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PAWAN MAKAN
+91-9638877700
mahanagarmetro7@gmail.com

Delimitation must be based on 1971 census: CM Shivakumar

BENGALURU. (Agency)

Karnataka Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Thursday flagged delimitation and women's reservation issues at the Southern Zonal Council meeting chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu.

He urged the Southern Zonal Council to adopt a resolution asking the Union government to honour the 1971 census for delimitation, retain 543 Lok Sabha seats for the next 25 years and provide women's reservation within the existing seats. He also called upon southern states to shift from "water sharing" to "water cooperation".

The south answered the nation's call and controlled its population with discipline and success and the success must never become the reason to make its voice smaller, he said. "Our economic weight must be matched with political voice," he said.

Water must unite states, says DKS

"Our share of representation cannot be reduced, in absolute numbers or in proportion," Shivakumar said. He urged the council to move a resolution to freeze the current number of seats in Lok Sabha and provide women's reservation within that. "I call upon my fellow chief ministers to stand together behind our shared stand," he said.

Shivakumar said they welcome the assurance that no southern state will lose seats, but representation is not only about numbers, it is also about weight and about voice. "I am confident that all the chief ministers here will support me in what I say. Let the 1971 basis be honoured and let the strength of our voice be protected," Shivakumar said, adding that the implementation of women's reservation should not be delayed on account of a fresh delimitation exercise as "women have waited long enough for their rightful representation".



Congress seeks united Opposition front for 2027 Goa polls; begins alliance talks with AAP, RGP

PANAJI. (Agency)

The Congress has opened formal alliance talks with the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Revolutionary Goans Party (RGP) to build a united front ahead of the 2027 Goa Assembly elections.

Talking to reporters, state Congress president Girish Chodankar confirmed positive preliminary discussions with AAP and RGP leaders, but noted that detailed seat-sharing negotiations will begin once the Goa Forward Party lifts its temporary suspension on alliance talks.

As the principal Opposition party, the Congress has taken the initiative to bring like-minded parties together to fight the upcoming assembly polls as a united front, he said.

Chodankar said that Goa AAP chief Valmiki Naik and RGP president Viresh Borkar have shown positive signs of allying with the Congress.

The formal talks of alliance will begin shortly, during which other details, including seat-sharing, could be discussed, he said.

He asserted that the Congress is also willing to go ahead with a tie-up with the Goa Forward Party, which has temporarily suspended talks.

"We are waiting for the GFP to lift the suspension of talks, so that we can begin the discussion," Chodankar said.

Earlier this month, the GFP, which had allied with the Congress during the 2022 state polls, stalled the negotiations, claiming they want to concentrate on all 40 constituencies in the coastal state.

In the 2022 Goa assembly polls, the BJP won 20 of the 40 seats, while the Congress bagged 11. GFP had won one seat back then.

Rahul Gandhi, With Pellet Victim, Sits Outside Senior Cop's Office Over FIR

As the cops refused to file an FIR, Rahul Gandhi, along with a pellet gun victim, Sahil Lochab, sat on a dharna outside the police station.

New Delhi (Agency)

Rahul Gandhi, who has been demanding to know who gave the order to fire pellet guns on the students, today walked into a police station at Parliament Street with a pellet gun victim and refused to leave until an FIR is registered in the case.

As the cops refused to file an FIR, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, along with the pellet gun victim, Sahil Lochab, then sat on a dharna outside the police station.

The Delhi Police informed the protesting Congress leader that the Supreme Court has constituted a High-Powered Expert Committee (HPEC) to examine allegations of excessive and disproportionate use of force by the police, paramilitary forces during the student protests. Gandhi, though, refused to budge until an FIR in the case is registered.

"We stand for students. We stand for justice. We will not be silent. Dharna at DCP office till FIR is filed," the Congress posted on X as Rahul Gandhi,

along with the victim and his mother, sat on a chair outside the police station.

While on a dharna, Rahul Gandhi posted on X that "on July 20 the police attacked Sahil, who was peacefully protesting at Jantar Mantar, with a



pellet gun". As a result, Gandhi said, Sahil's "vision in one eye is now at risk".

The Delhi police has denied the use of pellet guns, which were first used in 2010 against protesters in Kashmir, on student protesters. Pellet guns and shock batons are part of the gear of the Rapid

Action Force (RAF), the riot-control wing of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), which was deployed at Jantar Mantar, the protest site.

