

## PM Modi credits 'jalwa' of India's diplomacy for beating West Asia fuel crisis: 'history will record it'

On the occasion, Modi also laid the foundation stone and inaugurated various development projects worth around Rs 1.06 lakh crore in Balotra.

Jaipur.(Agency)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Saturday heaped praises on his government for overcoming the energy crisis created due to the war in west Asia, saying that Indian diplomacy was shining during the crisis and that the way the country dealt with the crisis will be recorded in the history books. He also said that market experts were predicting prices of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) to touch Rs 2,000 but this was averted due to various steps, such as a visionary policy, which has been going on for over a decade.

"Due to war in western Asia, there is panic across the world. Every country is in distress. This war gave birth to the biggest energy crisis of the 21st century. Major nations are grappling with a fuel shortage today. But the willpower and efforts of the new India of the 21st century have prevailed over these challenges," the prime minister said in Balotra.

"During this time of war, India's friendship

with other countries proved very useful. When this crisis began, India was importing fuel and energy from 25-26 countries. Lekin sankat ke samay Bharat ki diplomacy ka jalwa dikh gaya, doosre deshon ke saath humare ache



sambhandh is sankat ki ghadi mein bahut kaam aaye (But during this crisis, the power of India's diplomacy was demonstrated; our good relations with other countries proved very useful during this crisis). During the war itself, India began importing fuel from more than 40

countries," he said.

On the occasion, Modi also laid the foundation stone and inaugurated various development projects worth around Rs 1.06 lakh crore in Balotra, with the projects spanning multiple sectors, including petrochemicals, urban transport, railways, roads, renewable energy, and power transmission. He dedicated India's first greenfield integrated refinery-cum-petrochemical complex to the nation at Pachpadra.

Developed as a joint venture between Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) and the Rajasthan government, the 9 Million Metric Tonnes Per Annum (MMTPA) Greenfield Refinery-cum-Petrochemical Complex has been established with an investment of over Rs 79,450 crore.

"A lot of rumours were spread and people were instigated and political games were played, but those whose intentions were wrong did not succeed," the PM said on the energy crisis.

## 80% work on bullet train project done, will meet rollout deadline: Vaishnaw

Bullet trains on the corridor have been engineered for speeds up to 350 km per hour, while the operational speed is expected to be 320 kmph.

New Delhi .(Agency)

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Saturday that nearly 80% of works for the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project, India's first high-speed rail corridor, has been completed. "Construction is progressing at a rapid pace. The first phase of the service, connecting Surat and Billimora, will become operational in 2027," Vaishnaw said. He added that the project would subsequently be extended in phases to Vapi, Ahmedabad and finally Mumbai, bringing India closer to realisation of a world-class rail network.

Bullet trains on the corridor have been engineered for speeds up to 350 km per hour, while the operational speed is expected to be 320 kmph. Once fully operational, the 508-kilometre corridor will reduce the journey time between Mumbai and Ahmedabad, two key economic centres, to approximately 1 hour and 58 minutes.

The project spans 348 kilometres in Gujarat, 156 km in Maharashtra and 4 km in the Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli. Being developed with Japanese Shinkansen technology and operational practices, the corridor incorporates some of the most advanced systems in traction electrification, track infrastructure and railway operations.



## 'No competition': Uttarakhand CM Dhama credits all his predecessors, including ND Tiwari, for State's progress

DEHRADUN.(Agency)

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama on Saturday said he sees 'no competition' with former chief ministers of the state, including ND Tiwari, and credited all his predecessors for guiding him.

Addressing a gathering during a programme in Rishikesh, Dhama said, "Every former CM of Uttarakhand was more experienced than him when they took office." "All the former CMs were senior to me in experience and age, and I have learnt a lot from them," Dhama said.

"There is no question of any competition," he said. The remarks came amid talk in political circles that Dhama is set to surpass the tenure record of veteran Congress leader ND Tiwari, who served as Uttarakhand CM for the longest period so far.

Dhama, however, downplayed the comparisons.

"A few people are saying that I am going to break former CM ND Tiwari's record. But I have learnt a lot from ND Tiwari ji," he said. "When ND Tiwari became chief minister of Uttarakhand, he had the experience of his entire life behind him. But when I became CM, I was a novice. So there is no question of competition." Dhama acknowledged all former CMs of the state, saying, "From Nityanand Swami to all who followed, each contributed to Uttarakhand's progress. I have learnt a lot from them." The chief minister's comments reflect an attempt to strike a conciliatory tone at a time when the BJP government is marking five years of his leadership.

## One month in, CM Shivakumar's government faces cabinet expansion test

Karnataka (Agency)

Earlier this week, Chief Minister DK Shivakumar's government completed one month in office. Although it is a short period to judge a government's performance, the change of guard seems to have brought fresh energy to the administration, which looked jaded, especially in the last few months of Siddaramaiah's tenure.

After recovering from the initial shock of the portfolio allocation, with two senior ministers sulking, the CM has managed to keep the spotlight on his government rather than on the political uncertainty in his party. Unlike his predecessor, the CM has avoided open confrontation with the Union government, and has so far refrained from joining his party leaders in the state in aggressively criticising the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

However, it is just the beginning, and the Congress government has a long way to go. Maintaining the same tempo and cohesiveness in the government is a Herculean task, especially after the expansion of the cabinet. The government presently functions with just 13 ministers out of a 34-member-capacity cabinet. Of these, only two are new faces, and the rest were part of the previous cabinet.

If the Congress leadership decides to give a majority of the remaining berths to new faces, the seniors hoping to return to the cabinet would be aggrieved. However, if most seniors are accommodated again, it would leave new aspirants disappointed. Either way, it's a tricky situation. Congress will be counting on the new government's performance for the 2028 polls, but how those left out respond will also be crucial. It would be interesting to see how the party strikes a balance between the loyalists of Shivakumar, Siddaramaiah, and AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge in the cabinet expansion.

## Kheda LCB Swings into Action After SMC Crackdown; Raid Targets Alleged Illegal Liquor Network

Mahanagar Metro Desk  
Pawan Mekan

Nadiad.Following repeated enforcement drives by the State Monitoring Cell (SMC) across Kheda district, the Local Crime Branch (LCB) has reportedly initiated action against an alleged illegal liquor network operating in and around Nadiad. The latest operation is being viewed as a significant move against the illicit liquor trade, which has long been a matter of public concern despite Gujarat's prohibition laws. According to information received, the LCB acted on specific intelligence and conducted a raid near Paras Circle in the Makhanpura area under the jurisdiction of Nadiad Town Police Station. During the operation, officers reportedly recovered a substantial quantity of foreign liquor from an alleged storage location linked to the network. The raid is said to have created panic among those allegedly involved in the illegal business. The report further alleges that the liquor trade had been operating under the alleged patronage of an administrator identified as Subhash. It is claimed that the alleged protection enabled bootleggers to continue their activities without fear of enforcement. However, these allegations have not been independently verified, and no official statement confirming or denying the claims has been issued by the



concerned authorities. According to sources quoted in the report, the alleged bootlegging network had adopted a well-planned strategy to evade law enforcement agencies. Small quantities of liquor were reportedly kept at retail selling points, while larger consignments were stored at separate secret locations. This arrangement allegedly ensured that even if enforcement agencies conducted raids at the sales points, only limited quantities would be recovered, minimizing legal consequences and financial losses for those involved. The report states that investigators eventually traced one such alleged warehouse linked to a bootlegger identified as Girish. During the operation, the LCB reportedly seized

foreign liquor worth several lakh rupees. Information further suggests that another raid was carried out at an alleged hideout in Fatehpura village under Chaklasi Police Station limits, where additional stocks of foreign liquor were also recovered. Local residents have also made serious allegations regarding the role of certain police personnel and administrative officials. The report names several individuals and claims that illegal liquor and gambling activities have continued under alleged official protection. These allegations remain unverified, and no response from the Kheda Police or the officials named had been made available at the time of publication. The developments have once again brought renewed attention to

the issue of prohibition enforcement in Gujarat. Citizens have expressed concern over the alleged existence of organized liquor networks despite regular enforcement operations by various agencies. Many residents believe that isolated raids alone may not be sufficient unless investigations also focus on identifying the financial, logistical, and administrative support systems that allegedly allow such networks to function. Observers say that if the allegations mentioned in the report are substantiated through a fair and transparent investigation, the matter could have far-reaching implications for law enforcement and administrative accountability in the district. Public confidence in policing, they argue, depends not only on large-scale seizures but also on impartial action against anyone found responsible, irrespective of their position or influence. Citizens have therefore urged the state government and senior police authorities to ensure an independent probe into the allegations, strengthen monitoring mechanisms, dismantle organized bootlegging networks at every level, and take strict legal action against all individuals found involved, so that prohibition laws are enforced in both letter and spirit and public trust in the justice system is restored.

## Traitors, join BJP and fight me: Mamata Banerjee's blistering attack on rebels

Kolkata.(Agency)

Mamata Banerjee on Saturday launched a sharp attack on the rebel faction that has split the Trinamool Congress, accusing the dissidents of working with the BJP to engineer a break in the party and daring them to join the BJP openly if they had the courage.

In a Facebook Live address, her first since the TMC entered its biggest crisis, Banerjee defended her leadership, attacked the rebels, vowed to go ahead with the party's July 21 Martyrs' Day rally despite what she called administrative hurdles, and said that while individuals may leave, 'an institution does not cease to exist'.

Her remarks came on a day she lost another long-time associate, Chandrima Bhattacharya, who resigned as the TMC's West Bengal president and from other party posts. Responding to Banerjee's

allegations, the BJP said TMC leaders were leaving because the 'cut-money culture', which it claimed had held the party together, had ended after the saffron party came to power.

"I dare the treacherous and ungrateful traitors who are abandoning the party to directly join the BJP and take me on if they have the courage to do so, instead of playing this dishonest BJP-sponsored game," Banerjee said. Attacking the dissenters, she added, "You call yourself rebels? Where was your rebellion before the elections? Where was your dissent during the last 15 years when you were MPs and MLAs on TMC tickets and operated as

ministers and in other important government positions? Why didn't you come to me then and voice your differences."

'LOYALS ARE PARTY'S GOLDMINE' Calling workers who remain loyal in 'these difficult times' the 'party's goldmine', Banerjee told the rebels, who 'have



betrayed and quit the party with their luggage and baggage', to ensure that they did not commit 'the same treachery with the people who voted for them'.

On Bhattacharya's exit, she struck an

unconcerned note, saying, "Chandrima had been saying for some time now that she wants to resign. Her son had already joined hands with them (the rebels). It doesn't matter to me if a few leaders here and there desert the party and join hands with the BJP." Banerjee said that, along with her responsibilities as the party's chairperson, she would also function as the TMC's Bengal president until veteran leader Subrata Bakshi, who is indisposed, recovers. She also announced the induction of party leaders Kunal Ghosh and Madan Mitra as general secretaries.

'REBELS BETRAYED US'

Referring to the Ritabrata Banerjee-led rebel faction moving the Election Commission and staking claim to the party's twin flower symbol, Banerjee said people in Bengal would see through.

## News box

## Dumper on wrong side rams SUV, law student injured

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A 21-year-old law student was injured after an overloaded dumper, allegedly speeding on the wrong side of the road, crashed into his SUV near Mount Carmel School in Sector 114 on Friday.

Krish Goenka, a resident of Dwarka, was driving his Ford EcoSport from Bajghera towards his father's office in the city around 10.30am when the truck rammed into the right side of his vehicle.

Goenka alleged that the dumper was being driven at a speed of around 70 km per hour and in a rash and negligent manner. "I was driving at 40-50 km per hour when a dumper truck hit my car," he told TOI. "The impact has caused extensive damage to my car and endangered my life."

He claimed in his complaint that the dumper lacked rear taillights and displayed a registration number plate that was not clear and readable. He also alleged that it was seemingly being driven under the influence of intoxicants.

After the collision, Goenka said he attempted to stop the driver, but the driver fled the scene, leaving the truck behind. Goenka's father took him to a hospital in Dwarka Sector-12, New Delhi, where his medico-legal case examination was conducted. He wrote in his complaint that the impact of the accident led to chest pain, breathing difficulty and other physical injuries.

Police said that an emergency response vehicle informed Bajghera police station about the crash. Head constable Ankit and his team arranged a crane to remove the damaged EcoSport.

## Two wanted Lawrence Bishnoi gang members injured in police encounter in Haryana

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Two alleged members of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang, each carrying a reward of Rs 1 lakh, and a police officer were injured during an exchange of fire in Haryana's Bahadurgarh on Sunday following a joint operation by the Haryana Police and the Delhi Police. The operation was carried out jointly by the STF Bahadurgarh unit of the Haryana Police and the Counter Intelligence wing of the Delhi Police's Special Cell, based on specific intelligence inputs.

The accused were identified as Pravesh, son of Jai Prakash and a resident of Tibba Danasher in Hisar, and Himanshu, son of Sushil Kumar and a resident of Jakhod Khara village in Hisar district.

Police said both men were wanted in connection with FIR No. 379, dated June 11, 2026, registered at the City Hansi police station under Sections 103(1) (murder), 109(1) (attempt to murder), 3(5) (act done by multiple persons) and 61(2)(A) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), along with Sections 25, 54 and 59 of the Arms Act, in connection with the broad daylight murder of gym operator Kapil in Hansi. According to police, both accused carried a cash reward of ₹1 lakh each and were associated with the Lawrence Bishnoi gang.

Police said they had received specific intelligence that the armed accused had reached the Bahadurgarh area with the intention of committing a crime.

During the operation, the accused allegedly opened fire, prompting the police team to retaliate in self-defence. In the ensuing exchange of fire, both accused and one police officer sustained injuries.

All three were shifted to a hospital for treatment. Further investigation is underway.

## Helper buried alive as truck driver unloads sand and gravel

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A truck helper died after he got buried under sand and gravel when the truck's driver offloaded the material without realising the victim was standing behind it. The incident happened in Sector 113 early on Friday.

According to a complaint filed by the victim's father, Priyanshu was helping with transportation of sand and gravel at a stockyard in Sector 113. After reaching there around 1 am, the driver asked Priyanshu to get off the vehicle and open the truck's rear gate for unloading.

As the helper opened the rear gate, a heap of sand and gravel first trapped his legs. His father said he screamed for help, but the driver did not hear him and continued lifting the truck body hydraulically, unloading the entire consignment. Soon, Priyanshu was completely buried beneath sand and gravel. The truck driver was on the run at the time of filing this report. Police said the first information about the incident reached Bajghera police station through an Emergency Response Vehicle (ERV) call on July 3, informing them that a boy was buried under gravel at a stockyard in Sector 113.

By the time police reached the spot, an ERV team was already there and had pulled him out from beneath the gravel and taken him to Manipal Hospital in Palam Vihar. He was totally unconscious at this point.

Police said, when asked about his age at the hospital, the truck's owner said Priyanshu was 20 years old. However, the complaint submitted by his father said the victim was 16 years old. The hospital said the victim succumbed to his injuries sustained in what was described in the medical records as a road traffic accident.

Proceedings under Section 194 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) were initiated. The post-mortem examination was scheduled subsequently. Police are investigating the circumstances that led to the accident and the role of the driver in what happened. Based on a complaint filed by the victim's father, Durga Prasad Maurya, Bajghera police registered a case under Section 106 (causing death by negligence) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) on Friday.

## Foreigner among 3 held with MDMA worth Rs 14 lakh in Greater Noida

Noida.(Agency)

Three persons, including a Nigerian man, were arrested from the service road near Janata Flats in Sector Chi-IV, Greater Noida, for allegedly running an MDMA racket on Saturday. Police said they seized 143 g of MDMA, commonly known as ecstasy. It has an estimated international market value of around Rs 14 lakh.

Besides the narcotics, officers seized a scooter allegedly used for transportation, an electronic weighing machine and Rs 17,500 in cash believed to be linked to the illegal trade.

The cops were acting on a tip-off and they arrested Arun Kasana of Ghaziabad; Atul Singh, a resident of Sampoonam Society in Greater Noida; and Chidubem Stanley, a Nigerian national residing in Uttam Nagar.

Greater Noida DCP Ravi Shankar Nim said an initial investigation has suggested



that the men procured the drug at comparatively lower prices and repackaged it into smaller sachets before selling it at higher rates in residential societies across Noida, Greater Noida and other parts of Delhi-NCR. The profits were allegedly shared among the members of the network.

Investigators suspect the gang deliberately targeted residential neighbourhoods and highrise societies, where synthetic party drugs are believed to have a steady demand. Police are now examining whether the accused supplied narcotics to local peddlers or directly to consumers.

Police also found that Chidubem Stanley had been previously arrested by the Delhi Police Crime Branch in 2025 under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act. Officers said he was out on bail and had allegedly resumed drug trafficking activities.

A case was registered against the three accused at Beta-II police station under relevant provisions of the NDPS Act. The Nigerian national was also booked under Section 14 of the Foreigners Act for alleged violations related to his stay in India, police said.

Investigators are now working to identify the source of the seized MDMA and uncover the larger supply chain behind the racket.

Police are also trying to trace other associates, including suspected local contacts and financiers, who may have helped distribute the drugs across NCR.

