

# Sharad Pawar's surprise visit to Shinde sparks fresh buzz in Maharashtra

Sharad Pawar met Eknath Shinde at the Maharashtra legislature after a committee meeting. The surprise visit has intensified questions over tensions within the Maha Vikas Aghadi.

Mumbai. (Agency)

An unexpected meeting between NCP (SP) president Sharad Pawar and Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has set off intense political speculation, with observers viewing it as far more than a routine courtesy call amid growing uncertainty within the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA). On Wednesday, Pawar was at the state legislature to attend a meeting of the high-powered committee on the long-pending Maharashtra-Karnataka border dispute. After the meeting concluded, the NCP (SP) chief headed straight to Shinde's chamber, accompanied by senior party leaders Jayant Patil, Jitendra Awhad and

Shashikant Shinde.

According to his office, the Deputy Chief Minister paused the meeting upon learning of Pawar's arrival, welcomed the veteran leader



with a shawl and bouquet, and spent around 15 minutes with him before returning to the cabinet meeting. Pawar, however, remained in the chamber for

some more time to interact with his party legislators. While neither leader disclosed what transpired during the meeting, and Shinde's office described it as merely a courtesy call, its timing has fuelled intense political speculation. The meeting has also drawn attention because Pawar chose to meet Shinde instead of Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, widely regarded as the Mahayuti alliance's principal strategist.

The interaction comes at a delicate time for the opposition MVA, comprising the Congress, NCP (SP) and Shiv Sena (UBT), which has been grappling with internal strains following the defection of six Uddhav Thackeray-led Sena MPs to Shinde's camp.

The development has triggered fresh concerns over the alliance's cohesion ahead of future political battles.

## Eknath Shinde reprimands Shiv Sena corporator arrested for assaulting woman doctor

Eknath Shinde reprimanded Shiv Sena corporator Ramesh Mhatre after his arrest for assaulting a woman doctor and other medical staff at a Thane hospital, as the party distanced itself from the incident following widespread outrage over a viral video.

Mumbai. (Agency)

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has reprimanded Shiv Sena corporator Ramesh Mhatre, who was arrested for assaulting a woman doctor and other medical staff at a hospital in Thane district, state Industries Minister Uday Samant said on Thursday.

The incident triggered widespread outrage after a video of the assault went viral. The footage showed Mhatre slapping and punching a doctor, hitting him on the head with a register, and striking a woman doctor on her hand.

Speaking to reporters at Vidhan Bhavan, Samant said, "Our party's line is very clear. It is inappropriate to hit a woman doctor. Many in the Shiv Sena, as well as the state health minister, have stressed that such an assault was wrong." He said the deputy chief minister had rightly reprimanded the Sena corporator. "There was no political intervention, which means we are not endorsing his action," Samant said. The assault took place on Monday evening at the Shastri Nagar Hospital run by the Kalyan Dombivli Municipal Corporation. Doctors Srishti Bawiskar and Vaibhav Salunkhe had advised the relatives of a newborn to shift the baby to another facility because there was no space in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.



## Row Over Punjab Dearness Allowance, BJP Accuses AAP Of Denying Dues

New Delhi. (Agency)

A fresh political confrontation has erupted in Punjab over pending Dearness Allowance (DA) arrears, with the Bharatiya Janata Party accusing the Bhagwant Mann government of withholding benefits owed to lakhs of government employees and pensioners. The BJP alleged that the Aam Aadmi Party government is using financial constraints as a reason to delay payments despite a recent Punjab and Haryana High Court ruling that underscored the legal nature of the entitlement.

Addressing the issue, Punjab BJP president Kewal Singh Dhillon claimed that employees who were promised relief before the 2022 Assembly elections are still waiting for their dues. "Employees and pensioners have shown patience for years, but they continue to be denied what is rightfully theirs.

## CM Hemnat Soren calls for knowledge-driven economy as Jharkhand charts Vision 2050

RANCHI. (Agency)

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Tuesday said the state should move beyond being known only for its mineral wealth and transform into a knowledge-driven economy, as the government sought suggestions from industry leaders, technology firms and policy experts for its Vision 2050 roadmap.

Inaugurating a two-day National Stakeholders Consultation jointly organised by the state's Information Technology, Industries and Tourism Departments, Soren said the convergence of traditional knowledge and modern technology would drive Jharkhand's future development.

"Jharkhand should be known not only for its mines but also for its minds. Our identity must extend beyond resources to research, beyond extraction to innovation and beyond growth to broad-based, inclusive and sustainable development. Alongside our rich natural resources, we must give equal importance to research, innovation and a knowledge-based economy," the Chief Minister said.

# Lawlessness and Open Sin in Yeoor Hills Thane CP Silent as Raja Thakur's Criminal Dominance Thrives; Crores in Black Money Celebrated Right Under PI Mane's Nose

## MAHANAGAR METRO

**THANE:** In Thane, a city that falsely boasts of being a "Smart City" governed by the rule of law, law and order alongside the dignity of the police uniform have been torn to shreds. While the budget session of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly is live and leaders make hollow claims of corruption-free governance, the country's largest and most dangerous inter-state gambling syndicate is flourishing completely unfettered just a few kilometers away from the center of power, under the jurisdiction of the Vartak Nagar Police Station. According to highly sensational and explosive information obtained by Mahanagar Metro News, a luxurious villa located right behind the Upvan area and situated prominently at the Yeoor Check Post—widely known by a prominent politician's VIP name—has been transformed into an inter-state mini-casino and a den of vice. Bowing to the names of influential politicians, the entire police apparatus has surrendered before this establishment, leaving no officer with the courage to conduct a raid.

This is no ordinary street-corner gambling den; it is a corporate-style, multi-state black money syndicate where billions of rupees are wagered

every night. According to concrete evidence available with Mahanagar Metro News, prominent diamond merchants from Gujarat, shrewd bookies from Rajasthan, land mafias from Haryana, and white-collar criminals from Mumbai and Nashik line up their luxury vehicles under the cover of night to place massive bets. Surprisingly, as these VIP gamblers' vehicles pass through the Yeoor Check Post, the patrolling vehicles of the Vartak Nagar police blind themselves to the activity and change their routes.

The architecture of this illegal dark empire has been designed in an extremely shrewd and systematic manner. Raja Thakur and Jitu Jalgaon are the actual providers, kingpins, and financiers of this underworld enterprise. To ensure that no law enforcement officer reaches the site, an army of fierce bouncers, including Mangesh Bhosale and Shekhar Wadala, has been deployed. The chief strategist and cashier of this entire extortion ring is Gopal Sharma, whose job is to deliver crores of rupees in bribes and monthly protection money (hafta) to silence high-ranking administrative and police officers. The main kingpin of the racket, Raja Thakur, keeps the law under his heel by pre-



sending himself as a close associate of deputy chief minister-level leaders. However, the most terrifying and anti-national angle of this case is that this casino is not restricted merely to win-and-lose gambling. According to shocking claims by sources, a massive chunk of the black money extorted from this den is being routed through managers named Rafa and Bhuriya into nearby impoverished tribal pockets.

The funds are allegedly being used to finance a specific network involved in illegal activities, forced conversions, and disrupting social harmony. There are strong apprehensions that this tainted gambling money is being deployed to tear the social fabric of the

country and hatch illegal conspiracies. This entire racket operates right under the nose of Senior PI Mane of the Vartak Nagar Police Station, amid open allegations of bags filled with cash being delivered to the station daily. Despite written complaints accompanied by evidence sent to all top officers, ranging from the Thane Police Commissioner to the DCP level, the entire machinery has maintained a calculated silence, playing the victim card of helplessness. Why has no solid action been initiated despite responsible offices receiving confidential information regarding this high-profile establishment? Is a share of this gambling and illegal funding reaching the corridors of political power?

Mahanagar Metro News directly questions the Thane Police Administration: If you have any morality left, immediately suspend Senior PI Mane for allowing anti-national activities within his jurisdiction, and order an investigation into his disproportionate assets through the Anti-Corruption Bureau. This public outrage and awareness campaign will not stop until this mini-casino defiling the Yeoor Hills is sealed forever, and crocodiles like Rafa, Bhuriya, and Raja Thakur rot behind bars.

# Uttar Pradesh expands ITIs, ramps up skill training with Rs 3,634-crore upgrade

New Delhi. (Agency)

Uttar Pradesh is expanding its vocational training network and upgrading Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) as part of a broader push to build an industry-ready workforce. The state has 286 government-run ITIs and more than 3,000 private institutes, making it one of the country's largest vocational training ecosystems. The institutes offer technical and non-technical courses aimed at preparing students for jobs in manufacturing, engineering, automotive and other industrial sectors. The ITIs operate under the State Council for Vocational Training, Uttar Pradesh (SCVTUP) and follow standards set by the Directorate General of

Training under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.

Students can enroll in a range of trades, including electrician, fitter, welder, motor mechanic, turner, machinist and computer operator and programming assistant (COPA), among others.

## MODERNISATION PUSH

To upgrade vocational education, the Uttar Pradesh government has partnered with Tata Technologies Ltd to modernise government ITIs across the state.

In the first phase, 149 government ITIs were equipped with new machinery, digital infrastructure and updated training facilities designed to meet the needs of



Industry 4.0. The state Cabinet has now approved the modernisation of another 62 government ITIs under the same partnership. The institutes will receive new laboratories and advanced technical infrastructure, with training to be offered

through 11 long-term and 23 short-term industry-focused courses.

The project involves an investment of more than Rs 3,634 crore. Tata Technologies will contribute about Rs 2,851 crore, while the Uttar Pradesh government will provide over Rs 783 crore.

According to the state government, the upgraded institutes are expected to benefit around 12,500 students each year through long- and short-term training programmes. To support the expansion, the government has approved the engagement of 1,065 personnel, including 171 workshop instructors and 894 trainers. Five Centres for Innovation and Incubation.

## News box

## Two men use fake papers &amp; seals to secure bail

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

An FIR has been registered against four people for allegedly using a forged oath commissioner's seal on a bail affidavit submitted before the court of an additional chief judicial magistrate. The accused, arrested in a 2023 copyright infringement case in Modinagar, had allegedly got the fake seal affixed through their pairorakar(an agent or representative) and bail guarantor to secure bail, police said.

A publisher, Anuj Goyal, had filed a complaint at the Modinagar police station on April 29, 2023, alleging that Sumit Aggarwal and Hitendra Jain had been selling CBSE computer books from classes I to VIII using the label of his publication. Police conducted raids at their depots. One hundred and forty pirated books were found in Jain's depot and 21 were seized from Aggarwal's shop. They were subsequently arrested under sections of the Copyright Act, 1957.

The two men were released on bail. However, an advocate practising in the court, Ankit Mittal, alleged that Jain and Aggarwal forged the oath commissioner's seal, got it attached to their affidavit with the help of their pairorakar and guarantor and secured their bail. Mittal said faking the seal of an oath commissioner and affixing it to the affidavit for obtaining bail is a serious offence.

Kavinagar ACP Suryabali Maurya said an FIR has been registered against Aggarwal, Jain and their pairorakar and bail guarantor under sections 318(4) (punishment for cheating), 336(3) (forgery for cheating), 338 (forgery of valuable security, will, etc.) and 340(2) (using as genuine a forged document or electronic record) of BNS. A team has been formed to investigate the case and the investigation is underway.

## 7 injured as car rams into group of children outside Greater Noida West society

Noida.(Agency)

Five children and a couple were injured after a car struck a parked scooter outside Panchsheel Greens and ploughed through a group of children and parents waiting for a school bus in Greater Noida West on Wednesday, police said.

A resident of the society, Nikita, was driving out of the society to drop her children off at school. Eyewitnesses claim that she was busy on her phone and missed the people waiting at the curb. As soon as she became aware of their presence, she allegedly panicked and pressed the accelerator instead of the brake.

The impact knocked down a scooter parked in the service lane and then ploughed through the children. Eyewitnesses alleged that one of the girls had briefly come under the vehicle.

Among the injured were Tina Saxena, her husband, Swapnil Saxena, their child and several other children. Tina suffered a head injury, while the children suffered minor bruises and abrasions. Police said all the injured were taken for medical examination and discharged after first aid.

Police reached the spot soon after and seized the car involved in the accident. Officers said no written complaint had been submitted by the injured people or their families at the time of filing this report.

## Bank to compensate customer over failed transaction from 3 years ago

Noida.(Agency)

Three years after an ATM cash withdrawal failed during a power outage, a district consumer court has ordered Punjab National Bank (PNB) to refund Rs 10,000 to the customer along with interest and compensation.

The complaint was filed by Mubarakpur resident Raman Lal on Jan 6, 2023. He told the commission that on Oct 3, 2022, at around 3:10 pm, he attempted to withdraw Rs 10,000 from an ICICI Bank ATM using his PNB debit card. However, after a power failure interrupted the transaction and no cash was dispensed, the amount was debited from his account. He received both a receipt and an SMS notification of the withdrawal.

Lal filed a complaint with the PNB call centre at 5:39 pm the same day and was assured the issue would be resolved within 15 days. When the amount was not credited back, he filed another complaint on Oct 25, but received no resolution. "I also submitted an application to the PNB for CCTV footage of the day I tried to withdraw money but got no response," he said. Additionally, he submitted photocopies of affidavits and other documents as documentary evidence in support of his complaint.

## Death Trap at Karjan Border Under the Guise of Police Uniform

Illegal Liquor Dens and Gambling Hubs Thrive at the Behest of Jail-Return Tainted Constable Hanu Kamadiya; Law Openly Sold with PI Patel's Backing

Mahanagar Metro Desk

**VADODARA / KARJAN:** No matter how much the Gujarat government beats the drum of zero tolerance and clean governance from Gandhinagar, these tall claims have met a grim end in the Karjan taluka of Vadodara district. Law and order have completely ceased to exist within the jurisdiction of the Karjan Police Station. Here, the actual rule is not of the law, but of a fierce and unbridled syndicate flourishing under the protective shield of the khaki uniform.

Hanubha alias Hanu Kamadiya—a corrupt constable who has recently served time in jail—has now become the undeclared don of Karjan, pushing the entire region into a swamp of addiction and ruin. While Karjan PI Patel pretends to be completely oblivious to this entire operation, the entire territory has been transformed into a massive hub for illicit liquor and gambling.

**The Factories of Death and Gambling Dens: Karjan's 4 Dark Zones!**

1. Kurali Village (Nai Nagri) Right under the nose of the Karjan Police Station, near the local water tank, Varli Matka gambling and illicit trade are peaking without any fear of the law. The youth of the region are losing their hard-earned money here while the local beat police remain mute spectators.