A pellet gun fires cartridges loaded with up to 600 metal or rubber pellets, which disperse in a widespread manner at speeds of 1,000 feet per second. The SOP is that the gun should be fired from a minimum distance of 500 feet. The muzzle of the gun should always be targeted below the waist. In July, Gandhi presented before the media Sachil Lochab, the 19-year-old, who was allegedly shot with a pellet gun by security personnel during the march on Parliament on July 20, the first day of the Monsoon Session. The march was part of the Cockroach Janta Party-led student agitation for the demand of the Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation over the NEET paper leak. Earlier, Rahul Gandhi had written to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, demanding accountability for the "barbaric assault" on peacefully protesting students and asked whether he approved the use of "lethal force", including pellet guns, against the youth.

Tender mafia and turncoat politician's dominance in Karjan!

Allegations of multi-crore scam in VGL gas pipeline project: L-1 contractor threatened with death, L-2 awarded 9% higher commission

MAHANAGAR METRO

Karjan. A sensational case of massive fraud and corruption has come to light in the gas pipeline project being laid by Vadodara Gas Limited (VGL) in Karjan taluka of Vadodara district, Gujarat. The collusion between tender mafia and politicians has flouted rules, defrauding public tax money and the government treasury. This entire incident has created a stir in Karjan's politics and local administration. L-1 contractor receives death threat, tender forced to be cancelled! According to information received, the L-1 contractor, who was found eligible in the tender process issued by VGL for laying the gas pipeline in Karjan, was awarded the project worth ₹8 crore at a 4.5% commission. But then the game of the tender mafia began. The powerful mafia in Karjan directly threatened the owner of the L-1 contractor with death or even death, forcing the contractor to withdraw from the project, forcing VGL to re-issue the tender. The game of a defecting BJP



leader and the mafia: Work awarded to L-2 contractor at a 9% higher commission When the tender process was re-conducted, a powerful leader who had joined the BJP from another party and the tender mafia played the same trick. According to the rules, when the L-1 contractor is competent and qualified, the work is awarded to him. However, disregarding all rules and regulations, the tender was awarded to the L-2 contractor at a 9% higher commission rate. Direct questions from the public and informed citizens: Double blow to Karjan Municipality: Initially, Karjan Municipality

was supposed to contribute ₹36 lakh to this project, but due to this fraud, the municipality will now face an additional financial burden of ₹72 lakh. Blatant misuse of government funds: ₹8 crore was received from the Chief Minister's Fund for the project, and the remaining amount is to be paid by the municipality. The tender mafia is filling their pockets with the hard-earned money of the public. Tender in the name of their favorite (Madatiya): According to sources, an influential corporator of the Karjan Municipality secured this tender in the name of his close associate. Despite being a public representative, the municipal treasury has been defrauded of crores of rupees. Sharp questions from 'Mahanagar Metro': Is the administration helpless in the face of the tender mafia? 1. Why are the police and administration still holding back the mafia who threatened to kill

the L-1 contractor? 2. Why is the organization and senior leadership still silent against this turncoat leader who has tarnished the party's image? 3. Who gave the order to defraud the government treasury by paying 9% more instead of 4.5%? Fierce demand for Vigilance, ED, and ACB investigations The public of Karjan is deeply angered by this alleged scam. Local residents demand: A high-level vigilance investigation be conducted immediately into this entire tender process. An impartial investigation by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) should be conducted against the tender mafia and the politicians involved in the amassing of benami assets. The party leadership should immediately intervene and take strict disciplinary action against the corporators and politicians involved in the corruption. Mahanagar Metro News will continue to closely monitor this entire matter to expose this system of looting public funds.

Harsimrat Kaur Apologises For 'Sacrilege' Under Akalis, Turns Heat On Bhagwant Mann

Instead of remaining permanently defensive over the sacrilege issue, Harsimrat Kaur is attempting to turn the question around to corner AAP and Congress

Chandigarh (Agency)

In the Punjab poll season, the Akali Dal appears to be battling on the front foot on the sacrilege issue. Party MP Harsimrat Kaur Badal has once again publicly apologised for the beadbi (sacrilege) incidents during the previous SAD-BJP government, while simultaneously taking aims at the Aam Aadmi Party and Congress on the issue.

"Unfortunately, one incident of beadbi happened during our tenure and we are very sorry for it," Harsimrat Kaur said, while asserting that the Akalis had vowed not to rest until the perpetrators were punished. She was addressing a political conference in Sangrur to mark



the death anniversary of Akali Dal stalwart Sant Harchand Singh Longowal.