## YARD REMODELLING COMPLETE

## Porbandar Station Yard Remodelling Successfully Commissioned; Rail Operations to Become Safer, Faster and More Modern

Mahanagar Metro Desk  
Pawan Makan

**Porbandar.** In a significant milestone towards the modernization of railway infrastructure, the Bhavnagar Division of Western Railway has successfully commissioned the yard remodelling work at Porbandar Station on 04 July 2026. The completion of this ambitious project will make rail operations at the station safer, smoother and more efficient, while significantly enhancing the handling of trains and coaching rakes. Completed under the guidance of Divisional Railway Manager Shri Dinesh Verma, the project involved comprehensive modernization of the station's Electronic Interlocking (EI) system. A new Electronic Interlocking system with 72 routes has been commissioned. As part of the project, 25 new points have been installed and 16 existing points have been dismantled. The remodelled yard now comprises 31 points, 44 detection points, 28 track sections, 10 main signals and 17 shunt signals (09 dependant and 08 independent). The yard remodelling has resulted in a substantial improvement in both operational efficiency and safety. The provision of an engine escape line has completely eliminated the push-back movement that was previously required on Line No. 1 (now Line No. 2), thereby making operations safer and faster. The project has also significantly enhanced the yard's operational capacity, improving the efficiency of train and rake movements. A newly constructed double-exit pit-cum-washing line has streamlined the processes of washing, placement and removal of rakes, making them quicker and more con-



venient. Additionally, the construction of two new double-exit stabling lines will facilitate faster and smoother movement of empty coaching rakes. Another major feature of the project is the segregation of the non-interlocked yard, enabling simultaneous shunting operations and reception of trains on Lines No. 6, 7 and 8. This will save valuable time while considerably improving operational capacity and overall efficiency. With the successful completion of the yard remodelling work, Porbandar Station will witness reduced turnaround time for trains and coaching rakes, increased yard capacity, greater operational flexibility, and significant improve-

ments in safety and reliability. The project will also play a vital role in efficiently handling the growing volume of rail traffic in the future. Western Railway continues to accord the highest priority to the development of railway infrastructure and the adoption of advanced technologies to provide passengers with safe, modern and reliable rail services. The successful commissioning of the Porbandar Station Yard Remodelling Project marks another important achievement in this direction.

**Atul Kumar Tripathi** Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager Western Railway, Bhavnagar Para

## In Ghaziabad, Kanwar route shops must display owner names, licence details

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

Shop owners along the Kanwar yatra route in the district will have to prominently display their names and food safety licence details as part of measures to ensure hygienic food for pilgrims, officials said. The district administration said the requirement is intended to improve transparency and strengthen compliance with food safety regulations.

Assistant commissioner of food safety Suresh Mishra said all food establishments on the yatra route must display the owner's name along with relevant licensing information. He clarified that the requirement is part of the department's efforts to verify compliance with food safety regulations and make information about licensed establishments easily accessible to consumers.

The four key yatra routes — spanning Modinagar-Kadradabad-Ghaziabad-Delhi, Gangnagar-Gyani Border-Muradnagar-Tila Mod-Loni, Chhijarsi-Pilukhwa-Sector 62, and Noida-Partapur-DME-Ghaziapur — stretch for more than 70 kilometres across



Ghaziabad.

"Nine food safety teams have been constituted and are currently being trained in sanitation, hygiene and food safety protocols. These teams will serve as the first responders in the event of any food-related complaints or emergencies involving Kanwar pilgrims during the yatra," the official said.

The food safety department is also

introducing a digital verification system to improve transparency. "QR codes will be pasted at food establishments along the route and linked to the Food Safety Connect app. By scanning the code, consumers will be able to access details such as the food business operator's registration or licence number, the name of the establishment, the owner's name, address, mobile number and email ID,"

Mishra said.

Mishra said the initiative is designed to create a two-way communication system between consumers and the department. Pilgrims and other customers will be able to submit feedback on the quality and safety of food served at these establishments through the app.

Officials claimed the mechanism would help authorities respond more quickly to complaints, improve accountability among food vendors and ensure that safe, hygienic food is available throughout the Kanwar Yatra route in Ghaziabad.

Last year, the district administration covered 164 liquor shops along the yatra route with shrouds, while dhabas and hotels were asked to display owner names, food licences, menus and rate lists. Meat and liquor shops along the Kanwar route and near temples were ordered to shut or relocate. The directives followed a UP govt order requiring eateries to display QR codes containing information about their owners — a directive that raised apprehensions of discriminatory profiling.

## Short news

## CBI arrests military services engineer in bribery case

Shimla. (Agency)

The CBI has arrested KK Soni, Assistant Garrison Engineer with the Military Engineering Services (MES) in Manali, Himachal Pradesh, on Saturday for allegedly demanding and accepting a bribe of Rs 93,000 from a contractor's representative for clearing pending bills.



According to the CBI, a case was registered on July 3 based on a complaint filed by a supervisor who works with a contractor's firm. The complainant alleged that Soni had demanded Rs 93,000 to clear the firm's bills. While the supervisor allegedly paid Soni Rs 40,000, he said that he was asked to bring the remaining Rs 53,000 on Saturday, according to the complaint. On July 4, the CBI laid a trap and caught the accused red-handed. The agency also recovered Rs 40,000 from the accused's residence in the MES area of Manali. Officials said the search operation is on, and added that Rs 10 lakh in unaccounted cash was recovered from the premises. The accused will be produced before the court on July 5. Further probe is on, police said.

## 15 districts in Andhra Pradesh reel under deficient rainfall

VIJAYAWADA. (Agency)

Andhra Pradesh is confronting a deepening monsoon crisis as 15 districts reel under deficient rainfall and reservoir storage has fallen sharply, raising concerns over kharif cultivation, irrigation, drinking water supply and hydropower generation. The state has received 73.8 mm of rainfall against the normal 100.6 mm between June 1 and July 4, registering an overall 26.6 percent rainfall deficit, while water storage in major and medium reservoirs remains significantly lower than the corresponding period last year.

The prolonged dry spell has slowed progress of the southwest monsoon across large parts of the state, reducing inflows into reservoirs and increasing pressure on available water resources. With July being the most crucial month for the kharif season, officials are closely monitoring the rainfall situation and reservoir levels.

According to the latest APWRIMS data, 15 districts have recorded deficient rainfall, while NTR district is the only district to register excess rainfall, receiving 25.4 per cent above normal precipitation.

Districts witnessing severe rainfall shortages include Visakhapatnam (-50.4%), Alluri Sitharama Raju (-49%), Annamayya (-49%), West Godavari (-46%), East Godavari (-44.7%), Parvathipuram Manyam (-41.9%), Konaseema (-41.7%), Srikakulam (-39.7%), Tirupati (-36.8%), Chittoor (-34.9%), Polavaram (-34.4%), YSR Kadapa (-32.2%), Prakasam (-25.6%) and Vizianagaram (-25.4%), while another district also remained under the deficient category. Only a few districts, including Krishna, Eluru, Guntur, Bapatla, Kurnool, Nandyal, Anantapuramu, Sri Sathya Sai, SPSR Nellore.

## Teachers bear transport costs to educate tribal children in AP's Vizianagaram

VIZIANAGARAM. (Agency)

In a commendable effort to boost school enrolment among underprivileged children and prevent dropouts, government teachers in Vizianagaram district have gone beyond their professional duties to support tribal students by arranging free transportation. Spending from their own salaries, they have ensured that children from remote hamlets can attend school, significantly reducing absenteeism and dropout rates in region.

At Mandal Parishad Primary (MPP) School in Kapusompuram village under Kiltampalem Gram Panchayat, 55 students are enrolled, including 16 from hilltop hamlets Rayapalem, Munupurai and Ippamanuvalasa, located up to six kilometres away, and 15 from Dabbagunta, 2.5 kilometres away. Until recently, these 31 children rarely attended classes due to the long walk and lack of public transport. To address this, the school's four teachers pooled resources to hire auto-rickshaws, spending Rs 5,000 monthly for one vehicle serving the hilltop villages and Rs 4,500 for another covering Dabbagunta. Together, they share the Rs 9,500 monthly cost, ensuring safe daily transport for the children.

In another initiative, Indukuri Ashok Raju, Headmaster of Mandal Parishad Upper Primary (MPUP) School at Tennuboddavara village under Mulaboddavara Gram Panchayat, has been spending Rs 2,000 monthly from his salary to provide transport for students from Mulaboddavara and Lacchandarapalem.

## Mumbai floods: Roads shut, train, Metro services hit, red alert issued

With over 200-mm rain lashing pockets of the city in a span of 10 hours, traffic came to a standstill and people were left wading through knee-deep waters after the Mogra nalla and its associated drains overflowed in the western suburbs on Saturday afternoon.

Mumbai. (Agency)

Amid a red alert and high tide, torrential rain crippled life in Mumbai on Saturday.

With over 200-mm rain lashing pockets of the city in a span of 10 hours, traffic came to a standstill and people were left wading through knee-deep waters after the Mogra nalla and its associated drains overflowed in the western suburbs on Saturday afternoon.

The inundated streets nudged the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) to enforce road closures across suburbs like Andheri, Vikhroli and Chembur.

In no respite from the downpour, heavy showers continued to sweep the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) on Saturday. The Met had issued a red



alert for Saturday.

Data from the weather department and BMC's automatic weather stations showed between 8 am and 6 pm, Vikhroli area received 247-mm rain, Powai logged 240 mm, 220 mm in Chincholi and 208 mm in Andheri. In the neighbouring district of Navi Mumbai, over 180 mm rainfall was recorded between 8.30 am and 6.30 pm

in Airoli, followed by 155 mm rain in Digha and 143 mm rain in Koparkhairne.

According to IMD records, the Santacruz station recorded 164 mm rainfall between 8.30 am and 5.30 pm on Saturday.

Traffic takes a hit

Throwing life out of gear in the suburbs, Mogra nalla — a key drain flowing through Andheri east and west before finally emptying into the Arabian sea through the Versova creek — started overflowing around noon on Saturday. Alongside, drains associated with the Mogra drainage network also started to overflow. As the drain breached the normal levels, its water spilled onto the streets along Andheri subway as well as the adjoining carriageways like SV road

in Andheri and Link road among others. Throwing life out of gear in the suburbs, Mogra nalla — a key drain flowing through Andheri east and west before finally emptying into the Arabian sea through the Versova creek — started overflowing around noon on Saturday. Alongside, drains associated with the Mogra drainage network also started to overflow. As the drain breached the normal levels, its water spilled onto the streets along Andheri subway as well as the adjoining carriageways like SV road in Andheri and Link road among others. With continuous showers battering the region, the floodwater on the streets did not recede leaving the entire belt waterlogged for several hours. In what added to the civic woes were the 4.26-metre high tides at 2.50 pm.

## Nabbed with stolen mobile phones, 2 sentenced to 10 years in jail by Gujarat court

Meerut. (Agency)

The court in Surat on Saturday convicted and sentenced two youths — aged 24 and 20 — who were arrested with several stolen mobile phones, to 10 years' imprisonment each.

The court observed, "The accused have committed the same type of crime... It is the sacred duty of the court to see that such crimes are stopped... Therefore, taking into account the criminal history of the accused and keeping in mind the provision of punishment for the said crime, it is considered fair and appropriate to order the maximum punishment and fine prescribed in the law to the accused..."

The case dates back to February 1, 2024, when the complainant, Sandeep Kachhadiya, a lawyer and resident of Punagam area in Surat city, stepped out of his residence for a walk after dinner. He was on a phone call when three youths travelling on a bike approached him.

One of them snatched his phone, worth around Rs 70,000, and the three sped away. One of the youths also brandished a knife in a bid to warn him not to raise an alarm, Sandeep told the police in his complaint. On March 19, 2024, the police arrested two youths and recovered multiple stolen phones from their possession, including the one that belonged to the complainant. The third accused in the case is still at large, police sources said.

The duo were later sent to judicial custody in Surat Central Jail after their police remand application was rejected by the court. The two were released on bail in July 2024. The police submitted the chargesheet with the Surat district court on May 1 2024 and charges were framed against the two accused on January 18, 2025.

The case proceedings were carried out in the Additional Sessions Court of Judge R D Mehta. Additional Public Prosecutor M K Brahmabhatt and Advocate Ashwin Jogadiya pressed charges on the accused, who were represented by advocates K S Patel and A N Pancholi.

## CBI arrests former CFO of Reliance Capital in bank fraud case

Bapna has been lodged in Tihar Central Jail since April this year after being arrested by the ED in connection with a bank loan fraud and money laundering case linked to Reliance Home Finance Limited (RHFL) and Reliance Commercial Finance Limited (RCFL).

Mumbai. (Agency)

The CBI has arrested Reliance Capital's former chief financial officer (CFO) Amit Bapna in connection with the investigation into the Reliance ADA Group cases.

Bapna, who served as the CFO of Reliance Capital Limited from August 2014 to December 2019, was one of the key decision-makers responsible for managing the company's financial affairs.

The CBI has so far arrested six accused, including Bapna, in the bank fraud cases linked to Reliance ADA Group.

Bapna has been lodged in Tihar Central Jail since April this year after being arrested by the ED in connection with a bank loan



fraud and money laundering case linked to Reliance Home Finance Limited (RHFL) and Reliance Commercial Finance Limited (RCFL).

The CBI obtained Bapna's production warrant from a Mumbai court and secured his custody from the Tihar Jail. He was

## A 'supari' from ex-employer in Fiji: Two men who shot at Vadodara trader arrested

Vadodara . (Agency)

The June 26 firing on garment trader Ashish Kumar, who was shot in his moving car on Waghodia Road here, was the result of a contract killing plot allegedly hatched by his former employer based in Fiji, police said on Saturday.

The crime was executed after over two months of surveillance, rehearsals and cross-country travel, police said after announcing two arrests in the case.

Vadodara Range inspector general Sandeep Singh said the conspiracy was allegedly orchestrated by Jay Dayal, one of Kumar's former employers, who convinced his employee, Vikram Pratap Singh, to return to India and eliminate Kumar.

Kumar and Dayal had a long-running financial dispute. Vikram Singh,



meanwhile, is an electronics engineer from Durg, the IG added.

Police said Vikram arrived in New Delhi from Singapore on April 20 and got in touch with co-accused Gurjeet Singh to begin preparations for the hit.

Over the next two months, the duo allegedly made repeated trips to Vadodara, watched Kumar's movements, and identified

escape routes. Police said that the two accused went to unusual lengths to avoid attracting attention while in Vadodara. "During one visit, they watched a movie at Pooja Mall. Before they shot Kumar, they had watched another movie at Bansal Mall," Sandeep Singh said, adding that the actions reflected "the extent of planning and preparation involved in the conspiracy."

On the night of June 26, the men allegedly opened fire on Ashish Kumar's moving car near Waghodia Chokdi before disappearing into the night and beginning their journey back to Durg. Investigators reconstructed the trail through CCTV footage, train tickets, mobile phone data, and an image captured outside a medical store.

## Nine months after worker's death on duty, widow still awaits ESIC benefits as 'stress' query delays claim

Shobha's husband died during his night shift on October 23, 2025, and was declared "brought dead" at Civil Hospital, Mohali.

Mohali. (Agency)

Nearly nine months after her husband died while on duty, Shobha Devi is still waiting for the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) to release dependent benefits to her family, with fresh official queries delaying the claim despite an earlier finding that his death qualified as an employment injury.

A resident of Gobindganj in Bihar's East Champaran district, Shobha's husband, Ram Nath Paswan (Insurance No. 1214222305), was employed with M/s Ocean Support and Industrial Services in Mohali. He died during his night shift on October 23, 2025, and was declared "brought dead" at Civil Hospital, Mohali. "My husband went to work but never returned home. It has been nine months, yet I have not received the benefits that our family is entitled to. Every time we hope for relief, another query is raised,"

Shobha Devi told The Indian Express. She said she sought legal help after receiving a June 18, 2026, letter from ESIC Assistant Director Harpal Singh stating that "stress due to routine cannot be treated as Employment Injury" and asking the employer to explain the reasons for stress, noting that Paswan had been working as a helper.

"I have now approached Advocate Jasbir Singh, who has agreed to fight my case without charging any fee. I only want justice for my husband's death," she said.

The latest query comes despite an investigation report prepared by the ESIC Branch Office, Mohali, on April 22, 2026, which found that Paswan was on duty from 10 pm to 6 am, fell ill around 11.40 pm, and died during the course of his employment. Based on witness statements, hospital records and the FIR,

the branch office concluded that the "employment injury stands confirmed" and treated the death as an employment-related accident.



Advocate Jasbir Singh argued that the department's latest query was inconsistent with the provisions of the law.

"Section 51-A of the ESI Act, 1948 presumes that any accident or death arising during the course of employment

is an employment injury. The law does not require an employer to medically establish the cause of stress. That determination rests on medical evidence," he said.

Questioning the department's approach, he added, "The worker died during duty. Asking the employer to explain the reason for stress when he was employed as a helper is difficult to justify."

When contacted, Assistant Director Harpal Singh said he was undergoing dialysis and was unable to comment on the matter.

Regional Director Deepak Malik said the corporation had sought information from the employer to establish a causal connection between the death and employment and would proceed in accordance with the law after receiving the required information.