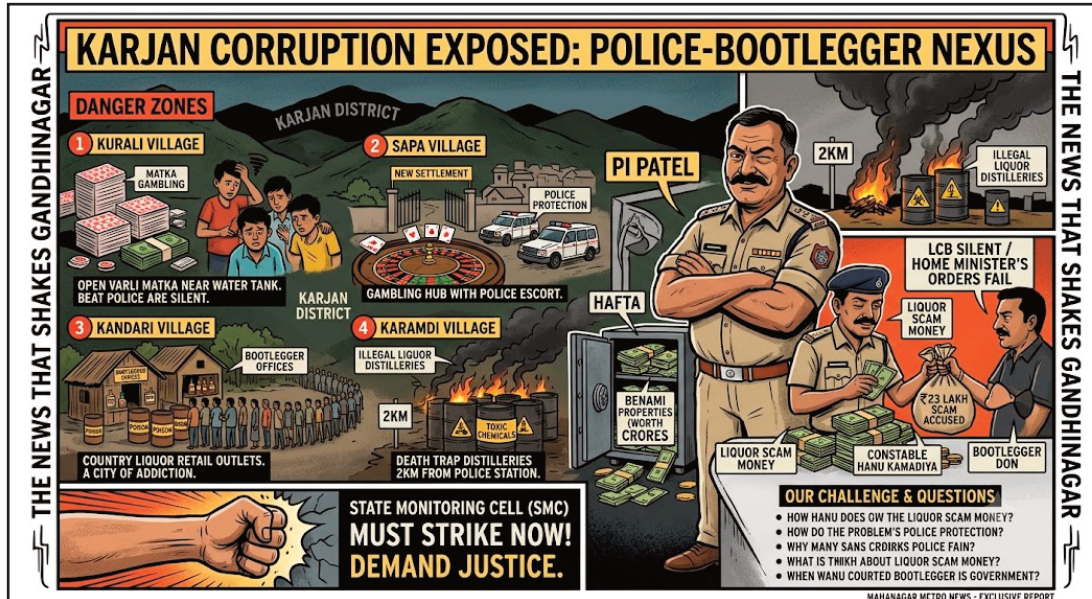
2. Sapa Village (Nai Vasahat) In the new settlement of this village, Varli Matka gambling is running rampant. This village has become a safe haven for notorious gamblers and anti-social elements from Vadodara city. Rumors suggest that special police protection is arranged for vehicles coming from outside.

3. Kandari Village : The entire village has been converted into retail outlets for country liquor. Poison is being served in every alley, making it look as though it is an official office of bootleggers rather than a jurisdiction under a police station.

4. Karamdi Village : Located barely 2 kilometers from the Karjan Police Station, country liquor distilleries are burning 24/7 in Karamdi village. This village has become a stronghold for country liquor laced with toxic chemicals. Dangerous chemicals are being used here that could trigger a massive poisonous liquor tragedy (\*Lathakand\*) at any moment on the soil of Karjan. Will this corrupt system only wake up after seeing piles of innocent corpses?

How Did Hanu Kamadiya, an Accused in a ₹23 Lakh Liquor Scam, Become the 'Cash Cow' Again?

The real mastermind behind this dark empire is Karjan Police's own tainted constable, Hanu Kamadiya. This is the same Hanubha who



was previously jailed, suspended, and expelled from Vadodara district for his direct nexus with bootleggers in a massive ₹23 lakh foreign liquor scam. However, the biggest question is: despite serving jail time, at the behest of which political kingpin was this corrupt constable handed back the lucrative post of Vahivatdar (transaction manager) in Karjan itself? For Karjan PI Patel, Hanu Kamadiya is currently proving to be the goose that lays golden eggs. Under the direct patronage of PI Patel, Hanu Kamadiya openly sits with bootleggers every day to smuggle in consignments of foreign liquor, building benami properties worth crores from this black money.

**LCB Silent, Home Minister's Orders Fail: When Will Gandhinagar SMC Strike?**

The strict orders of the State Home Minister lose their breath the moment they reach the borders of Karjan. Not just liquor and gambling, but a deadly narcotics network dealing in Ganja and Charas has also become active in Karjan. The district's Local Crime Branch (LCB), instead of tightening the noose on

these dens, sits with its eyes tightly shut. According to sources, this is because Vahivatdar Hanu Kamadiya manages a highly organized system to deliver lakhs of rupees in monthly protection money (hafta) to higher-ups. The arrogance of this constable has grown so much that he openly flouts the authority of the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister. Formal complaints backed by solid evidence have already been registered regarding this matter with the State Monitoring Cell (SMC) in Gandhinagar.

**Sharp and Direct Questions from Mahanagar Metro:**

1. Vadodara District Police Chief SP Agrawal Sir: A jail-return constable is virtually running an entire taluka police station right under your nose. Will you immediately suspend this corrupt Vahivatdar Hanu Kamadiya and PI Patel, and hand over the investigation of their crores of benami properties to the Vigilance or ACB? 2. When will Gandhinagar's State Monitoring Cell (SMC) conduct secret raids on these four danger zones of Karjan to dismantle this khaki-bootlegger nexus?

3. When will the government tighten the legal noose against such corrupt police personnel who exploit political patronage, and send them back behind bars?

The public of Karjan is completely tormented by this hellish system of extortion. If this trade of death and crores of corruption running in Karjan is not stopped immediately, Mahanagar Metro News will unleash an explosive exposé in the next edition. We will release audio-video evidence and official documents of benami properties worth crores belonging to this corrupt trio—an exposé that will shake the corridors of power all the way to Gandhinagar! Be ready!

## NHAI shuts 4 illegal NH-9 cuts, residents push back

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), acting on Supreme Court orders to shut illegal accesses along NH-9 and Delhi-Meerut Expressway (DME), has run into resistance from residents who removed barriers installed to block such cuts.

NHAI had identified 110 unauthorised accesses along the roughly 20-km stretch of the NH-9 and DME from UP Gate to Dasna, and closed at least four at Aditya World City, Wave City and Aradhyam with jersey barriers placed on the intervening night of Sunday. By Monday morning, residents had removed the barriers to let vehicles through, the official said.

Officials said NHAI has flagged the violations to the district administration and traffic



police, and that FIRs would be filed against those responsible.

Pravin Kumar, a resident of Wave City, said the township's proximity to NH-9 and DME had been a key selling point when developers marketed the flats, and that residents invested in the project for this access. With the exit suddenly closed and no alternative route provided, residents had no option but to remove the barriers themselves, he said, adding that NHAI should

have planned for this before acting.

Kiran Rai, another resident, said nearly 15,000 people live across the two townships, and closing the exit had left them effectively cut off, with residents, office-goers, students and school buses all dependent on the same access point.

The NHAI official said the closures were not without reason, and that residents with grievances should approach the

authority to resolve them rather than removing the barricades, which was unacceptable.

The Supreme Court's April 13 order came in a suo motu case triggered by the deaths of 34 people in successive highway accidents. The court noted that national highways make up about 2% of India's total road length but account for nearly 30% of road fatalities.

NHAI has issued notices to encroachers under Section 26 of the Control of National Highways (Land and Traffic) Act, 2002, and demolition drives have already begun against those who have not complied. A survey conducted in line with the court's order found 110 unauthorised accesses on the right side of the NH9/DME stretch and 48 on the left in Ghaziabad, created by shops, showrooms, petrol pumps, hotels and colleges, among other establishments.

## Andhra govt announces Rs 10 lakh ex-gratia to missing fishers' families

VISAKHAPATNAM. (Agency)

A three-member committee has recommended that the families of the six fishermen who remain missing after their mechanised fishing boat capsized off the Visakhapatnam coast be extended ex gratia and insurance benefits under the Group Accident Insurance Scheme (GAIS), after concluding that the fishermen may be presumed to have died while at sea.

The assistance comprises Rs 5 lakh from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund and Rs 5 lakh under the GAIS. The recommendation comes after the six fishermen remained untraced despite coordinated search and rescue operations by the Indian Coast Guard, Indian Navy and Marine Police, which continued for more than 72 hours.

In its report, the committee observed, "In view of the facts narrated and the findings recorded, the Committee presumes that the fishermen might have died while fishing at sea, enabling the dependent nominees of the deceased fishermen to claim ex gratia under the Group Accident Insurance Scheme (GAIS)." The report does not formally declare the fishermen dead but records the committee's presumption for the purpose of processing compensation claims under the scheme.

## Andhra govt clears guidelines for passive euthanasia

VIJAYAWADA. (Agency)

In a landmark decision, the Andhra Pradesh government has cleared the guidelines to implement passive euthanasia in the State, offering a legally backed mechanism for terminally ill patients surviving on life support with no hope of recovery.

Health Minister Y Satya Kumar Yadav on Wednesday formally approved the operational guidelines framed in absolute alignment with the Supreme Court's historical directives on the matter.

The decision aims to alleviate the prolonged suffering of end-stage patients while providing much-needed legal immunity and protection to both grieving family members and attending medical professionals.

The guidelines are based on the apex court's landmark ruling which clarified that the right to die with dignity is a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Constitution. The judgment, originally delivered in 2018 on a writ petition filed by the NGO 'Common Cause', underwent key modifications by the Supreme Court in January 2023 to remove legal bottlenecks that previously left hospitals, doctors, and families in a dilemma regarding the withdrawal of life-support systems.

## Natural or neglect? Wayanad landslip sparks fierce dispute

Agartala. (Agency)

Amid anger and pain, an intense dispute over accountability for the landslip at the Anakkampoyil-Kalladi-Meppadi tunnel project site in Wayanad continues to pit officials of the contracting firm against state authorities and local residents. While Agriculture Minister T Siddique, residents and eyewitnesses have labelled the tragedy a "man-made disaster", representatives of Dilip Buildcon Ltd, the contractor, strongly reject claims of operational failure or corporate negligence.

Recovering in his hospital bed, site employee Kunju R firmly maintains that the disaster was a natural calamity driven by extraordinary weather. On Wednesday, he was allowed to speak to reporters by the private hospital in Meppadi. He recalled that actual tunnel construction had been suspended for 10 days due to the downpour. "Everyone had anticipated that the area where excavated soil was dumped might pose a threat, but that zone remained completely secure," Kunju stated.

"Instead, the disaster struck from an entirely unexpected quadrant—the dense forest area to the left of the site." According to project staff, 48 hours of torrential rain created powerful underground springs, causing the heavily saturated topsoil on the forest slope to slide all at once. Sebastian, a GM of the company, reinforced this stance, asserting the mudslide originated 12m outside active construction perimeter.

# Rain destroys idols worth crores in Maharashtra's Pen before Ganesh Chaturthi

Days of heavy rain in the state caused creeks to overflow and inundate Johe and Tambadshet villages in Pen taluka, where over 1,000 artisans make a large share of Maharashtra's Ganesh idols. Individual losses range from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 20 lakh.

Mumbai. (Agency)

Barely a month before Ganesh Chaturthi, when workshops in Maharashtra's famed idol-making belt would usually be buzzing with activity, silence has descended over Johe and Tambadshet villages in Pen taluka of Raigad district. Clay idols in various stages of completion lie buried under slush, broken beyond repair, after floodwaters triggered by days of torrential rain swept through the low-lying villages on Tuesday, leaving hundreds of artisans counting losses running into crores.

The latest devastation comes close on the



heels of another setback for Pen's idol-making industry.

Earlier, The Indian Express had reported that the conflict in West Asia had disrupted exports of Ganesh idols, with escalating shipping costs, freight delays and uncertainty over consignments to various countries hurting artisans and exporters

ahead of the festive season. The two neighbouring villages, known for producing a large share of Maharashtra's Ganesh idols every year, witnessed floodwaters rising within minutes on Tuesday after incessant rainfall caused nearby creeks to overflow. Artisans said they had little warning before water rushed into their workshops, washing away idols that had taken months to make. "We have never seen anything like this before," said Mahendra Ganesh Patil (43) of Shivratri Kalakendra, whose family has been making Ganesh idols for generations.

"I had around 500 idols, mostly between 1.5 and 2 feet in height, ready for sale in

Mumbai and Pune. In just half an hour, everything was gone. I reached the workshop around 11.30 am. Earlier in the morning there was no water at all, but suddenly the entire place was submerged," he said.

Patil estimated that he had suffered losses of at least Rs 15 lakh in finished idols alone, besides the cost of raw materials, labour and transportation.

The devastation has come at the busiest period of the year for idol makers, who spend months preparing for Ganesh Chaturthi. Most idols had already been booked by customers across Maharashtra while many were meant to be shipped outside the state.

10 officers, Rs 49.8 crore assets: What Karnataka Lokayukta searches found

Bengaluru. (Agency)

The Karnataka Lokayukta conducted simultaneous search operations at more than 53 locations across the state on Wednesday in connection with disproportionate assets (DA) cases registered against 10 government officers, uncovering assets collectively valued at over Rs 49.8 crore.

This is the second major search operation conducted after D K Shivakumar took charge as Karnataka's chief minister.

According to the Lokayukta, the officers had combined assets of Rs 37.95 crore in immovable property and Rs 11.88 crore in movable property, taking the total to approximately Rs 49.83 crore.

The search operation came a day after Lokayukta officials conducted searches on three government officials, including the special deputy commissioner of Bengaluru district, on Tuesday in connection with the alleged illegal allotment of 13 acres of government land to private individuals. According to Lokayukta officials, the searches were conducted at premises linked to M K Jagadish, special deputy commissioner, Bengaluru district; B R Manjunath, tahsildar; and Rajanikanth, a clerk.

The case is related to the alleged wrongful allotment of more than 13 acres of land at Hunasamaranahalli to private people, causing a loss to the government. The Lokayukta officials who had registered a case had obtained permission from the government and were granted warrants to conduct the raid. A Lokayukta officer said that they have seized documents from the offices and residences and are investigating further.

## Key witness in Jaswant Khalra's murder, who had turned hostile, alive: 'Fed him roti with my hands in lock-up'

Kikkar Singh says Khalra was "heavily bruised" after police torture. Police shot Khalra dead two days after they had met in lock-up.

Chandigarh. (Agency)

"I fed him roti with my hands in the lock-up of Kang police station. He was so heavily bruised after police torture that his hands could not reach his mouth. I had initially recorded my statement that I had seen Jaswant Singh Khalra in police custody but later turned hostile as my family's life was in danger. My brother was picked up by the Punjab Police and implicated in false cases," claims Kikkar Singh, 53, a key witness in the police-orchestrated 1995 abduction and murder of Jaswant Singh Khalra.

Recently, Khalra's biopic Satluj, starring Diljit Dosanjh, has been banned by the Government of India and taken off the OTT platform. A human rights activist, Khalra had investigated

hundreds of alleged "fake encounters" executed by Punjab Police during militancy period, leading to CBI investigation and conviction of several policemen.



Contrary to the belief that Kikkar Singh's "whereabouts were unknown" and that he might have "died", he currently lives in Ludhiana. A native of Jaura village in Tarn

Taran district, Kikkar Singh was also detained at Kang police station in Tarn Taran on October 24, 1995, the day Khalra was also illegally detained there for a brief period.

After over 50 days of alleged torture in police custody, Khalra, who was abducted from Amritsar on September 6, 1995, was shot dead at Jhabal police station on October 27, 1995, and his body was thrown into the Sutlej river.

Kikkar Singh had initially told the CBI that he saw Khalra in police custody on October 24, 1995, witnessed signs of torture on his body, and helped him eat. Kikkar Singh's detention by the police was independently corroborated by a judicial inquiry. However, he later turned hostile, claiming that the police were "harassing and pressuring him and his family."

## NIA seeks life term for Mangaluru cooker blast convict Mohammed Shariq

Bangalore. (Agency)

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on July 1 moved the Karnataka High Court seeking a life sentence for Mohammed Shariq, 27, the main accused in the November 19, 2022 Mangaluru cooker blast case, who was already awarded 10 years' imprisonment.

Shariq was convicted on terrorism and conspiracy charges by a special court for terrorism cases on April 27 after he pleaded guilty.