But her apology came with a political counterattack: what about the 600-plus incidents of beadbi over the last decade,

she asked, and what happened to the promises made by AAP of delivering justice in 'sacrilege' cases within four months?

The move is significant because 'sacrilege' was one of the biggest political wounds for the Akalis. The issue contributed heavily to their rout in the 2017 Assembly elections. More importantly, when the Badal government was in power and the sacrilege controversy erupted, the Akalis faced intense public anger and sustained protests across Punjab. For months, the party leadership struggled to hold public meetings as the political backlash became a defining feature of the crisis. The contrast with the Bhagwant Mann government today is striking. Despite the continuing controversy around 'sacrilege' and the video case involving the chief minister, Bhagwant Mann continues to hold public meetings and political programmes.

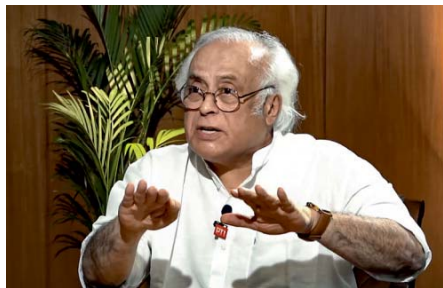
Congress demands review of E20 policy, calls fuel rollout 'anti-people'

New Delhi. (Agency)

The Congress on Friday demanded an immediate review of the E20 petrol policy, accusing the Modi government of pursuing an "anti-people" fuel policy that has increased household expenses while raising concerns over vehicle mileage and compatibility. Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh alleged that the diversion of sugarcane and grains for ethanol production had contributed to rising food prices.

Citing a media report, he said sugar prices had risen 40 per cent in three months, while jaggery, rice and maize flour prices increased by 24 per cent, 16 per cent and 11 per cent, respectively. "Due to the Modi government's shortsighted and anti-people E20 policy, inflation is rising on one

hand, while vehicle owners are forced to bear the brunt of reduced mileage and vehicle damage on the other," Ramesh said in a post on X. He said diverting sugarcane and grain towards producing ethanol for a 20 per cent blend with petrol was bound to create shortages, while also posing compatibility risks for vehicles not designed for E20 fuel.



sugar prices from Rs 48 to Rs 67 per kg and jaggery prices from Rs 50 to Rs 65 per kg over the past three months. He also cited increases in rice and maize flour prices of 16 per cent and 11 per cent, respectively, and said animal feed costs had risen 10.34 per cent.

News box

ED searches 7 offices of realty co over Rs 386cr fraud

Gurgaon.(Agency)

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) searched seven offices across Delhi-NCR in a money-laundering probe into alleged cheating of homebuyers and diversion of around Rs 120 crore in investor funds by Tashee Land Developers Pvt Ltd, KNS Infracon Pvt Ltd, Soni Infotech Pvt Ltd and associated entities.

The searches and surveys were conducted by ED's Gurgaon zonal office under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The probe, based on FIRs and chargesheets filed by the economic offences wing of Delhi and Haryana police, involved alleged fraud in Tashee Capital Gateway in Sector 111 and Orion Galaxy, formerly known as Spire South, in Sector 68. It also included alleged diversion of SWAMIH funds, housing-loan fraud and investor fraud. According to ED, Tashee Group collected Rs 386 crore from more than 600 homebuyers, but failed to hand over possession despite delays of 10 to 15 years. The agency alleged that around Rs 120 crore of investor funds was misappropriated, including Rs 98 crore invested through SWAMIH funds.

ED said substantial amounts collected from buyers and received through financial and investment facilities were transferred between interconnected group companies and promoter-controlled entities. The agency is tracing inter-company transactions and project-wise utilisation of funds to determine whether money was diverted from one project to another and the total proceeds of crime. The probe has also brought foreign investments and assets linked to promoter Kashi Nath Shukla's family under scrutiny. ED said family members had settled abroad, while substantial Indian assets were disposed of or liquidated over the past five to 10 years. Investments were allegedly made in foreign entities, including an old-age care home in the UK. One family member had also applied for St Kitts citizenship through the investment route. During the searches, ED said it seized incriminating documents, financial records relating to foreign investments and digital data connected with the companies and projects. Bank accounts and FDRs containing Rs 22 lakh, besides a luxury car, were frozen or seized.