## Air pollution plan needs political will, not an eye on the election cycle

Kapil Sibal

Over the past few years, we have witnessed a troubling disconnect between scientific evidence and policy implementation in the country. First, the weak enforcement of the fuel-ban policy for end-of-life vehicles undermined its intended impact. Then, the draft Electric Vehicles (EV) Policy 2.0 raised serious concerns among environmentalists by proposing to extend EV incentives to hybrid vehicles. While hybrids combine petrol engines with electric motors, they remain dependent on fossil fuels and cannot deliver the full environmental and public-health benefits of zero-emission mobility.

Against this backdrop, the Delhi government's latest initiative marks a step in the right direction by targeting emissions at their source rather than targeting the open sky. It offers renewed hope for sustained improvements in air quality. The push for the EV policy 2.0 might shrink the urban carbon footprint, and the purification of local air could help alleviate concerns over respiratory and other non-communicable diseases that affect a substantial section of the city's population. For the metropolis, which juggles a staggering fleet of over 15 million vehicles, transitioning to electric mobility is no longer just an environmental aspiration; it is a public health imperative.

The Delhi emission inventory database in the National Institute of Advanced Study's (NIAS) 2025 policy brief reveals that the transport sector accounted for 41 per cent of the city's most deadly air pollutant, PM 2.5, in 2024. The new policy will unfold in two phases. Starting January 1, 2027, the city will completely halt the registration of conventional three-wheelers and light goods vehicles, permitting only electric models. From April 1, 2028, only electric two-wheelers will be allowed. Two-wheelers contribute 20 per cent, whereas three-wheelers contribute less than 5 per cent of transport emissions. Currently, almost half of the three-wheelers are already non-fossil fuel, so their contribution is not 17-20 per cent as estimated by earlier studies, including the one by TERI in 2018. So, the overall gain with 100 per cent EV conversion of these three categories of vehicles would be 35 per cent of total transport, which will translate to just 15 per cent of Delhi's PM 2.5 concentration — this is a good initiative, but it won't lead to drastic change. However, a balanced perspective is one of the fundamental requirements of science. Studies conducted by the NIAS show that this policy is merely the first battle in a much larger war. While the present policy is a good start, to truly clear the air, subsequent policies must tackle the two heaviest polluters: Heavy commercial vehicles and buses, which command around 60 per cent of transport emissions. Tackling pollution from their tailpipes could reduce Delhi's PM 2.5 by 20-25 per cent. The number of commercial vehicles and buses might be low, but their emissions are higher compared to those from two-wheelers and cars. Policymakers need to prioritise targets based on the most polluting fleet. Transforming commercial vehicles to EVs will yield the maximum benefit. However, practical challenges need to be assessed. The public-health payoffs of this structural shift are monumental. According to an NIAS policy brief, adoption of EVs would avert 800 premature deaths annually because cleaner air would reduce diseases linked to vehicle emissions, such as heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, and respiratory illnesses. It will save 12,000 years lost to disability every year. In other words, Delhi's population would collectively gain the equivalent of 12,000 additional healthy years of life every year through reduced illness and premature death. Beyond the intrinsic value of human life, this transition makes undeniable economic sense. According to the NIAS study in 2025, transitioning two-wheelers, three-wheelers, and light commercial vehicles fully to electric power could save at least Rs 1,000 crore every year in averted medical expenses.

## Egg on a mid-day meal plate

Removing a low-cost source of high-quality protein from a school plate demands more than sentiment

Chandrakant Lahariya

The egg is a modest food, yet in India's school meals it has acquired political weight. The reported decision in West Bengal to replace eggs with vegetarian options in government-aided schools managed by a vegetarian provider has reopened a question. Should nutrition policy for children be governed by science and evidence, or by adult anxieties about religion, caste and purity? In an evidence-guided system, the answer would be simple. The National Family Health Survey-6 shows that India's child nutrition challenge remains grave: 29.3 per cent of children under five are stunted and 31.8 per cent are underweight. Behind these percentages are children whose bodies do not grow as they should, whose immunity is fragile, whose learning is blunted, and whose school life begins with a disadvantage. Improved protein intake, alongside calories is the solution.

In such a country, removing a low-cost source of high-quality protein from a school plate demands more than sentiment. It requires evidence. The nutritional case for eggs is uncomplicated and strong. An egg is affordable, easy to cook, simple to distribute and familiar across India. It provides high-quality protein and essential amino acids, along with vitamin B12, choline, selenium and nutrients needed for growth and brain development. For a rich household, an egg may be one item in a varied diet. For a poor child, it may be among the most nourishing foods received all week. That is why the state-wise picture matters.

PM POSHAN, generally called the mid-day meal scheme, allows states and UTs to decide menus according to local needs while meeting nutrition norms. Eggs entered mid-day meals in some states in the mid-1990s. Yet analyses of government data show that around 13 states provided eggs as an option in 2025-26, down from 16 states in 2015-16. Over the past decade, several states have either dropped eggs or considered removing them. When children need dietary variety, the menu has shrunk. The states that provide eggs acknowledge local food habits and nutritional need. Southern India has been more consistent. Tamil Nadu introduced eggs decades ago. Karnataka expanded egg provision after focusing on districts with anaemia. Andhra Pradesh has persisted with eggs despite vegetarian providers. Kerala, Telangana and several eastern or tribal states have also used eggs in child nutrition programmes. The principle is simple: a public meal should strengthen nutrition where diets are inadequate. The opposition to eggs seldom arises from nutrition science. It usually comes from politics. Vegetarian pressure groups, religious organisations and local elites invoke sentiment, purity, satvik food or



community preference. These words may sound benign. Their consequence is not. One section's dietary preference becomes a rule for everyone. That is unjust in a country as varied as India. India is not a vegetarian nation. Food habits differ by region, caste, tribe, religion, income and ecology. Many Dalit, Adivasi, backward caste, Muslim, Christian and other communities have long consumed eggs and animal-source foods. For their children, the egg is ordinary food. To remove it because some adults consider it impure is to smuggle hierarchy into a meal. Food in India has always carried social meaning. It has marked caste status, ritual purity, exclusion and power. The mid-day meal scheme challenged this by asking children from different backgrounds to sit together and eat. Its achievement was civic, not merely caloric. When eggs are banned because they offend the powerful, children receive a lesson no school should teach: the food of their homes is inferior. There is a constitutional question too. The Indian State is secular and plural. It cannot elevate one community's dietary code into public policy. The right to food has been read into the right to life under Article 21. A school meal should not merely relieve hunger; it should advance nutrition. A child's nutritional right cannot be hostage to another household's preference.

This does not mean vegetarian families should be dismissed. Some parents may not want their children to eat eggs. Their choice deserves respect. But respecting one family's preference does not require denying another

child nutritious food. The answer is not prohibition. It is choice. Practical solutions exist. Eggs can be served on specified days. Children who do not eat them can receive milk, banana, chikki, pulses or soya. Schools can arrange separate serving. Parents can opt in or out. This requires clarity, not dogma. A blanket ban, or an approach close to one, is the poorest response. It does not protect vegetarian children; they can be offered alternatives. What it does is deprive egg-eating children, often poorer, of protein they need. It allows adult opinion to overrule an undernourished child's need.

School meals must be guided by evidence, not ideology. What do children need to grow, learn and remain healthy? The answer must come from paediatric science, nutrition data, local food habits and poverty. India speaks of human capital, demographic dividend and Viksit Bharat. Such phrases are hollow if children remain stunted and undernourished. The first investment in the future is not a tablet or coding lesson. It is a child nourished enough to learn. Nutrition deficits in childhood can impair development in ways later feeding cannot fully reverse. Protein deficiency and undernutrition increase chronic disease risk in adulthood.

The midday meal is not just lunch. For millions, it is the State's promise. Removing eggs from that plate is not a minor menu change. It is a public health decision. A school meal should not become a site for cultural policing. It should remain a promise that no child will be too hungry or undernourished to learn.

## Ethanol push : Address concerns of key stakeholders

Preparedness, transparency and stakeholder collaboration, not haste, will determine whether E85 becomes a successful model or a missed opportunity

A month after India introduced E85 fuel, a high-ethanol blend for flex-fuel vehicles, concerns persist among consumers and the automotive industry. These vehicles are designed to run on higher blends such as E85 (85% ethanol, 15% petrol) and E100 (nearly pure ethanol), unlike petrol-powered vehicles compatible with E20 fuel (20% ethanol, 80% petrol). The decision to make E85 available at select outlets is aimed at reducing dependence on imported crude oil. With around 90% of the country's crude oil sourced from overseas, global geopolitical tensions have repeatedly exposed the vulnerabilities of India's energy ecosystem. Promoting ethanol as a mainstream fuel for flex-fuel vehicles is an ambitious step towards achieving energy self-reliance and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. However, a carefully calibrated execution that inspires public confidence is a must to facilitate this transition. India has already demonstrated the benefits of ethanol blending through substantial foreign exchange savings and the creation of a robust domestic ethanol industry. Higher



ethanol demand can provide farmers with additional income opportunities by expanding the market for

sugarcane and maize. The decision to price E85 at a discount to conventional petrol could make it a good option for consumers using compatible vehicles, even after accounting for its relatively lower fuel efficiency. Yet optimism must be tempered with realism. Automobile manufacturers have expressed apprehensions about engine compatibility, corrosion, fuel systems and long-term durability. These issues deserve serious attention rather than outright dismissal. Without clear communication, there is a genuine risk of widespread confusion, misfuelling (putting the wrong type of fuel into a vehicle) and misplaced scepticism. Infrastructure, vehicle readiness, fuel quality standards and technical training must evolve alongside fuel availability. There is a need to recognise that biofuels are not an immediate replacement for fossil fuels. Preparedness, transparency and stakeholder collaboration — not haste — will determine whether E85 becomes a successful model or a missed opportunity.

## More power to women in khaki

Tamil Nadu's all-women police task force raises the bar; Punjab also on the right track

Julio Ribeiro

TAMIL Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay recently inaugurated an all-women police unit called the Singappen Special Task Force, aimed at ensuring the safety of women and children in his state. That was a promise he had made during electioneering after he formed the TVK (Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam). He has decided that Singappen would be supervised by him. Most chief ministers keep the Home portfolio in their own hands. This is not surprising as the police are the most visible agency of the government on the street; the image of the party in power depends a lot on how the cops behave in their daily interaction with the people they have sworn to serve. Vijay has taken a resolute step forward. He has appointed a woman IPS officer, K Bhavaneeswari, to head the all-women unit and ordered that she report to him. That arrangement may not turn out to be practical, but the initiative is bound to send the desired message: the safety of women and children is of utmost importance to the CM and he is going to ensure that they go about their business without constantly looking over their shoulders. In my city of Mumbai, the police have evolved the "Didi" project. Female cops are specifically designated as "Didis" in every police station's jurisdiction to keep in touch with school authorities and monitor the safety of children from the moment they leave their homes to the time they return. Kids travelling in school buses are vulnerable to sexual harassment. The antecedents of bus drivers and conductors, besides toilet attendants and janitors in schools, need to be verified before they are employed. The safety of women on the street is another problem altogether. As a trustee of the Public Concern for Governance Trust (PCGT), I was in contact with another NGO that had been involved in this work for several years. We joined forces and were successful in getting many



spots in the city identified and equipped with better street lighting, to begin with. That experience was enough for us to realise the magnitude of the problem. The incidence of misbehaviour with women has increased exponentially in the last few decades. It is difficult to put your finger on the exact causes of this phenomenon, but what is certain is that we need to sensitise young men about the importance of respecting their mothers, sisters and daughters, and to extend this respect to all women. While it will be interesting to keep track of the Singappen project, the fact that women police officers in Punjab are leading major

operations against criminals is another heartening trend. Some of them are involved in the anti-gangster drive ("Gangstran Te Vaar"). Pragna Jain, Assistant Inspector General of Police (AIG, Law and Order) and former Faridkot SSP, believes that gender has nothing to do with the roles she has been asked to perform. "Policing is about competence, courage and commitment," she says. I agree with her completely. Much depends on the police leaders. If they can take all their juniors along to achieve various goals, their gender, religion, caste or economic status become irrelevant. The

leaders need to be honest, fair and just in their dealings with the public as well as their subordinates. Are women better than men in policing? I don't think so. It all depends on individuals. I have come across outstanding women and men at different levels of the police force. I have also seen laggards in both genders. Even corruption has affected both of them. Much depends on those in the top echelons. Both male and female personnel will look up to them. If the leaders are persons of integrity and willing to lead from the front, they can transform the outlook of the personnel entrusted to their care. There are some physical differences between men and women that have to be considered. For example, an all-out lathi charge should be assigned to men. Most other qualities required for getting a job done, like integrity, fair play, initiative and commitment, are common to them. The Punjab Police have found that women are more open to sharing information about wrongdoers in their locality with police officers of their own gender. This is to be expected. Similarly, a victim of molestation may not be keen to share details of the agony she has suffered with policemen, but would be more comfortable with policewomen. These realities should be kept in mind by police leaders who have to make on-the-spot decisions.

I vividly remember an incident that happened decades ago. The late Jayawantiben Mehta, a feisty BJP leader from Mumbai, and others had blocked a key road prior to then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's arrival. I was the DCP sent to clear the road. I tried to persuade Jayawantiben, but she was adamant. She insisted on dealing with women cops who, in those days, were not as numerous as they are today. I told her I did not have any policewoman with me and requested her to permit the PM to proceed. On the ground for making a racket to unsettle the protesters.

# Top 10 crazy Planters for your home

Toiling hard on a balcony garden, filled with the same old clay or plastic pots, can get boring at times. If you want to breathe a bit more life into your greens, just look around.

You will be surprised to find many household objects, unnecessarily occupying space, which can be turned into unique planters. As long as it can support soil and allow proper drainage, you can use almost anything. Container gardens can be the perfect solution for those living in small apartments. So, what are you waiting for? Unleash your crazy, creative side and make the best use of waste. Trust us, you'll love it!

## TO THE TEA

Cup planters look just fine on dull window sills.

They are small and can hold a small amount of gravel. But once you see them, you are bound to change your opinion. Tea cups with graphics can add spectacle in the whole scheme of things. If you want to have small plants, this can actually be a very good idea. You can accentuate the beauty of the planter by adding decorative stones around the brim.

## BOTTLE'S UP

Wine-bottle planters are really easy to make and look great once done. Start out by cutting off the bottom of the bottle. Since potting soil cannot be used as the planting medium here, use coco peat instead. A wire or small rope tied just below the bottle's threads is all we need to hang these planters. You can also grow various decorative indoor plants in these bottles.

## TOY TALE

Succulents are ideal plants to grow in these toy trucks discarded by your kids. They are pretty low-maintenance too. Find something that has a large enough opening to hold the potting mixture and deep enough to allow the roots to grow.

## SMUG IN JEANS

This planter is not just a great use of an old pair of jeans, but it's also a sure-shot way to grab eyeballs of every passer-by. So, if you are planning something extraordinary and eccentric this season, try and make at least one jeans container. You need to fill up the legs with pipes and thermocol.

Spread a water-resistant plastic bag inside before placing the potted plant. And you are ready to go...

## OUT OF THE BOX

Making a planter from a wooden crate or an old suitcase is quite simple. Because of its length, breadth and depth, it is best suited for growing herbs like coriander, lemon grass or mint. Fill it with soil. You can either sprinkle seeds, starting from the scratch, or directly plant saplings. If you are more into flowers, then Portulaca grandiflora (commonly called 9 o'clock flowers) can be one of the options. Decorate the case to your heart's content and it can double up as an installation in your balcony.



## SPICE OF LIFE

You can hang these old jars on the wall, like spice racks - in the dining room or in the kitchen. These jar planters can be used to grow fresh spices and herbs for cooking at home. Clear your kitchen counter and keep your herbs, fresh in the air. Aromatic, we say!

## HATS OFF

Give your tattered old hat a makeover as a unique hanging container for your plant. Pick one of the pots with seasonal flowers in it. Tie a wire around the pot and hang it on the balcony wall. Now, cut a hole in your once-favourite old hat and use it to cover the pot. Mindboggling, isn't it?

**HEAD OVER HEELS** These old shoes, which had once added to your style quotient, can also make for wonderful planters. Hung on the balcony fence, these coloured boots look great filled with flowering plants. Even high heels and sandals work perfectly well for decorative cacti. Let your imagination run as wild as possible.

## BOOK STORE

It doesn't take much to add a little charm to your home or office. Turning an old book into a sassy succulent planter can do wonders. Just select an old book and glue the pages together.

Make sure not to stick the pages to the cover. Let it dry completely. Decide how wide a space you want to fit in your succulent. Leave at least 2 inches around the circumference of the roots to promote growth. Line the box you just cut with a plastic bag, making sure the bottom and sides are covered. Arrange your succulent on top of the plastic bag. Be sure to transfer enough soil from the original planter, along with the plant itself. Trim the excess plastic around the edges, leaving just enough of the liner to keep water from running into the pages of the book when you water it.

## AT THE WHEEL

Next time you get your car tyre changed, don't throw the old one away. Paint it instead, and use it as a plant container. This type of arrangement is possible only if you have adequate space in your balcony or on the rooftop.

