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PAWAN MAKAN
+91-9638877700
mahanagarmetro7@gmail.com

Dharmendra Pradhan resigns amid massive student protests over NEET leak fiasco

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Dharmendra Pradhan announced his resignation as Union Education Minister on Saturday, saying the decision was driven by the need to protect the future of students and prevent "anti-national forces" from exploiting the massive youth protests at Delhi's Jantar Mantar. It marks a rare case in which a senior Modi government minister has stepped down amid sustained street protests and political pressure.Pradhan, whose resignation was the core demand of the protesters, announced his decision on X hours before the third round of talks between the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) and the Centre. Ahead of the third round of talks, the CJP leaders said Pradhan's resignation was "non-negotiable". A couple of hours later, Pradhan announced his resignation in a lengthy social media post, triggering jubilation at Jantar Mantar - the site where activist Sonam Wangchuk began his

indefinite fast and where the protesters found a home.Sources told India Today that Pradhan resigned taking moral responsibility on his own and was not sacked. It suggests that the government was keen on giving him a dignified



exit. The Odisha-born BJP leader first took office as Education Minister in 2021 and was re-appointed after the party won the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

WHAT DHARMENDRA PRADHAN SAID IN RESIGNATION LETTER?

Pradhan, who had come under flak over a spate

of exam paper leaks, made it clear at the outset that stepping down was "not a matter of personal prestige". The NEET-UG paper leak in May seemingly became the final nail in the coffin for Pradhan.

"The developments of the past ten days have saddened me deeply. This is not a matter of personal prestige for me," he said. In the next sentence, he stressed, "India's youth are the country's real strength."

"From the very first day, I took responsibility for the matter (NEET leak) and never turned away from this situation. My resolve was that we would not allow the examination mafia to destroy the prospects of any meritorious student," he said.In his letter, Pradhan underlined that developments of the past 10 days had left him "deeply saddened", referring to the massive July 20 violence during the students' march to Parliament. Over 180 student protesters and cops were injured in the violence.

Pradhan said he had submitted his resignation to Prime Minister Narendra Modi after considering the larger national interest.

'Thank You Friends': PM Modi's Reel Tops 303 Million Views Amid CJP Protest

New Delhi. (Agency)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has shattered digital viewing records, capturing a staggering global milestone with over 303 million views on a single Instagram reel within 24 hours.

This unprecedented digital turnout eclipses the previous worldwide record of 300 million views, occurring directly in the backdrop of continuous, high-profile student demonstrations led by protesters at New Delhi's Jantar Mantar.

The Prime Minister took to social media to share a follow-up video message, beginning with the words, "Thank you friends," to acknowledge the historic digital reception and positive suggestions he received from the country's youth.This latest communication follows a rare late-night selfie video posted by the Prime Minister, in which he addressed mounting national anxieties over examination paper leaks and assured the student community of strict government action.

The ongoing unrest at Jantar Mantar has seen thousands of students and youth protestors congregate to demand sweeping accountability and institutional reforms following recent competitive examination irregularities.

In response to the swelling demonstrations and intense political pressure, Prime Minister Modi utilised a direct digital format to connect with Gen Z, emphasising that the administration views examination malpractices as a matter of grave concern rather than a trivial issue.



Tej Pratap Yadav Extends Support To Prashant Kishor In Bankipur Bypolls

New Delhi. (Agency)

In a significant political development ahead of the July 30 Bankipur Assembly by-election, Tej Pratap Yadav, National President of the Janshakti Janata Dal (JJD), has announced his party's support for Jan Suraj candidate Prashant Kishor.Speaking to the media on Friday, Tej Pratap Yadav said that after internal discussions, his party had unanimously decided to back Prashant Kishor in the by-election. "The members of our party and I have decided who to support. We are supporting Prashant Kishor," he said.

Explaining the decision, Tej Pratap Yadav claimed that he had spoken with Prashant Kishor earlier in the day.According to him, Kishor said that the BJP should not be allowed to win the Bankipur seat and that preventing its victory reflected the aspirations of many people.

Tej Pratap added that he agreed with this view and reiterated his support for the ongoing protests by students and youth over issues such as the alleged NEET paper leak.

Congress wants Pradhan sacked, attacks Nirmala over paper leak comment

BENGALURU. (Agency)

Congress General Secretary (Organisation) KC Venugopal on Friday launched a scathing attack on the Central government over the NEET paper leak issue, accusing Prime Minister Narendra Modi of remaining silent on issues affecting students and demanding the immediate removal of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

He was speaking to reporters after taking part in training for Congress observers as part of 'Sanghatan Srujan Campaign' to revamp the party's units, including District Congress Committees.

Venugopal said the Centre was indirectly admitting to the possibility of future paper leaks, with Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman stating that paper leaks help students. "A cabinet minister is saying, 'Paper leaks will help students'. What does that mean? You are taking complete responsibility for the paper leaks? This is what students of India are believing today," he said.On the ongoing student protests, Venugopal questioned why PM Modi had not directly engaged with the agitating students or taken decisive action against the education minister.

MAHANAGAR METRO EXCLUSIVE

Corruption and Bootlegging Syndicate Exposed in Gujarat's Tapi District

Tapi Liquor Syndicate: 10-Year Police-Bootlegger Nexus Exposed

MAHANAGAR METRO

Tapi: An investigative ground report by Mahanagar Metro has uncovered an alleged high-level corruption and bootlegging syndicate operating in the Tapi-Vyara district of Gujarat. Despite the state's prohibition laws, the district has reportedly transformed into a major liquor supply hub for Surat city and surrounding regions, supported by systemic police patronage.The Illicit Supply NetworkThe illegal trade is operated through large container trucks transporting illegal liquor across district borders. According to the report, key operatives in this syndicate include local bootleggers Sanju Dadhi, Hemant Battery, Vijay Sayan, Nitin, and Rustom Songadh. Serious allegations indicate that police patrol vehicles actively provide protection and safe passage to these liquor-laden containers.Beyond imported liquor, illegal units producing chemical-laced country liquor are reportedly thriving across rural villages in Tapi, posing severe risks of mass alcohol poisoning similar to past tragedies in the state.Central Role of ASI Bipin ChaudhariThe operational mastermind behind this network is al-



leged to be Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Bipin Chaudhari of the Local Crime Branch (LCB). Reports indicate that monthly extortions ranging from Rs 60 lakh to Rs 70 lakh are collected from major bootleggers, generating illicit revenue running into crores of rupees.Despite official administrative rules requiring periodic transfers, Chaudhari has reportedly remained stationed in the same leadership role in Tapi district for the past decade. Considered a close confidant of Tapi District Police Chief Jashu Desai, Chaudhari has allegedly oper-

ated with complete disregard for Range IG and State Monitoring Cell (SMC) oversight.Controversial Dubai Trip and Administrative Response-Questions have intensified following details that ASI Chaudhari recently undertook a 10-day luxury trip to Dubai. The report raises critical queries regarding who granted official permission for this international travel and whether the trip was sponsored by the bootlegging network, directly challenging the state government's zero-tolerance policy against corruption.When contacted by Mahanagar

Metro regarding the allegations, District Police Chief Jashu Desai stated, "I am unaware of this, I will order an inquiry," before avoiding further media queries. The LCB Police Inspector has also maintained silence on the matter.Key Demands IssuedIn response to these findings, the report outlines four primary demands for state authorities:Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) Probe: A comprehensive investigation by the ACB into ASI Bipin Chaudhari's movable and immovable assets, bank accounts, and benami properties accumulated over the past 10 years.Foreign Travel Audit: An independent inquiry to identify who approved the 10-day Dubai trip and trace the exact financial source funding the travel.Supervisory Inquiry: Formation of a Range IG-level inquiry committee to examine the role and oversight failure of District Police Chief Jashu Desai and the LCB PI.Strict Enforcement via PASA: Immediate invocation of the Prevention of Anti-Social Activities (PASA) Act against key bootleggers Sanju Dadhi, Hemant Battery, Vijay Sayan, Nitin, and Rustom Songadh to dismantle the network.

Bid to reclaim political space: Fadnavis targets Thackeray cousins' proposed march

New Delhi. (Agency)

CM Fadnavis hit out at Thackeray cousins over their planned joint protest against the alleged TET examination scam, saying that the move was more political than student-focused.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Saturday took a swipe at Uddhav Thackeray and Raj Thackeray over their proposed joint 'Tiranga' march in Mumbai, saying it appeared to be less about students and more about rebuilding their political space.Fadnavis said everyone had the right to express their views in a democracy, but questioned the purpose behind the march.

The cousins have announced the march for Sunday in support of students and others protesting against the Centre.

Fadnavis also spoke about the wider agitation, saying it included both peaceful protesters

concerned about the future of the youth and people trying to use the issue for political gain.



Speaking to reporters in Pandharpur after offering prayers at the Vitthal-Rukmini temple in the early hours of Saturday on the occasion of Ashadhi Ekadashi, Fadnavis said,

"I think everyone has the right to express their views in a democracy. But I believe this march has very little to do with students. It appears to be more of an attempt to recreate political space for themselves. However, I extend my good wishes to them."

He was responding to a question on the ongoing protests in Delhi.His remarks come at a time when the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT) has suffered a major setback, with six of its nine Lok Sabha members joining the ruling Shiv Sena, three years after the split triggered by Eknath Shinde's rebellion.The Maharashtra Navnirman Sena, led by Raj Thackeray, has also been pushed to the margins in state politics and has no representation in the assembly.

News box

Man stabbed to death by colleague over affair with ex-lover

Noida.(Agency)

A 40-year-old man was stabbed to death by a colleague allegedly over an affair with his ex-lover in Greater Noida's Sirsa area late Thursday night. The accused, who also sustained injuries in the altercation, was arrested for murder.

The victim, Suresh, worked at a cloth manufacturing company in Greater Noida, where the accused, Naresh (33), was also employed.

Police said Naresh had been in a relationship with a married colleague for nearly seven years, and the two had fallen out about a month and a half ago, after which the woman began interacting with Suresh. Police suspect Naresh grew resentful of the growing friendship between the two and called Suresh for a meeting near the Sirsa roundabout on Thursday. The men spoke for a few minutes before an argument broke out and turned physical. During the altercation, Naresh allegedly stabbed Suresh multiple times with a fabric cutter, inflicting fatal injuries to his neck and abdomen. Naresh sustained deep cuts to his hands while grappling with Suresh. Police are investigating whether the killing was premeditated, noting Naresh had arrived at the spot with the fabric cutter, a tool he allegedly used at the factory.

Locals alerted police via the 112 emergency helpline, and both men were taken to hospital. Suresh died of his injuries before reaching the hospital. Naresh was taken into custody after treatment and booked under BNS Section 103 (murder).

In Gurgaon school, guest teacher served dismissal notice over mid-day meal irregularities

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A complaint over the implementation of the Mid-Day Meal (MDM) Scheme at PM SHRI Govt Senior Secondary School, in Mandi Khara of Nuh district has snowballed into disciplinary proceedings, with the directorate of elementary education issuing a show-cause notice to a guest teacher after an official inquiry found multiple alleged financial and administrative irregularities.

The complaint, received through the office of the deputy commissioner in Dec 2025, prompted the district elementary education officer (DEEO) to constitute an inquiry committee to examine the functioning of the scheme in the school. According to the show-cause notice issued on Monday, the inquiry found that Mid-Day Meal funds were allegedly transferred to the personal bank account of the school principal instead of being handled through the prescribed mechanism. It also pointed to discrepancies between entries recorded in the cash book and those reflected in the bank passbook, raising questions over financial record-keeping. The committee further found variations in the number of students recorded in the daily attendance register and those shown in the Mid-Day Meal register, indicating inconsistencies in beneficiary records.

Heavy rain spell likely from July 28 as active monsoon set to strengthen over Haryana

Gurgaon.(Agency)

The city is likely to witness generally cloudy skies with light to moderate rain over the next few days before monsoon activity intensifies across Haryana from July 28, when the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast a fresh spell of widespread rainfall accompanied by heavy to very heavy showers at isolated places. The active weather is expected to keep daytime temperatures below normal while increasing humidity levels.

According to the IMD's meteorological centre in Chandigarh, light to moderate rainfall is likely at many places across Haryana from July 28 to 30. Before that, rainfall activity is expected to remain scattered, with showers at a few places on July 24, 25 and 27 and isolated rainfall on July 26. The weather office has forecast heavy rainfall at isolated places on July 24, 25, 27 and 30, while heavy to very heavy rainfall is likely at isolated locations on July 28 and 29 as monsoon systems strengthen over northwestern India. For Gurgaon, the IMD has forecast generally cloudy skies with the possibility of light to moderate rain or thundershowers over the next few days. While widespread heavy rainfall is not expected immediately, rainfall activity is likely to pick up from July 27 before intensifying on July 28, when Gurgaon is among the districts placed under a heavy rain alert. Panchkula, Ambala, Yamunanagar, Kurukshetra and Karnal are likely to receive heavy to very heavy.

Chinese national, two aides using phone cover manufacturing unit as front to operate international hawala racket arrested

Noida.(Agency)

A Chinese national and two of his Indian associates were arrested for allegedly operating an international hawala and money laundering network through multiple shell companies. UP Police Special Task Force (STF) said the accused were using a mobile phone cover manufacturing business as a front to route funds between India and China.

The three men — Liao Longhui, who allegedly has been living in the country illegally for nearly six years after his visa expired, and his associates Sanjeev Kumar, a Ghaziabad-based chartered accountant, and Kaushalendra Singh of Auriya — were arrested on July 22

during a search at Purvanchal City. Longhui was based in the Sector 93 highrise. The arrests followed intelligence inputs on foreign nationals operating shell companies out of NCR to facilitate hawala transactions and other financial crimes. After weeks of scanning, cops zeroed in on YTL Manufacturing Pvt Ltd in Sector 83 on learning its assets are controlled by Longhui.

A team led by DSP Navendu Kumar subsequently summoned Longhui and his associates to the STF office with the company's records and travel documents. Cops said Longhui was unable to produce complete visa and company-related documents. He also led police to his apartment, saying he would produce additional records there. During the search, police

allegedly recovered incriminating documents linked to several shell companies, including invoices and incorporation documents of multiple companies, besides cheque books for multiple bank accounts, and an Aadhaar card with Longhui's photograph but bearing the name of Samuel Lotha and an address in Kohima, Nagaland.

The STF seized the documents along with five laptops, nine mobile phones, a tablet, two PAN cards, two Chinese passports, a Chinese identity card, 10 company seals, and cheques worth Rs 4.7 crore. Additional SP Rajkumar Mishra said Longhui came to India in 2018 and took over operations of YTL Manufacturing, which his father-in-law and brother-in-law initially set up. He overstayed after his visa lapsed in

2020. "The company manufactured mobile phone covers and imported raw material from China at inflated prices, while the finished products were allegedly sold in markets such as Karol Bagh and Nehru Place in Delhi through under-invoicing," Mishra said. Under-invoicing involves declaring a lower invoice value to customs or tax authorities than the goods' actual selling price, with the balance settled secretly through informal channels, cash, or offshore accounts. Police said Longhui transferred the balance amount through hawala channels to China.