The central agency moved the Karnataka High Court on July 1 with a plea to "set



aside the April 27, 2026 order" of the special court for terrorism cases and to "consequently, enhance the sentence of imprisonment for life" in the case of Shariq. The matter is yet to be taken up by the High Court, although a hearing date

was set for July 9.

Shariq, 27, suffered serious injuries after a cooker bomb he was carrying accidentally detonated in an autorickshaw in Mangaluru on November 19, 2022. He was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, 1967. In addition, Shariq was also sentenced to 10 years in prison under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections for attempt to murder, causing grievous injuries (to the autorickshaw driver) and criminal conspiracy, as well as the Explosive Substances Act, by the special court.

# Doctor assault triggers protests, political storm; Sena corporator, 3 aides arrested

Resident doctors and nurses announce black ribbon agitation today

Mumbai. (Agency)

The alleged assault on doctors and nurses at a civic hospital in Dombivli snowballed into a statewide confrontation between the medical fraternity and the Maharashtra government, even as the main accused — Shiv Sena corporator Ramesh Mhatre — surrendered before the Thane police following arrest of three of his associates Wednesday. Resident doctors and nurses have announced protests across the state, while healthcare organisations have warned of an indefinite agitation if strict action is not taken against those responsible.

The Maharashtra State Association of Resident Doctors (Central MARD) welcomed Mhatre's arrest and said resident doctors in all government medical colleges and hospitals would wear black ribbons on Thursday while continuing medical services. It stressed that the agitation is aimed at seeking long-

term measures to curb the rising incidents of violence against healthcare workers across Maharashtra.

The Maharashtra State Nurses Association (MSNA) said nurses across the state would begin a three-day black-ribbon protest from July 10 and warned that it would intensify the agitation after July 13 if no concrete action was taken. The Maharashtra Senior Resident Doctors' Association (MSRDA) and the BMC MARD also condemned the incident, sought Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis's intervention and demanded a zero-tolerance policy against violence in hospitals.

In separate memoranda to the chief minister, the doctors' and nurses' organisations described the alleged assault as an attack on the dignity of healthcare workers and the functioning of

public hospitals. They demanded immediate arrests, strict action under the Maharashtra Medicare Act and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, stronger hospital security, and protection for



doctors and nurses performing their duties. Dr Manisha Shinde, president of the Maharashtra State Nurses Association, said repeated assaults reflected the failure to enforce existing laws. "People have no

fear of law and order and think they can get away easily after assaulting doctors, nurses or any other medical staff deployed to treat them. There has to be strict action against such people so that no one dares to repeat such acts... We want the Chief Minister to take this matter very seriously. Doctors and nurses are already treating an overwhelming number of patients despite being under-staffed and overworked," she said. Central MARD gave the authorities 72 hours to identify and arrest those responsible, warning that failure to do so would lead to an indefinite statewide agitation. "The safety of doctors and healthcare workers is essential for ensuring uninterrupted and quality healthcare services to the public. We urge the government to treat this matter with utmost seriousness and implement strict measures to prevent such incidents in the future," the association said.

## Ram Mandir theft, Hindu nationalism, and politics

The cash theft at Ram Mandir that dominates national and international media headlines, has escalated into a massive political controversy, recalling the ideological conflicts of the 1990s. Just as the Mandir movement assumed immense political significance then, the theft at the temple too has gained political traction with the assembly elections in UP, the nerve centre of the Mandir movement, just months away.

While this political interest is natural and understandable, the situation today presents a stark difference. The Mandir movement then did not have to face today's hyper-competitive, minute-by-minute breaking news media. When such a frenzied media apparatus mixes with political agendas, truth can be uncovered only by taking a helicopter view that avoids the narratives arrested by contextual sensationalism.

Ram's opponents now His devotees. The theft has miraculously transformed the erstwhile opponents of Ram Mandir into his ardent devotees chanting "Jai Shri Ram". The Congress party, which boycotted the 'Pran Pratishtha' ceremony in 2024, dispatched a nine-member high-level delegation for Ram Lala's darshan last week. Even if driven by pure political opportunism, this is a welcome development, as Mahatma Gandhi, whom it swears by, regarded "Ram Naam" as cure for all ills, national and personal. Arvind Kejriwal, who had boycotted the 2024 Mandir ceremony, too has undergone instant metamorphosis into a Ram Bhakt, declaring that the theft had deeply pained all Sanatanis and announcing his Friday visit for darshan. Most ironically, when Mulayam Singh Yadav was Chief Minister in 1990, he ordered the police to fire and kill 16 kar sevaks and later proudly declared he would have issued the same order even if 30 had to die. Today, his Samajwadi Party sheds tears, claiming Ram Bhakts have been cheated. The overexcited Indian media competing for breaking news, too joined this political chorus. One media predicted long-term damage to the BJP. Another claimed this was a severe setback to BJP's promise of Ram Rajya—the gold standard of probity in governance.

Capitalising on the geopolitical significance of the temple, global media entities with a history of anti-India and anti-Hindu bias, the Reuters, BBC, and Al-Jazeera, painted the incident as if it were a billion-dollar heist. "Stealing from the gods: India's Ram Temple hit by corruption scandal. The temple is mired in embezzlement allegations before crucial state elections, embarrassing PM Modi's government," screamed Al-Jazeera.

A theft—not corruption or a scam. What has happened at the Ram Mandir is a theft. A pilferage easily executed by lower-level staff handling cash. Not a corruption or a scam. It would be corruption only if the top management had attempted to hush it up. On the contrary, within days of the theft coming to light, the higher-ups initiated severe, uncompromising action. There was no sign of an institutional cover-up which only will make it a scam. Theft happens everywhere. To know the times we live in, one must recall Swami Chinmayananda's observation: "In the Krita Yuga, good and evil lived in different worlds (Devas and Asuras). In Treta Yuga, they existed in the same world (Ram and Ravana). In Dwapara Yuga, they were in the same family (Pandavas and Kauravas). But in Kali Yuga, they exist within the same human being." We live in Kali Yuga, where good and evil reside simultaneously in man. When desire and greed overpower even inherently good people, crimes can occur in the most sacred of spaces—be it churches, mosques or temples. Stealing from a temple Hundi (donation box) is notoriously easy. As the C P Ramaswami Iyer Committee report on temple administration astutely noted, money dropped into a Hundi is sacred, but the moment it is taken out, it becomes mere currency notes. It was based on this very logic that the judiciary permitted secular governments to take over temple funds.

## Gen Z's vanishing white-collar dream

Young people are losing their agency and autonomy because of financial dependence on their parents

FOR more than 35 years now, middle-class parents — especially in India's bigger cities — have sent their children to college to get professional degrees that would fetch them decent white-collar jobs. That used to be their golden ticket to affluence. And it did pay dividends for most of this period. Young people with MBAs or degrees in finance or computer science sailed into corporate offices and began earning more than their parents ever did. Indeed, our booming IT and finance industries changed the lives of lakhs of graduates from small towns, as well — people who would have otherwise lived a lower-middle class existence. But over the past few years, things have turned sour for India's young — what is popularly called Gen Z. Take the availability of white-collar jobs, for starters. The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) estimates that the number of graduates seeking employment increased by 74% in the past three years. In the same period, white-collar hiring — according to Naukri's Jobspeak Index — grew by a measly 2%. Even this figure hides the true picture of what is happening to Gen Z. Now, the earliest someone enters a white-collar profession is when they are 20 years old — most start working when they are 22. By the time they are 25, their parents and relatives start pressuring them to get married and then have kids of their own. That's when student life suddenly gives way to marital domesticity. And it also increases the need for money. So, it is common for young white-collar professionals to begin shopping around for better jobs by the time they are nearing 30. What is happening to these people today? CMIE's estimates tell us that during January-March 2023 and the same period in 2026, the number of young people of 20-29 years of age, who either have work or want to work, has increased by 12%. In the same period — according to Naukri's index — white-collar employment opportunities for those with 0-3 years of work experience have increased by just 3%. This is still respectable compared to hiring among those with 4-7 years of experience. Here job opportunities have fallen by 15%. Much of this would have happened in the IT and finance industries, which is precisely what most of Gen Z trained for in college. There's been a sharp decline in hiring in these two sectors in the past three years — Naukri's data shows that job opportunities in IT software and software services have dropped by 8%, while they have fallen by 17% in the banking and financial services sector. Anecdotal evidence tells us that the young entry-level employees and middle managers have borne the brunt of this 'jobapocalypse'. What is interesting is the trend among the senior-most employees. White-collar hiring activity among people with more than 13 years of work



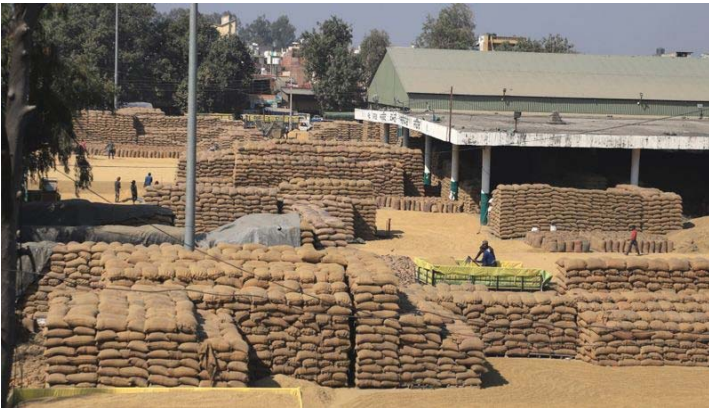
experience has increased by 32% in the past three years. In fact, even this is skewed towards those with more than 16 years of experience, where it has risen by a whopping 40%. This is a direct result of the invasion of AI into the workplace — especially in tech, finance and consulting. AI agents are reducing the need to hire freshers; if there are fewer entry-level employees, then a company no longer needs that many team leaders and middle managers to supervise them. As AI flattens the competition in non-specialised functions, companies are trying to differentiate themselves through business strategy. The net result is that firms across the world are cutting their junior- and mid-level workforce, while they are trying to get the best senior executives. There is a corollary to this story — top executives have seen huge jumps in their salaries, while those in the bottom two layers of the corporate hierarchy have seen their pay hikes collapse. In India's IT services industry, for instance, entry-level salaries have stagnated for the past decade, while median salaries for those with 5-10 years of experience have grown at a snail's pace. The CEOs in some companies, on the other hand, earn 500-700 times the median pay. And this is true not just for the IT sector, but for most of India Inc. This puts a different perspective on wage bills in India's top companies. Between 2022-23 and 2025-26, the salaries and wages of the BSE 500 companies — the 500 most valuable

listed companies in India — rose at an annual rate of 7.6%, while their net profits increased by 18.7% per year. If you account for the fact that much of this hike would have gone to the senior-most managers, one can estimate that the increments for most employees would have barely matched inflation. For the youngest lot — the Gen Z employees — pay hikes are likely to have been lower than the rise in their cost of living. It is true that there has been some recovery in white-collar hiring in the past one year, but all reports suggest that new jobs are coming at much lower pay. Companies cut their salary bills by sacking people in 2025, and are now replacing some of them for less pay. So, while the intense job crisis of 2024-25 might be easing a bit, Gen Z is getting jobs that cannot sustain the lifestyle their parents gave them. I personally know of young people who still have to take money from their parents to meet their monthly expenses even after working for more than two years. The previous generation did the opposite — they sent money home to their parents or bought them expensive gifts to make their lives better because they were earning good salaries. This is not just a matter of finances. Young people are losing their agency and autonomy because of financial dependence on their parents. They are being forced to postpone plans to get married and have children. This crisis has rid them of hope, and the will to engage with life. Their world has been turned upside down.

## Granary crunch : Storage failures undermine MSP success

The bottleneck lies in the slow movement of grain by the Food Corporation of India

PUNJAB's looming foodgrain storage crisis is not the result of a bumper harvest. It is the consequence of a procurement system that has stopped keeping pace with reality. With warehouses already crammed with rice from previous seasons, the state is preparing for yet another paddy procurement cycle with little room left to accommodate fresh stocks. Unless old grain is evacuated swiftly, procurement operations could slow, payments to farmers may be delayed and the entire supply chain could come under strain. The irony is striking. Punjab has long been celebrated as India's food bowl, faithfully delivering wheat and rice to the national pool under the minimum support price (MSP) regime. Yet the very system that rewarded production has failed to modernise storage, transport and distribution. The bottleneck lies in the slow movement of grain by the Food Corporation of India. As more This annual crisis exposes a deeper policy



mismatch. India continues to procure grain on a massive scale even as consumption patterns, regional production and logistics have changed. Temporary measures such as creating additional storage space or

expediting railway rakes may avert an immediate crisis, but they cannot substitute for structural reform. The answer lies in modern silos, faster evacuation, smarter inventory management and a serious push towards crop diversification. Punjab cannot be expected to shoulder the nation's food security burden indefinitely while bearing the costs of an outdated procurement model.

The overflowing granaries should serve as a warning. Without systemic reform, Punjab's warehouses will continue to overflow and a recurring logistical failure will increasingly undermine one of India's greatest agricultural successes. States become self-sufficient in rice, Punjab's stocks remain stranded in overflowing godowns, inflating storage costs and risking deterioration in grain quality.

## India's gaze fixed on NATO summit

New Delhi needs to recognise that even the strongest alliances undergo evolution

THE 36th NATO summit (July 7-8) is being held in Türkiye at an unusual moment. For many of its European members, the alliance's biggest strategic uncertainty today lies not in Moscow. It lies in Washington. Questions about US reliability, transatlantic cohesion and the future of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) will weigh as heavily as those about Russia. Yet the consequences of NATO's decisions will extend far beyond Europe, making the Ankara event more than just a transatlantic summit.

Founded in 1949 as a defensive transatlantic alliance in response to Cold War exigencies, NATO has persisted well beyond the dismantling of the Soviet Union. Its remit has steadily expanded since its first out-of-area operation, enforcing a no-fly zone in the Bosnian War during 1992-95. In 1999, it conducted a 78-day aerial bombing campaign against Yugoslavia. Closer home, NATO participated in counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean during 2008-16. Today, its decisions transcend Europe, increasingly shaping global defence markets, military deployments, technology controls and even Indo-Pacific security.

Four issues will dominate NATO discussions: implementation of the Hague commitment to raise defence spending to 5% of GDP by 2035; sustaining support for Ukraine in the fifth year of the war; the direction of US policy under President Donald Trump; and the fallout from the Iran war. Taken together, they reveal that NATO must confront its adversaries while adapting to a changing America and asking whether an alliance built for consensus can still move at the pace that strategic competition demands. From New Delhi, the answers to these questions look rather different than they do from Washington or Brussels. As regards the Ukraine war, NATO acknowledges that it has become

less a test of military manoeuvre than of industrial endurance, with the resulting war of attrition placing growing strain on allied resources. India's consistent position, that only dialogue and diplomacy can produce a durable settlement, remains sound. India has a direct interest in seeing the war end. A prolonged conflict will continue to reshape energy and defence markets as well as sanctions far beyond Europe.

