warrior and the threats come as tensions rise between Iran and the United States over the terms of their interim accord aimed at permanently ending the Iran war. From getting ships through the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf to the future of Iran's stockpile of highly enriched uranium, the two nations are increasingly debating the terms of the deal signed last week. Through the signing of the memorandum of understanding, the U.S. and Iran agreed to a 60-day period to iron out these and other details. Until that happens — during private talks — leaders from both countries will also continue to negotiate in public, raising the risks of derailing the

shaky ceasefire in the region.

A major threat to the deal is the flareup of fighting in Lebanon between Israel and the Iranian-backed militia Hezbollah. On Wednesday, Israel launched an airstrike that killed two people in southern Lebanon, the country's state-run news agency said. It was Israel's first airstrike on Lebanon since the latest ceasefire took effect on Saturday.

Tanker sails through Strait of Hormuz

The Stoic Warrior — signaling that it planned to transit the Strait of Hormuz — took off early Thursday morning on a trip that saw it hug the coast of the United Arab Emirates and then Oman. The vessel then traveled around Oman's Musandam Peninsula fairly close to the shore, part of a route that Oman laid out alongside the International Maritime Organization, an

agency of the United Nations that oversees shipping at sea. North of the route is the Traffic Separation Scheme, the route in the



center of the strait that for decades ships moved through freely. The route is used for transport of about a fifth of all the world's oil and natural gas.

However, there has been the report of at least one mine sighted in the water after the Guard said that it mined the passage during the war that started on Feb. 28 with U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran. The threat of mines shut off the route. The naval arm of the Revolutionary Guard, apparently reacting to Oman and the IMO's route, gave an angry warning Thursday, carried by Iran's state-run IRNA news agency. "A few hours ago, without notice or coordination with the Islamic Republic of Iran, some authorities announced a new route for ship traffic in the Strait of Hormuz, which is unacceptable and completely dangerous," the Guard said. "It is hereby notified to all that the only authorized route for passing through the Strait of Hormuz is the one declared by the Islamic Republic of Iran," the Iranian force said. "Vessel traffic outside these routes is extremely dangerous and prohibited."