Cops alleged that Longhui persuaded his employees and associates to allow him to use their identity documents to float shell companies that were later used for money laundering.

Tronica City set to get 2 more substations next month

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

More than 2,000 industrial units and over 3,000 consumers in Tronica City are expected to benefit from improved electricity supply when two new 33/11kV substations become operational by mid-Aug. Built at a cost of around Rs 8 crore, the substations will increase the township's network from four to six substations.

Tronica City is a 3,600-acre integrated industrial and residential township developed by Uttar Pradesh State Industrial Development Authority. It is located near the northeast border of Delhi. The township has been struggling with persistent power supply issues due to the overloading of the four substations.

Officials said each new substation



has a capacity of 5 MegaVolt-Ampere, with the potential for expansion. "The construction of these substations was a direct response to the demands from entrepreneurs who have experienced disruptions in production due to frequent power outages and low voltage," an official from the Authority said. "Many business owners had indicated that they would relocate if the power situation did not improve."

Noida.(Agency)

UP govt has sanctioned Rs 32 lakh to demarcate the floodplain of Khokhari (Sandhli) river using concrete pillars in Saharanpur and Shamli districts, complying with an NGT order of Aug 2025 on a petition highlighting the river's deteriorating condition. A total of Rs 38.9 lakh was approved for the project under the irrigation and water resources department, according to the govt order, with Rs 32 lakh released as the first instalment from the state fund for the 2026-27 financial year. The order, which lays down conditions on the use of funds, states that technical approval must be obtained from a competent authority before the work begins. It states that the sum must be used strictly for the approved purpose. The chief engineer and irrigation officials would be held accountable for



irregularities, it stated.

The Khokhari originates at Chausana village in Saharanpur and flows west of residential areas through several villages before reaching Khwajpura in

PMO intervention sought to fix pothole-ridden road near Gurgaon Sec-79 school

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Several residents of Sector 79 have approached the Prime Minister's Office for the restoration of a pothole-ridden 24-metre road near Mount Olympus School, used by 3,000 children daily.

While submitting their grievance on Friday, a representative of the residents said they had raised the issue with the local administration but to no avail. He said the residents hoped the

PM would direct the district administration, GMDA and the Municipal Corporation of Manesar (MCM) to immediately reconstruct the road and ensure its maintenance, particularly during the monsoon months. In their complaint, residents said more than 10,000 people, among them over 3,000 students, use the road every day. They alleged that during heavy rainfall, about 3 feet of water accumulates on the stretch, completely submerging deep potholes

and making it impossible for motorists to gauge where they are. They warned that the condition of the road poses a serious risk to school buses, two-wheelers and pedestrians and the possibility of a school bus overturning or a fatal accident cannot be ruled out if immediate repairs are not undertaken. According to them, the road was originally constructed by private developers, including Mapsko and Godrej, in 2020 as it was part of their licensed area.

UP section of DME to shut for five days for kanwar yatra from Aug 7

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

Traffic to and from Delhi will see disruptions from Aug 7, with police deciding to close the entire UP stretch of Delhi-Meerut Expressway for the annual kanwar pilgrimage.

Additional DCP (traffic) Varun Singh told TOI that all the six lanes of the speedway will be off-bounds for traffic — cars, trucks and buses — from UP Gate on the Delhi border to Kashi toll plaza near Meerut border for five days. The adjacent NH-9 lanes will, however, remain open. Last year, cops briefly diverted traffic from the DME, leading to traffic jams on NH-9. Most vehicles were diverted via NH-9, Eastern Peripheral Expressway (EPE) and Noida. The restrictions for light and medium vehicles will start from 8 am on Aug 7 and stay in force until Shivratri on Aug 12. Heavy vehicles will be barred from the stretch from July 29. The closure will allow uninterrupted movement for dak kanwars, pilgrims who run the route barefoot, accompanied by relay teams

in trucks and on bikes, who predominantly use the expressway.

Three routes are used by pilgrims from neighbouring UP districts and Delhi to reach Haridwar, from where they collect Ganga water in their kanwars for the annual yatra. Pilgrims travelling on foot largely use the Pipeline Road between Loni border and Niwari, while a significant number take National Highway 34 via GT Road. Combined, the three routes span 150 km in Ghaziabad. Vehicles coming from Delhi via Tulsī Niketan, Seemapuri and Anand Vihar borders will be stopped at UP Gate and routed via Chaudhary Charan Singh Marg, Ghazipur mandi and NH-9, using EPE from Dasna intersection, or via Akshardham onto the Delhi-Dehradun Expressway and the EPE intersection to reach Haridwar, Amroha, Moradabad or Lucknow.

Vehicles from Baghpat headed to Delhi will be diverted via Tronica City or Sonia Vihar and Delhi-Dehradun Expressway, while those coming from

Hapur or Bulandshahr will use NH-9 instead of entering Ghaziabad directly via Dasna, Lal Kuan or Atmaram Steel Plant crossing, the ADCP said. Heavy vehicle entry will be completely



barred from Loni border towards Loni Kasba, and from Santosh Medical cut in Siddharth Vihar towards Meerut crossing. The restriction also extends to the Indirapuram stretch from Gaur Green Avenue, Khoda, Kalapatthar, Noida's Sector 62, Chhijarsi and Kanawani Pusta towards NH-9, as well as the Ganganahar Patri Kanwar Marg, Pipeline Marg, NH-34 (formerly

NH-58) and the DME itself. Movement will also be prohibited on the Ganganahar Patri Kanwar Marg and Pipeline Marg. Cars and other light vehicles arriving from Mohannagar, Meerut crossing, Rajnagar Extension or Hapur Chungi will instead use the Meerut-bound lane of NH-34. From Aug 5, light vehicles coming from Palwal or Kundli via EPE and headed to Ghaziabad city, Muradnagar or Modinagar will not be allowed to exit at Duhai cut, and will instead exit at Dasna cut before proceeding via NH-9, police said.

Movement from Chaudhary Mod, Gaushala crossing, Hapur crossing or Kaila Bhatta towards Dudheshwarnath temple will be entirely barred, as will vehicle movement on the Patel Nagar flyover. Light vehicles arriving via Railway Station Road, Kirana market, Ramteteram Road, Ghantaghar, Bajarla Road and Delhi Gate will also be barred from heading towards the temple.

IGCAR, AIC FAST inks incubation agreement with deeptech firm

Chennai. (Agency)

The AIC IGCAR FAST Foundation (AIC FAST), the Atal Incubation Centre of Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research, at Kalpakkam inked an incubation agreement with a Deeptech firm for “Developing Radiation Hardening Strategies for GPU-Based Computing in Space Environments” IGCAR sources today said the pact was signed during an event organised by the AIC FAST under the theme “Translation of IGCAR Technologies: From Lab to Land...and to Space” at the Kalpakkam campus last evening.

An incubation agreement for “Developing Radiation Hardening Strategies for GPU-Based Computing in Space Environments” was exchanged by Sreekumar G Pillai, Director, IGCAR and Dr. N. Subramanian, Director, AIC FAST with M/s Big Bang Boom Solutions, a deeptech company mentored by renowned space scientists Dr. Myswamy Annadurai.

A team from StartupTN presented details of various schemes available for the benefit of the state's startups that obtain technology transfer licenses from reputed R and D centres.

Kerala to become hub for space, aviation, defence industries: Minister

Thiruvananthapuram. (Agency)

Kerala will be developed as a leading destination for the space, aviation and defence industries, Industries, Commerce and IT Minister P K Kunhalikutty has said.

The government will extend full support to promote fresh investments, develop infrastructure and strengthen cooperation between industry and academic institutions, he said.

Kerala is fully prepared to utilise the immense opportunities available in the space and defence sectors, Kunhalikutty said. The government will provide all necessary support to attract investments and promote technological advancement in these fields.

He called upon industry leaders and the authorities concerned to submit detailed proposals for new initiatives. All valuable suggestions received would be examined seriously and necessary policy decisions taken in a time-bound manner, he said while speaking at a consultation meeting held here on Friday with leading industry representatives as part of efforts to strengthen the state's space industrial ecosystem.

Electronics and IT Department Special Secretary Sreeram Sambasiva Rao said the draft Space Industry Policy would be released for public consultation. Suggestions from industries and educational institutions have been invited to make the policy more comprehensive and investor-friendly.

1,385 drowning deaths reported in Kerala in 2024: Kollam Collector

Kollam. (Agency)

As many as 1,385 people died by drowning in Kerala in 2024, compared to 1,344 in 2023, according to National Crime Records Bureau data, highlighting the need for increased vigilance and preventive measures to avoid such accidents, Kollam District Collector Annie Jul Thomas said in connection with International Drowning Prevention Day observed on July 25.

The Collector said drowning incidents account for a significant share of accidental deaths occurring during recreational trips and holiday celebrations. The Disaster Management Department is joining hands with the public to strengthen preventive measures under the message, “Together for Change”. Public participation is essential to achieve comprehensive prevention of drowning incidents, she said.

Several locations across Kollam district have witnessed drowning incidents, including the canals of the Kallada Irrigation Project, the Kallada, Pallikkal and Ithikkara rivers, Sasthamkotta Lake, the Ashtamudi and Paravur backwaters, the TS Canal and the beaches at Kollam, Thanni, Azheekal and Pozhikara. Water-filled pits in abandoned quarries have also been identified as potential danger spots.

NIA files chargesheet against UP tailor arrested in Gujarat's Navsari

Ahmedabad. (Agency)

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) filed a chargesheet against a Uttar Pradesh resident in an alleged Gujarat online terror radicalisation case linked with proscribed terrorist outfits such as the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) and Al-Qaeda. The accused identified as Faijan alias Faizan Shakil Salmani belongs to Rampur in UP and had settled in Navsari for the past 3-4 years where he worked as a tailor.

Salmani faces charges under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), besides sections of the BNS and the Arms Act. A statement issued by the agency on Thursday said, “Investigation by the NIA which took over the case from ATS Gujarat in March 2026 revealed that the accused conspired for the secession of Kashmir and Ladakh from India and was

in touch with Pakistan based JeM operative in furtherance of the conspiracy. ATS Gujarat had originally registered the FIR in the case following the arrest of Faijan on the basis of reliable input.”

The Original Case

On January 27, 2026, the Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) arrested 22-year-old Faizan (Faijan) Shakil Salmani, from Navsari on January 25, a day before Republic Day, and took him on remand for 12 days.

The ATS had alleged that Salmani was a “lone wolf” whose primary motive was to “identify and carry out targeted killings of those who allegedly insulted the Prophet”.

The ATS's primary investigation had

revealed that Salmani and another wanted accused Mohammed Abu Bakar, inspired by terrorist organisations such as JeM and Al-Qaeda, had planned to spread



terror within a specific community. “They also attempted to incite people towards armed rebellion and Jihad to separate

Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh from the Union of India,” said the statement from the ATS.

Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Sunil Joshi had then said that his deputy Harsh Upadhyay received confidential information that a man named Faizan, originally from Dundawala, Rampur district (Uttar Pradesh) and currently working as a tailor while residing in the Zarakwad area of Navsari, had hatched a conspiracy. “The plot involved attacking and killing certain well-known youths in UP with weapons to spread terror, as well as conspiring to separate Kashmir from India through Jihad. To execute this conspiracy, he had stockpiled deadly weapons”, he had said.

Punjab woman strangled in Canada, live-in partner from Delhi held

Ludhiana. (Agency)

A 23-year-old Indian-origin woman from Punjab was allegedly strangled to death by her live-in partner, also an Indian national from Delhi, in Canada's Edmonton, as per the local police.

The accused, identified as Ritesh Kumar, 22, has been arrested and charged with second-degree murder of Damanpreet Kaur, in what the Edmonton police, described as an “intimate partner homicide”.

Damanpreet was a native of Lal Kalan village of Samrala in Ludhiana district, and had gone to Canada on study visa around five years ago. She was the only child of her parents, who had taken loans to send her to Canada. According to the Edmonton Police Service (EPS), “On July 9,

2026, at approximately 6:44 pm, Southeast Branch patrol officers responded to a call for an unresponsive female with suspicious injuries at a residence in the Silverberry neighbourhood. An adult



male was taken into custody shortly thereafter. EMS responded, treated and transported the 23-year-old female to hospital with life-threatening injuries,

where she sadly passed away on Sunday, July 12, 2026.”

“The Edmonton Medical Examiner's Office completed an autopsy on July 14, 2026, and determined Damanpreet Kaur died as a result of homicide. The cause of death, which was withheld at the time for investigative reasons, was strangulation. Ritish Kumar was arrested on Wednesday, July 22, 2026, and charged with second degree murder.

This death is considered an intimate partner homicide. Police are not seeking any additional suspects at this time,” it further said. In police parlance, intimate partner violence is also known as spousal or domestic violence and is described as “gender-based violence caused by a current or former intimate partner or spouse”.

Himachal: GS Bali Children's Fair 2026 begins in Nagrota Bagwan

Dharamshala. (Agency)

Tourism Development Corporation Chairman, Nagrota Bagwan MLA and Chief Patron of the Shri GS Bali Bal Mela Committee, R.S. Bali on Friday formally inaugurated the Vikas Purush G.S. Bali Bal Mela-2026 after offering prayers at the temples of Maa Brajeshwari in Kangra and Maa Chamunda Devi.

Addressing the gathering, Bali said the Bal Mela was not an event belonging to any individual but a people's festival organised by the Bal Mela Committee and the residents of the Nagrota Assembly constituency. He said the event symbolised the affection and trust of the people towards late Congress leader G.S. Bali, popularly known as “Vikas Purush.”

The 24th edition of the annual fair continues the tradition of public participation and social service in the constituency, he said, adding that the successful organisation of the event every year was possible due to the dedicated efforts of the committee members and local residents. After offering prayers with his family for the prosperity of the state and the region, Bali reached the OBC Bhawan, where the opening-day blood donation camp was organised. Former MP and senior Congress leader Viplove Thakur inaugurated the blood donation camp as the chief guest. Himachal Road Transport Corporation Vice-Chairman Ajay Verma, Bal Mela Committee President Man Singh, office-bearers, committee members and several

prominent citizens were also present.

Speaking on the occasion, Thakur said late G.S. Bali had dedicated his life to public service and development. She said Bali transformed the Nagrota Bagwan Assembly constituency from a backward region into one of Himachal Pradesh's most developed and model constituencies through his visionary leadership. His lifelong struggle for people's rights and welfare earned him the title of “Vikas Purush,” she added.

R.S. Bali reaffirmed his commitment to carrying forward his father's vision of development, saying development projects worth crores of rupees were currently underway in the constituency and Nagrota Bagwan would continue to emerge as a model of development.