The most consequential undercurrent at Ankara is the US itself. Threats to annex Greenland, Trump's musings about making Canada the 51st American state and Washington's February 28 attack on Iran, which blindsided America's closest NATO allies, have raised doubts about the predictability of US leadership. In private conversations, many will ask whether the US has itself become a strategic variable that even its closest allies must now manage. India has long held that formal alliances are no guarantee of predictable behaviour, and Trump's approach unintentionally reinforces that proposition. The irony is striking. While Western capitals long extolled alliance politics, European NATO members are now quietly questioning how much certainty alliances still provide. An equally important question receives far less attention. If Europeans assume greater responsibility for their own defence, Washington will be able to devote more military attention to the Indo-Pacific. Every additional euro Europe spends on its own defence potentially releases American resources for the Indo-Pacific. That, in turn, will influence China's strategic calculations, regional military balances and the Indian Ocean environment. India welcomes a stable multipolar Asia, but has no interest in NATO's institutional extension into the Indo-Pacific. India's own engagement with the US as a partner is growing, from semiconductors and space to defence and diaspora.

Nonetheless, India should dismiss any framing of it by NATO as a balancing partner against China. India



chooses partnerships to serve its national interest, consistent with its strategic autonomy and multi-alignment approach. External vindication is neither sought nor needed. As with Ukraine, the repercussions of the Iran conflict directly reach India. Most NATO members declined to join the US campaign against Iran this year, while calculating how to insulate themselves from future disruptions. For India, West Asia is not a distant theatre but a neighbourhood in which it has significant equities: ten million Indians, energy supplies and food security. Disruption to shipping through the Strait of Hormuz would immediately affect Indian interests. NATO discussions on securing maritime routes deserve our close attention. One important implication of the Ankara summit relates to defence markets. As European NATO members substantially raise defence budgets, demand will grow for artillery, air

defence, drones and munitions. India's defence industry has begun moving from buyer-seller relationships towards co-development and co-innovation. European rearmament will create opportunities Indian industry should seize. Hosting the summit has enabled Türkiye to showcase its UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) industry while advancing its regional ambitions. New Delhi's ties with Ankara have been strained by the latter's alignment with Pakistan on questions internal to India. India's outreach to Armenia, Cyprus and Greece in recent years was a considered response, not a reactive one. Türkiye's diplomatic moves on the sidelines of the summit and beyond deserve close watching. Coinciding with the Ankara summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is visiting Indonesia and travelling onwards to two of the "Five Eyes", Australia and New Zealand. The contrast is instructive: NATO operates through treaty obligations; India through flexible partnerships, strategic autonomy and issue-based cooperation. India is engaging the same strategic geography, but on its own terms and through a very different diplomatic model. The summit's communiqué will paper over cracks, as such communiqués invariably do. The real test lies in whether NATO sustains higher defence spending, maintains credible support for Ukraine, manages the fallout from the Iran war and preserves confidence in US leadership. For India, Ankara is not a meeting to influence; it is one to interpret. What it reveals about US leadership, European defence capacity and NATO's adaptability will impinge on India's choices on defence industrial partnerships, foreign policy and the Indo-Pacific. Its significance for New Delhi lies less in its communiqué, which will soon be forgotten, than in the strategic choices it foreshadows. The summit reminds us that nothing is eternal.

# The 6 tools every man should own

Go beyond gaming consoles and music players and check out a few practical tools that can help you with home repairs lest an emergency arises...

## 1. Wire Cutters:

Because that tooth you lost as you tried to peel off a particularly tough wire isn't coming back, it's safe to use tools meant for the purpose. A pair of wire cutters always proves handy for any electrical emergencies you may have. Plus it is safe, as the plastic grip at the end prevents you from getting electrocuted.

## 2. Claw Hammer:

After you have drilled a hole in the wall, it is a light claw hammer that is used to drive the nail in. Its claw also helps you pull out old

nails, thereby protecting the surface where you're plucking the nail out from. And no, using a pestle is not a good idea as it could damage your fingers as well as your walls. Plus the Mrs won't be too happy either

3. Leatherman: A multi-purpose knife that makes other knives look like needles, this is a gadget that every man should own. From screwdrivers, to serrated blades, wire cutters, crimpers, pliers, scissors and even can-openers, the array of tools it offers is astonishing and practical. Besides that, you can always improvise with the many adjustments it provides.

## 4. Electric Drill:

There's always space for home improvement. Maybe its that new family photo you want to hang on the wall. Or a new name-plate for the main door. The old fashioned way was to go banging away with the hammer. However, using an electric drill is a smart, clean way of going about things. It gets the work done fast, and there is no noise. So your neighbours don't have to worry about the wall coming down on their heads!

## 5. Crimpers:

A live internet connection is a lifeline. So, when the cables go awry and you face downtime, you don't need to wait for your internet guy to come in and sort your problem. Because if you notice,

times, the guy will just chip off your ethernet cable, put in new RJ45 connector and fix it with a crimper. To avoid all that hassle, all you need is a crimper and a connector and you will be back online in no time, unless the issue is serious.

## 6. Multimeter:

lucky man as there was no fuse in those little things to prevent electrocution. Get a digital multimeter instead. It helps measure voltage, current, and resistance and to check whether the power line is functioning and at what level. If the voltage is too high, the in-built fuse that it has, helps avoid electrocution due to a current overload.

Remember using the old green screwdriver which lit up at the end when you used it to check whether the wire was live? If you did and have lived to read this, you are a

With Kate Middleton announcing her second pregnancy just a year after Prince George turned one, here's looking at 'two under two' phenomenon that is finding takers closer home too

Barely six weeks after Prince George turned one came the official announcement that the Duchess of Cambridge is pregnant again. With another heir on the way, the royal couple will be parents to two children under the age of two. Closer home, many urban couples are opting to closely space out the pregnancies too, following the strategy of 'two under two', also known as baby bunching.

Says consultant gynaecologist and IVF specialist Dr Bandita Sinha, "With most women in the metros starting their families well into thirties, they do not have the luxury of choosing wider space due to diminishing fertility. Also, those who are career-oriented may not want to take long breaks in their profession, so planning their next pregnancy quickly helps them to take care of two children together and get back to work early."

## Two years wait is a must

While the earlier generations had wider age gaps between siblings, today, most siblings are usually one-and-a-half or three years apart. World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends a waiting period of atleast two years after the baby's birth, says Sinha, adding, "In India, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare recommends spacing births by three years. However, the decision of spacing may vary depending upon the age and the health of the mother, career choices, financial conditions and child care support in the family."

Adds consulting psychiatrist Dr Pavan Sonar, "Psychologically, it is advisable to have a gap of around four years as the

# Have you thought of baby bunching?



Bringing up closely spaced siblings has its own share of challenges. Ask any mother who has delivered a child less than two years after the first one and she is likely to grumble about how the initial years pass by in a blur with sleepless nights and adjusting to both babies' schedules. Says Dr Sinha, "Some studies suggest that mothers are more likely to mistreat their children if they are spaced too closely. The older child, who is still a baby, has plenty of needs and may feel rejected. They are likely to have adjustment problems and throw temper tantrums later."

According to experts, common interests can lead to competition. Meanwhile, the first-born may be highly self-critical. "Many firstborns never lose this tendency to feel guilty or overly responsible when things go wrong," adds Sinha. "In future too, if both your kids opt for higher education, you will have to be prepared to spend a lot of money and resources almost at the same time," says Dr Sonar.

## Health risks if second pregnancy is within six to 17 months

- Premature birth
- Low weight babies
- Chances of placenta praevia and placental abruption increases
- Nutritional deficiency may cause weakness and iron deficiency may cause anaemia
- Postpartum depression
- Increased chances of complications related to delivery

## Things parents must remember

- Ensure that the mother gets enough nutrition even post the pregnancy
- Have a good support system of people in your family to attend the babies
- Ensure you give equal attention to both the kids
- Treat them as individuals rather than a single entity
- Ensure that your financial resources as well as savings for the future education are in place before planning a second pregnancy soon after

mother gets enough time to recover physically from the first pregnancy and support the next. It also gives the family adequate space to adjust to the entry of the new one, and help the first baby get adequate love and care."

## Lesser age gap equals more sibling bonding

While growing up, Gauri Pednekar, who has a brother eight years older to her, often wished she had a sibling closer to her age. When she planned her pregnancies, she gave birth to daughters who are two years apart. She says, "It's been five years since my second child was born and today, both of them are each other's playmates. They play with the same kind of toys, go to school together and are a great support system for each other."

Dr Sonar says, "Reduced age gap facilitates more friendly relations between siblings. Also, parents can manage the attention, time and resources for each child well because they are closely spaced and hence, have the same kind of needs."

## It's more challenging

Relationship counsellor Sauleha Shaik, however, feels it's okay to feel the slump at work sometimes. He says, "You need to boost your motivation every now and then so that you don't lose hope." he adds. So, stop fretting over and here's how you can keep yourself motivated:

## Stay positive:

No matter what the job atmosphere is, remember that staying positive will keep you motivated. Also, negativity will sap you off your energies. When you stay optimistic it will automatically show in your work.

## Surround yourself with happy colleagues:

At times, the reason to feel demotivated at work is that you have too many negative people surrounding you at your workplace. These are people who are constantly cribbing about the work atmosphere and leave no stones unturned when they have to gossip about something at work. Take the hint and try to maintain a distance from such people because their constant nagging may one day make you become just like them.

## Talk it out with your boss:

If you think the reason for feeling demotivated is your boss's attitude, then try talking it out with your immediate superior.

# How to cope with a career low and stay positive

**Smita Aliva, a 36-year-old advertising professional, says, "I have been working in this company for the past three years and I have seen a few colleagues being fired for no reason. I now fear I will face the same treatment and it has affected my work." She's not alone, given the scenario.**

Not only will you feel relieved, you will also be able to understand the perspective of your boss.

## Don't worry too much:

Don't get too affected by your colleague losing his/her job or people finding it difficult to cope at work. It's all a part and parcel of the professional environment. Working hard will surely reap benefits.

## Look out for another job:

Says clinical psychologist Dr Seema Hingorany, "Staying in a negative work atmosphere pulls you into further negativity. So, if you are not happy with your present job, it is better to look out for a job which suits you."

## Seek professional help

Says Advaita Kalra, a 27-year-old software engineer, "I was jobless for almost eight months and had started losing hope. I would keep applying to various companies, but none had any vacancy. That is when a friend suggested that I approach an outsourced HR agency. Within two weeks, they approached me with a job opening and I was happy to take it up."





# Working Mothers

**Add a baby in a couples lives, and they no longer share equal amount of household chores, claims a new study.**

The study has found that women shoulder a greater amount of workload than men in a high income household when a baby is born, though both thought they shared it equally.

Detailed time diaries that the new mothers and fathers overestimated their increased workload - but by widely varying amounts. Compared to the parents' estimated four hours of extra work each day, the time diaries showed women's workloads increased by two hours a day, while men's total working time each day increased by only about 40 minutes.

Claire Kamp Dush, co-author of the study and associate professor at The Ohio State University, said that women ended up shouldering a lot more of the work that comes with a new baby, even though both men and

**shoulder more responsibilities**

women thought they added the same amount of additional work. The results were especially surprising because before the baby was born, these couples were sharing household chores relatively equally.

182 couples participated in this study, where they all had higher-than-average levels of education, both spouses had jobs and both spouses, and reported their intention to keep working after the child was born.

Results showed that the couples shared duties equally before the baby was born. Both men and women reported doing about 15 hours of housework per week, as well as 42 to 45 hours of paid work, respectively. Moreover, 95 percent of both men and women agreed during the pregnancy that mothers and fathers should equally share the child care responsibility.

However, after the arrival of their child, men did about 10 hours a week of physical child care - the less fun work like changing diapers and bathing the baby. Meanwhile, women did 15 hours per week.

The more "fun" part of parenting, such as reading to the baby and playing, is called child engagement, and the time diaries showed a

much smaller gender gap here. Men spent about four hours per week in child engagement, while women spent about six hours. Men also cut back their housework by 5 hours per week, while women did not reduce their housework to compensate for additional childcare work.

One explanation for women's increased post-parenthood workloads compared to men has been that they are spending less time at their paid jobs. But this study didn't find that. Neither men nor women had significantly decreased the number of hours spent at their paid jobs, the results showed.



## Things bosses can't live without

Featured on job networking site LinkedIn, the full list resulted after questioning more than 50 influential people, according to News.com.au.

While Virgin king pin Richard Branson insisted that having an assistant who is on the ball 24/7 is one of the main ways he stays on top of business while Hewlett-Packard CEO Meg Whitman makes sure that she always carries her laptop (HP Envy x2), swimsuit and country music when travelling to focus, tune out and stay flexible.

Branson admitted that he'd be hopelessly lost without his personal assistant Helen.

And Whitman asserted that she always carry a swimsuit while travelling and try to stay at a location near a pool so she can get in a morning swim regardless of time zone.

Things that Indian-born American physician Deepak Chopra said he just can't travel or work without: "Mybasis, Dream Weaver, and my iPhone and iPad in my toolkit."

His mybasis acts as his online personal dashboard recording information about his body, while his Dream Weaver helps him relax and his iPad keep him connected to family, office and friends, something he asserted is important to him.

But Peter Guber, CEO of Mandalay Entertainment and owner of Golden State Warriors and Los Angeles Dodgers, can't function without his smartphone, which he admits he's addicted to.

The author also revealed that he's gone back home to get his phone if he's forgotten it but not his wallet.

Unlike others Vivian Schiller, Chief Digital Officer at America's NBC News said he carries almost nothing.

**Some of the world's most powerful and influential business people have revealed the secrets behind their success and things they simply can't function without, which include personal assistants, gadgets, and an old fashioned book.**

Neil Weinberg, Editor-in-Chief at American Banker, said he has learned to stay away from his smart phones and laptops as far as possible after he realised it was raising his blood pressure and stress.

Now, he usually carries only a book while travelling.

Meanwhile Clara Shih, CEO of Hearsay Social and Author of The Facebook Era, insisted that being on the go as head of a fast-growing tech company means she can't be without her Droid 4 (phone), her Tory Burch ballet flats and one business card with an important reminder: to slow down and take a deep breath.

Interestingly, RedBalloon founder Naomi Simson said she never gets by without a smile.

Jennifer Dulski, President and COO at Change.Org simply can't live without her calligraphy pens because she finds that a handwritten personal note can be especially precious.

But Craigslist.com founder Craig Newmark insisted that he couldn't function without his Samsung Galaxy Note II which he uses 80 per cent of the time.

## Don't take cat bites lightly

While all injuries to the hand caused by human and animal bites should receive medical care, infections due to dog bites occur at less than half the rate of cat bites, says a study.

"An estimated 30 percent to 50 percent of cat bites are complicated by infections, which can occur as early as three hours after injury in approximately 50 percent of the infection cases," the study noted.

"Although many people may be reluctant to immediately go to a doctor, all bites to the hand should receive medical care," said orthopaedic surgeon and lead study author Stephen Kennedy from University of Washington.

"And while routine antibiotics are not



necessarily recommended for other bite wounds, they are recommended for a bite to the hand to reduce the risk of infection and

disability," Kennedy added.

Symptoms of infection include erythema (redness), edema (swelling), progressive pain, and fever, the researchers who reviewed literature concerning hand injuries caused by human and animal bites.

Cats don't have the jaw strength of dogs; however, their sharp, narrow teeth also can cause serious injury, they said.

The researchers noted that in case of a bite injury, it is important to inspect the hand carefully for any puncture wounds as even a small wound can inject virulent bacteria under the skin.

"If there is a puncture wound of any size, wash as soon as possible with soap and water then seek medical advice," they added.