You can choose colours according to your preference. The advantage in this case is plenty of room, therefore suitable for bigger plants and bushes like rose, hibiscus et al.



## Why the time is ripe for a tech-less

# Living room

face each other. This seating arrangement encourages talking, sitting, reading and entertaining. You will now probably communicate face to face and reconnect instead of staring at a screen.

2. Rule of thumb  
When you say you have a digital-free living



While we are aware that gadgets will continue to rule our lives in many ways, decor experts around the globe reveal that more families are opting to ditch technology in their living rooms in order to facilitate more quality time. With an overdose of screen time throughout the day, people are consciously making a choice to create a room without digital distractions. They want to bond over meaningful conversations, read a book or enjoy a glass of wine, in peace. Says Dr Rajan Bhonsle, relationship counsellor, "The living room is supposed to encourage interaction. Whether it's a television, ipad or laptop - all gadgets are addictive and it's difficult to limit their usage.

Hence, if the whole family decides to eliminate technology from their living space, they will end up bonding on a personal level. That's good news because the lack of eye-to-eye contact over time has made us apathetic and arrogant as human beings."

Who says living rooms can't look chic minus the telly? In fact, this opens up huge opportunities for new designs and creative layouts in decor - you can now use up all the space that was once occupied by a gadget! Here are a few tips:

1. Let all seating face inwards  
Arrange all the chairs and sofas in the room to

room, it has to be unplugged in the true sense. To help encourage this, ask your family members to leave their phones, tablets, music player in another room.

They may grumble at first, but with time surely realise that it is very relaxing at the end of the day.

3. Stay away from too many colours  
While the idea is to create a space that de-stresses you after a long day, be careful not to incorporate too many colours in a tech-less space. Stick to a neutral colour palette and use soft, soothing colours. Whites, creams, blues, browns, greys - all make for brilliant choices.

## Decorate your home with these Indian handicrafts

Decorate your home with Indian handicrafts and boast the beautiful, interesting and intricate handicrafts which are made by rural artisans of the country. Add jute, brass and clay handicrafts to your home, says an expert. Cheenu Gupta, Co-founder of Divinehaat.com, an e-commerce portal of handicraft goods, has shared some ideas:

\* Brass handicrafts: Brass provides a durable and sturdy decor option. There are so many brass handicrafts and show pieces like vases, table tops, wall art, lamps, ornament boxes, plates, bowls and figurines.

True brass tends to oxidize quickly when exposed to air and hence check that the brass product you are buying has been given a clear coating of lacquer. Any brass product will have to be regularly polished to keep the shine intact and remove any tarnishing.

\* Jute handicrafts: Give a wow factor to your drawing room with one of the most affordable natural fibers Jute. There is a huge range of jute products which includes bags, rugs, lamps, tables, office stationery, curtains wall-hangings and many more.

Jute products are eco friendly and offer a natural, green way to decorate the house.

\* Clay handicrafts: Clay pottery is supposed to be one of the most ancient forms of handicrafts in India.

You can choose from lovely terracotta planters or clay serving utensils to beautiful vases to decorate the house. Not only these products look beautiful but food cooked in the pottery is considered good for health.

There are multiple types of clay pottery - terracotta, red, black and grey pottery.

\* Wooden handicrafts: Decorate your house with wooden furniture, toys, utensils, decorative pieces, jewellery and many more designer household goods like lamp shades, candle stands, vermilion boxes, jewellery boxes, bangle holders. Carved wood furniture is a treasured furniture item in a lot of homes.

\* Dhokra handicrafts: Dhokra is one of the oldest forms of handicrafts. Dhokra candle



stands, pen stands, ash trays, horses, elephants, peacocks, owls, religious images, measuring bowls and other show pieces give an extra edge to the corner of your house.

Dhokra cast metal and ironware has a rugged vibrancy about it. It looks beautiful in any corner of your home.

\* Marble handicrafts: To enhance the beauty of your house decorate it with marble decorative vase, marble elephants for the drawing room, pooja thali, idols of god for the spiritual room.

\* Art and metal ware handicrafts: Wall art designing for living room is a new trend. One can choose from varieties of designs to go in sync with your living room.

# Smart storage under Staircase

**The space below the staircase can be utilised for storage or as a display area maximising space with smart ideas that are innovative and useful is what homemakers are looking for these days.**

However, finding a solution that is utilitarian and attractive becomes an interesting challenge. Most furniture these days is modular, incorporating some storage facility to maximise utility. Beds and sofas come with storage. Wood chests, apart from being decorative, allow you to store trinkets. Study tables come with cubbyholes and shelves for added

storage. Another alternative to maximise storage that will not bring in new furniture is the creation of storage in an odd space in the home, such as the area below the staircase.

**ALCOVE**  
Many home owners are efficiently utilising the space below the staircase and some of the space abutting the staircase to create an alcove. The area beneath the staircase is quite valuable when space is at a premium. There are many ideas on how to make the most of this otherwise lost space.

**TVCABINET**  
We could all use some extra storage space and the space under the stairs could be ideal for a variety of storage needs. This space can be used for concealed storage or for housing a TV cabinet if

need be. Both are extremely practical and good options that are seen in most homes.

**BUILT-IN SHELVES**  
If the staircase has a high intermediate landing, then the space below can be considered for shelving. Built-in storage with shelves and drawers that will take care of the

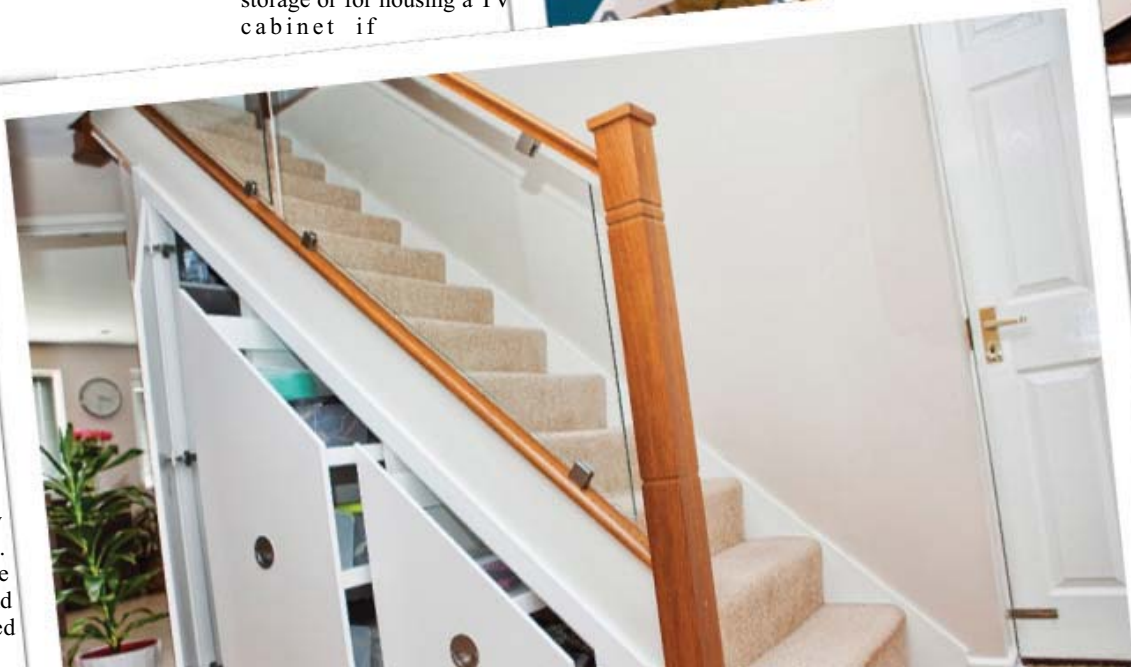
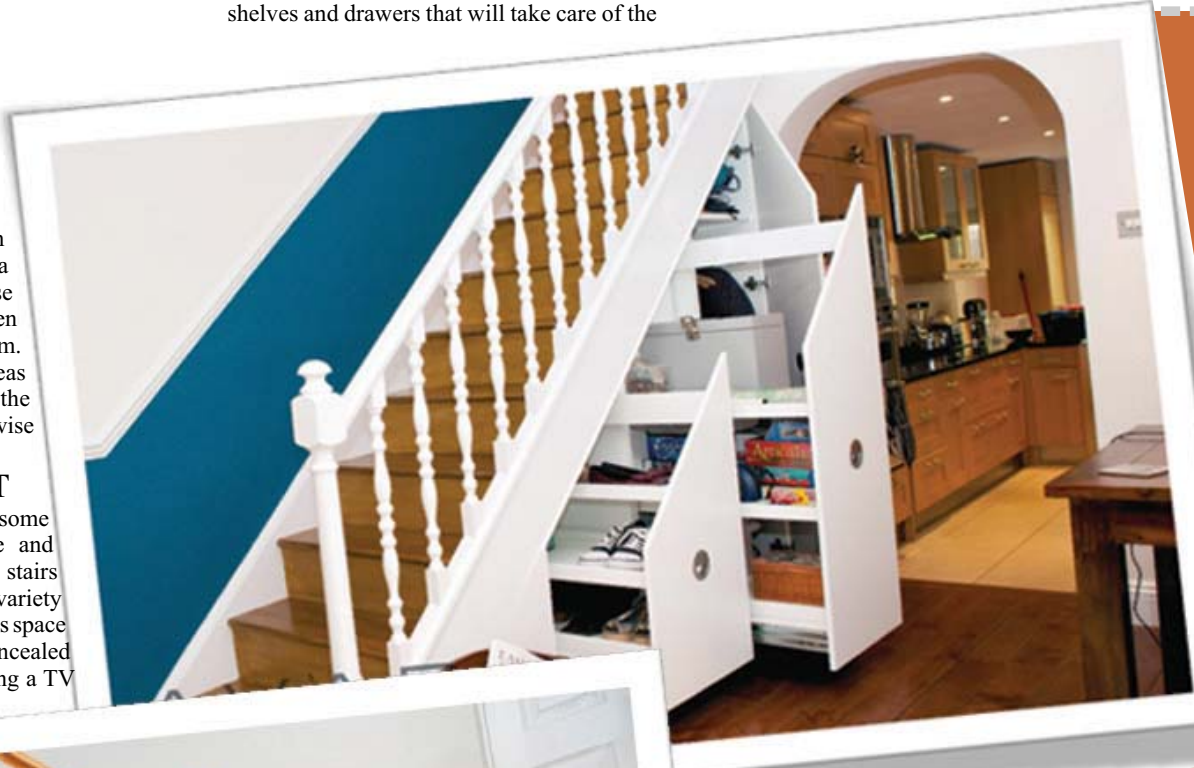
oddest cranny is the most basic way to utilise the space. For convenience, two cupboards can be built and the one with the highest point can be used to store unwieldy long coats or sports equipment such as golf clubs and cricket bats. All other knickknacks can be stored in the various drawers and shelves in the remaining space. This idea works well when the stairwell runs behind a door or if the staircase is in a small area.

**NOOK TO RELAX IN**  
Having bookcases under the staircase are a good way to use space that would otherwise be wasted. Besides, you can also consider creating a niche activity space under the stairs. If your staircase faces the living room, you could have a music area or a bar. It can be a small home office, or even a small hobby or craft room. If your staircase is located close to the utility area, it could serve as a convenient location for a small laundry room. If your staircase runs down into the front hallway, the area beneath could house a shoe rack. If it goes up to the

bedroom, you could have a mini cabinet or a wardrobe under the stairs.

**STORAGE FOR TOYS**  
It could also serve as an efficient toy storage area for your children. For a toy storage area, find baskets, plastic tubs or bins of different sizes and then design shelving of different heights and widths to accommodate them. Ensure that these storage spaces are both attractive and easy to access. It can be simply shelved out and left open, or covered as a cabinet, or covered as a complete cupboard.

**KITCHEN CABINETRY**  
If the staircase is in the dining room, consider having a superior quality wine storage cabinet below the stairs. Neat wood racks meant for wine bottles along with a temperature control mechanism will occupy little space as opposed to making a separate wine cellar. Smart shutters with glass can let you have a good view of your wine collection.



## Choosing the best kitchen

connected to the dining area; some may build a beautiful temple, some may have just an alcove; some may like it centrally air conditioned, whereas others may decide how to place it manually.

**WOMEN DECIDE**  
Gone are the times where everything was accepted. The women, today, customise their bedrooms, their verandah, and the kitchen. The kitchen truly is the heart of the home and social gatherings.

**THE TEMPLE OF FOOD**  
Kitchen designs are of various types. The one wall style, which is generally opted in for service or studio apartments, offers to save as much space as possible. The galley style, which is a walk-through kitchen, is designed with two walls opposite to each other utilising every inch of space. The L-shaped kitchen, which is designed basically for medium-sized kitchens, offers as much as workspace as possible. Likewise, the horseshoe or the U-shaped kitchen has three walls and the island (platform) in a similar shape, so that more than one person can work comfortably in the kitchen at the same time.

Few housewives who either have redone and renovated their kitchen, or have designed it the way they want it in a newly-bought house, have many common and related ideologies of designing a kitchen as a bright and a well-lit space, have proper ventilation, lots of room for storage. Some of them had Indian conventional style of cooking. Narendra Kaur Bagga, a housewife, says, "I have seen how trends change, but in my kitchen, I feel connected to the house, talking to my husband becomes easier while I cook and I can serve easily. Also, I can attend guests simultaneously, take a peek on what is going on the television. I do not have a door to my kitchen, it is open."

The present-day women choose their kitchens according to their own likes and conveniences, rather than picking what is trending in the market spaces. Interior design is the wishful thinking for a beautiful living. People spend more than half of our lives indoors. It is said 'home is where heart is'. It definitely is a very true saying. Indoors refer to a house, which can be a bedroom kitchen flat, a studio apartment or a bungalow. The place where we stay is a major asset for us. It provides us security, a sound sleep, area to cook food, and most importantly, peace of mind.

**PERCEPTION MATTERS**  
For every individual, the way of living is distinct, they may be living alone, in a nuclear family or a joint family. The more the number of people in the house, the more diversified is the way and need of living, some may want to apportion the drawing and living rooms, some may want to keep it as an elementary seating. Some may like their kitchens to be closed and walled well, some may like it open and

# How to maximize your Space at home

**When there is no room to spare, maximizing the potential of every inch becomes critical. Ajit Chellapan, of Gimi, India, shares some tips...**



Small spaces can be quite cozy, but squeezing-in is often challenging. When you're pressed for space, the "pile" can be your worst enemy. When there is no room to spare, maximizing the potential of every inch becomes critical. This is typically seen in a family setting where it is challenging to find space in a small house or an apartment thus being a major cause of concern. Due to this constraint a lot of things are usually

dropped. The only solution to save space is being 'Creative'.

**Most Essential:** Since storage space is at a premium in smaller homes, being creative is an important part which will help in designing the minimum space at your home. You can opt for minimalism concept as well. Minimalistic design is softer, more personal and easier to live with. Generally in a minimalist design, only the most essential

elements are taken into consideration for people whose main focus is the functioning of their home. Apart from that, the clean look of modern interiors make homeowners love this type of concept which is clutter free and stress free. Untapped accommodation space under the staircase, wall mounted cabinets, can also help in storing most of the items which helps in saving space. Using of compact home utility products also provides a perfect solution for making your homes look clutter and stress free.

**Role of Technology:** Innovation and technology plays a major role. Most of the products available in the market today are driven by innovation and backed with technology. For example, with the advent of Nitrogen technology (originated in Italy) uses Nitrogen that is blown into the pipes/handles of the product at a very low temperature (-20 degrees) during the injection phase to empty the closed cavities from the inside making them exceptionally resistance to bending and twisting making the products long lasting. This type of technology is used in products such as balcony cloth dryer, ironing boards etc. This

makes the product not only strong but also makes the product sturdy.

**Latest Advances:** Technology has come a long way over the last several years. Keeping updated with the latest advances is a great way to save space. Today we have table top ironing boards which are portable to carry even when you're on a vacation! It's light and compact and can be kept inside your suitcase as well. This type of ironing board helps you to re-iron you're already ironed clothes sitting anywhere in your home or even your hotel rooms. Balcony cloth dryers have also become a popular choice today among homemakers for its compact user friendly design that helps in drying your cloths outside/inside your

balcony with ease. To save space, use stackable appliances where possible. New designs for home appliances, such as washers, dryers and iron boards and take up less room in your home.

**Avoid Clutter:** Once all the initial arrangements in a house are made, it does become difficult after some time to accommodate more items with time. Hence sleek, elegant and compact home utility products are in more demand for their innovative design module. Look for pieces that are multi-functional or adjustable, such as a dining room table with expanding leaves or for two in-one sofa cum bed sets to avoid clutter inside the house.



# Delhi Gymkhana members move High Court over Centre's eviction notice

**Delhi Gymkhana Club members and staff have challenged the Centre's eviction notice in the Delhi High Court. The case pits a defence infrastructure claim against allegations of vague reasoning and denial of due process.**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
Delhi Gymkhana Club members and staff have moved the Delhi High Court against the Centre's show-cause notice seeking their eviction from the club's premises on Safdarjung Road. The applications seek a stay on the operation of the notice and are listed for hearing before Justice Avneesh Jhingan on July 6. The fresh applications are part of a pending lawsuit filed after the Land and Development Office's May 22 order directed the colonial-era



club to return its land by June 5 "strengthening and securing on the ground of defence infrastructure". The

court challenge has been brought by club member Vijay Khurana and the Delhi Gymkhana Club Ltd Staff Welfare Association.