Railways to launch online personal luggage booking for reserved passengers from July 31

Panchkula. (Agency)

Indian Railways will introduce an online facility for booking personal luggage accompanying passengers travelling on confirmed reserved tickets from July 31, as part of its push to digitise passenger services. The Railway Board has directed all Zonal Railways to implement the system following confirmation from the Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS) that the platform is ready for nationwide rollout.

The decision operationalises the Railway Board's in-principle approval issued in March 2025 for online booking of personal luggage to be carried inside reserved compartments. The facility will be available only to passengers holding confirmed reserved tickets and will allow online booking of luggage up to the maximum weight prescribed under the existing Railway rules.

The Railway Board said the service will be governed by the existing terms and conditions relating to carriage of luggage in reserved coaches. During the booking process, passengers will be provided information on class-wise free luggage allowance, maximum permissible weight, restricted items and penalties applicable for carrying luggage beyond the prescribed limits.

Under the prevailing rules, booking of excess luggage will not be permitted in AC 3-Tier, AC 3 Economy and AC Chair Car classes, where the free luggage allowance and maximum permissible weight are identical, except in cases where the free allowance itself is chargeable.

The Railway Board has instructed all Zonal Railways to issue operational instructions for implementation, while CRIS has been tasked with making the necessary software changes to operationalise the service from July 31.

Rivers rising, BLOs in Punjab's border areas take boats to meet SIR deadline

Electoral roll revision in some of state's most inaccessible villages

Chandigarh. (Agency)

For most Booth Level Officers (BLOs), revising electoral rolls means walking from one house to another with forms in hand. For some in Punjab's remote border belt, it has meant rowing across rivers, waiting out floodwaters and, on occasion, relying on Army boats to return home.

As the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls gathers pace, BLOs posted in some of Punjab's most inaccessible villages have been navigating swollen rivers and flood-prone terrain to ensure that even the state's last voters, living on the edge of the India-Pakistan border, are not left out.

In Gurdaspur district, Vikram Singh's workday begins not on a road but on the Ravi. To reach Bharyal village, he boards a small country boat at Makaura Pattan,

near the confluence of the Ravi and Ujh rivers. Villagers ferry him across to a settlement that remains cut off from the mainland for months every year.

“With rains lashing Jammu and Kashmir and the river getting into spate, it becomes difficult. I had to go daily. I wanted to finish my work before the monsoon. I have been able to identify 60 percent of the voters. It was not an easy task,” Singh told The Indian Express, adding that SIR is still underway.

Bharyal, which has 369 voters, is inundated almost every year. Many of its residents temporarily move to 15 neighbouring villages during the flood

season. “I had to map each one of them. Like today, it is raining and I cannot go,” Singh said. Bharyal and neighbouring



Toor village, covered under Polling Station Nos. 1 and 2 of the Dinanagar (SC) Assembly constituency, are among

Punjab's most isolated habitations. Pakistan lies on one side, the Ravi on the other, while the international border is

barely 8 kilometres away. Of Punjab's 12,500 villages, 50 are considered remote because they are located along the international border and have poor road connectivity. For part of the year, a temporary pontoon bridge connects the villages with the mainland. During monsoon, the bridge is dismantled as the river swells, leaving boats as the only means of transport.

“These villages are cut off during monsoons but that doesn't happen every year,” one official said.

Tone-deaf reply to an evolving youth anthem

There are moments in the life of political leaders when their unflappable self-beliefs are suddenly shaken. That's assuming that they recognise such moments. As Parliament convened on July 20 hoping to pass certain contentious but significant bills, Delhi's heart was overrun by young women and men who coalesced in ostensibly spontaneous protests against the ruling regime. The BJP-led government, flush with the euphoria of snagging West Bengal and hollowing out the Trinamool Congress, was certainly unprepared for the first big threat in 12 years that came from India's youth—a carefully nurtured constituency that the BJP had taken for granted. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with his penchant for using alliteration and anaphora, might now rue the moment last month when he celebrated “yuva shakti” (youth power). At the 11th governing council meeting of the Niti Aayog, he described India's 70 crore young people as an asset and urged states to transform the “demographic dividend into development dividend” through initiatives such as Startup India and Skill India. Such highfalutin words might have made little sense to the youths choking central Delhi at present, for they not only include students preparing for professional courses but also those working in corporate firms after passing through IIMs, startups and the tertiary sector. India Inc is one of the ruling regime's biggest backers; that its striplings could be part of a political movement targeting the regime would have come as a surprise to the honchos. The movement indeed has curious origins quite unlike those seen since 2014. This made it easier for the establishment to first stigmatise them in offensive language and then try to crush them with oft-used toolkits. The first run of protests made it easier to contain turmoil by branding protesting farmers as “Khalistanis”, those demonstrating against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act as “anti-national”, and campus dissenters in Jawaharlal Nehru University and Jamia Millia Islamia as “urban Naxals”. The use of these labels appealed to the BJP's expanded following, which believed till recently that the government's “good work” must not be disrupted. The spark that ignited the ongoing protests was a social media response from a 30-year-old master's student at Boston University to a contentious remark attributed to the Chief Justice of India, where he called unemployed youth “cockroaches” struggling to find their place under the sun. Amused by the comment, Abhijeet Dipke, who had volunteered for the Aam Aadmi Party's social media team between 2020 and 2022, launched the Cockroach Janta Party, using the remark as a peg to carve out a self-deprecating identity for his target group—youngsters. But online expressions of what began as a joke outgrew their satirical provenance and evolved into a hard political reality. The tipping point came in May, after the national entrance test for undergraduate medical and dental courses was cancelled. It followed investigations that revealed significant overlaps between a pre-circulated guess paper and the actual question paper, leading to the arrest of insiders from the National Testing Agency. Although the leak was spotted in Rajasthan, the offenders were spread over several states. The incident—not the first of its kind—spurred protests from parents and students. At least 12 students took their lives. Parents wailed about having poured their life savings into preparing their children for the exam, while the students spoke tearfully of the mental toll the cancellation took. The whole episode reflected the rotten education system that needs a slew of reforms. Dipke returned from the US and started a sit-in at Delhi's Jantar Mantar, which he probably couldn't imagine would transform into the political highpoint of 2026.

Life of a constitution: Boredom over a drama of climaxes

Nations like telling themselves that their constitutions were forged in a heroic grind of the founding text against competing narratives. But its morality flows as much from unwritten conventions and mundane practice. It's a performing art where power must justify itself in the idiom of rules

We tend to portray constitutional law as a constant progression of crises—as a drama of climaxes, where judges robed and grey hoist the Constitution or heroically submerge with it, only for their brethren to fight another day. Our entire grammar of admiration is built around these ‘constitutional moments’—far too many venerated episodes of political and judicial history that seemingly steered the ship in the right direction.

Schools across the world teach students that the present polity came about as a result of a great awakening, from an era when the enlightened opened the floodgates of political aspiration and wrote the nation's future story. In this narrative, the progress thereafter remains the same in all societies—a slow and grinding contest of competing interpretations of this future story, each stretching the limits of the consensus originally arrived at. And much like these societies, their constitutions endure, tarry on, or fall based on the crises they confront.

This is indeed a seductive narrative—one with a lot of truth in it. Yet it is hardly complete, as is any accepted chronicle of our society it is oftentimes generalised and just a step away from apocrypha. History, however, has shown us that successful constitutions are not ones that exist in order to resolve crises, but those that ensure that the occurrence of crises becomes extraordinary. This is because constitutions and constitutional law are in themselves not exciting—they are the sum of our histories and wishes and are to endure primarily by preserving the reverence the populace has in them, but the truth remains that successful constitutions live in their routines. To wit, the rule of law, which a constitution is supposed to establish and uphold, is the rule of the ordinary. It is in the mundanity of everyday administration and justice dispensation—the unremarkable parts of political and social life—that the true colour of the coin is revealed. As I have written earlier, it is not just the

written word of a constitution that supplies its working morality, but also what is not spoken. The unwritten conventions, non-legally enforceable rules and silences that animate a constitution coalesce to supply it with authority. These, along with the practice of constitutional law—precedents, habits and the actors who perform them—provide a constitution its living flesh.

It is as much a performing art as any other. In this performance, power must justify itself in the idiom of rule; that it submits to procedure, applies the same standard to like cases—power must constrain the

entrenched corruption at every level that should push the nation into a state of constant churning, push its citizens towards change. Yet, against all odds, it has stayed a beacon of stability and an island of continuity in an era of disruption. May be, by way of a special kind of social thermodynamics, we have found a unique equilibrium that helps us sail through without major crises, or perhaps the change is yet in the making, but what is certain is the soft guardrails of our democracy firmly remain in place.

It is, however, undeniable that all democracies have the tendency towards constitutional entropy—an inevitable march towards decay and crises, a patient erosion in quality, that is natural to any social institution. Checks and balances in the classical sense can only go so far when the entire system suffers a gradual and legal decline and when the warning signs are undramatic as they usually are despite the churn of crises.

As Ryszard Kapuscinski wrote, “It takes a long time for a truth to mature, and in the meantime people suffer or blunder around in ignorance.” In a sense, the only way to protect the State from these lightning strikes is to reorient our focus from the seductive to the mundane; to focus on administrative integrity and its various facets. As noted, India's case may be uniquely complicated than most other democracies. Yet, it is without doubt true

that a decline in public faith in the integrity of institutions—the guardians of the boring—will challenge the foundations of the nation. Then why do schools fetishise landmark cases and certain events of historical importance or confine themselves to the bare basis of civics? It could well be that they feel compelled as a consequence of the syllabus, or to gain students' attention, or it could be that lawyers and politicians—known for being solipsistic—have predictably mythologised their deeds. However, focusing on this drama of climaxes ignores the enormity and subtle solemnity of mundane administration. If schools focus more on the practice of the rule of law, we may end up with a more informed class of citizens.

Isro needs to coexist with private players, its scientists need a lift

The private sector's growth is attributed to the 2020 space policy reforms allowing foreign direct investment. However, former Isro scientists founding or joining these startups seems to be nibbling at the heart of the space agency

India's growing private space sector is, ironically, affecting its guide and mentor, the Indian Space Research Organisation. The government agency has been rattled by about 120 scientists' resignation or voluntary retirement over the past year. The finger squarely points at the lucrative private sector, which now features 400 functional startups. On July 14, the department of space issued a memorandum to the heads of Isro's various centres and units, instructing them not to accept requests for resignation or voluntary retirement, and instead forward them to the department for scrutiny. At the back is the fear of a debilitating impact on India's ambitious space plans that include the first manned mission, Gaganyaan, in 2027; setting up a space station by 2035; and sending the first Indian astronauts to the moon by 2040. As if justifying the department's fears, just four days after the office note, Hyderabad-based startup Skyroot Aerospace



successfully launched the country's first privately designed and developed rocket, Vikram-1, from Isro's Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota to heart-warming congratulatory messages. The historic feat

announced the take-off of India's private space sector, which uses Isro's infrastructure and guidance as launch pads.

The private sector's growth is attributed to the 2020 space policy reforms allowing foreign direct investment. However, former Isro scientists founding or joining these startups, which provide significantly more lucrative prospects, seems to be nibbling at the heart of the space agency. Several senior Isro scientists, including former chairman S Somanath, have moved to private startups post retirement. Skyroot Aerospace itself was founded by two young former Isro scientists, Pawan Kumar Chandana and Naga Bharath Daka. Such shifts profoundly influence the minds of younger scientists seeking higher pays and bigger challenges. Although Isro's overall attrition rate last year was less than 1 percent, the insecurity is real as filling the vacated posts is not easy.

Brain drain tests ISRO's mettle

Space agency hit by a spate of resignations amid the rise of private companies

INDIA's space sector is hitting the headlines for both right and wrong reasons. The good news is that an Indian private space company, Skyroot, has executed the first end-to-end private space mission. The company, founded by two former engineers of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), has achieved a remarkable feat by demonstrating the success of its rocket, Vikram-1, on its maiden flight. It hopes to fly an upgraded version of the rocket, Vikram-2, next year, aiming to enter the multi-billion-dollar market for launching satellites into low Earth orbit. The bad news concerns ISRO, which is experiencing an exodus of top scientists and engineers. As per reports, dozens of senior scientists working with the UR Rao Satellite Centre (URSC), Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) and other key units of the national space agency have either resigned or taken premature retirement. Many of them were working on flagship programmes such as Gaganyaan (human spaceflight), Next Generation Launch Vehicle (NGLV) and the Bharatiya Antariksh Station. The situation has become so alarming that the Department of Space has decided to clamp down on the exodus, directing that those associated with critical missions would not be allowed to leave ISRO till the completion of the projects. On the face of it, the launch of India's first private rocket and the brain drain from ISRO seem unrelated. Actually, they are interlinked. The most apparent reason for the spate of resignations in ISRO units is the rise of private sector space companies in the past few years. This is a direct consequence of the government's decision to allow private firms to build rockets and satellites, and also launch them. Before this policy was rolled out, ISRO had a monopoly on launching rockets from Indian soil. The government not only opened up the space sector to private players but also directed

ISRO to allow the use of its facilities to private companies. All this created an ideal situation in which private companies poached ISRO's engineering talent, offering them attractive packages and challenging projects. Such movement of talent from public institutions to the private sector is not new to ISRO, nor is it restricted to the space sector. The much-celebrated private space sector in the US stands on the shoulders of human resources developed and nurtured by NASA. In the formative years of the information technology industry, private firms hired their R&D teams from public sector companies like the Electronics Corporation of India Limited and the Computer Maintenance Corporation. It has also happened with niche public sector companies like the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). An ISRO-like situation is also prevailing in the laboratories of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) following the opening up of defence and aerospace production to the private sector. IndiaNews Updates

Our scientific agencies, be it ISRO or DRDO, need to look deeper into the reasons for the situation they are facing today. In March 2026, a parliamentary committee which looked into the functioning of the Department of Space was told that various ISRO units had over 2,800 vacancies against the sanctioned strength of about 18,000 posts. Almost 500 posts are vacant in VSSC, a facility engaged in critical projects like NGLV. On the one hand, private companies are poaching experienced scientists, and on the other, ISRO projects are not getting funding from the government.

For instance, the Cabinet approved the NGLV project in 2024 with a timeline of 96 months for the development of the rocket — from facility commissioning to the launch. The first developmental test flight was targeted within 84

months from the date of approval. But the project remained on paper for many months after approval as no provision was made for it in the 2024-25 Budget. In revised estimates, a token allocation of Rs 3 crore was made, of which ISRO could spend Rs 85 lakh. In the 2025-



26 Budget, Rs 158 crore was provided initially but slashed to Rs 39.76 crore in the revised estimates. Against this revised estimate, ISRO incurred an expenditure of Rs 7.93 crore till January 31, 2026. The delay in funding, coupled with a lack of adequate staff, could adversely affect the timelines of such critical projects.