The findings appeared in the Journal of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons



# Delhi waterlogged, Surat flooded, landslides in Uttarakhand, Kerala amid heavy rain

**Torrential monsoon rain battered several states, triggering floods, landslides, a building collapse and widespread transport disruption. Thousands were evacuated as rescue operations continued, while the Centre reviewed the situation and the IMD warned of more heavy rainfall.**

**New Delhi. (Agency)**

Torrential monsoon rain lashed large parts of India on Wednesday and Thursday, setting off flash floods, landslides, a building collapse and major disruption to road and rail movement across several states. Rescue teams were deployed in multiple locations, thousands were moved from flood-affected areas, and the India Meteorological Department warned that more heavy rain was likely in several regions.

Amid the worsening weather, Union Home Minister Amit Shah spoke to the chief ministers of Kerala, Maharashtra,

Gujarat and Jammu and Kashmir to review the situation and said the Centre would extend all possible assistance. The impact was felt across Delhi-NCR, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Kerala, Jammu and Kashmir and Rajasthan, with authorities remaining on alert as the monsoon strengthened further.

**DELHI-NCR: BUILDING COLLAPSE, WATERLOGGING AND TRAFFIC SNARLS**

Delhi recorded one of its heaviest spells of rain this season overnight, leaving several neighbourhoods waterlogged and slowing traffic across the city. The IMD issued red and orange alerts and warned of thunderstorms, intense rain and



lightning. By 8.30 am, Mayur Vihar had received 102 mm of rain over the previous 24 hours, followed by Pusa with 83 mm, Lodhi Road with 80 mm and Safdarjung with 72.6 mm.

In Rohini, three people died after a newly built four-storey structure collapsed. A preliminary assessment by the civic body

said plumbing work was going on inside the building and that drilling or cutting of structural parts, including beams and columns, may have led to the collapse. Officials have not linked the incident to the rain.

Elsewhere in the capital, severe waterlogging was reported from Sadar Bazar, Nasirpur, Greater Kailash, Badarpur, Teliwara, Mahavir Bazar, Swarup Nagar and Kushak Road. Traffic moved very slowly on Ring Road, Outer Ring Road and NH-48, especially near Dhaula Kuan, Mahipalpur and Rajokri. The Delhi Fire Service attended calls

about uprooted trees in East of Kailash, while civic agencies received several complaints about waterlogging, fallen trees and power cuts. The Delhi government said long-standing flooding points such as Minto Bridge and ITO did not see waterlogging this time.

Heavy rain also disrupted life in neighbouring Gurugram, where waterlogging stranded vehicles and reduced traffic to a crawl on key roads. Congestion was reported on the Delhi-Jaipur Highway service lane near Narsinghpur, Basai, Umang Bhardwaj Chowk, Kadipur, Sector 10A and Sohna Road, among other stretches.

## Capital breathes clean air amid rain, IMD issues yellow alert

**New Delhi. (Agency)**

As rains continue to lash the capital, its Ridge weather station recorded 154% excess rainfall this month. The city also registered its cleanest air in more than 10 months on Wednesday, even as waterlogging and traffic snarls disrupted normal life.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) said the Ridge weather station received 79.1 mm of rainfall between July 1 and 8.30 am on July 8, 154% higher than the long-period average of 31.2 mm for the corresponding period.

Additionally, the IMD has issued a 'yellow alert' for Thursday and forecast a generally cloudy sky with light to moderate rain.

On the air quality front, the city's 24-hour average Air Quality Index (AQI) stood at 59 in the 'satisfactory' category, the lowest since September 4, 2025, when it was 58.

According to the weather department, cumulative rainfall till 8.30 am stood at 14.2 mm at Safdarjung, 19.2 mm at Palam, 17.8 mm at Lodhi Road, 54.3 mm at Ridge, 37.6 mm at Ayanagar, 18.6 mm at Rajghat, 44.5 mm at Pusa, 85.5 mm at Najafgarh and 24.5 mm at Mayur Vihar.

Persistent showers kept temperatures well below normal. Safdarjung recorded a maximum temperature of 30.8 ° Celsius, 5.8 notches below normal, followed by Palam at 30.0° Celsius, 7.4 notches below normal, Lodhi Road at 30.2° Celsius, 4.8 notches below normal, Ridge at 29.4 °s Celsius, 6.8 notches below normal, and Ayanagar at 28.3 ° Celsius, 8.3 notches below normal.

## Delhi scores high in school education, enrolment gaps a worry

**New Delhi. (Agency)**

The capital city has been placed among the country's better-performing states and Union Territories in the Ministry of Education's Performance Grading Index (PGI) 2025-26. While the capital scored well across several school education indicators, the report flagged concerns over declining enrolment at the foundational level and lower student retention in secondary classes.

For 2025-26, Delhi was placed in the second-highest performance band, alongside Punjab, Kerala, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Daman and Diu. Chandigarh was the only State or Union Territory to achieve the higher Uttam-3 category.

The PGI is the Centre's annual assessment of school education, evaluating states across 70 indicators covering learning outcomes, access, infrastructure, equity, governance, and teacher education. The index groups states into performance bands based on scores.

The framework is based on data from multiple official sources, including the Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+), PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan 2024, the PM POSHAN portal, PRABANDH and Vidyanjali.

Despite its overall performance, the report highlighted a decline in enrolment at the foundational stage, covering pre-primary to Class II, where the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) fell to 102.8 in 2024-25.

In this regard, the Ministry has advised the Delhi government to analyse class-wise enrolment trends and make better use of data available through the Poshan Tracker. At the same time, Delhi recorded improvements in enrolment across higher classes. The GER at the preparatory stage (Classes III-V) increased from 51 to 52.2, while the middle stage (Classes VI-VIII) registered a significant jump from 106.8 to 115. Enrolment at the secondary level (Classes IX-XII) also improved marginally.

## SC to examine if arrest memo typo can justify bail for Sonam Raghuvanshi

**New Delhi. (Agency)**

The Supreme Court on Thursday said it may refer to a larger bench the legal question of whether a typographical error in an arrest memo, including the mention of an incorrect statutory provision, is sufficient to invalidate an arrest and justify bail to Sonam Raghuvanshi, who is accused of murdering her husband.

A partial working-day bench of Justices Manoj Misra and Shree Chandrashekhar also indicated that it would closely examine whether the Meghalaya High Court so it could verify what was actually communicated to the accused at the time of her arrest.



Appearing for the state, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta argued that the mention of the wrong statutory section in the arrest memo was a purely clerical error and could not be treated as a ground to invalidate the arrest or sustain bail in a murder case.

"This is a very serious case where bail has been granted on the ground that the written grounds of arrest were not supplied, even though there is a record showing that they were furnished at the time of arrest," Mehta submitted. He further contended that the gravity of the offence should not be overshadowed by a technical defect in the paperwork.

## Truck carrying 20 tonnes of suspected cow meat seized in Rajasthan

**New Delhi. (Agency)**

A container truck carrying approximately 20 tonnes of beef was seized by the police in Rajasthan's Alwar district after receiving a tip-off from cow vigilantes. While the vehicle's papers declared the cargo buffalo meat, a group of right-wing activists alleged that the truck was transporting cow meat. The container truck was intercepted by the police on a stretch of the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway while Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, had arrived in Alwar on Wednesday to inspect the major



motorway. The consignment of meat reportedly belonged to a private company and was being transported in large-scale commercial packaging. According to the police, the container was carrying packaged meat in quantities ranging from 1 kilogram to 10 kilograms. The truck was travelling from Mumbai to Uttar Pradesh. Cow vigilantes expressed suspicion about the nature of the meat being transported through the vehicle and demanded that it be examined by the animal husbandry department. Acting on information provided by them, the truck was intercepted and seized by the police. Following this, a veterinary officer was called in. Samples of the meat were subsequently collected and sent for laboratory testing. The police said an investigation is underway into the matter, adding that it will only be possible to determine the actual nature of the meat after the test report is received.

## By Oct- Nov, five new waste processing plants to be operational

**New Delhi. (Agency)**

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi's five new fresh waste processing plants are set to become operational by October-November this year, officials said.

Apart from landfill sites like Ghazipur, Okhla and Bhalaswa, these plants will be set up in two new identified spots – Singhola and Narela-Bawana. The combined capacity of the five waste-processing projects is 5,900 metric tonnes and is expected to resolve the waste processing gap in the city. Currently, the city processes about 7,000-8,000



tonnes of fresh waste every day against a daily waste generation of 13,000-14,000 tonnes. The plants worth ₹596 crore were approved by the MCD last month. The development comes when biomining operations at the landfill sites have slowed by more than half due to monsoon, temporarily affecting the pace of legacy waste remediation. Officials said, monthly targets are revised to account for the slowdown, with work expected to pick up again after the monsoon.

According to the civic body, the Okhla plant will have a processing capacity of 1,400 tonnes per day (TPD), the Ghazipur plant 800 TPD and the Bhalaswa plant 1,800 TPD. The remaining two facilities, at Singhola and Narela-Bawana, having a capacity of 700 TPD and 1200 TPD, respectively.

## Delhi HC seeks police response on plea of conman Suresh Chandrasekhar's close aide in extortion case

**The petition claimed that Irani was wrongly charged in the case and that there was no basis to sustain the MCOCA provisions against her.**

**New Delhi. (Agency)**

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The Delhi High Court on Wednesday sought a response from the city police on a petition moved by the alleged conman Suresh Chandrasekhar's close aide Pinky Irani challenging the framing of charges against her in a Rs 200 crore extortion case against them.

The trial court on June 3 framed charges against Chandrasekhar, Irani, and 19 others for offences, including under the stringent MCOCA (Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act) provisions.

Justice Madhu Jain issued notice to Delhi Police on Irani's revision petition assailing the trial court order and granted two weeks to the investigating agency to file its response. The court has listed the matter for hearing on September 10.

The petition claimed that Irani was wrongly charged in the case and that there was no basis to sustain the MCOCA provisions against her. The police sought time to reply in the plea.

They had earlier alleged that Irani used to portray Suresh as a business tycoon and was instrumental in facilitating meetings with Bollywood personalities.

**US terror accused seeks 'American diet' in jail**

A Delhi court sought a response from Tihar Central Prison on a plea filed by the US citizen Matthew Aaron Van Dyke, an alleged 'mercenary' accused in a terror conspiracy case in India and Myanmar, who sought an 'American diet' in prison. Dyke's counsel claimed that he is currently on a hunger strike for around 50 days and was unable to tolerate the spicy, oily, and deep-fried food.



## Rupee slips 4 paise to 95.52 against US dollar in early trade

New Delhi. (Agency)

The rupee fell 4 paise to 95.52 against the US dollar in early trade on Thursday, weighed down by surging crude oil prices after fresh tensions in West Asia rattled sentiments worldwide, raising fears of uncertainties over global trade.

According to analysts, oil prices soared to their highest point in weeks after President Donald Trump announced an end to the ceasefire with Iran in response to Iranian attacks on commercial ships in the Strait of Hormuz and on American military sites in other Gulf nations.

However, positive sentiment in domestic equity markets supported the Indian currency, they said.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 95.52 and remained weaker against the US dollar, down 4 paise from its previous close. On Wednesday, the rupee plunged 52 paise to settle at 95.48 against the US dollar. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading at 100.98, down 0.09 per cent.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading higher by 1 per cent at USD 78.80 per barrel in futures trade.

## Missiles fly, markets rise: Why Sensex is climbing despite fresh US-Iran escalation

New Delhi. (Agency)

The United States has launched fresh strikes on Iran. President Donald Trump has declared the June 17 Iran understanding effectively "over". Tehran has threatened retaliation, and tensions around the Strait of Hormuz remain elevated after attacks on commercial shipping.

Yet, on Dalal Street, investors are responding with surprising calm.

The Sensex was up 531 points at 77,035.15, while the Nifty rose 171 points to 24,053.30 by 9:51 am on Thursday, marking a recovery after the previous session's crash. The reason is simple: Dalal Street is not trading the war. It is trading oil.

### WHY MARKETS FELL FIRST

Markets had reacted sharply on Wednesday after Trump declared the Iran deal "over" and signalled further military action. The uncertainty triggered a sell-off, with Senex losing 1,600 points and Nifty shedding 516 points and wiping out nearly half of its recent gains.

According to Dr V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Investments, long unwinding and fresh short positions amplified the decline. "President Trump's statement that the ceasefire with Iran is over triggered sharp selling in the market shaving off 516 points from the Nifty," Vijayakumar said.

## Markets recover despite US-Iran tensions; IT stocks under pressure

New Delhi. (Agency)

Benchmark indices opened higher on Thursday, recovering part of Wednesday's steep losses, as investors bought beaten-down large-cap stocks despite lingering concerns over fresh tensions in the Middle East. At 9:40 am, the BSE Sensex was up 516.15 points, or 0.67%, at 77,019.75, while the NSE Nifty50 gained 139.90 points, or 0.59%, to 24,021.95.

The recovery follows Wednesday's sharp sell-off, when both benchmark indices tumbled over 2% to record their biggest single-day decline in three months after renewed US-Iran tensions sent crude oil prices sharply higher.

### FINANCIALS, BROADER MARKETS LEAD RECOVERY

The rebound was broad-based, with 15 of the 16 sectoral indices trading in the green.

Among broader markets, the Nifty Smallcap 100 rose 1.03%, the Nifty Midcap 50 gained 0.97%, the Nifty Midcap 100 advanced 0.95%, the Nifty MidSmall Financial Services index climbed 0.95%, the Nifty 500 added 0.68%, the Nifty 200 gained 0.64% and the Nifty 100 rose 0.57%. India VIX, the market's fear gauge, declined more than 7%, indicating easing volatility after Wednesday's spike.

Among sectoral indices, Nifty Consumer Durables gained 1.91%, Nifty Realty rose 1.34%, Nifty Private Bank climbed 0.90%, Nifty MidSmall Healthcare added 0.90%, Nifty Chemicals gained 0.83%, Nifty PSU Bank rose 0.77%, Nifty Media advanced 0.75%, Nifty Financial Services 25/50 gained 0.68%, Nifty Pharma rose 0.69%, Nifty Healthcare Index added 0.66%, Nifty FMCG gained 0.62%, Nifty Financial Services Ex-Bank rose 0.59%, Nifty Auto gained 0.55% and Nifty Oil.

# Flipkart's food business grows 50% as demand for healthier products rises

**The company is seeing strong demand for products such as nuts and dry fruits, protein-rich breakfasts, cold-pressed oils and other premium food items as consumers shift towards healthier eating habits, he said, speaking on the sidelines of Flipkart's Food Fest**

New Delhi. (Agency)

Flipkart's food and nutrition business is growing 50% year-on-year, driven by rising demand for healthier products and increasing purchases from Tier-2 and smaller cities, Nishant Dalal, Vice

President, Consumables, FMCG and Healthcare, Head of BGM at Flipkart, told.

The company is seeing strong demand for products such as nuts and dry fruits, protein-rich breakfasts, cold-pressed oils and other premium food items as consumers shift towards healthier eating habits, he said, speaking on the sidelines of Flipkart's Food Fest 2026.

"Customer growth has been healthy for us. Gen Z is one of the key driving factors. So Gen Z is growing at about 60%. Gen Z contribution is coming to about 60% for us and that's driving the majority of the segment," Dalal said.

He said health-conscious consumption is emerging as a key

trend across the platform, with both established companies and direct-to-consumer (D2C) brands contributing to growth.