Forest land used without clearance, Centre puts warehouse road on hold

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Centre has deferred a proposal to use forest land for an access road to a private warehouse on Sohna-Palwal Road after finding that the land was being used without forest clearance. The environment ministry's advisory committee has also sought action against officials responsible for allowing the use to continue.

The committee examined the proposal on Aug 10. It found that 0.181 hectares of forest land was being used without approval under Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980. The user agency had submitted its forest clearance proposal on Aug 25, 2023. The proposal sought the forest land for construction of an approach road and involved felling six trees. However, a violation was reported by the ministry's regional office in Chandigarh on Sept 10, 2023, while the proposal was still under consideration. A subsequent site inspection found that the use of the forest land had not stopped.

The committee said the activity amounted to a violation of the forest conservation law and directed that the matter be dealt with under the relevant provisions for violations under the Act. It has now asked Haryana to report whether the forest land is still being used and what action has been taken to remove the encroachment. The state has been asked to provide documentary evidence.

21 Ghaziabad hospitals off Ayushman panel over quality lapses, fraud

Ghaziabad.(Agency)

Twenty-one private hospitals have been dropped from the Ayushman Bharat panel after being found to have failed govt-prescribed quality standards and allegedly indulged in irregularities that could have left beneficiaries denied cashless care or paying for treatment that should have been free.

The action followed complaints and data analytics by the state anti-fraud unit. Officials said the hospitals fell short of 35 standards laid down by the Centre for empanelled facilities. RK Gupta, nodal officer for Ayushman Yojana in the city, said the probe found complaints of hospitals refusing admission to Ayushman card holders and demanding extra payments.

There were also cases where patients were shown as unnecessarily admitted. In some instances, patients visiting the OPD were shown as IPD admissions. Repeated admissions of the same patient were also detected," he added. The hospitals that were removed included Maxwell Multispeciality Hospital, Yashoda Hospital Research Centre, Om Eye & Gynaecology Centre, Dev Eye Centre, Apex Multispeciality Hospital, Krishna Hospital & Trauma Centre, Vidyawati Dubey Hospital, SM Hospital, Uttam Hospital, Meenakshi Hospital, Shivam Hospital & HA Centre, Santosh Sudarshan Hospital, S Sanjeevani Hospital, Dental Park, Aaradhy Medi Life Centre, Sparsh Medicare & Trauma Centre, Nagar Hospital and St Joseph Hospital, among others. The district had 84 Ayushman-empanelled hospitals, but the number has now fallen to 63. Officials said the action was aimed at ensuring beneficiaries receive treatment without being denied admission or charged for covered services.

Homeowners to move court against blanket action on 2.5k houses in DLF 3

Gurgaon.(Agency)

More than 2,500 houses, each measuring around 60 square yards, in U block of DLF 3 face penal action like sealing or demolition as the administration examines alleged construction violations. Homeowners, however, are preparing to move court, arguing that the properties cannot be treated uniformly because the nature and extent of violations vary widely. The issue has emerged during an intensified enforcement drive across DLF 3 following court directions. Department of Town and Country Planning (DTCP) has been acting against unauthorised construction, commercial use of residential properties, misuse of stilt parking and encroachments. In June, several properties in the area, including paying guest accommodations,

commercial units and unauthorised structures, were sealed or demolished. The action followed a court-ordered survey of properties in DLF colonies. A 2025 order of Punjab and Haryana high court also noted that earlier surveys in DLF 3 had found widespread unauthorised construction, with authorities recording that more than a thousand buildings had unauthorised structures. Residents of U Block fear that the scrutiny could lead to action against a large number of small residential properties. They are preparing to place before the court details showing differences in construction across the block. According to residents, around 104 houses in U block have seven to eight floors or more instead of the allowed stilt-plus-four floors. Of these, around 90 have seven floors. Homeowners contended that such cases

of extensive vertical construction should not be used to classify all 60-square-yard houses in the same category. "Why should thousands of houses be put in the same bracket because some properties have seven or eight floors? The extent of construction and the nature of alleged violation are different and should be examined separately," said Kuldeep Yadav, a resident involved in the discussions. Another homeowner, Avinash Kumar, said residents were not seeking immunity from building rules. "We are not saying violations should be ignored. Our point is that there must be a property-wise assessment. A house with substantially excessive construction cannot be compared with one where the deviation is much smaller," he said.

Through their lawyers, homeowners plan to argue that properties involving serious or large-scale violations should

be dealt with separately. They also want the govt to examine whether existing structures can be brought within applicable norms through a practical policy.