Under-utilisation of funds, reduction in budgetary allocations, delays in filling vacancies and the entry of the private sector are all contributing to a serious situation in

ISRO. On top of this, there have been a series of failures involving the workhorse rocket, PSLV, and massive delays in challenging missions like Gaganyaan. The centralisation of decision-making and growing bureaucratic as well as political interference also do not augur well for the functioning of a large mission-oriented scientific agency. The net result is low morale and general disenchantment in the scientific workforce.

All this should be a matter of concern for the political leadership, policymakers and the space agency. Simply asking scientists not to resign and issuing a diktat is not an adequate response. The Central Government, which pushed for the entry of the private sector, and ISRO, which facilitated it, should have anticipated the fallout of this approach on the national programme and taken proactive measures to address it. The ISRO leadership should also take measures to boost the scientists' morale, which has been affected by mission failures and delays. In the long run, the agency will have to think of innovative mechanisms — like permitting scientists to engage with the private sector for a limited period while retaining their jobs at ISRO, allowing them to float their own companies in non-critical areas, besides the revision of pay structures, promotion policies and incentives.

The government, on its part, should restore the autonomy of scientific institutions and stop using them for political gains. The space market is growing globally, and there is enough room for both national agencies and private companies to explore this potential. Brain drain can well be converted into “brain circulation.”

Your fertility could be directly proportionate to how Stressed You are



An estimated one in seven couples in India have fertility issues and sadly, more often than not, there is no known medical explanation, say doctors.

Case study: Radha, 34 (name changed), an ambitious career-oriented woman, has been trying to conceive, unsuccessfully, for the last three years. She now worries that she might never have a child. Her gynaecologist has told her that she needs to change her lifestyle and be more at ease mentally. However, her highly stressful job doesn't allow her the luxury of relaxing or stay calm.

Physiological effects of stress cannot be ignored

"It has been found that around 10 per cent of the general population suffers from some form of infertility. Researchers say that women who are undergoing high levels of stress are 29 per cent less likely to get pregnant each month, than those women with lower stress levels," says fertility specialist Dr Shobha Gupta. Experts reiterate that the physiological effects of stress cannot be ignored and might play a relatively big role in conception.

Stress is one of the most overused words among the urban population world over. And it's not just the case with women. Gynaecologist and IVF specialist Dr Shweta Goswami, says, "Men who work in night shifts are more affected when it comes to fertility issues as compared to men working in regular shifts since their biological clock is badly disturbed. They sleep during the day and to keep themselves awake during the night, they often smoke, which damages the system further. Stress at the work place and sitting for long hours at work stations is also found to reduce sperm count."

Gynaecologist and IVF specialist Dr Anubha Singh, says, "Stress puts the body in 'fight or flight' mode from an evolutionary perspective and activates the sympathetic nervous system." This leads to the production of fat promoting hormones cortisol and insulin that cause weight gain. It also disrupts the body's hunger regulating hormones causing one to eat more."

Women are affected more

Women are often found to be more stressed than men. "Repeated failure to conceive puts more pressure on already stressed women. But thanks to technology, today, we have treatment for infertility through IVF or IUI. But it is advisable that women as well as men also try stress management

techniques to overcome this problem because natural conception is always the preferred method," adds Dr Anubha.

The psychology behind it

Young working women experience prolonged periods of frustration due to unsuccessful attempts at conception. Clinical psychologist Seema Hingorany says, "Often, this leads to marital stress further translating into personal sense of loss or failure. Infertility is often accompanied by psychological and emotional distress, frustration, sense of incompetency, jealousy, trauma and even depression."

Most women with infertility report symptoms of heightened anxiety, depression, fear that they will never have children. Infertility is associated with negative feeling



of helplessness leading to chronic stress. These symptoms and negative beliefs actually hamper fertility in women.

Constant stress Vs sudden stress

Experts say that there is a difference between constant stress and sudden stress, and it affects fertility in very different ways. Ovulation might still occur despite constant high stress because bodies are likely to acclimatise. However, sudden stress, like a death in the family, might interfere with the ovulation cycle. Doctors add that this may vary from one individual to another — for some women a simple weekend trip can hamper ovulation while a traumatic incident might not affect it at all. Also, negative stress is not the sole bad guy here. In fact, bridal jitters can also interfere with ovulation.

Points to ponder

Fertility experts have stated that there is no scientific proof that relaxation techniques will increase the chances of conception, but then, they can't harm you either.



hour can be de-stressing.

Factors that lead to infertility include

Marital disturbance
High pressure jobs or business stress
Advanced age
Inability to have physical intimacy
Depression
Personal injury or illness
Death of a close family member
Late marriages
Sitting for long hours at work stations
Exposure to environmental pollutants

Tips to cope with stress

Balance your career and home — spend adequate time with your family.

If you can't, take sabbatical if possible to review and introspect your priorities in life.

Don't shy away from taking professional help to deal with stress and anxiety if you can't deal with it yourself.

Moderate levels of stress in your life is okay, so do not panic.

Ease your mind by practising yoga and meditation.

Make sure that you are eating meals on time and having the right kinds of healthy, nutritious foods.

Delegate responsibility at work and don't take it all on yourself.

Take small breaks with your spouse/partner to nurture your relationship.

Articulate your feelings and emotions and communicate with others.

DID YOU KNOW?

Of every 100 couples reporting to fertility clinics, 40 per cent are cases of male infertility, 50 per cent are of women, and the remaining 10 per cent of both partners being infertile. India has a population of over 1.2 billion; the number of Indians suffering from infertility is huge.



Couples, who worry about stressing too much, tend to become even more stressed. Elimination of the factors that lead to stress before attempting to conceive, might help. Even something as simple as taking a walk for half an

Signs your texting habits are unhealthy

Many among us are more confident expressing ourselves over a text than a face-to-face conversation or through a call. Typing whatever is there on your mind and pressing the send button seems to have become the shortcut to an easier communication. Why are millennials shying away from talking over the phone? Why has the calling technology become almost obsolete or intrusive? What's wrong with this epistemological shift?

Why are people texting more than talking?

"Texting allows for communication which is less spontaneous but more 'to the point', avoiding circumstantiality and allowing the person to convey what he/she wants without the fear of being criticized immediately, therefore, reducing the fear of social interaction," says Dr. Jyoti Kapoor Madan, Senior Consultant, Psychiatry, Paras Hospitals, Gurugram. She adds, "There is slurring, stuttering or trembling in the speech of an anxious person. Writing allows one to rethink while reading what one has written. Socially conscious kids feel they will be able to convey the right thing if they texted rather than just spoke. It is also possible that talking face to face allows the other person to respond and react which may make the person trying to say something more anxious."

Here are a few scenarios in which it may be happening:

- If one does not want to seem vulnerable. In such cases, texting acts as a good cover.

- In order to have a control over the conversation, one may opt for texting. Whether a person feels



intimidated in the presence of another person or if he wants to intimidate the other person, preferring to text over talk can mean either of these.

- To avoid other person's heightened emotional state, such as his crying or anger, a person may not want to talk over the phone.

- Or simply, one may prefer texting to expend lesser energy.

What's wrong with texting more?

The rise in texting has many critics. You must have lost the count of number of times when you wanted to convey a sarcastic remark in good humour but it came across as rude. The instances of misunderstandings over messaging are too frequent and too many and they are much beyond the 'autocorrect fails'.

Here's a whopping fact: Only 7 per cent of human communication happens through the content of

the message. The rest are body language (58 per cent) and vocal tone, pitch and emphasis (35 per cent). This was established by UCLA professor Albert Mehrabian. So, when we are texting each other, we are using only 7 per cent of our total communication potential. This is the reason you may find, for instance, apologizing over a message easier than through talking or through a face-to-face conversation. Typing 'sorry' and hitting send is way more convenient as it doesn't require you to convey an apologetic expression, body language, tone or pitch. The person at the receiving end is less likely to be convinced if the apology comes through a text for the same reason. He wants to see if you feel the apology, if your body language conveys it and if your expressions say it.

There's a common saying these days: 'Face it, Not Facebook'. This is only because texting causes many problems for those dependent on it a little too much.

The pros of texting

However, there are many who believe that it shouldn't be cut down altogether. Many a times, it also offers benefits, such as:

- Saves your time
- Helps you stay in touch with people more who you would otherwise not talk to
- It is better for casual conversations, everyday banter, planning outings on chat groups, saying quick hellos and good byes.

Signs it is becoming unhealthy

Look out for these signs to know if you are getting too much dependent on texting.

- If there are critical issues than need talking out but you are avoiding to call

- If you feel that you prefer to text over talk due to any underlying confidence issues

- If you are getting too dependent on it for every kind of conversation

- If you get panicky when the concerned person calls you

Why dengue is now an all-season threat

The city has been witnessing an unusual presence of the Aedes mosquitoes and the diseases transmitted by them even though the vectors are usually associated with rainy season.

March and April are considered dry months.

Scientists said this crisis is man-made and caused primarily due to large-scale construction activity and poor upkeep of overhead tanks. "There is a need for introducing heavy fines for mosquito breeding in and around construction sites and overhead tanks," said Dr Neena Valecha, director of National Institute of Malaria Research (NIMR).

A pilot project carried out by NIMR in collaboration with south corporation in 277 localities in west zone from July 2012 to May 2014 found overhead and curing tanks were the key habitats of Aedes mosquitoes during the dry months (December to May).

The incidence of mosquito-borne diseases can be reduced significantly with community participation. This involves putting proper lids on overhead tanks, regular emptying and cleaning of water containers, treatment of coolers and curing tanks with temephos and proper and safe disposal of solid waste, said NIMR scientists.

"Only one dengue case was reported in the study area in which fortnightly surveillance and interventions were carried out between 2012 and 2013. In the control area, which followed conventional intervention, 38 dengue cases were reported in the corresponding period," the NIMR study reveals. The results of the study have been published in a recent issue of PLOS One, a reputed medical journal.

Both dengue and chikungunya viruses are spread by Aedes aegypti mosquito that breeds in fresh water collected at construction sites or in the overhead tanks during dry season. In rainy season, stagnation of water can be seen in all empty containers and even potholes.

The average lifespan of an Aedes mosquito is two weeks. Each mosquito can lay eggs about thrice in its lifetime. About 100 eggs are produced each time. Entomologists say eggs produced by an Aedes mosquito can lie dormant in dry conditions for up to nine months after which they can hatch if exposed to favourable conditions, which is water and food. "If the key habitats -overhead and curing tanks -are cleared of these eggs during dry season, the chances of outbreaks during wet months can be reduced significantly. But for this we need active support of the public. The authorities alone cannot tackle the crisis," said Dr D K Seth, director, hospital administration of north corporation. Solid waste management is another area of concern. Due to lack of proper disposal system of solid waste in Delhi, it is indiscriminately dumped everywhere. This is a major threat for the increase in the population density of Aedes mosquitoes in urban and industrial towns. Responsibility of solid waste management remains primarily with the municipal bodies, so reduction in solid waste and its disposal is of utmost importance for reducing breeding of Aedes mosquitoes, said scientists.



Ten commandments for good

Eye health

Eyes are the most neglected especially when we spend hours straining our eyes in front of the screen - computer or smartphones.

This negligence can cause blindness or vision impairment in the long run. Follow the Ten Commandments for good eye health and vision, to keep your window to a colourful life safe.

Wash your hands

Wash your hands thoroughly before touching your eyes. Our hands are filled with dirt and minute pollutants, when they meet your eyes can cause eye infections and conjunctivitis.

Quit smoking

Smoking is bad for the human body including your eyes. Excessive smoking or constant chewing of tobacco can cause macular (eye-nerve) degeneration or blindness, due to the presence of harmful compound, nicotine.

UV protect your eyes

Yes, sunshine is good for eye health, but nothing in excess is ever good. If your work demands you to stay outdoors, then always wear good UV protected sunglasses. This will help prevent or delay the problem of

cataract.

Wear safety goggles

Eye injuries can also impair your vision in a great way; in order to avoid it always remember to wear safety goggles or eyewear, while working with

chemicals, playing sports, bursting crackers or while swimming.

Stare at a distance

All work and no play will surely make your lethargic and add strain to your eyes. Take a

break and change the focus of your eyes to greener or look at a distance. Practice eye exercises for good vision.

Eat healthy food

Nourish your eyes with foods that improve your eyes like carrots, apricots and blueberries. All these foods are rich in beta-carotene and are good for vision.

Go for a routine check-up

Even if you have good vision and have no trouble in reading, go for a vision check at least once a year. This is a good way to detect various eye related ailments and prevent it with timely treatment.

Do not ignore!

If you face any abnormality with your vision never neglect it. Take action and consult an ophthalmologist at that instance. This action of yours will help prevent major problem in the future.

Blink your eyes regularly

Keep blinking your eyes, to keep your eyes fresh and avoid eyestrain. Computer users tend to blink their eyes far less, thus it is recommended that they should follow the eye exercise of blinking their eyes every three-four seconds.

Splash water

Splashing your eyes with water will help to relieve your eyes from excessive stress. Thus, whenever you feel your eyes are strained, go splash some water on them.



Cycling

tips for beginners

While the monsoon is not really an ideal time to cycle, don't let the potholes, muck and wet roads get you down. Take advantage of the dry spells that the city often experiences between bouts of heavy rain and cycle away to good health. Invest in a good bicycle, helmet, gloves (optional) and keep aside some time every week to take off — you'll fall in love with cycling before you know it. While it is farfetched to expect an empty road sans any potholes in a city like Mumbai, there are still plenty of remarkably clear roads where you can cycle. Here are some of the benefits of this exercise...

Cycling doesn't just offer physical benefits but is also an excellent tool to help you clear your mind. Several health experts say that it is a great way to unwind and exercise at the same time. It also helps improve your reflexes, balance and co-ordination. It is also one of the best ways to burn fat. Because it increases heart rate, cycling helps burn fat faster. Studies say that simply cycling at a moderate to fast speed for 30 minutes can help your body burn calories for a hour or so even after you stop. Having trouble falling asleep? Several studies reckon that cycling regularly actually improves your sleep. We know that lack of sleep can have a detrimental impact on your overall health, which is why if you suffer from insomnia especially, you should take up cycling. Cycling often is said to aid falling asleep faster and also help you sleep better.

Give yourself a thorough workout with cycling, which also helps improve your cardiovascular health. This exercise has a positive impact on your heart and lungs because it helps improve blood flow and the speed at which oxygen is passed around in your body. After some time you will realise that cycling improves your stamina and your overall fitness levels. Some studies have stated that people who cycle 30 kms or more

per week, have a lower chance of heart disease. Being a non-load-bearing exercise, cycling has a minimal risk of injury unless you lose your balance. With lesser pressure applied to your joints, they aren't bearing the brunt that other exercises can cause. Instead, Yet another advantage of cycling is that it is a

non-load bearing, low impact form of exercise, and an excellent way to tone your legs and toughen your tendons. Lastly, an increasing number of experts say that cycling is an effective way to relieve stress, improve brain function and well-being.