"The key macro driving factors I think are also in general focus on health. So you see a lot of focus around nuts and dry fruit, protein-led snacking, peanuts," he said. Among the fastest-growing categories, Dalal highlighted nuts and dry fruits, value-added oats

and premium edible oils. He added that consumers are increasingly moving from refined cooking oils to cold-pressed and olive oils.

The demand is also spreading beyond metro cities. "The demand is very strongly driven by growth in T2 plus. We're seeing very strong momentum. There's almost 60% growth we are seeing coming from T2 plus markets," Flipkart is also seeing changes in how consumers discover food products. Dalal said creators and food influencers are playing a larger role in introducing shoppers to new products and healthier alternatives. "I think a very big segment on discovery is the creator network or creator ecosystem. We see a lot of food bloggers talking about different products, different benefits, healthier."

## Stock markets rebound in early trade after sharp fall in previous session

**The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 495.86 points to 76,998.54 in early trade. The 50-share NSE Nifty went up by 148.70 points to 24,025.**

New Delhi. (Agency)

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded in early trade on Thursday after a sharp fall in the previous session amid foreign fund inflows and buying in blue-chip stocks.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 495.86 points to 76,998.54 in early trade. The 50-share NSE Nifty went up by 148.70 points to 24,025.

From the Sensex pack, Eternal, Sun

Pharma, Bharti Airtel, Titan, ICICI Bank, Asian Paints, Reliance Industries and HDFC Bank were among the major winners. Infosys,



Tata Consultancy Services, HCL Tech and Tech Mahindra were among the laggards.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 1,962.80 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, quoted 1.04 per cent

higher at USD 78.83 per barrel.

On Wednesday, the Sensex tanked 1,677.12 points, or 2.15 per cent, to settle at 76,503.60. On similar lines, the Nifty tumbled 516.65 points, or 2.12 per cent, to end at 23,882.05.

Geopolitics has again played spoilsport with the Indian market, which has been slowly strengthening, V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Limited, said. "There are market indications that things may not deteriorate as feared. First, Brent at USD 80 is not a problem. It won't create a BoP (Balance of Payments) crisis. The crisis will reemerge only if the tensions lead to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz again, and consequently, crude spiking above USD 100. The present futures do not reflect such a pessimistic scenario," he added.

## Aviva becomes first foreign insurer to fully own India life business after FDI rule change

New Delhi. (Agency)

British insurer Aviva has become the first foreign life insurance company to take full ownership of its Indian business after agreeing to acquire the remaining 26% stake in Aviva Life Insurance Company India from its joint venture partner, Dabur Invest Corp.

The transaction marks the first such deal since the Centre allowed 100% foreign direct investment (FDI) in the insurance sector earlier this year, ending the requirement for foreign insurers to operate through Indian joint venture partners. Aviva confirmed the acquisition on Thursday, while

the proposed transaction had earlier been reported by Economic Times, citing people familiar with the matter. Reuters later reported



that the deal has now been agreed. The London-headquartered insurer, however, did not disclose the financial terms of the transaction and said the acquisition is not expected to have a material

financial impact on the group, Reuters reported.

### FIRST DEAL UNDER NEW FDI REGIME

The acquisition follows one of the biggest policy changes in India's insurance sector in recent years. The government raised the foreign direct investment limit in insurance companies to 100% from the earlier 74% of paid-up equity capital, opening the door for overseas insurers to own their Indian businesses outright.

Aviva's acquisition is the first major life insurance transaction under the new regime and is expected to be closely watched by other multinational insurers operating in India.

# India's insurance industry is seeing a Gen Z takeover, but there's a twist

New Delhi. (Agency)

For decades, the face of insurance in India was the middle-aged advisor who knew every family in the neighbourhood and sold policies through personal relationships.

Now, Gen Z is beginning to rewrite that story. A new report by Probus has found that younger advisors are selling significantly more insurance policies than their older peers. However, when it comes to helping customers buy higher-value life insurance and long-term protection products, experienced advisors continue to lead the way.

The findings point to a changing insurance landscape where digital-first, younger advisors are expanding insurance access at scale, while seasoned professionals continue to handle more complex financial

planning conversations.

### GEN Z IS SELLING MORE POLICIES

According to the report, newly onboarded Point of Sales Persons (PoSPs) below the age of 30 sold nearly 68% more policies per advisor than those aged 30 and above during FY26.

They also made up 41% of all new advisors joining the Probus platform, underlining the growing role of digitally savvy youngsters in India's insurance distribution network.

During the year, these young advisors issued 1.95 lakh policies out of the nearly 23 lakh policies sold by Probus.

Their business was largely driven by retail insurance products. Motor insurance accounted for 78% of the policies they sold, followed by life insurance (15%) and SME insurance

(4%). Overall, Gen Z advisors sold 18.3% more policies than their older peers, helping insurers reach more first-time customers.

### BUT EXPERIENCE STILL WINS BIG



### TICKETS

While younger advisors excelled in policy volumes, the report found that experienced advisors generated far greater business value. Advisors aged 30 and above accounted for nearly 64% of the total premium collected,

reflecting stronger participation in higher-value insurance products.

They also recorded 270% higher life insurance premium volumes than younger advisors, highlighting their strength in products that require detailed financial discussions and long-term planning.

Their portfolio was also more diversified, with motor insurance contributing 53%, life insurance 31%, and SME commercial insurance 10% of the policies they sold.

### A DIGITAL-FIRST SHIFT

The report suggests that technology is reshaping how insurance is sold in India. Younger advisors, who are generally more comfortable with digital tools and online customer acquisition, are helping insurers expand their reach and sell standardised retail products quickly.

### 3,000 km of embankments in Assam need repair: Minister

GUWAHATI.(Agency)

Over 60 per cent of 4,800 km embankments in Assam require repair or complete reconstruction as their carrying or flood resistance capacity has waned, the state Assembly was informed on Wednesday.

In a written reply to a query by BJP MLA Bhupen Roy, Water Resources Minister Susanta Borgohain said his department has so far constructed 4,800 km of embankments across the state.

"Out of them, we have strengthened almost 1,800 km. We can say the carrying or flood resistance capacity of the remaining 3,000 km embankments has decreased," he added.

However, the Water Resources Department occasionally carries out maintenance work to keep these embankments in a working condition, Borgohain said.

"In the last five years, the Water Resources Department enhanced the height and strengthened almost 863 km of embankment. These works are at the last stages of completion," he added.

### Muslim woman forced to remove niqab in Bihar

PATNA.(Agency)

In a shocking incident that has sent shockwaves, a group of Hindutva supporters allegedly forced a Muslim woman to remove her niqab (veil) after she was spotted with a Hindu man in Bihar's Nawada district.

Sources said that her friend was forced to apply sindoor to her forehead. A video of the incident was posted on social media platforms last Thursday. The woman is seen pleading with the Hindutva mob to stop, but her repeated appeals went unheeded.

"Video to banega. "Saboot to rahega" (We will make the video for evidence)," one miscreant reportedly remarked as others removed her burqa and exposed her forehead, amid chants of 'Jai Bajranbali'. The woman's Hindu friend also pleaded with them not to harass her. But one of the harassers says, "Arey, tum idhar sindoor daalo aur phir Muslim rivaaz mein karte rehna" (Apply the sindoor. You can get married in the Muslim way later." Later, they followed the couple and continued making videos.A senior police officer posted in Nawada said that police have obtained the viral video. The authenticity of the video was being verified, he said, adding that police would also contact the victim to record her statement. The shocking incident has sparked off tension in the area.

### ED freezes 3 bank accounts of TMC: 'Used party corpus to invest in aviation firm to buy jet and chopper'

Kolkata.(Agency)

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) said on Wednesday that it has frozen three bank accounts of the Trinamool Congress (TMC), holding deposits worth Rs 440.42 crore, under the PMLA (Prevention of Money Laundering Act), following searches in an alleged funds misappropriation case.

According to ED sources, the preliminary probe has found that the political party had invested its own corpus into a private aviation firm to acquire a business jet and a helicopter.

"The ED conducted search operations at five premises in and around Kolkata under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002. The premises belonged to the Carewell group of companies, which operates in the aviation sector. During the searches, balances amounting to Rs 440.42 crore lying in three HDFC Bank accounts of the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) were frozen under Section 17(1-A) of the PMLA," an ED spokesperson said. The searches were conducted in connection with a money laundering investigation based on an FIR lodged by the Cyber Police, Bidhannagar, in a case involving alleged dishonest financial dealings, unlawful collection of money, and routing of suspected funds through certain bank accounts of the TMC, the spokesperson said.

## Private schools add students as government institutions sees enrolment slide in TN

Government schools witnessed the sharpest fall, with enrolment dropping from 45.1 lakh in 2024-25 to 43.03 lakh in 2025-26, a decline of more than 2.07 lakh students.

CHENNAI.(Agency)

Tamil Nadu's overall school enrolment declined for the second consecutive year in 2025-26, with government and government-aided schools continuing to lose students and private schools registering a rise in enrolment, according to the latest Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) report. A similar trend was recorded across the country.

The state's total enrolment from pre-primary to higher secondary dropped to 1,24,02,872 in 2025-26 from 1,25,18,167 the previous year, a decline of 1,15,295 students. Since peaking at 1,29,93,050 in 2023-24, enrolment has fallen by nearly 5.9

lakh.

The decline was driven largely by the drop in enrolment in the elementary stage. Enrolment in Classes 1 to 8 fell from



76,39,104 in 2024-25 to 74,59,350 in 2025-26, a drop of nearly 1.8 lakh students. While Classes 1 to 5 recorded a decline of 71,643

students, Classes 6 to 8 saw enrolment fall by 1,08,111.

Officials attributed the overall decline to falling fertility rates and smaller birth cohorts, but said a detailed analysis would be required to determine why government and aided schools continue to lose students while private schools attract more admissions.Government schools witnessed the sharpest fall, with enrolment dropping from 45.1 lakh in 2024-25 to 43.03 lakh in 2025-26, a decline of more than 2.07 lakh students. Government-aided schools lost over 83,000 students during the same period. In contrast, private schools added nearly 1.77 lakh students, taking their enrolment from 60.26 lakh to 62.03 lakh.

## Lack of nephrologist at Nilgiris GH forces referral of patients to Coimbatore GH

The incident has raised concern among residents and activists, who have urged the state government to ensure the availability of adequate specialists to handle medical emergencies.

NILGIRIS.(Agency)

The Nilgiris Government Medical College and Hospital, inaugurated by former Chief Minister M K Stalin a year ago, is yet to deliver the expected benefits. The recent referral of a snakebite patient to the Coimbatore Medical College Hospital (CMCH) has highlighted the absence of a nephrologist at the Nilgiris hospital

A 49-year-old farmer, R Siva, from Vaazhathottam near Masinagudi, was referred from the Nilgiris Government Medical College and Hospital to CMCH on the third day of treatment following a snakebite. He had initially been admitted to the Nilgiris hospital on June 30 after first



being taken to the Masinagudi Government Hospital.

The incident has raised concern among residents and activists, who have urged the state government to ensure the availability of adequate specialists to handle medical emergencies. They pointed out that referring patients to Coimbatore, which is

nearly a three-hour journey from parts of the Nilgiris district, could delay critical treatment and endanger lives.

According to S Prakash, a temporary conductor with the Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation (TNSTC) and the patient's son, "My father was bitten on his right hand while switching on a motor to irrigate our vegetable farm at Vaazhathottam on the afternoon of June 30. My uncle first took him to the Masinagudi Government Hospital, but there was no doctor available. We were forced to wait for nearly an hour because there was no ambulance there. Eventually, an ambulance arrived from Ooty and shifted my father to the emergency ward of the Nilgiris Government Medical College and Hospital."

## Only 9 SUMUL Dairy board seats to see contest as BJP-backed front bags 7 unopposed

Surat.(Agency)

With five days to go, the number of seats on which elections for the Board of Directors of Surat-Tapi District Milk Producers Union Ltd, popularly SUMUL dairy, are to be held, have further shrunk. From the 16 seats due for elections the BJP-backed Sahkar panel first won five uncontested. Now the elections on July 15 will be held on nine seats to elect directors after one BJP rebel candidate and one Congress - backed candidate withdrew resulting in the BJP winning a total of seven seats uncontested.

Feeling threatened, the Congress had taken all the 11 candidates fighting on its panel- Pashupalak Heet Rakshak Samiti (PHRS) or as independents against the BJP, to a "safe place" outside Gujarat, over a week back to

protect them from being influenced by the BJP. Former Surat district president of Congress Darshan Naik said, "They returned on July 4 (last day of withdrawal of form)."

The election has become interesting



with not just Congress and BJP backed panels contesting against each other but rebels from either side contesting as independents or from rival panels against their parent parties.

The SUMUL dairy with an annual turnover of Rs. 6500 crore is one of the six founding dairies of Gujarat co-

operative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF) which owns the Amul brand and has 18 milk unions under its umbrella, most of whose bodies are controlled by BJP-backed chairpersons. With a 2.5 lakh membership, political party-backed panels vie to take control of the co-operative for the clout it has in the rural community. Source say, daily over 15 lakh litres of milk is sold to Surat and Tapi consumers.

The dairy is directly associated with lakhs of people in Surat and Tapi and has expansion plans in Goa and Maharashtra.BJP MLA from Choryasi in Surat and former director of Sumul Dairy, Sandeep desai said that "The Amul Federation has given approval for setting up new plant with capacity to process 18 lakh litres of milk, which includes 5 lakhs litres in Kolhapur, 5 lakhs in Mumbai, 3 lakhs in Goa and 5 lakhs in Nasik.

### AI no less than colonisation, it's driven by Western minds, ideas: Humans in the Loop director

Ahmedabad.(Agency)

Addressing how its core idea came from studying sociology and history and observing the realities of Adivasi communities in Jharkhand, Aranya Sahay on Wednesday said that his debut feature film, Humans in the Loop, was inspired by the reality of technology entering lives.

Sahay also believes that the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) today is deeply linked to history. During an exclusive interaction with The Indian Express, Sahay said, "AI is no less than colonisation." He added, "It (AI) is meant for everyone, but it is driven by Western minds and Western ideas."

The film, which recently transitioned from independent grassroots screenings to a global release on Netflix, explores AI and bias through the story of an Indigenous Adivasi woman. It was released internationally and became eligible for consideration at the 2026 Academy Awards for Best Original Screenplay. Sahay, who comes from a sociology and politics background, sees himself first as a writer and storyteller.Speaking about his entry into cinema, Sahay noted that it was completely unplanned. Raised in a home where education and the arts were highly respected, his father encouraged him to pursue cinema.

## Doctor assault triggers protests, political storm; Sena corporator, 3 aides arrested

Mumbai.(Agency)

The alleged assault on doctors and nurses at a civic hospital in Dombivli snowballed into a statewide confrontation between the medical fraternity and the Maharashtra government, even as the main accused — Shiv Sena corporator Ramesh Mhatre — surrendered before the Thane police following arrest of three of his associates Wednesday. Resident doctors and nurses have announced protests across the state, while healthcare organisations have warned of an indefinite agitation if strict action is not taken against those responsible. The Maharashtra State Association of

Resident Doctors (Central MARD) welcomed Mhatre's arrest and said resident doctors in all government medical colleges and hospitals would wear black ribbons on Thursday while continuing medical services. It stressed that the agitation is aimed at seeking long-term measures to curb the rising incidents of violence against healthcare workers across Maharashtra.