On June 29, the Land and Development Office under the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry issued a show-cause notice to the club, asking why an eviction order should not be passed under the Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Act, 1971. The notice, issued by Estate Officer Bipin Kumar Singh, directed the club and all

persons concerned occupying the premises to submit their response by July 7 and appear for a personal hearing on the same day at 2.30 pm. The latest move came more than a month after the Centre told the Delhi High Court on May 26 that it would not take forceful possession of the 27.3-acre premises by June 5, though it said the land was required for "strengthening and securing defence infrastructure".

In his lawsuit, Khurana said the "vague and generalised reasons" of defence

infrastructure and security given by the Centre were a "sham". He alleged that the move was an "attempt to effect forced eviction" instead of following the due process of law.

The petition is stated to be supported by more than 500 members of the club. The dispute now centres on the Centre's move to reclaim the club's land and the challenge by members and staff, with the High Court set to hear the plea for a stay on the eviction notice on July 6.

## Suspecting Affair, Delhi Man Kills Wife With Battery, Consumes Poison, Then Tells Family

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
A 28-year-old man allegedly bludgeoned his wife to death with a battery after suspecting her of talking to someone on the phone, and later died by suicide after consuming poison in the Ranhola area, police said on Saturday. The incident came to light on July 2 when police received a PCR call regarding an attempted murder at Tilangpur Kotla village in Outer Delhi. According to investigators, Vinay allegedly hit Nisha, 24, on the head with an Exide battery following a dispute. Police said after killing his wife, Vinay allegedly consumed aluminium phosphide. He then took their three-year-old daughter to his mother's rented accommodation in nearby Kotla Vihar Phase-I, about 150 yards from his rented room, where he confessed to his sister Priya that he had killed his wife and consumed poison, police said. They said Priya rushed to the couple's room, found Nisha lying in a pool of blood, and alerted neighbours, who then informed police. Vinay was taken to Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital, where he was declared brought dead, they said. Police said post-mortem examinations of both the deceased have been conducted and the bodies handed over to their family for the last rites. Police said after they found Nisha, lying critically injured with severe head wounds, they rushed her to Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital, where doctors declared her brought dead. Preliminary investigation revealed that Nisha had been married to Vinay for five years. The couple had a daughter around three years old and had been living as tenants in the area for the last six or seven months.

## East Delhi govt hospital floods; waterlogged OPD sparks political reactions

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
A spell of rain on Saturday reportedly led to waterlogging inside parts of the Outpatient Department (OPD) at Lal Bahadur Shastri (LBS) Hospital in east Delhi. Visuals circulating on social media showed water accumulated on the floor of a waiting area while patients and attendants looked on. Images and a short video clip shared by local political representatives and other users appeared to show water entering the hospital premises, with seating areas partially submerged and people navigating through puddles. The incident was reported after a brief period of rainfall, though its exact duration could not be independently verified. Several elected representatives, including an MLA Kuldeep Kumar and a municipal councillor from Trilokpuri, shared the visuals online, criticising civic preparedness and hospital infrastructure. They alleged that even a short spell of rain was enough to disrupt basic services and raised concerns over patient safety at a government healthcare facility. There was no official clarification on whether the waterlogging was caused by drainage blockage, infrastructure gaps or external flooding entering the premises. A Trilokpuri resident, RK Gupta, said, "a few minutes of rain have already exposed how fragile the public health infrastructure is. This is just the start of the season. How will Delhi survive through the next month, if such a situation persists?"



## Ahead of first E20 protest, Team Bharat dares Delhi Police on protesters limit

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
A day ahead of the first protest against the "rushed implementation" of the Central government's E20 ethanol-blended petrol policy, organisers of the demonstration claimed that the Delhi Police had verbally permitted them to hold the agitation at Jantar Mantar but asked them to limit the number of protesters to 200. Leading the protest scheduled for 2 pm on Sunday under the banner "Team Bharat against Ethanol scam", entrepreneur and TV personality Tehseen Poonawalla criticised the conditions imposed by Delhi Police and told India Today Digital that the demonstration would go ahead regardless of any restrictions. Poonawalla also said that he would be addressing a press

conference on Sunday and expose the "sham press conference" held on Saturday by auto experts defending the government's ethanol policy. "We have got the permission verbally from Delhi Police. Strangely, Delhi



Police has asked us to limit the number of protesters to 200 only. I don't know how a police force in a democracy can dictate to citizens that a protest must be limited."

Poonawalla told India Today Digital. Other members of Team Bharat told India Today Digital that the protest wasn't against the ethanol-blending policy but against its implementation and how car owners were being left without choice.

Poonawalla also warned of a stir outside Union Minister Nitin Gadkari's house if the Delhi Police resort to any "funny act" to try and "stop the protest". "In any case, we are protesting at Jantar Mantar irrespective of what the police say. We don't care. If they don't allow us to protest or act funny, we will sit in front of Nitin Gadkari's house," he said. Though Nitin Gadkari is the Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways, he is seen as the face of the government's ethanol-blended fuel campaign because of his support.

## Cops Trace Sources Of Rs 15 Lakh Transactions In Ram Temple Theft Case

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
The police have found new evidence in the theft of donations from the Ram Temple in Uttar Pradesh's Ayodhya. The details are linked to one of the accused, Avinash Shukla, whose transactions exceeded Rs 15 lakh. He sent the money to many people and also handed over cash to some. The police are investigating whether these funds were linked to the stolen donation money. The investigation found Shukla gifted approximately Rs 2 lakh in cash and an expensive mobile phone to a woman friend. This, too, is under investigation. His brother, Abhishek, had frequently seen him carrying cash to a yoga centre after his shift, the police said. He did not give a clear answer when his

brother asked him about the source of the funds. Later, when Abhishek asked another individual, Anukalp, about the source of the cash, he said the devotees gave money out of



happiness and also offered payments in exchange for assistance during the darshan. He also warned Abhishek not to bring up the subject again. On July 3, the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the alleged

embezzlement of donations at the Ram Temple arrived at the temple premises to carry out further investigation in the case.

The state government on July 1 granted a 15-day extension to the SIT to complete its investigation. The extension has been given to enable the SIT to widen the scope of its probe and conduct a comprehensive inquiry into all aspects of the case.

An FIR was registered on June 25 after the SIT submitted the preliminary report on June 23, and eight accused were arrested. Subsequently, Champat Rai and former trustee Anil Mishra resigned, taking moral responsibility for alleged misappropriation of donations hours after the police arrested all eight people named in the FIR.

# Govt orders Meta to remove child abuse ads on Instagram, seeks reply in 7 days

**The Centre has issued a notice to Meta over paid Instagram ads allegedly promoting Child Sexual Exploitative and Abuse Material (CSEAM). MeitY has ordered the removal of such ads and content and sought a detailed explanation from the company within seven days, sources said.**

**New Delhi.(Agency)**  
The government has issued a stern notice to Meta over the alleged presence of Child Sexual Exploitative and Abuse Material (CSEAM) in paid advertisements on Instagram, news agency ANI reported citing sources. According to the report, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has directed Instagram to immediately disable all advertisements and content that promote or facilitate access to CSEAM on its platform. The government has also sought a detailed explanation from Meta, asking the company to respond within seven days. The action comes as part of the Centre's crackdown on the circulation and promotion of child sexual abuse

material online, with authorities seeking stricter compliance from digital platforms.

### BBC INVESTIGATION TRIGGERED SCRUTINY

The government's action follows a BBC Eye investigation that found Instagram displaying paid advertisements containing terms such as "rape video" and "child video", which allegedly redirected users to Telegram channels where child sexual abuse material could be purchased for as little as Rs 99.

According to the investigation, the advertisements had passed Instagram's moderation process before appearing on the platform.

### TEST ACCOUNT RECEIVED ILLEGAL ADVERTISEMENTS

The BBC said it created an alias Instagram

account in India after observing that the platform recommended sexually suggestive content even without users actively searching for it.

The account followed 10 profiles posting sexually suggestive content to study Instagram's recommendation system.



Within a week, it began receiving advertisements offering video calls and explicit sexual content. Days later, the account was shown advertisements

depicting children with adults in sexually suggestive situations, along with links to Telegram channels.

The investigation found around 30 unique advertisements allegedly promoting child sexual abuse material, some appearing through multiple advertiser accounts, in addition to about 20 advertisements featuring adult pornography.

### DISTURBING CONTENT IDENTIFIED

According to the BBC, one advertisement showed a boy and a girl, appearing to be around 12 years old, engaged in a sexual act. Another featured a man claiming to be 52 years old alongside a girl described as 12, urging users to click through to Telegram. The investigation also reported an advertisement.

## Govt raises ONGC chairman entry age to 59, offers up to five-year tenure

New Delhi.(Agency)

The government has relaxed the eligibility conditions for appointing the next chairman of state-owned ONGC by raising the maximum entry age to 59 years and offering the successful candidate a fixed three-year term extendable by up to two years, widening the pool of eligible contenders to head India's largest oil and gas producer. The Public Enterprises Selection Board (PESB), the government's headhunter for appointments to state-run firms, has invited applications for the post, which will fall vacant on December 7 when incumbent Arun Kumar Singh completes his extended tenure.

Under the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) advertisement, candidates should not have attained the age of 59 years on the date of occurrence of the vacancy -- December 7, 2026. The selected candidate will initially be appointed for three years, with the tenure extendable by another two years after a performance review. Any employment or extension of tenure beyond the age of 60 shall be on a contract basis," the advertisement said. The selection will be made by a search-cum-selection committee constituted by the oil ministry instead of the normal PESB selection process. The revised age limit marks a departure from the norms followed for most board-level appointments in Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs). While recent appointments have largely been governed by a residual service criterion rather than fixed age limits, the advertisement prescribes a maximum entry age of 59 years, allowing both internal and external candidates who would otherwise have been ineligible to be considered. The tenure conditions are also a departure from the prevailing practice of appointing PSU chiefs until the age of superannuation, which is generally 60 years.

Under the revised framework, a chairman may continue beyond that age on a contractual basis. The government had made a similar relaxation when appointing Singh in 2022.

## Tata Steel aims to spend 20,000 cr in FY27 on expansion, technology

NEW DELHI.(Agency)

Tata Steel is looking to spend around ₹20,000 crore as capex in the current financial year and a major share of it will be spent to support the India business, the company's management said.

The capex for the ongoing FY27 will be around 38 per cent higher from ₹14,559 crore that Tata Steel has spent on capital expenditure in the preceding 2025-26 financial year. "In FY26, we spent ₹14,559 crore on capital expenditure, and we plan to increase this to approximately ₹20,000 crore in FY 2026-27, with 60 per cent allocated to India," said Tata Steel's CEO & MD T V Narendran, and Koushik Chatterjee, the company's Executive Director & Chief Financial Officer. The management made the statement in reply to a question related to Tata Steel's capex plans and long-term growth strategy.

They said the capital allocation strategy for FY27 focuses on a balanced mix of sustenance projects, ongoing investments in value-added downstream and infrastructure projects, new technologies, and long-term growth projects, with a clear emphasis on India. "This includes expansions in tinplate and wires, the HRPGL (Hot Rolled Pickling & Galvanising Line) facility at Tarapur, and the Coke Ovens project at Jamshedpur. In addition, we are continuing to invest in mining, a stronger supply chain and sustainability of operations," the company officials said.

## Ex-CFO of RCap, Amit Bapna, held in connection with ADAG probe

NEW DELHI.(Agency)

CBI has arrested Amit Bapna, former chief financial officer of Reliance Capital Ltd, in connection with the ongoing investigation into the Reliance ADA Group cases. Investigation has allegedly revealed that Bapna, who served as CFO at Reliance Capital



Ltd from Aug 2014 to Dec 2019, was one of the key decision-makers responsible for managing company's financial affairs. "Bapna allegedly facilitated and approved loans to intermediary and conduit companies despite being aware that such lending was contrary to RBI guidelines and the sanction conditions governing borrowings from public sector banks," a CBI spokesperson said.

"Investigation further revealed that funds borrowed by Reliance Commercial Finance Ltd were diverted through such intermediary entities to various Reliance ADA Group companies, including Reliance Capital, Reliance Infrastructure and Reliance Power, thereby causing wrongful loss to the lending banks and corresponding wrongful gain to the accused persons and related entities," it added.

Bapna was already in judicial custody in a case being investigated by ED, and was lodged in Tihar jail. In order to secure his custody in the present case, the CBI obtained production warrant from court.

# Maersk places fresh order for 1,000 India-made shipping containers

**The announcement came as Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal, unveiled the first export-import (EXIM) shipping container manufactured in India for the company at the Maersk-CONCOR Inland Container Depot in UP's Dadri.**

New Delhi.(Agency)

Global shipping giant Maersk has placed an order for 1,000 India-manufactured shipping containers, the government said. The development was announced as Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal, unveiled the first export-import (EXIM) shipping container manufactured in India for the company at the Maersk-CONCOR Inland Container



Depot in Uttar Pradesh's Dadri on Friday, July 3. "Marking a strong vote of confidence in India's emerging container manufacturing ecosystem, Maersk also placed an order for 1,000 additional India-manufactured shipping containers with DCM Shriram Group during the event," the

Union Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways said in an official release. It asserted that the bulk order marks the beginning of a long-term commercial partnership that is expected to strengthen India's position in the global maritime value chain. The development builds on

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's interaction with Robert Maersk Uggla, Chairman of the Supervisory Board of AP Moller-Maersk, in February 2025, the ministry noted. During the meeting, he had encouraged the company to support the development of world-class container manufacturing in India, it added.

"Within just sixteen months, that vision has culminated in the successful rollout of the country's first internationally procured, India-manufactured EXIM shipping container, demonstrating the Government's ability to translate strategic intent into timely execution," the ministry stated.

Speaking at the unveiling ceremony, Sonowal said that India is rapidly emerging as a trusted global manufacturing and maritime powerhouse under the leadership of PM Modi. The unveiling of the first India-manufactured EXIM shipping container for a leading global shipping line is a defining milestone on our journey towards Atmanirbhar Bharat. It reflects the growing confidence of global industry in India's manufacturing capabilities and our commitment to building world-class maritime infrastructure," he said.

## SEBI share buyback: Open market operations to resume from August 1; will you benefit?

**Sebi has decided to resume open market share buybacks from August 1. As a result, listed companies will now be able to buy back their shares through tender offers as well as through stock exchanges. The decision of the regulator will provide companies with greater flexibility. It will also provide investors with an additional option to sell shares.**

Kolkata.(Agency)

Sebi has taken a momentous decision regarding share buyback. As a result, there could be a big shift that could trigger a wave of cash distribution on Dalal Street. In a landmark board meeting, market regulator Sebi (Securities and Exchange Board of India) officially approved the reintroduction of open market share buybacks through stock exchanges from August 1, 2026. This not only constitutes a reversal of phasing out of open market buybacks in early 2025 but will also boost the interest of investors. Analysts have pointed out that SEBI's latest move is designed to inject immense flexibility into how India industry manages surplus cash. What does this mean for the everyday investor, and perhaps more important, how does it benefit investors with a payday? Let's

have a look at the implications and policy reversal in detail.

**New SEBI open market buyback rules** Since earlier open market buybacks were described as slow and opaque, the market regulator has completely overhauled the framework to inject efficiency and investor protection. Companies must wrap up the entire buyback process within 66 working days

buyback window, the regulator has said. **Who will benefit the most?**

A few constituencies can benefit from the step. Analysts point out that the cash-rich IT sector will be the big winners. Prominent tech companies frequently generate massive free cash flows. Instead of navigating complex, fixed-price tender offers, giants can now buy back shares directly during normal trading hours, vastly improving their return on equity.

Retail investors can benefit a lot. Retail stock investors can have a powerful safety net. Since open market purchases happen via regular trading transactions, they provide immediate upward price support to the stock on the NSE and BSE. Also electronic dissemination mandate will pave the way for public shareholders receiving instant updates within one working

day. Listed companies who want to restructure their capital can also save compliance costs. Sebi has eliminated the mandatory requirement to appoint merchant bankers for these transactions, shifting the operational responsibility directly to the stock exchanges, secretarial auditors and compliance teams. With India Inc running up share buyback announcements worth about Rs 25,000 crore in 2026, the new rule from August 1 can boost trading volumes.



from the launch date, preventing long drawn-out capital hoarding. This will remove the space for procrastination.

The new rules can also lead to aggressive capital deployment. Listed companies are mandated to utilise at least 40% of their earmarked buyback funds within the first half of the execution period.

Trying to eliminate market manipulation and insider trading, promoter and promoter group holdings will remain frozen at the ISIN level throughout the

## Decision to drop Adani charges not tied to planned investments: US DOJ

NEW DELHI.(Agency)

The US Department of Justice has denied that its decision to drop criminal charges against Indian billionaire Gautam Adani and seven others was linked to the Adani Group's plans to invest about \$10 billion in the United States, saying the prosecution was legally unsustainable and should never have been brought. In a filing, responding to a federal judge's demand for a fuller explanation, Principal Associate Deputy Attorney General R Trent McCotter rejected media reports suggesting the dismissal was influenced by the conglomerate's investment plans. "The current or former

Department attorneys... have suggested that I sought dismissal of the securities charges at least in part because of some promise by those defendants to invest money in the United States. That is false," McCotter wrote.