Workout tips

for busy moms

Running behind your kids to get them to behave isn't a form of exercising! Whether you're a working or stay-at-home mom, your daily schedule is bound to be jam-packed. Here are some simple fitness tips moms must follow:

Set aside time for exercising: Just like you make time to cook or attend a PTA meeting, budget time for your workout. Dedicate at least 45 minutes.

To focus, exercise early in the morning, before your mom-duties begin or in the evening when the kids aren't around.

Involve your kids: Discover workout routines that involve your children. This will encourage them to be physically active and will also help you spend quality time with your child. Activities like yoga allow the participation of mothers as well as toddlers, while older kids can enjoy dance-based

exercises like Zumba with their moms. Gyms have come up with 'mommy and me' classes, specifically designed to bring your kids along with you.

Turn your home into a gym: If the commute from your home to the gym takes away precious minutes of your day, work out at home, at your own convenience. Get your hands on fitness DVDs and online exercise videos, that



will help you come up with a fitness routine you can follow at home, minus all the fancy gym equipment!

Eat like a mom: Because mothers are constantly multitasking, they need to include those foods in their diet that will fuel and replenish their bodies. Incorporate lean protein and complex carbohydrates and avoid excess

sugar, carbonated drinks and processed or pre-packaged foods.

Daily diet chart for moms

9 am: Have three egg whites with two slices of toasted brown bread and a glass of milk without sugar

1 pm: Eat a bowl of papaya

3 pm: A bowl of sprouts

5 pm: One chapati with dal and fibrous salads

7 pm: Vegetable or chicken soup and a bowl of brown rice with raita



Arrest me: Viral hospital video of Wangchuk sparks buzz, Safdarjung clarifies

A viral video shows Sonam Wangchuk confronting a police officer at Safdarjung Hospital on a day the Delhi High Court ordered that the activist be shifted to a hospital of his choice. The hospital has now come out with a clarification.

Delhi. (Agency)

A video has gone viral showing the final moments of activist Sonam Wangchuk inside Delhi's Safdarjung Hospital, where he was shifted from the Jantar Mantar protest site on July 18 amid his hunger strike. The video shows a visibly agitated Wangchuk confronting a police officer and accusing him of "harassment" as he tries to leave the hospital. The video was shot on July 21 - the day the Delhi High Court directed that Wangchuk be shifted to a hospital of his choice. However, the state-run

Safdarjung Hospital, in a statement, clarified that the video was recorded before the authorities received the written order of the High Court. The video shows Wangchuk, dressed in a blue shirt and white trousers, walking through a hospital corridor with his wife, who is seen carrying his belongings. However, a police officer tries to stop him, ostensibly to prevent him from leaving. "Ask them to arrest me. I am a free citizen," an infuriated Wangchuk is heard telling the cop. "You all are harassing me. If I die of stress, it will be

your responsibility," the activist further says. To this, the police officer tells him he was not trying to harass him. However, Wangchuk, unperturbed, continues to walk towards the exit. "You are keeping me here for no reason for three hours on the 24th day of my hunger strike," Wangchuk is heard saying. His wife, Gitanjali Angmo, who has been leading Wangchuk's fight against paper leaks amid the activist's

says. Wangchuk is then seen walking out of the door. **WHAT SAFDARJUNG HOSPITAL SAID ON VIRAL VIDEO?** As the video went viral, Safdarjung Hospital said the video was purportedly recorded by Wangchuk's aides on July 21 in the "no videography" zone. "The video was recorded before the hospital administration received the written order of the High Court. At that time, Wangchuk insisted on leaving the hospital based on information available in the media," the hospital said.



Abhijeet Dipke diagnosed with typhoid, vows protests against Pradhan will continue

New Delhi. (Agency)

Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke on Saturday said he has been diagnosed with typhoid but asserted that his illness would not weaken the movement demanding the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. In a video message shared on social media, Dipke said he had been unwell for the past few days and was currently undergoing treatment. "As you know, I have been unwell for the last few days. The reports are out and I have been diagnosed with typhoid," he said, adding that he was receiving intravenous medication but remained committed to the movement. The treatment is going on. I am getting IV drips every day. But I want to thank all



the cockroaches who are protesting peacefully across the country," Dipke said. Thanking supporters for expanding the agitation, the CJP founder expressed confidence that sustained peaceful protests would eventually force Pradhan's resignation. "Congratulations to all of you for making this movement such a big success. I am very sure that if we continue protesting like this, we will get Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation," he said.

Army Officer's Son, 20, Killed After Car Falls Into Drain In Delhi

New Delhi. (Agency)

A 20-year-old student pursuing higher education in the US died after he drove his car into a drain losing control at a sharp turn near the Nangal Dewat area of southwest Delhi on Friday morning, police said. Yashvendra was the son of an Indian Army officer, the police said. A female friend, who was travelling with him and whose car it was, sustained injuries. According to the police, a team from Vasant Kunj South Police



Station found the car turned on its head inside the drain. "Preliminary investigation revealed that Yashvendra and his friend, a resident of Vasant Kunj, were headed towards her residence when the accident took place," an officer said. Yashvendra likely lost control at a sharp turn near the Nangal Dewat traffic signal where the road was slippery, causing the car to veer off the road and fall into the drain, the officer said. A critically injured Yashvendra succumbed during treatment. He and the woman were students of the same educational institution in the US, where they became friends.

CJP volunteer alleges police detained his family from Ghaziabad; cops deny claims

New Delhi. (Agency)

A volunteer at the Cockroach Janta Party-led protest at Delhi's Jantar Mantar over paper leaks has alleged that his family in Ghaziabad was detained and his relatives in Meerut were harassed because of his role in the agitation. Mohammad Junaid, a Ghaziabad resident who said he was providing free food and drinking water to protesters, told mediapersons at Jantar Mantar on Friday that UP Police took away his family members and seized their bank passbooks and PAN cards during a raid at his house. However, Meerut Police denied carrying out any action against his family. According to his family, police from

Ghaziabad's Masoori police station reached their residence in Nahal village on Thursday evening and searched the premises. The family alleged that Junaid's father, Mustafa, was taken away by the police and that bank passbooks and PAN cards belonging to family members were also taken. Junaid's sister told the media that police asked her father to call Junaid and



18 Delhi Metro stations remain closed for fourth consecutive day amid CJP protest

New Delhi. (Agency)

Commuters continued to face disruptions on Saturday as 18 Delhi Metro stations in central Delhi remained closed for the fourth consecutive day amid the ongoing Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) protest near Jantar Mantar. According to the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC), the stations remain closed from 7.30 am until further instructions. However, interchange facilities will be available at Rajiv Chowk, Mandi House and Central Secretariat

stations. The closed stations include Lok Kalyan Marg, Rajiv Chowk, Patel Chowk, Ramakrishna Ashram Marg, Barakhambha Road, Supreme Court, Seva Teerth, Janpath, Mandi House, Central Secretariat, ITO, Delhi Gate, Indraprastha, Khan Market, Jor



Man rapes toddler, court hands him life term within 21 days of framing charges

New Delhi. (Agency)

A special POCSO court in Uttar Pradesh's Muzaffarnagar district on Friday sentenced a 30-year-old man to life in prison for raping his 18-month-old niece. He was found guilty under Section 65 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and Section 5 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. The court also imposed a penalty of Rs 2 lakh and directed that the entire amount be paid to the survivor, government counsel Pradeep Balyan said. The verdict was delivered by Special Judge Manoj Kumar Sidhu. According to the prosecution, the court framed



charges against the man on July 3 and pronounced the verdict on July 24, disposing of the case within 21 days. The offence was committed in March this year. The child was visiting her maternal grandparents' home with her mother when the incident took place, the prosecution said. During the visit, the man, a cousin of the young girl's mother, took the toddler away under the pretext of buying her biscuits and instead raped her. When the child returned home crying, her undergarments were found soaked in blood, Public Prosecutor Rajiv Sharma told the media. Subsequently, her mother lodged a complaint with the police. The police immediately registered a case and later that same day, the man was arrested following an encounter. The swift verdict by the POCSO court in the matter is being attributed to a robust investigation, including gathering of scientific evidence, by the police. Senior police officials also ensured the timely appearance of all witnesses before the court.

Not 24x7 entertainment channel: SC bars sharing of hearing videos without prior nod

Taking note of the misuse of audio and video recordings of court proceedings, the Supreme Court barred their unauthorised posting, editing, sharing and uploading on social media and digital platforms without prior court approval.

New Delhi. (Agency)

Observing that courts can't be a 24x7 entertainment channel, the Supreme Court on Friday passed an interim order prohibiting the extraction, editing, dissemination, reposting, uploading or monetisation of audio and video recordings of judicial proceedings on social media and other digital platforms without prior permission from the concerned court. A Bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, Justice Joymalya Bagchi and Justice V Mohan passed the interim direction while hearing a public interest litigation filed by journalist Harshita Grover seeking guidelines to regulate the clipping, editing, dissemination and monetisation of audiovisual recordings

of court proceedings. "There shall be no extraction, modification, dissemination, posting, re-posting, uploading or monetisation of audio/video recordings of the judicial proceedings on social media or other digital platforms without the prior permission of the Registrar General of the concerned High Courts or the Secretary General of the Supreme Court," the Bench said. According to a report in Live Law, the court, however, clarified that the interim order would not affect fair news reporting of judicial proceedings. The Bench issued notice on the petition and impleaded all High Courts in the matter. It also directed the Union

government to place before the court a proposal identifying the nodal ministries that could implement the continuous livestreaming of proceedings. Notices were also issued to social media intermediaries, including Meta and X. During the hearing, senior advocate Vikas Singh, appearing for the petitioner, clarified that the plea was not against livestreaming of court proceedings but against the misuse of selectively edited clips circulating online. "I personally don't see any problem with livestream," Singh submitted, adding that snippets of hearings were often taken out of context and went viral. Referring to a recent incident, he said a clip from proceedings before Justice Viswanathan had become viral, making "the judiciary a joke before the lay people".



HCLTech to set up Rs 14.3k cr AI data centre in Odisha

New Delhi. (Agency)

HCLTech plans to invest Rs 14,257 crore to set up its first AI data centre at the upcoming Odisha Sovereign AI Park, marking one of the country's largest investments in sovereign AI infrastructure.

The IT firm will establish the AI data centre in partnership with homegrown AI startup Sarvam and Odisha govt. The project cost includes financial assistance from the state govt.

The announcement comes a month after Sarvam raised \$234 million in a funding round led by HCLTech and Bessemer Venture Partners, taking its valuation to \$1.5 billion. HCLTech invested \$150 million as the lead strategic investor, acquiring a 10.4% stake in the company. The proposed data centre aims to strengthen India's sovereign AI ecosystem by combining HCLTech's AI infrastructure and services capabilities with Sarvam's indigenous foundation models to develop sector-specific AI applications for enterprises, govt departments and public sector organisations. "We strive to be an enabler of India's sovereign AI ecosystem with differentiated offerings across the value chain through focused investments and partnerships," said Roshni Nadar Malhotra, chairperson of HCLTech. Separately, HCLTech announced plans to set up a global technology centre in Bhubaneswar to deliver AI-led digital solutions to global enterprises, which will employ about 5,000 people and may begin operations by 2028.

Forex schemes: BoB, Bol target over \$6bn mop-up

MUMBAI. (Agency)

Bank of Baroda and Bank of India, the two largest public sector banks in terms of overseas branches, are aiming to raise over \$6 billion in foreign capital through schemes where RBI undertakes to cover forex risk through a dollar swap. Bank of Baroda is targeting \$4 billion to \$5 billion through a combination of FCNR(B) deposits, medium-term notes in foreign currency, and overseas foreign currency bonds. "We have already raised over \$700 million through FCNR(B) deposits and should cross \$1



billion by the end of the month," said Debadatta Chand, MD and CEO, Bank of Baroda.

Bank of India MD and CEO Rajneesh Karnatak said that the bank has raised \$200 million through deposits and aims to mobilise \$1.2 billion by the time the scheme closes at end-Sept. He said that the bank would offer leverage up to nine times the initial deposits placed by the customer. "We will be doing this on our own as we have significant foreign operations".

Karnatak said that while the bank would offer returns as high as 6.5% on these international deposits to compete with other alternatives available to NRI, the funds would still be margin accretive as they would be 50 basis points to 60 basis points lower than the cost of bulk deposits.

RBI said that banks have raised over \$17 billion until this week through FCNR(B) deposits. Among other public sector banks, Punjab National Bank said that it could raise around \$2.5 billion of FCNR(B) deposits, while Union Bank of India expects to mobilise up to \$2.0 billion. Central Bank of India has set a \$400 million target.

Maruti: Clean-fuel vehicles in demand

MUMBAI. (Agency)

Maruti Suzuki said it commands a 54% share of India's clean and green passenger vehicle market, spanning CNG, hybrid and electric vehicles, as consumer demand shifts beyond fuel savings towards lower-emission mobility. Speaking on the sidelines of the launch of new Brezza (starting price of Rs 7.4 lakh), Partho Banerjee, senior executive director (marketing & sales), said the profile of CNG buyers has changed significantly over the past few years.

"Customers are no longer choosing CNG only for lower running costs. Increasingly, they are environmentally conscious and see it as a cleaner mobility option," he said. The company has also expanded its underbody CNG technology to the Brezza, making it the second Maruti model after the Victoris to feature the packaging innovation.

FM asks CBDT to explore ways to clear backlog of pending tax appeals

The minister also urged the department to shift its focus from "litigation management" to "litigation prevention", saying tax certainty is essential for improving voluntary compliance and investor confidence

CHENNAI. (Agency)

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday asked the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) to further explore ways to pace up their scale and review the strategy for disposing of pending

tax appeals, warning that it could take "a century" to clear the backlog of pending 5.4 lakh appeals. The minister also urged the department to shift its focus from "litigation management" to "litigation prevention", saying tax certainty is essential for improving voluntary compliance and investor confidence. Addressing the 167th Income Tax Day celebration on Friday, Sitharaman said the Income Tax Department still has 5.4 lakh pending appeals and the number has been piling up despite efforts in recent years to speed up disposal. "We still have 5.4 lakh appeals. Three or four years ago, we had an exercise within our boards about how to reduce pending appeals. I am sure the blueprint is what is making a lot more speedier disposal

and clearance," she said. However, she cautioned that the inflow of fresh appeals continues to outpace disposals. "Allowing the mounting of these to keep coming up, the newer ones coming up, even as the reduction is happening in a slower pace. I appeal to the board that you should have one more review to see how you are going to handle this. It cannot be that the cases keep mounting and you are clearing at some pace, which is going to make us the same in some numbers. It will take a century to clear it, if you are allowing the growth to go on like this," mentioned the Minister during her address. Calling for a taxpayer-centric administration, Sitharaman outlined 5-R's structure that include—Recognise, Respond, Redress, Reflect

and Reform, to make the process more simplistic. She emphasised that the tax authorities need to acknowledge taxpayer grievances, recognise the taxpayers grievances with clarity and empathy, and thereby resolve genuine complaints within defined timelines. While she lauded the department's efforts for making significant progress, but called for more measures to analyse recurring issues for institutional learning, and continuously reform systems and procedures to minimise future disputes. "The authority conferred by tax law must always be exercised with humility. A taxpayer is not merely an assessee; a taxpayer is a citizen and a partner in India's development," she said.