The Maharashtra State Nurses Association (MSNA) said nurses across the state would begin a three-day black-ribbon protest from July 10 and warned that it would intensify the agitation after



July 13 if no concrete action was taken. The Maharashtra Senior Resident Doctors' Association (MSRDA) and the BMC MARD also condemned the incident, sought Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis's intervention and demanded a zero-tolerance policy against violence in

hospitals.

In separate memoranda to the chief minister, the doctors' and nurses' organisations described the alleged assault as an attack on the dignity of healthcare workers and the functioning of public hospitals. They demanded immediate arrests, strict action under the Maharashtra Medicare Act and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, stronger hospital security, and protection for doctors and nurses performing their duties.Dr Manisha Shinde, president of the Maharashtra State Nurses Association, said repeated assaults reflected the failure to enforce existing laws.

### Kolkata Metro likely to receive 14 new-generation rakes in FY27 to boost passenger capacity

Kolkata.(Agency)

Kolkata Metro is likely to receive 14 new-generation rakes in the financial year 2026-27 to enhance passenger capacity and improve operational efficiency. These new trainsets are expected to provide better services to commuters by increasing fleet availability and supporting the growing demand for metro travel.

Speaking to Indianexpress.com, SS Kannan, Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) of Kolkata Metro, said that around 14 rakes are expected to be received during the financial year 2026-27. He further added that these rakes will be manufactured by the Chennai-based Integral Coach Factory (ICF).

"Around 14 rakes may be received during this financial year. Rakes shall be ICF-manufactured," the CPRO said. The official also stated that these new-generation rakes will be equipped with three-phase AC motors and automatic sliding doors. The rakes will have a design speed of 90 kmph and an operational speed of 80 kmph.

Last month, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced the induction of 60 new-generation metro rakes to modernise the Kolkata Metro network over the next four to five years. He highlighted the rapid expansion and ongoing modernisation of the country's oldest metro system.In the Kolkata Metro, the rakes are uniquely designed and not available anywhere else in the world. The bogie-wheel set is designed for Broad Gauge, while the coach body (shell) is based on a Meter Gauge configuration.

## NEWS BOX

## Women's cricket gets its first Lord's Test as England face India

LONDON. (Agency)

Lord's will finally host a women's Test, 142 years since staging its first such men's match, when England face India in a four-day game at the 'Home of Cricket' starting Friday.

"It just boggles my mind that it is just the first (women's) Test match here at Lord's," said India coach Amol Muzumdar, who added: "It is a great occasion and we are looking forward to it."

The match takes place just over 50 years since the first women's match of any kind at the renowned London venue, with England beating Australia by eight wickets in a one-day international on August 4, 1976.

England's captain at Lord's that day was the late Rachael Heyhoe Flint, a pioneering figure in a women's game where players were still wearing skirts rather than, as they do now, white or coloured trousers.

Heyhoe Flint, who died in 2017, now has a gate named after her at Lord's.

But in 1976, Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), the owners of Lord's, were still decades away from admitting women as members, with the thought of females walking directly through the Long Room of the pavilion before taking the field a distant dream.

England's No. 5 that day, Megan Lear, compared the experience to the moon landing, telling the Guardian: "On that day in 1976, to walk on to the hallowed turf at Lord's, it was like one small step for us women cricketers, but one giant leap towards the future of women's cricket."

It is a sign of how things have changed from those amateur days that a Test between two professional sides will also be England's second fixture at Lord's in under a week following Sunday's defeat by Australia in the women's T20 World Cup final -- a match that attracted a capacity crowd.

Nine of England's World Cup squad are included for the Test, including captain Nat Sciver-Brunt, who is "hoping to play" despite a nagging calf injury.

## 'I Am Old, I Can Barely Walk': Internet Decodes MS Dhoni's Gesture During 3rd India vs England T20I

BENGALURU. (Agency)

MS Dhoni recently celebrated his 45th birthday. The legendary India captain retired from international cricket long ago but continues to be part of the Chennai Super Kings side in the IPL. However, in the 2026 edition, Dhoni did not play a single match. He was recently spotted at the India vs England third T20I at Trent Bridge, where he was seen interacting with fans through gestures. "I'm old now. My beard has gone grey, and I can barely walk," he seemed to be saying in jest, as decoded by a social media handle. Dhoni has one of the most inspiring journeys in sports history. From working as a ticket collector at a railway station, he transformed into India's biggest trophy collector, leading the team to the ICC T20 World Cup 2007, ICC Cricket World Cup 2011, and ICC Champions Trophy 2013 titles as captain. He made his international debut in 2004 and carved out a reputation as a ferocious hitter of the cricket ball before evolving into a finisher who guided his team to victories with calculated aggression and exceptional tactical acumen.

With 17,266 international runs, 829 dismissals, and 538 appearances across formats for India, Dhoni is not only one of the greatest cricketers the game has ever seen but also a revolutionary who redefined the role of a wicketkeeper-batter and transformed India's approach to limited-overs cricket.

In 350 One-Day Internationals (ODIs), Dhoni amassed 10,773 runs at an exceptional average of 50.57, including 10 centuries and 73 half-centuries, with a career-best score of an unbeaten 183. He remains India's sixth-highest run-scorer in ODIs, with Sachin Tendulkar leading the list with 18,426 runs.

What makes Dhoni's record truly remarkable is that he accumulated more than 10,000 ODI runs while batting predominantly in the middle order, maintaining an average above 50 despite often arriving at the crease under pressure and with fewer overs at his disposal.

## Egypt were robbed: New York City Mayor Mamdani's smooth World Cup jibe goes viral

**New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani slipped a viral 'Egypt were robbed' line into a bus service briefing after Egypt's defeat to Argentina in the Round of 16. His remarks amplified the raging row over refereeing and Egypt's reactions to their exit.**

New Delhi. (Agency)

The fallout from Egypt's highly controversial, heartbreaking 3-2 Round of 16 exit to Argentina has transcended the footballing sphere, finding its way into the upper echelons of American civic politics. New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani has thrust himself into the centre of a global sporting debate, declaring that the North African side were "robbed" during their dramatic

FIFA World Cup encounter.

Political speeches are historically renowned for calculated pivots, but Mamdani executed a masterclass in rhetorical misdirection on Wednesday. In what was scheduled to be a completely dry, administrative press conference outlining municipal infrastructure upgrades, Mamdani smoothly weaponised local transit data to deliver a scathing, globally heard verdict on the World Cup's biggest refereeing scandal.

Unveiling his new "Next Stop: Better Buses, Faster Service" initiative, Mamdani was deep into a statistical breakdown of how streamlined bus routes could return 24 hours of personal time to local commuters over a six-month period.

He began painting a picture of domestic bliss, outlining the human value of time saved. "That means breakfast with your family," Mamdani told the gathered

press corps. "It means having the time to argue balls and strikes at your kid's Little League game. It means getting home for bedtime."

Then came the sucker punch. Without



breaking stride, Mamdani added: "It means agreeing with your friends that Egypt were robbed yesterday."

**WHAT HAPPENED DURING EGYPT vs ARGENTINA**

The Mayor's comments have poured petrol onto a burning row at FIFA World Cup. The source of global fury centres

around a critical 58th-minute incident that fundamentally altered the trajectory of Tuesday's match in Atlanta. With a fearless Egyptian side leading the defending world champions 1-0, midfielder Mostafa Zico finished off a breathtaking team move to ostensibly put the Pharaohs in complete control.

However, French referee Francois Letexier was instructed by the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) to review an incident that had occurred more than 20 seconds earlier at the entirely opposite end of the pitch. Letexier subsequently ruled that Egyptian midfielder Marawan Attia had fouled Argentina's Lisandro Martinez a full 100 yards away from where the goal was eventually scored.

The goal was chalked off, entirely deflating the Egyptians and handing a massive reprieve to Lionel Messi's men, who took full advantage to launch an 11-minute comeback and steal victory in the dying moments.

## IND vs ENG, 4th T20I preview: How do Shreyas Iyer's India come back from 76-all-out

New Delhi. (Agency)

Cricket, like life, has its ups and downs. There are good days and there are bad, and there is not much you can do about it. At the high points, you bask in glory, take the accolades, ride the wave, as they say. But when the trough hits, it hits you hard. Shreyas Iyer knows that all too well.

The last 14 days have been the worst for the newly appointed India captain, who was elevated to the position after three very strong seasons in the format. But that ascension has gone wrong, and horribly so. What was expected to be a smooth



transition for the world champions has suddenly become a battle for survival in the Wild West.

India vs England 4th T20I match starts at 10 pm IST on Thursday, July 9. The match will be played at the County Ground in Bristol and will be livestreamed on JioStar. The broadcast rights are with Sony Sports Network.

Safe to say, this is the worst phase of Shreyas Iyer's career since he was unceremoniously dropped from the BCCI contracts at the start of 2024 for allegedly not focusing on domestic cricket.

Shreyas was able to battle out of that potentially career-ending situation, where the BCCI wanted to make an example out of him. Shreyas's fight was one to watch. An IPL title with KKR in 2024, a runners-up finish with Punjab Kings in 2025, and then an unbeaten run of seven matches in IPL 2026 (although that went away quickly), brought Shreyas to the mantle of Indian captaincy, in a team where he had not played for almost two and a half years.

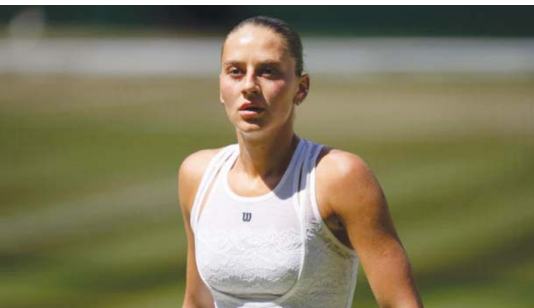
## Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk blasts IOC over easing of Russian Olympic restrictions

New Delhi. (Agency)

Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk has strongly criticised the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) decision to ease restrictions on Russian athletes, calling the move "terrible" and insisting it is "very, very far from fair play" as Russia's invasion of Ukraine continues. Kostyuk made the comments after reaching her maiden Wimbledon semifinal with a commanding 6-3, 6-2 victory over 2024 runner-up Jasmine Paolini.

The 24-year-old, one of Ukraine's most outspoken athletes since the war began in 2022, said she completely disagreed with the IOC's decision to provisionally lift the suspension of the Russian Olympic Committee. The move

could pave the way for more Russian athletes to return to international competition ahead of the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, although individual



sports federations will still have the final say on participation.

Speaking after her quarterfinal win, Kostyuk said, "It's terrible. I think it's very, very far from fair play for all the countries involved here, not just for

Ukraine. I 100 percent don't agree with this decision. But I feel like a lot of people spoke out on this issue."

"They obviously don't agree, as well. I don't think anything is going to change. I just want to go out there and hopefully beat every single Russian I play in the Olympics, and that's it," Kostyuk added.

**WAR CONTINUES TO CAST SHADOW OVER WIMBLEDON RUN**

Kostyuk's remarks came against the backdrop of fresh Russian missile attacks on Kyiv, including strikes close to where her parents live. The

Ukrainian admitted it had become increasingly difficult to separate tennis from the realities unfolding back home, saying she constantly follows developments despite trying to remain focused during the tournament.

## The blessing and curse of VAR: Football's never-ending debate

New Delhi. (Agency)

Tens of thousands leap from their seats. Players sprint towards the corner flag. Commentators lose their voices. Somewhere, a television remote flies across a living room in celebration. A goal has been scored. Or so everyone thinks. Then comes the pause.

The referee raises a finger to his ear. Players stop celebrating. Fans stare at giant screens. Television broadcasters begin drawing lines across replay footage.

A goal that existed a few seconds ago suddenly enters a strange state of uncertainty. Introduced to make



football fairer, the Video Assistant Referee system has transformed the world's most popular sport. It has corrected mistakes that once altered the course of World Cups and league titles. It has also created a new kind of drama -- one measured not in goals and saves, but in freeze frames, replay angles and endless arguments.

The 2026 FIFA World Cup has once again exposed that contradiction.

There was heartbreak in Iran, where players celebrated a goal that never truly existed. There was disbelief in Croatia, where a dramatic equaliser against Portugal disappeared after a review.

But no match captured the promise and peril of VAR quite like Argentina's extraordinary 3-2 victory over Egypt in the Round of 16. For Egypt, it was a story about injustice. For Argentina, it was a story about survival. For the rest of the football world, it became a case study in the question that has followed VAR since its introduction:

**World Cup: FIFA rejected France's appeal against Michael Olise's yellow card before the Morocco quarter-final. The ruling leaves their star winger one booking away from a semi-final suspension.**

New Delhi. (Agency)

Coach Didier Deschamps has confirmed that world football's governing body has officially rejected the French Football Federation's (FFF) appeal to rescind the yellow card shown to Michael Olise. The decision leaves the Bayern Munich winger on a disciplinary tightrope ahead of France's crucial quarter-final clash against Morocco at FIFA World Cup 2026.

"There was no change when it comes to Olise's yellow card," Deschamps revealed during his press conference on Wednesday. "We received FIFA's decision this morning

that the yellow card was maintained." The caution was brandished in the 97th minute of Les Bleus' 1-0 Round of 16 victory over Paraguay following a late



altercation with midfielder Matas Galarza. Although video replays strongly

indicated that Olise merely grasped the Paraguayan's jersey before Galarza went to ground claiming a facial blow, FIFA's disciplinary panel chose not to alter the referee's original on-field decision.

The FFF's decision to lodge a formal complaint was framed by a dramatic precedent earlier in the tournament, where the United States successfully managed to get a booking overturned under entirely different circumstances. US striker Folarin Balogun had been shown a straight red card for a challenge during the Americans' victory over Bosnia and Herzegovina, which carried an automatic one-match suspension.

# Deepika Padukone's

## 'Lil Baby Bump' Steals The Show In New Ad; Internet Gushes Over Mom-To-Be

Deepika Padukone, who is expecting her second baby with her husband Ranveer Singh, has shared a new post on her Instagram. The actress, who will soon be seen sharing



screen space with Shah Rukh Khan in King, dropped a new ad for a global hotel chain. In the video, the actress is seen wearing a chic blue pantsuit and flaunting her baby bump. As per an HT report, Deepika Padukone reportedly shot the campaign while she was four months pregnant. The advertisement quickly gained attention online, with fans gushing

over her baby bump. Reacting to the video, one wrote, "Dua's mumma slaying with that baby bump."

"Finally! It's been almost three months without posting," another comment read. A third fan commented, "Dua's Mom debuting another child globally." Another comment read, "That lil baby bump."

A user wrote, "Deepika posting on social media after ages feels like spotting a rare comet. The notification alone deserves a celebration because who knows when we'll get the next one."

**About Deepika-Ranveer's second baby**  
Earlier this year, Deepika and Ranveer shared that they are expecting their second child. The announcement was made through a joint social media post that also featured their daughter, Dua. Deepika and Ranveer tied the knot in November 2018 in a private wedding ceremony at Lake Como, Italy.

They welcomed their first child, daughter Dua, in September 2024 and later introduced her name during the Diwali celebrations. The name "Dua" translates to "prayer."

**Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh's work front**

Deepika Padukone resumed work after returning from South Africa, where she recently wrapped a major shooting schedule for King with Shah Rukh Khan. The actor is currently balancing multiple projects, including King, which is scheduled for a December 24 release, and Atlee's Raaka, where she is paired opposite Allu Arjun.