I would have sought dismissal of the securities charges regardless of any mentions of investments," he added, saying he had already concluded that the case should be dropped before the issue was ever raised. "The mention of potential investments could not have played any role." Reports in US media had linked the DOJ decision to drop charges altogether to Adani hiring a new legal team led by Robert J Giuffra Jr, one

of President Trump's personal lawyers and the co-chairman of the prominent firm Sullivan & Cromwell. According to a May 14 report in the New York Times, Giuffra had made a presentation of about 100 slides in meetings at the Justice Department's headquarters in Washington in April this year, outlining why prosecutors lacked basic evidence, as well as the jurisdiction even to bring the case. In one of the slides, he reportedly made an unusual offer: If prosecutors dropped the charges, Adani would be willing to invest USD 10 billion in the American economy and create 15,000 jobs, echoing a pledge he had made in the wake of Trump's election last year.

# Semiconductor mission of Rs 1.25 trillion: Run your eyes through these two stocks

**The Centre has decided to undertake major drive in chip manufacturing by adopting the 1.25 trillion semiconductor mission. The ambitious plan has set a target of meeting 75% of the country's chip needs domestically by 2030. This could significantly roll out new opportunities for companies like Kaynes Technology and CG Power.**

Kolkata.(Agency)

ordered in May, The Centre is rapidly moving towards adding muscle to the country's semiconductor manufacturing sector. In this regard, the government has taken a significant step by approving the expansion of the Rs-1.25 trillion India Semiconductor Mission. The objective of this plan is to meet 75% of the country's chip needs domestically by 2030. This decision could open up new opportunities for many companies involved in semiconductor design, packaging, testing, and manufacturing. It is no wonder why



investors are now eyeing companies that can benefit from this mission. India currently imports most of its semiconductor chips and other equipment. The government wants to reduce the overwhelming dependence on imports. The proposed Rs 1.25-lakh crore mission aims to develop not just chip factories but the entire semiconductor ecosystem, including design, packaging, testing, and advanced materials. Naturally, it will boost some companies engaged in this sector. Kaynes Technology is among the leading

companies in this sector already investing in the semiconductor business. The company is developing Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test (OSAT) services in Gujarat. Chip packaging and testing will take place at this location. If the government provides new incentives, the company could see an initial boost. On Friday, the company's shares closed at Rs 3,326, up 5.30%. The company has generated returns of about 328% to investors over the past five years.

CG Power

**Market price: Rs 894.40 INR**

The business of CG Power is no longer solely manufacturing electrical equipment. It is also part of a group that has received the Centre's nod for the OSAT project. This has given the company an opportunity to enter the semiconductor packaging business. This new sector, combined with its strong industrial business, could provide a new direction for the company's long-term growth. On Friday, the company's shares closed at Rs 894.40, down 6.78%. The stock has offered investors a return of 1008% in the last five years.

The need of semiconductors can hardly be overestimated. They are used as needed in cars, mobile phones, computers, defense equipment, the artificial intelligence sector, data centers and many other sectors advanced technologies. The global chip crisis during the pandemic demonstrated the importance of domestic chip manufacturing for any country. Consequently, India is rapidly increasing its investment in this sector. Experts have pointed out that the sector can grow fast and the government could take steps such as single window clearances for investments in this sector.

## Short news

**Report contaminated water supply, says Panvel mayor after two GBS cases****Mumbai.(Agency)**

Panvel City Municipal Corporation (PCMC) mayor, Nitin Patil, has appealed to the people to report contaminated water supply. His appeal came after two confirmed cases of the rare and serious autoimmune disorder (Guillain-Barre Syndrome-GBS) were reported in Panvel in the past month.

The PCMC has launched an awareness drive across suspected places and started collecting water samples. The two cases were reported at the Aadhar Multispecialty Hospital, Panvel. A 40-year-old male patient, complaining of weakness, was admitted to the hospital on June 6 and after treatment, was released on June 15. Another 71-year-old female patient from Konkan arrived at Takka on June 12 after a Chardham journey. She had symptoms of fever and weakness from June 16. She suffered with numbness in her hands and legs on June 24.

The disease is triggered by a preceding viral or bacterial infection arising out of consuming contaminated water, eating outside food, among others.

This affects the brains besides other symptoms, as is observed among the infected persons. Patil stressed upon checking the potable water quality before consumption. He further said that in the advent of monsoon season, infectious diseases spread fast and hence people should remain cautious.

**UP man killed 4 mnths after interfaith union; bro-in-law held****Agra.(Agency)**

A 30-year-old man, who had married a woman from Firozabad in March, was allegedly beaten to death during his first visit to his in-laws' house on Thursday night. The prime accused, his brother-in-law, was arrested after an encounter on Friday, police said.

Devesh Singh alias Dau, an autorickshaw driver and resident of Tedhi Bagiya, had been living in Agra with his wife after the couple married against her family's wishes. "According to Devesh's family, the woman's relatives assaulted and strangled him after he reached his in-laws' house with his wife for the first time after the wedding," an officer at Ramgarh police station, privy to the case, told TOI. His body was found near Chapariya locality late Thursday night.

An FIR was registered at Ramgarh police station on the complaint of the victim's uncle under BNS sections 103(1) for murder and 115(2) for voluntarily causing hurt. Two police teams were formed to investigate the case.

Police said they received information on Friday morning that the prime accused, Sameer Mohammad, 28, was hiding in Hasmatnagar, Firozabad. When a police team surrounded him, he allegedly opened fire instead of surrendering. Police retaliated and Sameer sustained bullet injuries in both legs. He was arrested and admitted to the district hospital under police custody.SP (city) Ravishankar Prasad said raids were on to arrest the remaining named accused.

**State can't undo 33-year-old appointment: Gujarat High Court****Mumbai.(Agency)**

The Gujarat HighCourt has quashed a state govt order cancelling an appointment of a teacher 33 years after he was given the job and some 17 years after his death, and stopping the pension being given to his widow.

In this case, Harshad Bhavsar, along with five others, was appointed as a teacher in its school by Sugyan Education Trust in 1988. After ascertaining he got requisite qualification for the post, his appointment was regularised by the district education officer in 1989. After serving for 16 years, Bhavsar died in 2004. The education department began paying family pension to Bhavsar's widow, Manorama.

In 2021, the director of schools cancelled the appointment of six teachers and a librarian of the school, including that of Bhavsar, withdrew grant benefits, cancelled employee numbers and stopped salary payments under the Direct Salary Scheme.

The govt action was initiated following a complaint made in 2015 by the husband of then school principal, alleging that the appointments had been made in violation of recruitment rules. The govt cancelled the appointments on the grounds that they were based on forged documents, made without obtaining a no-objection certificate, without publishing advertisements and without seeking names from the employment exchange, causing a financial loss of over Rs 6 crore to the exchequer. The school trust and the affected employees, including Bhavsar's widow, challenged the order before HC in 2021. A single-judge bench quashed the govt's decision, ruling that appointments could not be cancelled after more than three decades.

# An unsung forest fire warrior's battle to save the greenery in Odisha

**This guardian of the forests has been the first responder to wildfires for last 33 years in Sundargarh****ROURKELA.(Agency)**

Every summer, when the forests of Ujjalpur range in Sundargarh begin to crackle under an unforgiving sun and carpets of dry leaves wait for a spark, one man readies himself for war. Not with machines or protective gear but with grit, experience and an unceasing love for the forests.

For 52-year-old Debanand Mahaling, the last 33 summers have meant only one thing - fighting forest fire. A resident of the forest-fringed Sagarpali hamlet under Mangaspur village in Tangarpali block, about 130 km from Rourkela, Debanand has spent more than three decades standing between raging flames and the forests he calls home. While others seek safety when fire sweeps across the hills, he runs towards it.

For villagers, he is not merely an environment warrior. He is the forest's first responder and its unofficial guardian. Forest fires are a



recurring menace in this part of western Odisha, triggered by natural, accidental and human causes. Every blaze threatens not just trees but entire ecosystems, forcing birds from nests and animals from habitats built over generations. For Debanand, the loss is personal. "These fires are not just environmental disasters. They are personal battles for me. Every burning tree, every

fleeing animal and every charred patch of forest strengthens my resolve to protect nature," he says.

His journey began in 1993 after he returned home following completion of his ITI course in Rourkela and joined his family's farming activities. Around the same time, senior volunteer Santosh Patel introduced him to the Nehru Yuva Kendra movement, an experience that shaped his commitment to community service and conservation. His work prompted the Forest department to engage him as a watcher in 2012.

What started with plantation drives and occasional firefighting gradually became a mission. Debanand mobilised 24 village youths to form a community forest fire response team. The moment smoke rises above the hills, the team heads out carrying little more than green branches, spades and fire beaters, often trekking across rugged terrain in slippers.

## Telangana revives Gond kingdom's historic fort with heritage-focused makeover

**ADILABAD.(Agency)**

For over six centuries—from 1308 CE until Indian Independence — the Gondwana kings ruled a vast tribal kingdom stretching across present-day Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, northern Telangana, western Odisha and parts of southern Uttar Pradesh. Now, their legacy is getting a modern makeover.

The Utnoor Fort, once the seat of Gond power, is undergoing a Rs 3.9 crore renovation, with plans for a museum, architectural lighting, landscaped greenery, a children's play area and open spaces for cultural celebrations. The Telangana government has sanctioned Rs 3.9 crore for the restoration of the historic fort, with renovation work currently under way. Besides conserving the fort, officials plan to transform it into a heritage destination showcasing the history, culture and traditions of the Gond community.



During a recent inspection, District Collector Rajarshi Shah and Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA), Utnoor Project Officer Manda Makarand directed officials to prepare proposals for a state-of-the-art museum that will preserve the history of the Gond kingdom, its rulers and tribal heritage for future generations.

The collector also asked engineering officials to prepare plans for decorative lighting,

greenery, a children's play area and open spaces to host small cultural and community events within the fort premises, which spread across nearly 15 acres.

Officials say the Archaeology department and ITDA are jointly executing the restoration works, ensuring that conservation does not compromise the fort's historical character. Speaking to , Kumra Vittal Rao, adviser to the Gondwana Panchayat Raj Centre and a member of

the Gond royal family, says the Gondwana kingdom ruled the region from 1308 AD until Indian Independence. The first ruler was Raja Hanumanth Rao, while the last ruler was Attram Dev Shah. The Gond rulers governed the region from their capital at Chandrapur, in present-day Maharashtra, with their influence extending across Utnoor, Kanchanpelli and Mahoor. After Independence, the kingdom merged.

## Cop who turned thalassaemia crusader in Western Odisha

**SAMBALPUR.(Agency)**

For years, Ramdas Panda organised blood donation camps, mobilised donors and responded to emergency calls for blood. But it was a chance encounter with a distressed mother of two children suffering from thalassaemia at VIMSAR, Burla, during the Covid-19 pandemic that changed the course of his life.



Four years later, the former Odisha Police constable took voluntary retirement to dedicate himself to supporting thalassaemia patients, building a network of over 500 affected individuals across western Odisha and campaigning for greater awareness of the genetic blood disorder that requires lifelong blood transfusions.

The encounter with two brothers, Sipun and Papun Barik from Bargarh, in 2020 was Panda's introduction to thalassaemia. The children were struggling to find blood for their regular transfusions as the pandemic

disrupted blood donation activities and hospital services.

"I was surprised to learn that a healthy-looking child could require blood twice every month just to survive. I wanted to understand why," the 46-year-old recalled.

After arranging blood for the two siblings, he began studying the disorder and interacting with doctors, patients and their families. What began as an effort to help two children soon evolved into a larger mission.

Panda not only took responsibility for arranging blood for the brothers but

also bore their monthly travel and treatment-related expenses. At the same time, he started compiling information on thalassaemia patients across western Odisha.

From a handful of families, the initiative gradually has since grown into a WhatsApp network of more than 500 patients who use the platform to seek blood donors whenever they visit VIMSAR for transfusions. "I

can now assure that any thalassaemia patient coming to VIMSAR for blood will not have to face any hassle," Panda said. The network eventually became more than a support group. It evolved into a platform for awareness generation and advocacy. Panda has since conducted awareness programmes in educational institutions across the region, including Gangadhar Meher University, VSSUT and AIIMS, highlighting the importance of voluntary blood donation and premarital screening to prevent.

## Telangana's avionics engineer who grounded himself to lift others

**The funds were donated to Basavatarakam Hospital to support children undergoing cancer treatment.****HYDERABAD.(Agency)**

At an age when many professionals focus on advancing their careers, 34-year-old Vinil Reddy Adudodla chose a different path. In 2023, he stepped away from his job in avionics engineering to devote himself full-time to social service and built a volunteer network that works in education, healthcare, agriculture and environmental conservation.

Through Youth Force and in his role as general secretary of the Telangana Development Forum, Vinil has mobilised thousands of young volunteers for community initiatives. He also contributes around 90% of his income towards social causes. One of his key initiatives is 'Mana



Panta Mana Vanta', under which 86 villages have been adopted to help preserve indigenous paddy varieties. Working with farmers, the programme collects traditional seeds from Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha, multiplies them and preserves them

in community seed banks.

The idea that shaped Vinil's life emerged during his Intermediate studies. Moved by a television programme on children battling cancer, he began discussing ways to help with friends and family. The first initiative started modestly in a college canteen, where he and his classmates encouraged students to donate the loose change left after buying snacks.

The small contributions added up quickly, with nearly Rs 2 lakh collected in the first month. The funds were donated to Basavatarakam Hospital to support children undergoing cancer treatment.

Recalling an incident that left a lasting impression, Vinil said a four-year-old girl

who had completed cancer treatment could not be discharged because her family could not pay the final hospital bill. "We quietly cleared the amount and left. Her parents searched for us for two days just to say thank you. That experience convinced us that our contributions should remain anonymous," he tells the .

Today, the organisation works with students across colleges and encourages them to contribute not just money, but also their time. "If every young person gives even one or two hours a week to society, the collective impact can be enormous. We don't expect everyone to become social workers. We only ask them to become responsible citizens," he adds.

**This Thane pet crematorium has witnessed hundreds of goodbyes****Mumbai.(Agency)**

The faux diamond stud in his right ear catches the 6 pm light. Bluetooth earphones hang around his neck as Rahul Suradkar watches a woman walk silently down a corridor painted with paw prints and a playful pup. "I am here for the ashes... of the rabbit," she says.

"Have you brought...?" "The white dabba right there," she replies before he can finish.

That's his cue. Suradkar opens the plastic box, disappears inside, and returns with a metal wok holding the rabbit's cooled remains. He gently scoops the ashes into the container, snaps the lid shut and hands it back.

Neither says another word. As he watches her leave, weighed down by grief, Suradkar recalls other owners who have broken down before him — some weeping uncontrollably, others calling priests to perform the last rites. "For some, they're family," says the khaki-clad operator.

Opened in Majiwada last November by transport minister Pratap Sarnaik — whose own family had to travel to Mumbai to cremate their dog, Moti, because no such facility existed in Thane — the crematorium has already handled nearly 1,500 cremations. Families travel from as far as

Ambernath and Kharegaon, says Suradkar, one of the two operators who run the gas-fired incinerator and return the ashes to owners. At 35, this animal-loving father of two, has cremated dogs, cats, rabbits, turtles and, once, a deer brought in by the forest department with all the necessary paperwork. His Rs 19,000-a-month job is not for the faint-hearted. Every day, wearing gloves, a mask and goggles, he lifts the bodies of animals into the furnace before later collecting their ashes for grieving families.

## NEWS BOX

## Kylian Mbappe: If we have to get our hands dirty, we'll do it

Philadelphia, (Agency)

France captain Kylian Mbappe said his side proved they are much more than just an entertaining attacking team after grinding out a hard-fought win over Paraguay in the FIFA World Cup Round of 16, insisting Les Bleus are equally capable of winning a physical and scrappy battle if needed.

Speaking after France sealed their place in the quarter-finals, Mbappe said the team's display against Paraguay showed they could adapt to whatever the occasion demanded. "If we have to get our hands dirty, we'll do it," Mbappe said in the post-match interview. "They thought we'd come in tuxedos, playing pretty football with one-tuos and attacking moves. But we know how to play ugly football too. We did that today, we won, and even in that kind of game we were better than them." Paraguay vs France, FIFA World Cup 2026 Round of 16: Highlights | Report Paraguay turned the knockout clash into a scrappy affair, repeatedly trying to break France's rhythm and draw the players into



confrontations. Mbappe, however, said the French squad had anticipated exactly that kind of contest. "We knew the kind of match we were going to have. Today we showed that we're not just a team that knows how to play attacking football.

**"BEAT THEM AT THEIR OWN GAME"**

The Real Madrid forward also brushed aside Paraguay's attempts to unsettle France during the closing stages of the match, saying every team has its own way of competing.

"That's their football. That's the way they play," Mbappe said. "Everyone uses the weapons they have. There's no right or wrong way to play football. There's only one way, and that's to win." "They tried to beat us that way, but we beat them at their own game." France eventually came through one of their sternest tests of the tournament to move into the last eight, showing a side of their game that has often been overshadowed by their attacking quality.