ITR filing: The process is complete only after verifying return; know how to do it

Kolkata. (Agency)

The final step of the ITR filing process is extremely important and one must not think the process of filing to be over until the verification stage is done. The Income Tax Department offers more than one ways to complete the verification process. These include Aadhaar OTP, Electronic Verification Code (EVC), net banking, Digital Signature Certificate and electronic verification code generated through a pre-validated bank or demat account. However, e-verification is the quickest and most smooth way of completing the ITR filing process.

After the ITR is verified, taxpayers are sent a transaction ID on the portal and an email confirming the

not verified within the deadline, it is regarded as invalid which can trigger the same consequences as failing to file ITR.

Deadline for verifying an ITR

According to rule, the ITR must be verified within 30 days from the date of filing the return. This window of 1 month has been in force from August 1, 2022. This window was of 120 days prior to ITRs filed before July 31, 2022. If a taxpayer misses the deadline of 30 days, he/she can send a request to condone the delay explaining the reason for it. If the Income Tax Department approves the request the ITR will be treated as valid.



status. But taxpayers also have the option of verifying their ITR by sending a signed physical copy of ITR-V to the Centralised Processing Centre in Bengaluru. If the ITR is

Setback for Trump: US appeals court refuses to revive \$100,000 H-1B visa fee

MUMBAI. (Agency)

The Trump administration suffered a setback on Friday after a US federal appeals court refused to lift a ruling that blocks the government from charging a \$100,000 fee for new H-1B visas.

The 1st US Circuit Court of Appeals in Boston left in place a June 8 decision that found the fee unlawful, allowing the order to remain in effect while the administration challenges it in court, reported Reuters.

The case stems from a lawsuit brought by 20 Democratic attorneys general, who argued that the administration had effectively created a new tax without congressional approval. A district judge agreed, ruling that the fee

exceeded the executive branch's authority. Rejecting the administration's emergency request, the three-judge appellate



panel said the government had not shown it was likely to prevail in its appeal. Trump announced the steep fee increase through a presidential proclamation in September, saying it was aimed at curbing what he described as misuse of the H-1B programme by employers.

"The H-1B program has been deliberately exploited to replace, rather than supplement, American workers with lower-paid, lower-skilled labor," Trump had said while unveiling the measure. The H-1B programme, widely used by technology companies and other employers to hire highly skilled foreign professionals, grants 65,000 visas each year, along with an additional 20,000 visas for applicants with advanced US degrees. Before the new policy, employers generally paid between \$2,000 and \$5,000 in government fees to sponsor an H-1B worker. The proposed \$100,000 charge applied only to new overseas applicants and did not cover foreign nationals already in the United States on student visas, who make up a large share of H-1B recipients.

Is owning a home still the best long-term financial decision for Indians? Listen to this CEO

Owning a home is a dream for most youths who have started earning. But how much of a sound financial decision is it? Ankita Luharuka, CEO, Alliance City Developers examines the question for the benefit of News9 readers.

New Delhi. (Agency)

Owning a home is a dream for most youths who have started earning. But how much of a sound financial decision is it? Employees and professionals are becoming more and more mobile. They are also looking at investment differently from the earlier generations with rising income and a plethora of investment opportunities. In this new climate how does one view the

issue of owning a home? Ankita Luharuka, CEO, Alliance City Developers examines this important issue.

Much complicated question now

"Homeownership is still very important to Indian families, but the discourse now is significantly more complicated than it was a decade ago," she says. Buying a house was usually influenced by emotional and social wants. Today, it is more and more a financial decision with buyers considering their budget, long term value creation, lifestyle needs and overall financial readiness prior to making a purchase. Obviously there is not straight jacket of an answer. "For families planning to stay in a city for the long term, homeownership offers greater financial stability compared to renting. Aside from insulating households from

escalating rental expenses, owning a home helps families to gradually accumulate wealth in a tangible asset. Over time residential real estate has the potential to generate



wealth while also acting as a place to live, distinguishing it from most other investment opportunities," she said.

Factors influencing the decision

Buying a house should never be seen as the only way to get rich. "The choice should be based on the person's stable income, ability to pay

back the loan and long-term financial goals. Potential buyers shouldn't take on too much debt just to buy a house. Having enough cash on hand, emergency savings and a well-balanced investment portfolio are still very important," observes the CEO of Alliance City Developers.

Another big change is that people who buy homes today know a lot more than people did in the past. They're not just looking at prices they're also looking at how trustworthy the developer is, how well the project has been executed in the past, the quality of the building, the location, the progress being made on infrastructure and how long people will be able to live in the area. This shows that India's home real estate market is getting more mature and making smart decisions is becoming just as important as finding a good deal, says Luharuka.

Amarnath Yatra resumes after six-day suspension; over 6,200 pilgrims leave Jammu

Jammu.(Agency)

The annual Shri Amarnath Yatra resumed on Saturday after a six-day suspension caused by adverse weather, with more than 6,200 pilgrims leaving the Bhagwati Nagar base camp in Jammu for the holy cave shrine via the Baltal route under tight security.

The yatra has been suspended since July 19 as a precautionary measure following adverse weather conditions and forecasts for heavy rainfall along the twin Baltal and Pahalgam routes in Jammu and Kashmir. Officials said a fresh batch of 6,269 pilgrims departed from the Bhagwati Nagar Yatri Niwas early this morning, with all pilgrims proceeding via the Baltal base camp.

The batch comprised 1,470 women, 25 children and 54 sadhus, who travelled in a convoy of 223 vehicles under elaborate security arrangements.

No convoy was dispatched for the traditional Pahalgam route, officials added. The resumption of the Yatra followed the restoration of traffic on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway, which had remained closed due to landslides and shooting stones along the Udhampur-Ramban stretch.

The annual pilgrimage is scheduled to conclude on August 28, coinciding with the festival of Raksha Bandhan.

With Saturday's batch, nearly four lakh pilgrims have so far paid obeisance at the holy Amarnath cave shrine during this year's Yatra.

Naveen blames Odisha government for recurring crowd management failures after Bahuda Yatra death

Bhubaneswar.(Agency)

Biju Janata Dal (BJD) president Naveen Patnaik on Saturday launched a sharp attack on the BJP government in Odisha, blaming it for repeated failures in crowd management during the annual Rath Yatra in Puri following the death of a devotee and injuries to several others during the Bahuda Yatra.

Expressing grief over the incident in a post on social media platform X, Patnaik said he was "deeply saddened and heartbroken" by the tragedy in which one devotee lost his life and several others were injured in the stampede.

He conveyed his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and wished a speedy recovery to those injured.

Questioning the government's handling of the world-famous festival, Patnaik asked why such accidents continue to occur during the Rath Yatra every year despite repeated warnings and past experiences.

"It is deeply disturbing that the government appears to attach little importance to ensuring the safe completion of Mahaprabhu's sacred nine-day festival," he said.

Manipur: CM inaugurates new Education training centre

Imphal.(Agency)

In a major step towards improving the education and infrastructure sectors in the State, Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh today inaugurated a newly constructed District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) building at Salam, Imphal West.

He also inaugurated the newly built Ima Market at the same location.

The DIET building has been constructed under the Samagra (Teacher Education) scheme while the Ima Market has been developed under the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) project.

Khemchand Singh acknowledged the efforts of Sorokhaibam Rajen Singh, Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) of Lamsang Assembly Constituency for ensuring the establishment of the DIET Centre at Salam among all the constituencies in Imphal West district.

Make up for lost days by working on public holidays, South Gujarat schools told

Surat.(Agency)

TO MAKE up for the days lost in the heavy downpour leading to an emergency situation, the District Education Officers of the six south Gujarat districts have directed schools to make up for the loss by working on public holidays. This is to comply with the 120 mandatory working days in the first semester which began just over a month ago.

Heavy downpour was witnessed on Thursday and Friday in South Gujarat. Many roads in the urban and rural areas in the region had been affected, prompting the government to announce a holiday on both days. Even in Ahmedabad, which was badly affected by the heavy rainfall, schools and colleges were closed on both days.

Keeping the present situation in mind and acting on the instructions of District

Collectors of affected districts in South Gujarat, the District Education officers (DEO) of respective districts – Surat, Tapi, Bharuch, Navsari, Valsad and Dang declared holiday in the schools as a precautionary

day holiday will be covered in the next two public holidays. Thus, in the next two forthcoming public holidays, schools and colleges will remain operational, and students have to attend classes and cover the pending syllabus.

Surat District Education Officer Bhagirathsinh Parmar told The Indian Express, "The education of students has been affected due to the heavy downpour and holidays declared on Thursday and Friday. In order to ensure that the students do not suffer, a decision has been taken to keep the schools functioning in the coming two public holidays. It is up to the schools to decide which two holidays they will select to keep the schools working. The school has to inform the students early and declare the holidays for the coming two holidays."



measure. As per the new notification issued by the District Education Officers of these districts in South Gujarat on Thursday evening, the education affected by the two

Maharashtra TET paper leak mastermind, on the run for a month, arrested in Bihar under false identity

Mumbai.(Agency)

Nearly a month after the Maharashtra Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) question paper leak left around six lakh aspirants in limbo, Thane City Police on Saturday arrested the alleged mastermind, Bijendra Gupta, who had been living under a false identity in Bihar after weeks on the run.

The Indian Express had highlighted in its Friday edition that Gupta, a former coaching class teacher facing multiple paper leak cases, remained absconding even as the investigation gathered pace. His arrest comes with the state government yet to announce a fresh examination date and student organisations escalating protests, demanding the resignation of School Education Minister Dada Bhuse over the leak. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Zone II) Dr Pawan Bansod said police tracked

Gupta down in Bihar. "Today morning we arrested him from Bihar. We are bringing him to Thane and will produce him before the court to seek his custody," Bansod said. Police said they are still searching for a few



others who had allegedly agreed to purchase the leaked question paper but have since gone underground.

"Those arrested are still in judicial custody and we will soon file the chargesheet," the

officers said.

The leak came to light two days before the examination, after Thane City Police received a tip-off from a Bhiwandi resident who said he had been approached by three people offering to sell the TET question paper. A raid confirmed the accused were carrying question papers meant for the examination.

Rajiv Kumar and Aakash Kumar were arrested from Bihar, and Dheeraj Singh from Haryana. A Special Investigation Team (SIT) was then constituted to probe the case. Investigators later traced the leak to an Agra-based printing press, Mahim Patran Pvt Ltd, where two current employees and a former employee allegedly smuggled out copies of the confidential question paper hidden inside their shoe insoles.

Police allege the three had been cultivated by Gupta for just Rs 8,000.

Lakhs witness grand return of Lord Jagannath to Srimandir in Puri

Bhubaneswar.(Agency)

Lakhs of devotees from across the country thronged the pilgrim town of Puri on Friday to witness Bahuda Yatra, the return car festival of Lord Jagannath and his siblings, marking the final phase of the world-famous annual Rath Yatra amid elaborate security arrangements.

The Grand Road (Bada Danda) reverberated with chants of "Jai Jagannath" as devotees pulled the towering wooden chariots of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra, transforming the seaside town into a sea of devotion.

The sibling deities had begun their annual sojourn on July 16, travelling from the 12th-century Jagannath Temple to the Gundicha Temple, regarded as their birthplace. After a

week-long stay there, they embarked on the ceremonial return journey to the Srimandir in the Bahuda Yatra.

Authorities enforced an unprecedented multi-layered security arrangement across Puri to ensure the smooth conduct of the festival. Security deployment and crowd-management measures were significantly intensified following the stampede during this year's Rath Yatra in which two devotees lost their lives. The return procession commenced after a series of age-old rituals at the Gundicha Temple.

Amid the rhythmic beating of gongs and cymbals and the blowing of conch shells, the deities were ceremonially escorted to their chariots in the elaborate Pahandi ritual. Lord Jagannath was seated on the 45-foot-high Nandighosh, Lord

Balabhadra on the 44-foot-high Taladhwaaja, and Devi Subhadra on the 43-foot-high Darpadalan, each magnificently decorated for the occasion.

Puri Gajapati Maharaja Divyasingha Deb performed the traditional Chhera Pahanra ritual, symbolically sweeping the chariot platforms with a golden broom after offering prayers and sprinkling fragrant water and flowers, reaffirming the belief that all are equal before the Lord.

The deities will remain on their chariots overnight, with priests performing the prescribed rituals. On Saturday, they will appear before devotees in the spectacular Suna Besha, adorned with gold ornaments, one of the most-awaited attractions of the festival that draws massive crowds.

Haryana Sets One-Month Deadline to Green NCR Junctions, Rolls Out Tough Anti-Pollution Push

Panchkula.(Agency)

In a major push to tackle chronic air pollution in the National Capital Region (NCR), Haryana on Friday ordered a time-bound implementation of key pollution-control measures. The measures include expansion of air quality monitoring stations, enforcement of the 'No PUC, No Fuel' policy, action against old vehicles, a rapid scale-up of EV charging infrastructure and scientific management of construction waste and paddy stubble. The decisions were taken at a high-level review meeting chaired jointly by Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini and union Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Bhopender Yadav in Gurugram.

In a key directive, the union Environment Minister asked officials to identify all major traffic junctions in Gurugram, Faridabad and Sonapat within one month and prepare an action plan to convert them into green zones through plantation, deep cleaning and filling of roadside pits to reduce dust pollution and PM-10 levels. Chief Minister Saini directed all departments to ensure strict adherence to timelines for every pollution-control initiative, warning against delays in implementing the action plan.

294.6 mm in 24 hours: Ahmedabad city records fourth highest rainfall in its history

Ahmedabad.(Agency)

Ahmedabad received 294.6 mm of rainfall in the last 24 hours ending 8 am on Friday (July 24), the fourth highest rainfall recorded in Gujarat's largest city so far. The highest 24-rain rainfall recorded in Ahmedabad was in July 1927, when the city recorded 414.8 mm downpour.

"Ahmedabad recorded its fourth highest rainfall on Thursday-Friday. The highest rainfall record was in 1927, somewhere around July 20," IMD's Ahmedabad region director.

While the South west and north west zones among the seven zones the city received the highest rainfall, Bopal area received the highest rainfall of 467.5 mm followed by Bakrol 462.5 mm. The IMD

official attributed the record rainfall to five weather systems activated over Gujarat.

"There are two troughs: one Western Disturbance – a low pressure area – and an offshore trough leading rainfall across Gujarat. There was already one trough and another added today. This is a normal phenomenon during the monsoon season. Among these five weather systems, though all contribute to the ongoing rainfall, the low pressure area impacts the most," Das told this paper.