Resident Iswar Yadav said several homeowners were willing to cooperate with the authorities. "If the govt gives us a clear and practical policy, people are ready to make changes and comply with the norms. There should be a roadmap for existing houses instead of a blanket action," he said. He added that some owners were willing to explore whether existing stilt-plus-four or stilt-plus-five structures could be brought within the applicable height limit of around 16.5 metres, subject to the rules governing their properties. Another resident said the govt should consider ground realities before taking coercive action. "These houses are not just buildings.

How Wonderful Are Those Moments, When There Is No One and Nothing

Mahanagar Metro Desk

The history of human life has been surrounded by a materialistic race, endless expectations, and the intricate webs of relationships. From the rising of the sun in the morning until the darkness of late night, man is constantly running behind some thought, face, or object. The clamor of towns and metropolises is not merely on the roads, but it pervades within the very soul of man. Yet, in the midst of this busy and noisy life, sometimes an unexpected moment arrives, which proves to be more valuable than all the grandeur of the universe. That moment is when there is 'no one and nothing' in life. From a literary philosophy perspective, this moment is not an inner void, but a supreme divine time of absolute peace and self-realization. When there is 'no one' in life, it does not mean that a person has become lonely or orphaned; its true essence is that at that very moment, the heart has become liberated from the calculations of relationships, expectations, and social masks. At that time, there is neither the yearning to attain someone nor the fear of losing someone. Similarly, when there is 'nothing', the mind becomes entirely light as a feather, freed from the burden of material wealth, riches, or anxieties of the future.



This is such a wonderful and supernatural state, where man transcends the boundaries of ego and jealousy to converse with his pure soul. Nature itself, as if remaining silent at that time, respectfully observes this supreme solitude of man. This supreme liberation and peace of the heart can be carved into poetic words in this manner: "There is no longing for any face, nor any infatuation for an object, When silence pulsates in the heart, one experiences the Supreme Element." In today's modern and social media era, man remains constantly surrounded by a virtual crowd of people. We are connected with thousands of peo-

ple through the medium of the internet, but we have moved very far away from our own soul. In this blind race, man goes on becoming dry and lonely from within. For this very reason, a few moments obtained during the day or night, where we possess only our silence, prove to be like a life-giving herb for the soul. The dawn of true literature, deep thoughts, and spiritual consciousness occurs in such sacred moments, where all the bonds of the world dissolve and only pure existence remains. The hearts of the people always accept this realization of selfless peace and true spiritual connection in this



way: "Grandeur and assemblies merely maintain worldliness, But when there is nothing, only then a bond is forged with the Divine." This thought imparts a profound message for living life: a person's true art and grandeur lie not in material accumulation, but in inner liberation. No matter how much social prestige or material prosperity exists, everything appears futile if that spiritual moisture to enjoy this silence and void is missing in life. If this lamp of love residing within the heart remains illuminated, no individual can ever lose, no matter what kind of crisis arises. This harmony of inner void and absolute peace will continue to explain to mankind for centuries to come that the real joy of life lies not in the external crowd, but in that solitude within where there is 'no one and nothing'.

Author: Rupesh Solanki.

Yamuna sand mining row: NGT seeks replies from Baghpat, GB Nagar and Outer North Delhi district magistrates

Noida.(Agency)

National Green Tribunal (NGT) has sought replies from seven respondents — including three district magistrates and a senior superintendent of police (SSP) — imploding them in a hearing on sand mining along Yamuna. The NGT hearing in the case had begun following a news report, 'Sand miners lay a road across Yamuna', published in TOI on Nov 30, 2024. The bench comprising judicial member Justice Arun Tyagi and expert members Dr Afroz Ahmad and Dr A Senthil Vel imploded DMs of Baghpat, GB Nagar and Outer North Delhi besides commissioners of police, GB Nagar, Delhi and Ghaziabad and Baghpat SSP as respondents, directing them to file their respective responses at least one day before the next date of hearing on Sept 15. The tribunal had completed hearing the arguments and reserved its order on May 8. However, after examining the material on record, the bench considered it necessary to conduct further hearing and to implead additional authorities whose presence was considered necessary for "proper adjudication of the matter". The tribunal said, "We are also of the considered view that some material aspects of the case —



particularly regarding formation of joint task force by Uttar Pradesh, quarterly meetings of the JTF, joint patrolling, uploading of the complete information including minutes of the meetings and mining in inter-state area on the website, and action taken by the commissioners of police, Ghaziabad, Delhi and GB Nagar and senior superintendent of police, Baghpat for prevention of illegal mining — weren't referred to at the time of