Ranveer Singh, meanwhile, is gearing up for his upcoming zombie adventure film Pralay, which also stars Kalyani Priyadarshan.



## Bhagyashree Breaks Silence On Viral Kashi Video, Hits Back At Trolls: 'It Is A Shame...'



Veteran actress Bhagyashree has responded to criticism over her efforts to promote local food and vendors during her recent visit to Kashi. After receiving comments questioning such promotions, the 'Maine Pyar Kiya' actress defended her stance and highlighted the importance of supporting local traditions, businesses, and food culture. Sharing a strong message on social media, Bhagyashree said that promoting local food helps vendors and preserves the essence of the place. She also called out those who criticize even simple initiatives. Bhagyashree shared a video on social media in which she can be seen enjoying Kulhad lassi. For the caption, she wrote, "tuesdaytipswithb Lassi on a hot day I had been up since 3 am to do the mangala aarti, then walking down the Gangaghats in the immense heat, this lassi was just the energy booster I needed. Sprinkled with dryfruits on top I enjoyed the crunch."

"Salted or sweet is a matter of choice and yes for those who are diabetic, indulgence of a sweetened lassi would not be the right choice. Curds is rich in calcium, protein, probiotics. The sugar/gud gives energy & water hydrates.... for me it was the perfect combination in the heat of 40°."

Bhagyashree added, "And along with the outstanding taste it was also the love with which it was made. There is a clip of this video going around saying its fake promotion. Kya aap the wahan par? Kya kahin bhi uss fake clip ke dauran kisine, sunna, ya record kiya ki meine yeh kaha ki its is too sweet and that I will not have it? Kya aapke Ma ne kabhi garmi mein aapko lassi nahi pilai... fake toh aaddha video, aadhi knowledge ke saath upload karna hota hein."

"Local food ko promote karne se koi bhi paise nahi kamate. The only good is that local food, local vendors get support. It is a shame that idle minds have nothing nice to say even about the simplest of things. Kashi is a place of purity, how insignificant is your rant. #hydrate #benarasi #lassi #probiotics."

## Anshula Kapoor Wears Late Mother's 42-Year-Old Dupatta On Her Wedding, Calls It 'Deeply Personal'



Social media influencer and Bollywood actor Arjun Kapoor's sister Anshula Kapoor shared the emotional story behind her bridal ensemble, revealing how she kept her late mother close to her on her most important day. The bride mentioned that the one thing she was certain about carrying on her wedding day was her late mother's 42-year-old gold tissue and zardozi dupatta.

Taking to her social media account, Anshula shared a series of stunning bridal portraits from her wedding festivities. The pictures show her as the bride dressed in an elegant antique rose lehenga, accessorised with layered emerald and pearl jewellery. Her mother's heritage dupatta featuring heirloom gold tissue and zardozi dupatta was seen draped over her outfit. She sported another bandhani ghar chola dupatta as tribute to the family she has married into.

Sharing the significance behind her bridal look, Anshula wrote, "There was only one thing I knew I wanted to carry with me when I became a bride - my mom's 42-year-old gold tissue & zardozi dupatta. Everything else was built around it. On a day that marked the beginning of a new family, it felt right to be wrapped in the one that raised me first."

She added, "Together with @taruntahiliani, and with the incredible vision of @mohitrai and @ruchikrishnastyles, every detail was imagined around the heirloom that meant the most to me. A bridal ensemble that brought together crafts from across India: intricate Kashida embroidery layered with rich zari work, a bandhini ghar chola dupatta as a nod to the family I am marrying into, all in a palette of antique rose, blush and muted gold, finished with delicate Phulkari borders as a tribute to my Punjabi roots. Thank you, Tarun, for bringing this vision to life and creating a bridal ensemble that felt timeless, deeply personal, and so incredibly me."

For the uninitiated, Anshula is the daughter of film producer Boney Kapoor and the late Mona Shourie Kapoor.

Mona passed away on March 25, 2012, after battling cancer, just days before the release of 'Ishaqzaade', which marked Arjun Kapoor's Bollywood debut. Talking about Anshula, she tied the knot with her longtime boyfriend Rohan Thakkar in an intimate yet grand ceremony in Mumbai.



# Alia Bhatt

## Kiara Advani, Athiya Shetty And Sonam Kapoor To Attend Akansha Ranjan Kapoor's Reception

Wedding bells are set to ring for actress Akansha Ranjan Kapoor and directly Sharan Sharma very soon. If reports are to be believed, the lovebirds have been dating since 2022 but have kept their relationship hidden from the public eye. The couple will tie the knot in a low-key, intimate ceremony, which will be attended by their families and close friends, in Mumbai on July 11.

But seems like their reception day (July 12) will be a star-studded affair. A little birdie exclusively tells News18, "Some of the biggest names in Bollywood will be gracing Akansha and Sharan's reception party. Given the warm rapport and longstanding friendship her parents, actor-director Shashi Ranjan and television producer Anu Ranjan, share with several industry names, many of them are expected."

The high-profile guest list at the reception will include Akansha's childhood best friend Alia Bhatt, whose friendship began at Juhu's Jamnabai Narsee School. "Apart from Alia, actors like Sonam Kapoor Ahuja, Athiya Shetty and Kiara Advani will also be a part of their special day at JW Marriott. Filmmakers Ekta R Kapoor and Karan Johar are part of the guest list as well," the source further adds. On the work front, Akansha was recently seen in the second season of OTT series Gram Chikitsalay and is also awaiting the release of Ikka this Friday. Sharan, on the other hand, had last directed Mr & Mrs Mahi starring Rajkumar Rao and Janhvi Kapoor. Speaking to us recently, Akansha had said that she doesn't want to put marriage or motherhood on hold for the sake of

her career.

"Not wanting to get married or have kids is also not the right approach. I feel like you can have a grounded and well-rounded life with people around you and still keep trying to conquer the world. I think it's high time women are allowed to have a life apart from being an



actor. I shouldn't have to justify that. I shouldn't have to leave everything behind to become a trailblazer," she had stated.

She, in fact, was never worried about starting her acting journey with Guilty at 26 unlike most female actors marking their debuts in their late teens. "You have to understand that everyone will have a different journey. If you haven't become a superstar at 18, it doesn't mean that you won't ever be successful. People have this perception that you need to start out at 18 because you'll eventually get married at 28," she had said.

## NEWS BOX

## E. Jean Carroll cleared to collect USD 5.8 million from Trump escrow

Newyork.(Agency)

A federal judge in the US has ruled that writer E. Jean Carroll can collect USD 5.8 million that has been held in escrow since a jury found that President Donald Trump sexually abused and defamed her. Trump's lawyers immediately appealed, but their request for an emergency order to block the payment was rejected. The ruling follows a recent US Supreme Court decision to let the civil verdict stand. Trump had deposited the money shortly after the 2023 jury verdict, and the original USD 5 million award has since increased with interest. The jury found that Trump attacked Carroll in 1996 in the dressing room of a luxury Manhattan department store and later defamed her after she wrote about it in a 2019 memoir during his first term as president. Trump had called her allegations false and said in an interview, "she's not my type". On Wednesday, Trump's lawyers said they would continue their appeal and accused his political opponents of using the legal system against him. In appellate court filings, they argued that Judge Lewis A. Kaplan's decision should not take effect because Trump has asked the Supreme Court to reconsider its decision.

## Artificial cloud brightening could tame El Nino, but with risks: Study

WASHINGTON.(Agency)

A brewing "Super" El Nino cycle is poised to unleash heat waves, floods and drought worldwide, with the effects amplified by long term human-caused climate change. But what if it was possible to interrupt and effectively "switch off" the Pacific Ocean heating phenomenon as it starts to form? That's the premise of a new Science Advances study published Wednesday, which uses computer models to show that artificially brightening clouds over the Pacific, when timed right, could neutralize the influential weather pattern and blunt its worst impacts. While previous research on so-called geoengineering has focused on cooling the planet as a whole, the new paper instead proposes more targeted interventions. "These shorter timescales of interventions could be a very powerful way that geoengineering enters this portfolio of responses to climate change," lead author Jessica Wan, a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Chicago, told AFP.

## US strikes Iran again after Hormuz ship attacks cast doubt on ceasefire

World.(Agency)

The United States said on Wednesday that it was carrying out another round of strikes on Iran after the Islamic Republic attacked ships in the Strait of Hormuz a day earlier, raising fresh doubts over an interim ceasefire and fears that the conflict could flare up again. President Donald Trump said earlier that the Iranian attacks signalled the end of the ceasefire and threatened more military action. But later, he said the latest exchange of fire would not lead to a return to full-scale war or to "long-term" military action. Speaking on the sidelines of a NATO summit in Ankara, Turkey, Trump said the strikes were continued retaliation for Iranian attacks on commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz. "They are behaving very badly," he said of Iran, accusing it of launching drones and a missile at ships. After three tankers were hit on Tuesday, the US launched strikes on Iran, and Iranian forces retaliated by attacking American military sites in the Persian Gulf. Trump said the US would "probably hit them hard again tonight" and later added that "Anything that happens is going to happen very fast", though he also suggested the US military might "just finish the job". A day after the attacks on shipping widened into strikes on Iranian and US military targets, he also renewed past threats to target Iran's civilian infrastructure, including electric plants and desalination plants, and to seize the oil-production hub of Kharg Island.

## US hits Iran's Chabahar port after Trump warns attacks will get much worse

The US strikes on the strategic Chabahar port came after Trump warned Tehran that the attacks would "get much worse" if it continued targeting commercial vessels in the Strait of Hormuz.

World.(Agency)

The US launched fresh strikes on Iran's southeastern port city of Chabahar on Thursday as the two adversaries exchanged attacks for a second straight day after President Donald Trump declared the ceasefire "over." Explosions were reported across

Chabahar, with Iranian state media reporting widespread power outages in parts of the city. Residents said they heard multiple blasts as emergency services rushed to damaged sites. This marked the first attack on the strategic port since the US-Iran ceasefire was announced in April. According to US military officials, the operation targeted maritime infrastructure and military facilities that Washington said supported Iran's ability to threaten commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz. In all, CENTCOM, the US military's Middle East command, said it hit around 90 Iranian targets in the latest round of strikes. "US Central Command forces have started conducting additional strikes

against Iran to further degrade their ability to threaten freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz,"



CENTCOM wrote on X.

"The United States is holding Iran accountable for recent unjustified aggression against commercial shipping and civilian crews freely navigating a vital international waterway."

Initial reports said the strikes hit piers, a maritime traffic control tower and nearby military assets while avoiding civilian port facilities and critical energy infrastructure. The latest US onslaught followed Tuesday's attack on three cargo ships transiting the Strait of Hormuz, which Washington blamed on Iran. Trump warned Tehran that the strikes would "get much worse" if it continued targeting commercial vessels in the vital shipping lane.

Iran retaliated with a second consecutive day of attacks targeting Kuwait and Bahrain, which host US military bases. The latest exchange has further heightened tensions in the region and threatened efforts to bring the war to an end.

## How Pakistan's own missiles shoot down its sham bid to claim pre-Islamic Indic roots

Pakistan is making a sham bid to claim the pre-Islamic cultural and civilisational heritage of the Indian subcontinent. However, a concerning amount of Pakistan's military hardware, especially its missiles, are named after Turkic and Afghan conquerors who plundered the region for centuries.

NAJAF.(Agency)

Most things that Pakistan's civilian-military hybrid regime does are duplicitous in nature. So is its bid to highlight its pre-Islamic heritage, especially the legacy of the Indus Valley Civilisation. It has focused on building that narrative, especially after India put the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance in April 2025. This attempt to embrace the ancient

Indic heritage is exposed by an awkward contradiction: many of Pakistan's weapons, especially its missiles, are named after foreign conquerors remembered for invading and plundering the Indian subcontinent. Modern Pakistan traces its origins to the Two-Nation Theory, which held that Hindus and Muslims

General Zia-ul-Haq, recasting its history around the Islamic conquest of Sindh in the 8th century CE. The attempt to highlight itself as the centre of the pre-Islamic Indus Valley Civilisation is to claim a share of the Indus waters. Pakistan has long sought to anchor its national identity in the legacy of Arab, Afghan, and Turkic conquerors who crossed the Hindu Kush and established dynasties across large parts of the Indian subcontinent. For decades, its textbooks have taught that Pakistan's history began with Muhammad bin Qasim's conquest of Sindh in 712 CE. Many of these rulers, who rose to power through conquest and plunder, have been glorified by the Pakistani state through the names of its missiles, tanks, and warships.



could not coexist in a single state. The Partition of 1947 created Pakistan, which later embraced a hardline Islamic identity under

## Flight instructor jumps to death from plane mid-training, student lands safely

ANKARA.(Agency)

A flight instructor in Argentina died after jumping from a moving aircraft during a training session, leaving his student to land the plane on her own. The student, identified as 22-year-old Rosario, brought the Cessna 150 down safely and the aircraft was not damaged. Leandro Andres Bertazzo, 42, was found dead after the incident in Toledo, in central Argentina, on



Saturday, according to a statement issued by the country's public prosecutor and published on Tuesday. Bertazzo was on board the aircraft with Rosario, CNN affiliate

TN reported. According to TN, the student said Bertazzo told her, "You know what you have to do, carry on," before removing his headset and seatbelt, opening the door and jumping from the plane. Eduardo lvarez, director of the Flying Parrot Cordoba flying school where Bertazzo worked, told TN there had been no signs that the instructor was planning to jump from the aircraft. lvarez said Bertazzo had flown with another student earlier the same day.

## Trump ditches new Qatari Air Force One amid Iran tensions, flies back in older jet

Trump returned from the NATO summit in Turkey aboard the older Air Force One instead of the newly retrofitted Qatari-gifted jet, making a surprise aircraft switch as the US and Iran resumed exchanging strikes.

Washington.(Agency)

President Donald Trump flew back from the NATO summit in Turkey aboard an older Air Force One aircraft instead of the newly retrofitted Boeing 747-800 gifted by Qatar, a last-minute switch that has reignited questions over

the interim jet's security capabilities amid escalating tensions with Iran. The decision came as the US and Iran exchanged fresh strikes, less than a day after the US military launched major attacks inside Iran in retaliation for Tehran's alleged attacks on merchant ships in the Strait of Hormuz.

Trump offered little explanation for the aircraft change, saying he chose to travel on the older Air Force One "for old time's sake". He added that both aircraft would make an unscheduled stop at RAF Mildenhall in the United Kingdom.

In a post on social media, Trump said the newer aircraft would stop at the base so military personnel could "tour



the aircraft", while he would return to Washington aboard the aircraft that has served as Air Force One for decades. Asked during a press conference whether security concerns prompted the last-minute switch, Trump did not directly respond. Instead, referring to Iran, he said he was "No. 1 on the list for killing."

When pressed further, he reiterated that he would be "going home by normal methods" while the newer aircraft would be displayed to US troops. The unexpected switch has renewed scrutiny of the Boeing 747-800, which underwent a USD 400 million retrofit before entering service as an interim presidential aircraft. Images released after its unveiling suggested the jet lacks some of the missile detection and defensive countermeasure systems installed on the ageing VC-25A aircraft currently used as Air Force One. When asked whether those missing systems influenced the decision, the US Air Force referred questions to the White House.