**MOROCCONEXT**

France will now take on Morocco in the quarter-finals, with the tie set to pit Mbappe against close friend and former Paris Saint-Germain teammate Achraf Hakimi. Mbappe revealed Hakimi may have already reached out after the match but said friendships will be put on hold once the two teams step onto the pitch.

## Mbappe settles battle of wills as France edge resilient Paraguay into quarters

Philadelphia, (Agency)

Kylian Mbappe eventually found the one moment Paraguay could not survive.

For 70 minutes, France's talisman was kicked, crowded, wrestled and frustrated as Paraguay turned their World Cup Round of 16 clash into an attritional battle fought as much through grit as quality. The South Americans, fresh from their penalty shoot-out upset over Germany, arrived with little interest in matching France's star power and every intention of disrupting it. They succeeded for long stretches, but when substitute Desire Doue burst into the penalty area and was brought down by Diego Gomez, Mbappe stepped up to settle the contest from the spot. His coolly taken penalty secured a hard-fought 1-0 victory in searing 38°C heat, sending Didier Deschamps' side into a



quarter-final against Morocco while ending one of the tournament's most spirited underdog stories. It also took Mbappe to seven goals at the tournament, drawing him level with Lionel Messi in the race for the Golden Boot. **STAR-STUDED STALEMATE**

France arrived boasting arguably the most feared attacking quartet left in the competition. Mbappe, Ousmane Dembele, Michael Olise and Bradley Barcola had dismantled Sweden in the previous round, and the expectation was that Paraguay would be the latest side to fall victim to Les Bleus' attacking firepower. Instead, Gustavo Alfaro's men produced one of the defensive performances of the tournament. Happy to concede possession, Paraguay retreated into a compact defensive shape, crowding central areas and forcing France into harmless circulation of the ball. Mbappe was rarely afforded space to run, Dembele found himself double-marked, while Olise's clever movement was repeatedly met by a wall of white shirts. The statistics at half-time underlined Paraguay's discipline. France had enjoyed more than 80 per cent possession but failed to register a single shot on target, producing an expected goals figure of just 0.15.

## England Women are flying, but can they break the Australia hoodoo in final?

**Women's T20 World Cup, AUSW vs ENGW: Nat Sciver-Brunt's England and Sophie Molineux's Australia will lock horns in the blockbuster final on Sunday, July 5, at the iconic Lord's Cricket Ground.**

New Delhi, (Agency)

England could hardly have asked for a better build-up to the ICC Women's T20 World Cup final. Seven wins from seven matches, dominant performances with both bat and ball, and a place in the title clash at Lord's have established them as one of the standout teams of the tournament. Yet, standing between them and history is a familiar foe — Australia. For all of England's resurgence under Charlotte Edwards, the final presents a psychological hurdle that has haunted

generations. England have never beaten Australia in a Women's World Cup final, losing all six previous meetings across the ODI and T20 World Cups. Three of those defeats came in the 50-over showpiece (1988, 1997 and 2022), while Australia also got the better of England in the 2012, 2018 and 2023 Women's T20 World Cup finals. That daunting record makes Sunday's clash about far more than simply lifting the trophy, it is an opportunity to finally end the Australia hoodoo. Australia, however, have once again shown why they remain the benchmark in women's cricket. The defending champions are unbeaten heading into the final after sweeping through the group stage before brushing aside West Indies in the semi-finals. England have matched that flawless run, defeating every opponent in their path and sealing their place in the final with a commanding 40-run win over South Africa. With both teams yet to suffer a defeat, the tournament has built towards the blockbuster final everyone had hoped for.

**BATTLE BETWEEN TWO FLAWLESS CAMPAIGNS**

England have looked the most complete side in the competition. Their batting has clicked



consistently, while a disciplined bowling attack has strangled opponents throughout the tournament. They began their campaign with an emphatic 87-run win over Sri Lanka before overcoming Ireland, Scotland, West Indies and New Zealand in the group stage.

The semi-final against South Africa further

underlined their resilience as Nat Sciver-Brunt and Heather Knight rescued England from 23 for 3 with a match-winning 133-run partnership before the bowlers wrapped up a comprehensive 40-run victory.

Australia's campaign has been equally ruthless. Comfortable victories over Bangladesh, Netherlands, Pakistan and India in the group stage were followed by an emphatic eight-wicket win over West Indies in the semi-final. Their depth has once again set them apart from the rest of the field, with different players stepping up in every match and ensuring there has been little drop in standards, regardless of the situation.

**AUSTRALIA'S DYNASTY MEETS ENGLAND'S DREAM**

Australia enter the final chasing a seventh Women's T20 World Cup title, having already won the tournament in 2010, 2012, 2014, 2018, 2020 and 2023. Victory at Lord's would also hand them a remarkable 14th women's world title across the ODI and T20 World Cups, further cementing one of the greatest dynasties in international sport.

## Mbappe refuses to shake hands, agitated Gill throws ball at France striker

**France reached the FIFA World Cup quarter-finals after Kylian Mbappe's penalty sealed a 1-0 win over Paraguay, but the match ended with a bizarre confrontation as goalkeeper Orlando Gill threw the ball at the French captain.**

New Delhi, (Agency)

Kylian Mbappe's match-winning penalty sent France into the FIFA World Cup quarter-finals on Sunday, July 5, but the final whistle brought with it an ugly flashpoint involving Paraguay goalkeeper Orlando Gill. Moments after France secured a hard-fought 1-0 win in the Round of 16, Gill walked towards Mbappe to congratulate him with a handshake. The France captain, still celebrating, appeared to ignore the gesture and walked past the Paraguayan

goalkeeper. Frustrated by the snub, Gill threw the match ball at Mbappe's back before walking away. Mbappe did not react to the incident and continued celebrating



France's progression, ensuring the confrontation did not escalate further. The incident quickly drew attention after a fiercely contested encounter in which Paraguay had spent 90 minutes trying to unsettle the two-time world champions.

**FIFA WORLD CUP: FRANCE EKE OUT TOUGH WIN**

France knew they were unlikely to enjoy a straightforward evening against the South

Americans, who defended deep, disrupted the rhythm of the game with frequent fouls and looked to drag Didier Deschamps' side into a physical battle in sweltering conditions. Mbappe eventually settled the contest in the 70th minute, calmly converting a penalty after Desire Doue's driving run into the penalty area forced Diego Gomez into a clumsy challenge. The referee initially waved play on before awarding the spot-kick following a VAR review. The goal was Mbappe's seventh of the tournament and the 19th of his World Cup career, drawing him level with Lionel Messi in the race for the Golden Boot while moving him within one goal of the Argentine's all-time World Cup scoring record. "It wasn't easy. They used every trick in the book," France coach Didier Deschamps said after the match. "It is not the kind of football that will bring people to the stadium, but they defended well. It is always difficult against these South American teams." Mbappe echoed his coach's assessment, insisting France had expected exactly this kind of contest.

## I'd rather be us than them: Jesse Marsch defiant despite Canada's World Cup exit

Houston, (Agency)

Canada's FIFA World Cup 2026 journey came to an end with a 3-0 last-16 defeat to Morocco in Houston on July 4, Saturday, but head coach Jesse Marsch refused to let the scoreline overshadow his team's performance. The Canadian boss said he would "rather be us than them," insisting his players stayed true to their attacking identity despite Morocco's clinical second-half display. The result sends Morocco into a quarter-final against either France or Paraguay as they continue their bid to match or better their historic semi-final run from the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

"We went after the game. We didn't play defensively. We showed we can be better," Marsch said after the defeat. "Of course, we have to be in these situations more and more, and then we have to find ways to succeed. But what a great team. I'd rather be us than them, as good as Morocco is. I'm really proud

of our guys. They're hurting right now, but my goodness, I couldn't be prouder. Canada, thank you. I thank Canada." Canada started



brightly in Houston and forced Morocco goalkeeper Yassine Bounou into two important early saves through Jonathan David and Tani Oluwaseyi. However, Morocco took control after the break as

Azzedine Ounahi scored twice before substitute Soufiane Rahimi sealed a 3-0 victory in stoppage time.

Despite the scoreline, Marsch focused on the progress Canada had made and the identity his side displayed against one of the tournament favourites. Reflecting on Canada's performance, Marsch added: "In the biggest games, in the biggest moments, it's about how much we can be ourselves, how much belief we can show and how much we can put the game on our terms. We did that. We had 11 incredible performances in the first half. We were unlucky not to take the lead. Then it's the fine details.

They have quality and players who compete at the highest level, but in terms of how we played and sticking to who we wanted to be, it was an incredible performance."

## Gautam Gambhir consoles Sanju Samson in long chat after dropping star from T20I team

ARLINGTON, (Agency)

India decided to rest Sanju Samson for the second T20I against England on Saturday, July 4, in Manchester. After three consecutive poor outings from the T20 World Cup-winning opener, the team management handed the spot to the generational talent Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, who had been called up for the tour of the United Kingdom. Samson, who played crucial knocks for India during their triumphant T20 World Cup 2026 campaign, was left out just days after the team management had said they wanted to give their opening pair a long rope because they had earned it. After the decision was made ahead of



the second T20I, India head coach Gautam Gambhir was seen having a long conversation with Samson. Gambhir appeared to console the batter, holding his hand as the two spoke following the selection call. **SAMSON'S STRING OF POOR SCORES**

Samson did not leave the Indian team management with many options. The opener failed to reach double figures in each of his last three T20I innings on the tour of the United Kingdom. After scores of 0 and 5 in India's historic series defeat against Ireland, Samson managed just one run off seven balls in the first T20I against England. With fans increasingly calling for Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's inclusion, the management eventually made the change. Samson's omission paved the way for the 15-year-old to make his international debut. Vaibhav scored 14 off 10 balls in his first outing for India.

However, being rested for the second T20I does not necessarily signal the end of the road for Samson. The Indian team management has repeatedly spoken about backing players over a longer period as they build a new-look T20 side under the captaincy of Shreyas Iyer.

**INDIA FALTER IN VAIBHAV'S DEBUT**

The exclusion of Sanju Samson did little to change India's fortunes under Shreyas Iyer. India are still searching for their first T20I win under Iyer's captaincy after suffering another defeat.

## How the mighty have fallen: What went wrong for Germany and Italy

**Once football's gold standard, Germany and Italy are no longer setting the benchmark. Germany lost its edge. Italy lost its way. Both have watched the rest of the football world overtake them. The climb back to the top will demand far more than another man in the dugout.**

New Delhi, (Agency)

Let's go back to Belo Horizonte, Brazil, July 8, 2014, for a second. If you're not a die-hard football fan, you might not know this game off the top of your head, but you've probably heard the score somewhere, because it's become one of those numbers people just repeat: 7-1. That was Germany, in a World Cup semifinal, against Brazil, the host nation, playing in front of their own fans. It wasn't a



close game that got out of hand late. It was a total, humiliating dismantling, the kind of result people still bring up years later as the go-to example of a team getting torn apart on the biggest stage there is. Four days after that, Germany went on to win the whole tournament. For a while after that, it felt like nobody could touch them. Twelve years, as it

turns out, is enough time to make untouchable look like a long time ago.

Fast-forward to this summer's World Cup. Jose Canale, a 29-year-old center-back playing his first match ever for Paraguay, jogs up to take a penalty after two of his teammates had already missed theirs. He'd said four months earlier he didn't think he'd ever get a

cap. Now here he is, staring down Manuel Neuer, 40 years old and somehow still Manuel Neuer, and he buries it. Cue bedlam. A Paraguayan TV reporter apparently shot out of his chair mid-broadcast and started sobbing under his desk. Somewhere off to the side, eleven Germans stood there not looking at each other, the way people do when something has just ended and nobody's ready to say it out loud. Germany didn't just lose to Paraguay on penalties in the Round of 32, they watched the last bit of their old aura get taken off them, in real time, by a team that had never beaten them before. After Germany's loss, the conversation swung south, almost immediately, to a country that's been living this exact nightmare for years. Italy isn't dealing with one bad tournament. They just missed their third World Cup in a row, beaten on penalties by Bosnia and Herzegovina in a qualifying playoff in Zenica, a small industrial town that now means something it was never supposed to mean in Italian football history. The Azzurri stood and watched the home fans celebrate.

When

# Parineeti Chopra

## Admitted That She Is Scared Of Katrina Kaif: 'That Day She Came...'

As Parineeti Chopra graced the famous 'Koffee With Karan' couch with Aditya Roy Kapoor, she hilariously revealed that she gets extremely nervous around fellow actress Katrina Kaif. In a pure fangirl moment, Parineeti called Katrina her idol, adding that she is a huge admirer of her calm and composed personality. Sharing a particular incident, Parineeti said, "That day, she (Katrina) came to the gym, and I quickly increased the speed of my treadmill." Then Katrina came to her and asked, "What are you doing? How many minutes have you done?" As the 'Chamkila' actress replied, "20 minutes", Katrina replied in a stern voice, "5 more minutes". After hearing this, Parineeti was like, "Okay, okay, whatever you say".



"She is like my idol," she further admitted. When host and filmmaker Karan Johar asked Aditya if he was also scared of Katrina, he shared, "Yes, from time to time". When Karan asked, "But why? She is lovely", both Parineeti and Aditya stated that Katrina has a straight face that can make anyone around her nervous. While Parineeti is yet to share screen space with Katrina, Aditya was seen romancing her in the 2016 outing, "Fitoor". On the professional front, Parineeti recently came out with a devotional track, 'Namami Shamisham'. Through her recent social media post, the 'Kesari' actress revealed that she sang the track while she was pregnant with her son Neer. Revealing what inspired her to record 'Namami Shamisham', Parineeti wrote on Instagram, "There are some prayers that become memories forever, and Namami Shamisham is one of them. I recorded this during my pregnancy, a phase that brought me closer to faith, reflection and gratitude. Every time I listen to it, I'm reminded of that beautiful chapter of my life." "I'm so happy to finally share it with all of you. OUT NOW on YouTube and all music platforms. Har Har Mahadev... Love, Parineeti Chopra", she went on to add.



## Farah Khan Ali Recalls Teenage Bond With Bobby Deol: 'We Were Childhood Sweethearts'



Farah Khan Ali has opened up about her past bond with Bobby Deol, clarifying that the two were childhood sweethearts and that their relationship was innocent. The jewellery designer, who is the daughter of Sanjay Khan and the late Zarine Khan, recalled that she and Bobby had mutual crushes during their teenage years and would write letters to each other.

In a recent interview with Vickey Lalwani, Farah reflected on her equation with Bobby and said their bond was very different from how relationships are perceived today.

**Farah Khan Ali On Her Bond With Bobby Deol** Speaking about Bobby, Farah said, "We were childhood sweethearts. I had a massive crush on him. He had a massive crush on me. And that's it. I mean, nothing. We held hands. We wrote letters to each other. That's it. No dating? No. I mean, those days we were... it's not like today. I was 16, Bobby was 17. That was around 40 years ago, life was very different. Today it's not the same when you're 16 and 17."

Farah made it clear that there was no conventional dating involved and described their teenage bond as sweet, simple and innocent.

**Farah Khan Ali Says Bobby Deol And Tanya Deol Are Family**

Farah also spoke warmly about Bobby and his wife Tanya Deol, saying that both remain very close to her even today. She said Bobby is now one of her closest friends and that she shares an equally affectionate bond with Tanya. "Probably today he is one of my closest friends, and so is Tanya, his wife, whom I adore them from the bottom of my heart," she said.

When it was mentioned that Bobby and Tanya had attended her store launch, Farah said, "They're family to me, and there's nothing I would not do for both of them. I'm so happy that they found each other because they're perfect for each other." Farah added that her connection with Bobby and Tanya goes beyond her old teenage bond with the actor, and that both of them continue to be an important part of her life.

## Sharvari Shares 'Good Energies' With Alia Bhatt, Anil Kapoor In BTS Moments From Alpha Set



Actress Sharvari has shared behind-the-scenes moments with Alia Bhatt from the sets of 'Alpha'. Taking to Instagram, the 'Munjya' actress offered a peek into her on-set experience, where she is seen sharing positive vibes and "good energies" with co-star Alia. Sharing their photos, Sharvari wrote, "It's officially Alpha day! Serving some badass action on screen & good energies behind the scenes! #Alpha in cinemas near you."

In the first image, Alia Bhatt and Sharvari can be seen striking a pose together. Another picture shows Sharvari posing with Anil Kapoor. The carousel also includes a video of her skipping through the hills, along with several solo shots from the film's sets. Interestingly, both actresses shared a great bond on the sets of 'Alpha' and were often seen enjoying their time together during the shoot. They were also spotted promoting the film as a team. Their on-set camaraderie and off-screen bond reflected a strong working equation. Alia and Sharvari were seen engaging in fun moments while also actively participating in promotional activities for the film.

In "Alpha," Alia Bhatt plays Sita, also known as the "Alpha Killer," in the spy thriller. Her character is a highly skilled and dangerous secret agent who has been trained from childhood by her adoptive father. The story follows her as she sets out on a mission to take down the very people who raised her as a weapon.