The five systems, as per IMD, are monsoon trough that passes through Jaisalmer, centre of low-pressure area over southwest Rajasthan and neighbourhood, a trough that runs from cyclonic circulation associated with the

low-pressure area over southwest Rajasthan and neighbourhood to Jammu across West Rajasthan, Haryana and Punjab, an offshore trough from Gujarat



to Karnataka coast and Western Disturbance and the low-pressure area over southeast Rajasthan and neighbourhood that lies over southwest

Rajasthan and neighbourhood. Ahmedabad is expected to receive 'extremely heavy' rainfall on Saturday, the IMD Ahmedabad region director said.

IMD forecast

A red alert has been issued for Mehsana, Sabarkantha, Gandhinagar, Aravalli, Kheda and Mahisagar; along with districts of Saurashtra including Surendranagar on Saturday.

An orange alert has been issued for Banaskantha, Vav-Tharad, Patan, Ahmedabad, Anand, Panchmahal, Dahod, Vadodara, Chhota Udepur and Bharuch and in the districts of Saurashtra namely Rajkot, Amreli, Bhavnagar, Morbi and Botad on Saturday.

NEWS BOX

Spectacular: PM congratulates Jhandu Kumar after India opens CWG 2026 medal tally

New Delhi. (Agency)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated para powerlifter Jhandu Kumar after the 29-year-old won India's first medal at the 2026 Commonwealth Games, claiming bronze in the men's heavyweight event in Glasgow. Modi hailed the lifter's perseverance and determination after the inspiring performance opened India's account at the Games. Jhandu's bronze capped a remarkable journey from driving an e-rickshaw in Bihar and helping his vegetable vendor father to standing on the Commonwealth Games podium, giving India a memorable start to its campaign.

CWG 2026 DAY 1: HIGHLIGHTS

Taking to X after the medal-winning performance, Prime Minister Modi praised Jhandu's achievement and said his success would inspire millions across the country. "A spectacular performance by Jhandu Kumar, who has opened India's



medal tally at the #CWG2026 by winning a Bronze in the Men's Heavyweight Para Powerlifting event! Congratulations to him." The Prime Minister also lauded the para powerlifter's resilience, saying the bronze medal reflected years of dedication and hard work.

"His achievement is a powerful reflection of immense strength, unwavering determination and years of disciplined effort. By overcoming every challenge and excelling on the international stage, he has made the entire nation proud and inspired countless Indians."

Jhandu, meanwhile, described the medal as one of the happiest moments of his life and said his first thoughts were with his family and those who supported his journey from the very beginning.

Commonwealth Games 2026 Day 2 Wrap: Jhandu Kumar's bronze headlines India's mixed day

Glasgow., (Agency)

India enjoyed a busy but mixed second day at the 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow on Friday, with para powerlifter Jhandu Kumar's historic bronze medal remaining the standout achievement even as several other athletes produced encouraging performances without reaching the podium.

There was plenty to cheer beyond the medal tally as boxer Jadumani Singh began his campaign with an emphatic victory, India's lawn bowls contingent extended its unbeaten run, and artistic gymnasts Pranati Nayak and Ruthuja Nataraj secured places in apparatus



finals. Para swimmer R.V.V.B.K. Budigina came within touching distance of a medal, while the country's women para powerlifters endured a frustrating day.

JHANDU'S FAIRYTALE CONTINUES

India's first medal of the Games came through Jhandu Kumar, whose bronze in the men's heavyweight para powerlifting capped an extraordinary journey from driving an e-rickshaw in Bihar to standing on the Commonwealth podium. The 29-year-old's inspiring achievement gave India the breakthrough it had been waiting for and provided the biggest talking point of an otherwise competitive day across multiple disciplines.

JADUMANI MAKES STRONG START

India's boxing campaign gathered momentum as Jadumani Singh produced a commanding performance to defeat Scotland's Aaron Cullen by unanimous decision in the men's 55kg bout.

Commonwealth Games: Free from pressure of podium finish, boxer Lovlina targets gold

Lovlina Borgohain heads into the Commonwealth Games 2026 with a medal already guaranteed. Freed from the pressure, the Tokyo Olympic bronze medallist says her only target now is to win the one medal missing from her collection: Commonwealth Games gold.

New Delhi. (Agency)

"Maybe this is a blessing for all my hard work," boxer Lovlina Borgohain breathed a sigh of relief ahead of her first bout at the Commonwealth Games 2026. The Tokyo Olympics bronze medallist is yet to win a CWG medal, which she has now been assured of in the most unlikely of circumstances. Lovlina, now 28 years old, is already guaranteed a medal after

receiving a bye into the semi-finals. For a boxer who had to battle through multiple bouts in each of her previous Commonwealth Games campaigns without reaching the podium, the direct passage came as a surprise. "This was shocking news even for me. I never thought I'd get a direct entry into the semifinal because in the last two Commonwealth Games, I didn't even have a medal and I had to fight four or five bouts," Lovlina said on Friday.

LOVLINA TARGETS GOLD

The guaranteed podium finish has also changed her mindset heading into the competition. Instead of carrying the burden of chasing a medal, Lovlina said she now has the freedom to focus solely on winning gold. There is no medal pressure now. I have to fight for gold. If I can win gold for my country, that will make me happy," she said.

COMMONWEALTH GAMES DAY 2: INDIA WRAP

The bye marks a welcome change for the Assamese boxer, whose journey since the Paris Olympics has been anything but straightforward. After falling short in Paris, Lovlina admitted she even



questioned whether she should continue boxing before deciding to persevere. "After the Paris Olympics I changed a lot. I played a lot of competitions, including the World Championships. I was confused whether to continue playing or not, but I continued. Then I got back-to-back

training and I started winning medals," she said. Those performances have gradually restored her confidence, and Lovlina believes the preparations leading into Glasgow have put her in the right frame of mind for another major title challenge.

CONFIDENCE IS KEY: LOVLINA

India's boxing team travelled to Belfast for a preparatory camp before arriving in Scotland, and Lovlina credited the training block for sharpening her game. "We had a training camp in Belfast. The training and sparring went well, so I am confident that I can win gold here," she said.

COMMONWEALTH GAMES DAY 3: INDIA SCHEDULE

If results go according to seeding, Lovlina is expected to meet Australia's Emma-Sue Greentree, a two-time World Championships bronze medallist, in the gold medal bout.

Dominic Thiem, who retired from tennis at 30, makes comeback. But in football

New Delhi. (Agency)

Former US Open champion Dominic Thiem, who retired from tennis in 2024, has decided to return to competitive sport. No, he is not making a comeback to Arthur Ashe Stadium this time. Instead, the former World No. 3 is stepping onto the football pitch in Austria's lower leagues.

The move marks an intriguing second chapter for the 32-year-old, whose promising tennis career came to an emotional close due to persistent injury struggles. Thiem officially called time on his professional tennis career at the end of the 2024 season, playing his final Grand Slam match at Flushing Meadows, the venue of his crowning achievement. After capturing the 2020 US Open title, a severe wrist injury suffered in 2021 sidelined him for months



and ultimately prevented him from recapturing his peak form. Speaking after his first-round exit to Ben Shelton at the 2024 US Open, Thiem admitted he was at peace with his decision to step away. "I was struggling enough the last years, especially since I was not able to come back to my level, but once I took the decision this year in March, I was happy about it," Thiem said at the time. "I loved playing on tour, but I also always really enjoyed being home and having kind of a normal life. The basic reason why I'm retiring pretty young is the bad luck with the wrist injury, but I don't really have any regrets."

Mesmerised by Kolkata's fandom, Brazil planning football match in India

CHENNAI. (Agency)

The Brazil national football team could be set to return to India for the first time in years, with Kolkata emerging as the likely host for an international friendly during the October FIFA window.

According to a report by ESPN Brasil, the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) is in advanced negotiations to schedule a third friendly in India in early October, in addition to the two matches already confirmed against Australia on September 25 in Townsville and September 29 in Brisbane. The opposition for the proposed India fixture is yet to be finalised. The report added that Kolkata has been identified as the venue, with talks between the CBF and local

organisers beginning during the recently concluded FIFA World Cup in the United States.

The proposed fixture is understood to have been driven by the overwhelming



support Brazil received from football fans in Kolkata during the World Cup. Images of thousands of supporters wearing Brazil's iconic yellow shirts flooded social media throughout the tournament, while neighbourhoods

across the city celebrated the Selecao's campaign despite India not being part of the competition. Only the final details remain before the agreement is formalised and contracts are signed, according to the report.

The friendly is expected to be part of FIFA's expanded international calendar, with the new "Super FIFA window" allowing national teams up to 16 days to play as many as four matches, including both competitive fixtures and friendlies.

The report also stated that the CBF intends to organise more home friendlies in 2027, taking the national team to Brazilian cities that have rarely hosted international matches in recent years.

Next lap: Sajan Prakash isn't done yet, but already planning life after swimming

New Delhi. (Agency)

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There is something poetic about Sajan Prakash's swimming career. With his mother, V.J. Shantymol, a former athlete herself, serving as the driving force behind his pursuit of his dreams, the man from Kerala's Idukki district has remained at the pinnacle of Indian swimming ever since he first stepped into the pool wearing the national colours. From there, he went on to represent India at two Olympic Games, first in Rio in 2016 and then in Tokyo. While his maiden appearance came through a university quota, the second was earned entirely on merit. He sealed his place for Tokyo with a historic performance at the 2021 Sette Colli



Trophy in Rome, clocking 1:56.38 to set a new national record and go below the Olympic Qualification Time. It was a watershed moment for Indian swimming. Never before had an Indian swimmer secured direct Olympic qualification by achieving the OQT.

Yet, when he failed to qualify for the Paris Olympics, the mental and physical

burnout proved too much to bear. A break soon followed, one that could very well have marked the end of his journey in the sport. But Sajan was not ready to walk away. He went back to the drawing board and, in 2025, shifted to the Inspire Institute of Sport (IIS), where he began training in an integrated high-performance environment. Before long, he was back in the pool, preparing for one final push at the Commonwealth Games 2026 and the Asian Games. He booked his place at both events by surpassing the Swimming Federation of India's qualification standards. Now, however, comes the biggest test. Sajan calls it possibly the final stretch of his career.

IND vs ZIM, 2nd T20I Preview: Monkey off their back, India look to win series in Harare

India will look to seal the T20I series against Zimbabwe when the two sides meet in the second match in Harare on Saturday. After a convincing win in the opener, Shreyas Iyer's side will bank on its pace attack and the form of teenage sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi to finish the job with a game to spare.

New Delhi. (Agency)

Matches against Zimbabwe rarely carry this kind of weight, but Thursday's

opener in Harare was a crucial fixture for a transitional Indian side. Fresh off tough away tours of Ireland and England, captain Shreyas Iyer finally got a result to breathe easy, backed by a fiery spell from his pacers in helpful conditions.

As the relentless cricket calendar moves swiftly along, India return to the Harare Sports Club for the second T20I on Saturday, July 25. Iyer's men will look to build on that momentum, clean up the minor errors, and wrap up the three-match series with a game to spare.

INDIAN PACE ATTACK IN FOCUS

While chasing down 126 turned out to be fairly routine, the real story of the first game was how India's young pacers handled the conditions in Harare. After spending almost two years out with injuries, tearaway fast bowler Mayank

Yadav looked right at home. He kept things tight, picked up 2/18, and set the tone early by dismissing Brian Bennett



with his very first delivery. Mayank was not alone. Prince Yadav picked up a couple of wickets as well, while debutant Ashok Sharma hit good speeds even if he did not get among the wickets. Zimbabwe were pushed onto the back

foot early, slumping to 26/3 inside the powerplay. They eventually scraped together 125/7, but on a decent surface, it was never going to be enough to trouble India.

VAIBHAV SOORYAVANSHI'S STATEMENT KNOCK

The chase was largely about young Vaibhav Sooryavanshi showing what he can do. After a rough patch in England, where teams repeatedly targeted him with short balls, the 15-year-old smashed a 19-ball fifty, becoming the youngest player to score a T20I half-century. Along with Ishan Kishan's 35 and a composed unbeaten 28 from Shreyas Iyer, India knocked off the target with more than six overs to spare. The only quiet spot in the top order was Abhishek Sharma, who fell early.

Manushi Chhillar

**Recalls Giving NEET Twice In 2015
Due To Paper Leak, Voices Support
For Students' Protest**

Bollywood actress Manushi Chhillar has voiced her support for students protesting over the alleged NEET-UG 2026 paper leak. She shared her own experience of having to take the medical entrance exam twice after a paper leak in 2015, recalling that it was extremely traumatic. Sharing a note on Instagram, the actress said she understood the emotional toll such situations take on students. She said she hopes the authorities introduce the reforms needed to ensure students are not forced to go through an unfair process while pursuing opportunities.

Manushi Chhillar Backs NEET Protesters

Manushi Chhillar recalled how she had to appear for NEET twice in 2015. "I have always believed that in an unfair world, education becomes the biggest equaliser. Anyone who is saying "just write it again" is missing the point. We have to have sensitivity. I've written it, twice in 2015 due to a paper leak then as well. It is not just an exam, it represents years of hard work, sleepless nights, sacrifices and aspirations. We then accepted the failure in our system and made peace with the solution provided. Now, a decade later, we expect change," she wrote, in her Instagram post.

"You don't realise the value of your dream of becoming a doctor till you're at a coaching centre, where parents have borrowed beyond their means to send their children to study, or those who have spent years together trying to clear the exam, the same years I felt frustrated sitting at home due to a pandemic during my early twenties, facing delays, at a stage where all you want is to do something meaningful and impactful. The belief is simple, education could change everything," she further added. Manushi added that the demand for reform should not be seen as criticism of the country or its institutions. "It is about believing they can be better. Every generation has a responsibility to leave behind a stronger system than the one it inherited. I have faith in India. I have faith in our democracy. And I have faith that the strongest solutions are found through dialogue, constitutional processes and mutual respect. Let compassion guide us. Let understanding unite us. And let us never forget our youth is our future. Jai Hind," she wrote.

'Extremely Traumatic': Manushi On Having To Give NEET Twice In 2015

In a post shared on Threads a few days ago, Manushi wrote that she understands the struggles of students firsthand, having appeared for NEET twice in the same cycle due to a paper leak. "As someone who gave NEET twice in the same cycle due to a paper leak, it is extremely traumatic. I hope authorities will help bring the needed reform so students can access opportunities and not be exhausted by an unfair experience. Have always had faith in my country and will continue to do so," she wrote.

Apoorva Makhija

Recalls Being Suicidal During 'India's Got Latent' Controversy: 'Would've Killed Myself'

Content creator Apoorva Makhija turned emotional while recalling the fallout of the 'India's Got Latent' controversy. The influencer revealed that she had experienced suicidal thoughts during the difficult phase and credited fellow content creator Sufi Motiwala for standing by her when



she needed support the most. During a candid conversation with Sufi Motiwala in the reality show, Lock Upp Season 2, Apoorva admitted that she would not have been able to cope with the controversy had he not been by her side. Apoorva, expressing her emotions upon meeting Sufi after a long time, said, "I have really missed you. Don't do this again; I am starting to cry. Every time someone asks me about you and says, 'How were you friends

with him? He's so mean,' I tell them... I would've killed myself if, at the time of the Latent fiasco, I hadn't had Sufi," she said. Sufi Motiwala immediately responded, "Don't say that." Apoorva reiterated how crucial his support had been during that period.