On the other hand, Sharvari plays an elite secret agent and Alia Bhatt's partner in Yash Raj Films' action thriller. Her character is a highly skilled spy who initially finds herself in conflict with Alia's character but eventually joins forces with her to take on a common enemy.

Directed by Shiv Rawail, "Alpha" is produced by Aditya Chopra under the banner of Yash Raj Films. The spy thriller is the seventh film in the YRF Spy Universe.

# Preity Zinta's

## AI Deepfake Case: Bombay HC Seeks Takedown Plan, Next Hearing On July 6

Preity Zinta has approached the Bombay High Court. The actress has requested the removal of AI-generated deepfake videos, morphed images, and other unauthorised content featuring her circulating on social media and other platforms. Justice Madhav Jamdar heard the case on Friday. According to reports, the court, after hearing the actress' plea, has asked all parties,



including online platforms, to find a way to take down the content in question. The next hearing in the case is now scheduled for July 6.

### Preity Zinta's Plea

Preity Zinta has filed a case in the Bombay High Court, stating that several AI-made deepfake videos, edited photos, and chatbot conversations are using her identity without her permission. In her plea, the actress requested the court to order the removal of any such content that uses her face,

name, or identity without her permission. She has also requested the court to stop anyone from creating or sharing AI-generated content featuring her without her permission in the future.

### Court Decision on Preity Zinta's Case

During the hearing, Justice Madhav Jamdar asked all the parties to come up with a process to remove the disputed content from websites and online platforms. The court did not pass any interim order and scheduled the next hearing for July 6.

Meanwhile, on the professional front, the actress is gearing up for the release of her upcoming film 'Batwara 1947'. The makers of the film recently unveiled the character posters of the core cast of the drama. The character posters show Shabana Azmi, Sunny Deol, Preity Zinta, Karan Deol, Ali Fazal, and Abhimanyu Singh in a fresh avatar.

### What Exactly Are Personality Rights?

Although "personality rights" is now a commonly used term, there is no single statute in India that specifically defines or governs these rights. Instead, they have evolved through judicial decisions over the years.

Broadly speaking, personality rights refer to an individual's right to control the commercial use of their identity. This includes their name, face, photograph, voice, signature, image, likeness, and other distinctive characteristics associated with them.



## NEWS BOX

## Iran envoy says friendly nations to get 'special' Hormuz fee treatment

BEIJING.(Agency)

Iran's ambassador to China insisted Saturday that new fees would be charged to ships transiting the Strait of Hormuz -- an idea rejected by Washington -- while assuring that "friendly" nations would receive special treatment. The initial deal struck between Iran and the United States to end their war stipulated that commercial ships would transit the strait free of charge for 60 days, but it remains unclear what will be in place after that period. Iranian Ambassador Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli told the World Peace Forum in Beijing that his country was working in "collaboration and cooperation" with Oman on "new arrangements" for the vital waterway. "As a country where the Hormuz is part of its territorial waters, we will definitely charge service fees," Azli said in translated remarks, while insisting such fees would not be a "toll." "These new arrangements will be concerning guaranteeing the security of passage through the Straits of Hormuz, supervision of the passage of the vessels... and also guaranteeing and dealing with the environmental consequences of the massive number of ships," he said. "We will definitely consider special treatment for the countries that were friendly to us and specially stood by us during the hard times," he added. The strait normally carries one-fifth of the world's crude oil and liquefied natural gas, but it was all but closed by Iran during the Middle East war, sending energy prices soaring. Iran lifted its blockade of the Hormuz after it struck an initial deal with the US to end the Middle East war, and negotiations on a permanent settlement of the conflict are ongoing.

## Boat transporting students from exams sinks in Congo, killing at least 20, authorities say

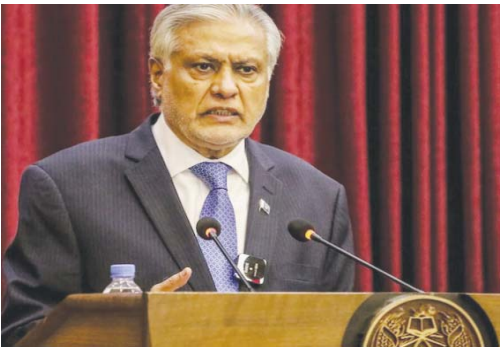
KINSHASA. (Agency)

A wooden boat transporting students back from state exams sank in central Congo, killing at least 20 people, authorities said. The vessel was traveling in Kasai province when it sank while entering the confluence of the Sankuru and Kasai rivers, according to witnesses. Deadly boating tragedies are common in the central African country, where late-night travels and overcrowded vessels are often blamed. Poor safety standards and lack of infrastructure in remote parts of the country also contribute to the hundreds killed in boat disasters in recent years. "There were 80 survivors and 20 bodies," said Francois Kabula, administrator of the Ilebo territory in Kasai province, where the sinking happened Friday. However, Tshikudi Jean, who witnessed the crash, told The Associated Press that the boat was carrying over 200 people. "The shipowners of the DRC are only after money and don't care about human lives," François Malepo, president of the Ilebo civil society organization said.

## "Quit Immediately": Pakistan Deputy PM Faces Flak After Grandson Arrested For Rape

world.(Agency)

A Pakistani senator, with close links to the country's military establishment, on Saturday demanded the resignation of Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar after a relative of his was arrested in a case concerning the abduction and gangrape of two foreigners here. Senator Faisal Vawda also accused the federal government and the provincial government in Punjab of protecting the minister's relative in the high-profile case. Two women - one from the Netherlands and the other from Venezuela - were allegedly abducted by a group of men on June 29 and gangraped in Lahore. The police have arrested four men, while one is absconding. They were sent to five-day police custody by a Lahore court on Friday. One of the arrested men - Muhammad Raza Dar - was identified as the prime suspect in the case. Police sources said Raza Dar is Ishaq Dar's grandson. During the investigation, police have said, it emerged that Raza Dar met the two women



in Singapore last year, and they were partners in a cryptocurrency venture. He arranged business visas for them for their visit to Pakistan. Vawda on Saturday said Pakistan is being "run like a family corporation", as he highlighted the gangrape incident and described the prime suspect as "alleged grandson" of Ishaq Dar, who is also the foreign minister. "He (Raza Dar) was arrested only after the intervention of the relevant foreign embassy. After such serious allegations, how can Ishaq Dar continue to represent Pakistan before the world as Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister?" Vawda said in a post on X. "If there is any concern for Pakistan and its international image, Ishaq Dar should resign immediately," he said. Vawda, widely seen as a mouthpiece of the Pakistani military establishment, was elected as Senator on the vote of both Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), which are coalition partners in the federal government. He, however, does not represent any political party. Vawda further said on Saturday, "Attempts are being made to limit the case to extortion rather than rape."

## Prosecutors to lay out their case against the man accused of killing

The five-day preliminary hearing that starts Monday will be the first time members of Kirk's family are in the Utah courtroom with defendant Tyler Robinson.

SALT LAKE CITY.(Agency)

Charlie Kirk's widow and parents are expected this week in a Utah court where prosecutors seeking the death penalty will argue that the man charged with killing the conservative activist should stand trial for murder. The five-day preliminary hearing that starts Monday will be the first time members of Kirk's family are in the Utah courtroom with defendant Tyler Robinson.

The hearing will be livestreamed.

Robinson turned himself in after the shooting. Prosecutors allege that he also sent a text message confession to his partner and left a note saying he had an opportunity to kill one of the nation's leading conservative voices "and I'm going to take it."

He has not entered a plea in the case, however. Robinson, 23, is charged with aggravated murder in the Sept. 10 assassination of Kirk, who was addressing a crowd of thousands at Utah Valley University. His attorneys have not commented on his guilt or innocence. Months of legal jostling leading up to the hearing centered largely on media access. Beginning Monday, the focus shifts to whether there is enough evidence for a trial and if the death penalty is warranted, said Paul Cassell, a University of Utah law professor and former federal judge.

Cassell said evidence made public to date in court filings suggests prosecutors have "an overwhelming case." "This seems like the

proverbial slam dunk at this stage of the case, where the only issue is whether there is a sound basis for moving forward with a trial on the merits," he said.



A death sentence is an option in Utah only when a crime has aggravating circumstances. Prosecutors will argue in Robinson's case that Kirk's shooting endangered others in attendance. The proceeding will resemble a minitrial, with prosecutors planning to offer DNA evidence linking Robinson to the suspected murder

weapon, testimony from investigators, autopsy findings, witness statements and video of Kirk's killing. They are not required to present all their evidence and can use secondhand information, or hearsay.

After the hearing concludes, state District Judge Tony Graf must determine if the case should proceed. Reporters and the public will be allowed to attend after Graf denied a defense request to restrict access. Kirk's killing drew backlash from his Republican allies, including President Donald Trump, who first announced Robinson's arrest in a Sept. 12 interview on Fox News and said, "I hope he gets the death penalty." This week prosecutors need only demonstrate that there are reasonable grounds to believe Robinson killed Kirk. The standard is lower than for a trial, where prosecutors have to prove guilt "beyond a reasonable doubt." Authorities have said DNA consistent with Robinson's was found on the trigger of the rifle used to kill Kirk.

## NATO chief may have to match his made-for-Trump sales pitch to keep a summit on the rails

ANKARA.(Agency)

Since he started work as NATO secretary-general almost two years ago, Mark Rutte has spent much of his time trying to keep the United States anchored to the world's biggest military alliance, employing outright flattery to dissuade US President Donald Trump from acting on threats to abandon it. But the goalposts keep shifting, raising the stakes ahead of this week's summit in Turkey. Initially, it was about money. Trump has long lashed against NATO allies for spending too small a fraction of their national budgets on defense. But those problems were addressed at their summit last year, when US allies committed to invest as much as America, in gross domestic product terms. NATO's real problem now is turning that money into military capabilities, particularly as European countries worry about a possible attack from Russia. Still, Rutte tried to put to bed any lingering concerns at a White House meeting last month, with a new pitch using a chart labeled the "The Trump Trillion" in gold letters — showing USD 1.2 trillion in spending by European allies and Canada since 2017. But Trump appeared unmoved, saying he was still disappointed at some NATO allies' refusal to join the Iran war, which he had launched alongside Israel without consulting them. "We don't need their money — we do need anything," Trump said. "I just want loyalty." Trump suggested he might have skipped the upcoming summit entirely were it not being hosted by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. It's a sign that even Erdogan and Rutte — foreign leaders Trump seems to hold in rare esteem — will have their work cut out for them in keeping the summit on track. Rutte set a new marker for flattery at the White House

Historically, the prime tasks of NATO's top civilian official — always a European, never an American — have been to encourage consensus in an organization that makes its decisions unanimously, and to speak on behalf of all 32 member countries. But during both of Trump's terms, Rutte and his predecessor at the helm of NATO, Jens Stoltenberg, have dedicated a huge amount of energy just to keep the United States inside their alliance. Trump has threatened to leave NATO, dallied with pulling US troops out of Europe and vowed to take over the island of Greenland — a semiautonomous part of ally Denmark. He has cast doubt over whether he would defend another member not spending enough on their military, eroding trust. Rutte's approach has been heavy on flattery. Last month's carefully choreographed pitch in the Oval Office — with props redolent of an American flag — laid down a new marker, even for a man heavily criticized for likening Trump to a "daddy." The charts showed tens of thousands of US jobs were being created and a backlog of USD 300 billion in European orders for military equipment — all thanks to the "leader of the free world," Rutte said. He pushed back, gently, on Trump's complaints that NATO did not support the US against Iran, noting that up to 5,000 US planes took off from bases in Europe before an April ceasefire.

➡The comment is the first, direct call for Trump's death by an emcee at the funeral, which has seen posters and graffiti calling for the killing of Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

TEHRAN.(Agency)

A performer at the funeral for Iran's late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei called for the death of US President Donald Trump before a crowd of hundreds of thousands of people Sunday in the capital, Tehran.

The comment represents the first, direct call for Trump's death by an emcee at the funeral, which has seen posters and graffiti calling for the killing of Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. That's been a hard-line demand even as Tehran negotiates with the US over a permanent end to the war that's disrupted global energy supplies.

Mohammad Rasouli, a poet, drew calls of "Death to America!" and "Death to Israel!" Speaking to the crowd over loudspeakers at the funeral, Rasouli asked, referring to Trump: "Why is the most bastard man in the world still



alive?" The question drew cheers from the crowd, and again when Rasouli said that "the world is no longer a good place for" Trump. Larger crowd attends second day of Khamenei's funeral A far-larger crowd for the funeral than the day before attended the ceremony Sunday. Mourners dressed in black walked to the site, carrying banners and flags

honoring Khamenei and also calling for Trump's killing as the American president gave a speech in Washington for the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States.

"We've had tremendous success,"

Trump said, speaking of the American military. "You look at Venezuela, you look at Iran. We wiped it out, wiped out their military." US federal authorities have been tracking Iranian threats against Trump and other administration officials for years. That stems from Trump ordering the 2020 killing of Gen. Qassem Soleimani, who led the expeditionary Quds Force of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard. Iran repeatedly has denied plotting to kill Trump, though hard-line propaganda footage long has suggested Trump was in Tehran's crosshairs.

Trump meanwhile promised to destroy Iran's very civilization during the war among a variety of other threats.

## Xi says ready to work with Kim for 'stable' China-N. Korea ties: KCNA

SEOUL.(Agency)

China's President Xi Jinping said he was ready to work with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to steer their bilateral relationship toward "long-term, sound and stable" development, Pyongyang's state media reported Sunday.

The exchange follows Xi's rare visit to North Korea last month, when the two leaders pledged to deepen ties as tensions rise on the Korean Peninsula and Pyongyang expands its military cooperation with Russia. In a message dated July 1, Xi thanked Kim for his congratulatory message marking the 105th anniversary of the founding of China's Communist Party, according to the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA). Xi said Kim's message reflected the "deep and warm feelings" of the North Korean leader, the ruling

Workers' Party and the North Korean people toward China. "The Communist Party of China and the Workers' Party of Korea are the Marxist ruling parties," Xi



said, adding that the two countries had stood together for national independence and had jointly advanced the socialist cause over generations. "I am ready to guide the relevant sectors and regions of both sides to the full

implementation of the important common understanding achieved among us and lead the China-DPRK relations to a long-term, sound and stable development," Xi said, using the initials of the North's official name.

Referring to his recent state visit to Pyongyang, Xi thanked Kim for the "enthusiastic and friendly" hospitality during the trip. The message came in response to a letter from Kim, who described their summit in Pyongyang as a "historic occasion" and said it was North Korea's "steadfast stand" to continue strengthening ties with Beijing. North Korea has expanded security ties with Russia, where Pyongyang has sent soldiers and munitions to assist Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

Still, China remains North Korea's largest economic partner, accounting for nearly 98 percent of the country's foreign trade in 2024, according to South Korea's Ministry of Economy and Finance.

## Trump mixes patriotism with partisanship as he celebrates America's 'joyous' 250th anniversary

Trump highlighted his support for the Second Amendment and revived denunciations of communism, which are becoming an increasingly central part of Trump's message ahead of the November midterms.

WASHINGTON.(Agency)

President Donald Trump mixed partisan politics with patriotic appeals on Saturday as he commemorated the 250th anniversary of American independence, a moment he declared "one of the most joyous and glorious milestones of all time." Speaking in Washington after storms prompted a roughly two-hour evacuation of the National Mall, Trump honored veterans, including several from World War II and one of the first Black officers to lead a Special

Forces team in combat in Vietnam. They appeared before flags that symbolized some of the most significant and challenging moments in American history, from the one that was draped over Abraham Lincoln's casket to the one that flew on the plane piloted by the Wright Brothers.

Yet Trump also leaned into partisan territory unusual for an Independence Day address, which presidents typically use as a moment to unify the country. Instead, he stumped again for the SAVE America Act, an elections bill that's encountering challenges even from Trump's fellow Republicans in Congress. He highlighted his support for the Second Amendment and revived denunciations of communism, which are becoming an increasingly central part of Trump's message ahead of the November midterms. The speech capped a holiday that Trump has gone to great lengths to shape to his own tastes. He was introduced by two musical performers who often appear at his trademark rallies, including Lee

Greenwood, who performed "God Bless America." The event organizers were largely aligned with the White House, supplanting a bipartisan organization that



was launched by Congress a decade ago. "We will always be on top," Trump said. "We will never let our country fall. We will always be the best." Trump didn't talk about himself as much as he does during his normal rally speeches. Still, he still found time to include a joke about seeking a third presidential term and about World War II's "greatest generation."

"They are the greatest generation," Trump said. "I hate to admit that, but they are."

Anticipation for the milestone holiday has been building for much of the year, serving as an opportunity for Americans to reflect on their complicated history as onetime colonists of an empire who became a superpower of their own. Organizers of celebrations months in the making had to adjust or cancel activities entirely as much of the East Coast sweltered under heat that approached and in many cases surpassed triple digits. Heat is defining the big weekend in many places. Severe weather prompted the cancellation of celebrations in Hartford, Connecticut, along with Harrisburg and Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. Spectators at Boston's fireworks and concert were told to briefly seek shelter before events later resumed. An evacuation was also ordered in Philadelphia. New York and Pittsburgh moved forward with fireworks but shifted the time to accommodate the shifting weather.