"I wouldn't have been able to get through that. You were the only person with me. I wasn't dating anyone. Personally, in my life, as a friend," she added. Reflecting on their friendship, Sufi Motiwala admitted that the time they spent together was among the happiest periods of his life.

"I will tell you the truth, bro. That one year was the most favourite year of my life when we were friends. I finally felt like I had a social circle in Bombay. I felt like there was someone I could go to whenever I wanted. And I genuinely missed you a lot," he said. The emotional exchange then ended with both apologising to each other.

Apoorva said, "I am also really sorry. I know those little, little things can hurt a lot. And I am sorry for not creating that safe space for you when you needed it the most."



Deepika Chikhalia Reacts To Sai Pallavi's Ramayana Casting: 'Sita With Curly Hair Is Not Mentioned...'



With the trailer of Nitesh Tiwari's Ramayana set to arrive on July 24, Deepika Chikhalia has weighed in on Sai Pallavi stepping into the role of Sita. Deepika, whose portrayal in Ramanand Sagar's Ramayan remains deeply embedded in popular memory, praised Sai's abilities but said the final impression would depend on how convincingly she embodies the character on screen.

Speaking to Variety India, Deepika also reflected on the physical description traditionally associated with Sita and the particular qualities Ramanand Sagar had sought while casting his television adaptation.

'Sai Pallavi Is A Phenomenal Actor'

Deepika said she was familiar with Sai Pallavi's work and had no doubts about her talent. However, she stopped short of judging the casting before seeing footage from the film.

"I have seen her work. She's a phenomenal actor. But I don't know how she'll look like Sita. Once we see her, we'll know. At the moment, I have no clue," she said.

Deepika Recalls Ramanand Sagar's Search For Sita

The actor then referred to the description of Sita in Tulsidas' Ramayan, explaining that Ramanand Sagar had looked for specific physical attributes while casting the part. "The description of Sita in Tulsidas' Ramayan was that of a woman with almond eyes, a certain height, hair and skin. That's what Ramanand Sagar was looking for, and he saw it in me," Deepika said.

She added that the actors associated with the new film were all capable performers and believed the casting would work if they suited the characters as envisioned by the makers. "I know all of them are good actors. If they fit the bill, then it's good," she said.

Malaika Arora Slams Khesari Lal Yadav, Condemns 'Disgusting' Treatment Of Stray Dog



Actress and fitness enthusiast Malaika Arora has expressed her utter disappointment over a viral video featuring Bhojpuri superstar Khesari Lal Yadav, where a stray dog was allegedly mishandled in presence of the Bhojpuri actor. Taking to her social media account, Malaika reshared the video and wrote, "Wtf r these people ya ??? N who is this guy standing n posing ??? DISGUSTING (sic)."

The viral clip shows Khesari Lal Yadav posing for the paparazzi in front of an event standee while a stray dog is seen peacefully lying on the green carpet near his feet. Initially, the actor appears to gesture in an attempt to shoo the dog away subtly so that the photo session can continue. But, when the canine refuses to move, an assistant is seen approaching and nudges the dog with his leg before dragging it away from the spot.

The dog, unaware of the situation and intentions of the human, appears to mistake the assistant's gesture for affection and rolls over, asking for belly rubs.

While Malaika's Story did not directly name or accuse Khesari Lal Yadav of harming the animal, she made it clear that she found the overall incident disturbing and unacceptable. Malaika, for the uninitiated is known for her deep love for animals and has often been spotted interacting with stray dogs during her daily outings. A lot many videos of the actress outside her gym have gone viral over the period of time showing her petting, feeding and playing with the indie dogs stationed near the premises.

The strays are so familiar with her that they often run towards her car when she leaves the gym. The actress has even been seen allowing them to sit inside her vehicle while showering them with affection.

Meanwhile, Khesari Lal Yadav, as of yet has not issued any statement addressing the incident or reacted to it.

NEWS BOX

OpenAI's AI Agent Spent Days Hacking A Company, But It Did Not Notice For A Week: Report

WASHINGTON/SAN FRANCISCO.(Agency)

The OpenAI agent that broke into tech firm Hugging Face went on a dayslong hacking spree that OpenAI didn't notice until well after the threat was contained and the FBI was alerted, according to people familiar with the investigation. The agent - a program capable of making decisions and executing complex tasks with little or no human oversight - attempted to break out of its isolated testing environment at OpenAI around July 9, according to two of the people. The intrusion at Hugging Face, which operates as a repository for AI tools and models, began two days later on July 11 and lasted until July 13, said Thomas Wolf, Hugging Face's co-founder. It took several more days for OpenAI to realize its agent was behind the hack, and the two companies only communicated about it for the first time on or around July 20, according to Wolf and three of the people familiar with the investigation. OpenAI's public disclosure, on July 21, that one of its agents had slipped out of control and carried out the break-in at Hugging Face drew global attention. But many details of the hack, including how long the agent went rogue and OpenAI's belated knowledge of it, are being reported here for the first time.

First US City Could Run Out Of Water, A Warning For The World

WORLD.(Agency)

A major US city is facing a water crisis so severe that it could become the first modern American city to run out of water. Corpus Christi, a coastal city in Texas with more than 300,000 residents, is struggling with falling water supplies after years of drought, rising demand and delays in developing new sources of water.

The city's water shortage has been made worse by rapid industrial growth. Large petrochemical facilities in the region require huge amounts of water, adding pressure on supplies already affected by extreme weather conditions.

A plastics chemical plant built in 2022 reportedly uses as much water for cooling every day as all residents of Corpus Christi combined.

Officials had planned to reduce pressure on existing supplies by building a seawater desalination plant, which would convert ocean water into usable freshwater. However, the project has faced delays due to funding issues, regulations and opposition. Climate change has also played a role in worsening the situation. Texas has experienced several severe droughts in recent years, leaving key reservoirs at dangerously low levels.

New Zealand Man Survives Shark Attack While Diving In Fiji, Undergoes Four Surgeries

Colombo.(Agency)

A New Zealand fishing influencer has shared an update after surviving a shark attack while diving in Fiji. Henry Gibbs said he is recovering well and hopes to make a full recovery after undergoing several surgeries. On July 24, Gibbs shared his first Instagram post in two weeks, revealing that he was involved in a serious shark attack during his first dive off the Fiji Islands earlier in the month, reported People. In the post, which included five photos from the hospital, Gibbs said his first dive in Fiji resulted in a pretty nasty shark incident. He explained that two of his friends quickly pulled him out of the water after the attack and rushed him for medical treatment. At the hospital, Gibbs underwent four surgeries and received a skin graft on his right leg, which was injured in the incident. He said it is looking like he will make a full recovery and added that he is hugely grateful for it. Despite the frightening experience, Gibbs said he has no hard feelings toward the shark. He explained that he was in the shark's environment and hunting its food when the incident happened. Gibbs added that it was a case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. He said there were several lessons he planned to share when he posts the footage from the incident, hoping it would help others avoid ending up in the same situation and also explain how to respond to such an event. He also thanked everyone who had reached out to him over the past six days since the incident, both in Fiji and in New Zealand. Gibbs said the support had honestly meant a lot to him.

Trump returns to correspondents' dinner for a rambling, insult-filled speech 3 months after shooting

Trump's sometimes off-color speech, which lasted just over an hour, was full of vague potshots directed at individuals he doesn't like — from Jane Fonda to Bruce Springsteen to "Barack Hussein Obama."

WASHINGTON.(Agency)

President Donald Trump returned to the rescheduled White House Correspondents' Association dinner Friday night, delivering a rambling, hour-long speech that praised some journalists, took potshots at others, made jokes about public figures' weight and intellect, and quipped about a third presidential term.

He assured the crowd of journalists,

though, that he'd scrapped the most biting parts of his remarks.

"That was going to be a doozy," Trump said about the speech he'd been prepared to give in April, before a gunman upended the original dinner and forced its postponement.

"As I said three months ago, the show must go on," the president said to begin his remarks, hailing the decision to reschedule the dinner. He referred to "the attempted mass murder" that could have happened that night in April, but then moved largely to humor — and insults. Trump's return to the correspondents' dinner — and his promise to come back next year as well — represented a notable moment in his relationship with the news media, which he has attacked, sued and taken administrative action against since he began his second term early last year.

Among the audience members were reporters he had denounced and barred from events. Trump's sometimes off-color speech, which lasted just over an



hour, was full of vague potshots directed at individuals he doesn't like — from Jane Fonda to Bruce Springsteen to "Barack Hussein Obama." The audience, reacting at first with some friendly laughs, slowly quieted to

scattered titters as the insults piled up. Among other targets of Trump's humor: Late-night hosts Jimmy Fallon and Jimmy Kimmel; Rep. Ilhan Omar, D-Minn.; California Gov. Gavin Newsom; former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie; and Trump's own speechwriters, whose jokes he sometimes criticized even as he delivered them. Some of the comments flirted with racism. The president also spent some time expressing pride in the ballroom at the Waldorf Astoria hotel, formerly the Trump International Hotel. "It's great to be back at a place that I know very well, because I built it," Trump said.

He also made reference to the journalism awards that had been handed out earlier in the evening, most of them for stories challenging him and his administration.

US says it fired on another merchant vessel trying to breach its blockade of Iranian ports

IRBIL.(Agency)

The U.S. military said Friday that it fired on another merchant vessel that was trying to breach its blockade of Iran's ports, while the Islamic Republic targeted American strongholds around the Persian Gulf. The U.S. and Iran showed no sign of backing away from their conflict after a 13th straight night of strikes. With fighting flaring again and diplomacy uncertain, both sides made moves suggesting an escalation was possible. U.S. embassies in the Middle East began alerting Americans in the region



that options to leave could become more limited, while Iran's Revolutionary Guard advised residents of neighboring countries to stay away from bases with U.S. troops. Saudi Arabia struck the port city of Hodeida in Yemen in response to Iranian-backed Houthi rebel attacks on Saudi oil tankers in the Red Sea, the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen said early Saturday. The Houthis said they would escalate after tensions have been brewing for weeks, breaking a yearslong calm. American forces disabled the M/T Lavine in the Gulf of Oman after the ship attempted to run the blockade at least four times, Capt. Tim Hawkins, U.S. Central Command spokesman, told The Associated Press. Hawkins stressed that the ship's crew was warned and didn't comply with commands. The military then fired into its engine room. It's the second commercial ship to be disabled since the military reimposed its blockade. Earlier on Friday, U.S. President Donald Trump met with top national security aides to discuss the situation with Iran and whether the administration should maintain the current course or escalate military attacks, according to a U.S. official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

'Iran will not bow to US pressure': Araghchi at SCO foreign ministers' summit

WASHINGTON.(Agency)

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has said Tehran will not give in to American pressure or threats, insisting that the country will continue to defend its interests despite growing tensions with Washington. Speaking to journalists after the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Council of Foreign Ministers' meeting in Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyzstan, Araghchi said the main obstacle to engagement between Tehran and Washington was not the absence of communication channels but the US approach towards Iran. Iran has shown that it will not bow to US bullying and will under no circumstances respond to the language of force, pressure,



and threats," Araghchi said, according to Press TV. Responding to questions about diplomatic contacts on the sidelines of the summit, he said discussions with Pakistan, which has been acting as a mediator, were a natural part of diplomatic efforts. "Protecting the Iranian people and protecting Iran's interests in the Strait of Hormuz are among our principles," he said. "As long as the rightful

objectives and demands of the Iranian people are not realised, we will naturally continue our path," Araghchi added. "We are not afraid of threats, nor will we succumb to pressure, and we do not tolerate the language of threats." He said Iran's armed forces and diplomats were working together to safeguard the country's interests and urged SCO member states to oppose unilateralism and attempts by the US and Western countries to dominate international affairs. On the sidelines of the summit, Araghchi held meetings with the foreign ministers of Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Pakistan, Egypt, Uzbekistan and China.

Houthis claim strike on Saudi Arabia as conflict deepens

SANAA.(Agency)

Iran-backed Houthi rebels claimed a missile strike on Saudi Arabia on Saturday, hours after vowing to retaliate against the kingdom for attacks as the Middle East war expanded. Riyadh struck Houthi military targets in Hodeida on Friday, with rebel media reporting two wounded after the Yemeni group announced a maritime blockade of the top oil producer and hit its ships. The flare-up marks a new front of the war that has engulfed the region following US-Israeli strikes on Tehran in February, and comes on top of Iran's parallel blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, Riyadh's only other maritime route. The rebels had accused Saudi Arabia of a "dangerous escalation" and said its actions "will not go unanswered". The Houthis' Ansarollah media said on Telegram early Saturday

that a "Yemeni missile strike" had sparked fires in the southern Saudi city of Jizan on the Red Sea. Saudi Arabia did not immediately comment on the claim. But Riyadh's civil defence agency had issued brief warnings to residents in Jizan and Yanbu early Saturday for "potential danger", only to lift the warnings minutes later. Similar warnings have been issued in the past when missiles or drones were fired at the kingdom. The warning came after the Saudi-led coalition said Friday it had hit Houthi sites and destroyed targets threatening commercial vessels in response to attacks on Red Sea shipping. A Yemeni security source told AFP a naval base in the port city of Hodeida and a military camp on Kamaran island were among the Saudi targets. The Houthis claimed attacks on two Saudi ships earlier this week, with Saudi Arabia confirming one of the

attacks in the Red Sea. The Yemeni security source, who requested anonymity, said the Saudi strikes targeted a telecommunications building near Hodeida's port and a



naval base at Ras al-Kathib in Hodeida. The Houthis' al-Masirah television channel said two people were wounded -- a worker in Hodeida and a woman on Kamaran island. It said a telecoms building had been hit in Hodeida. On Monday, the rebels had warned in a radio message to ships that they would target vessels "belonging to (the) Saudi

enemy" that do not comply with their blockade. Saudi state media cited a transport authority official on Friday as saying "the vessel (NCC MASA), belonging to a Saudi company, was targeted while sailing in the Red Sea today... resulting in minor damage to the vessel's hull". The ship resumed its course, the SPA added. Red Sea access has become vital for Saudi Arabia to keep shipping oil as traffic in Hormuz is disrupted. In April and May, all of Saudi seaborne crude exports departed from its Red Sea port of Yanbu, according to Kpler data. It represented 92 percent of all seaborne crude exports in June and 78 percent so far in July. The Houthis have been at war with Yemen's government since 2014, in a conflict that has killed hundreds of thousands of people. The recent exchange of fire threatens a 2022 truce that has held despite expiring.