arguments and the matter requires further hearing for due elucidation/consideration of the same. Therefore, it will be appropriate that the matter is re-listed for further hearing." Hearing the matter on earlier dates, the tribunal made it clear that mere exchange of information between officials was insufficient to protect the environment. The tribunal observed that simply sending letters about illegal sand

mining did not fulfil the objective of environmental protection and called for a more proactive approach from district magistrates. While hearing the matter on Oct 10 last year, the tribunal had asked chief secretary of Delhi to nominate officials for the new joint task force, which will work alongside their UP counterparts. The task force was tasked with holding joint meetings, conducting field visits to sites where illegal mining is reported, and preparing detailed reports on action taken to prevent further violations.

The reports, along with minutes of meetings, were supposed to be filed with the tribunal and uploaded to the websites of relevant district magistrates and state govts, ensuring transparency and public accountability. The tribunal, however, observed that these directions were not followed in letter and spirit and disposal of the matter at this stage might jeopardise the objective of the case taken up by the tribunal suo motu way back in 2024.

After 11 years without 66A, Maharashtra wants social media posts back in criminal law

Mumbai. (Agency)

Eleven years after the Supreme Court struck down Section 66A of the Information Technology Act, a Maharashtra government committee has recommended a state amendment to the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) to specifically cover defamatory social media posts, along with safeguards against its misuse, The Indian Express has learnt. The committee, set up in May to examine legal options for dealing with defamatory content online, has submitted its recommendations to the state Law and Judiciary Department. According to sources, the committee has settled on a state amendment to the BNS, which sits on the Concurrent List. That route requires the state legislature to pass the amendment, after which it goes to the Centre and then to the President for assent before it can take effect. Amending the Maharashtra Police Act or seeking a change to the IT Act was considered and dropped. "The BNS amendment route was preferred as it would be vetted at multiple levels and have a stronger footing if challenged in courts as compared to amending the state law. The IT Act is a central law and hence cannot be amended only at state level," the source said. The BNS already defines defamation as making or publishing any imputation about a person, by words spoken or intended to be read, by signs or by visible representations, intending or knowing it will harm that person's reputation. It makes no specific mention of online content.

Andhra's Nellore to revamp 46 city parks across 25 divisions with Rs 15 crore upgrade

NELLORE. (Agency)

Nellore city has been witnessing a major transformation of its urban recreational spaces, with 46 city parks across 25 divisions being developed and modernised with improved landscaping and modern public amenities. The project, being taken up under the leadership of Nellore city MLA and Municipal Administration Minister Dr P Narayana, aims to provide residents, particularly children, senior citizens and families from middle- and low-income communities, with accessible spaces for recreation, exercise and community activities. According to the Nellore Municipal Corporation officials, the 46 parks are spread across 25 divisions. The listed projects have a combined total park estimation of Rs 13.24 crore, while gym and play-equipment works account for another Rs 1.72 crore. The overall listed project value works out to approximately Rs 14.96 crore.

The development programme includes landscaping and greenery, open gyms, children's play equipment, walking tracks, wall art, fountains and community facilities. The data shows that 31 parks have provisions for open gyms, while two parks have indoor gym facilities. Children's play equipment is proposed in 32 parks, and eight parks include mini function halls or glass-room community halls. Fountains are proposed in two parks, while wall-art works feature in 34 parks. Several parks are also being provided with additional facilities.

Andhra Pradesh to follow Karnataka model for protection

VIJAYAWADA. (Agency)

Deputy Chief Minister and Minister Forest and Environment Pawan Kalyan has directed officials to introduce an advanced technology-based administrative system on the lines of Karnataka to protect every inch of forest land in the State. During a review meeting on Thursday, Pawan Kalyan ordered officials to prepare an action plan to establish an Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) at the newly developed Aranyaramam. The system will enable digital monitoring of forest mapping, wildlife movements and various forest activities.

A State Forest department team, led by IT advisor Pennamreddy Nagababu, recently visited Karnataka for three days to study its IT systems, GIS technology, mobile applications and ICCC. The team submitted a detailed report to Pawan Kalyan, who directed senior officials to adopt successful practices followed by Karnataka state forest department. The proposed ICCC will facilitate centralised monitoring of forests through a geo-spatial dashboard, drone surveillance and camera traps to analyse wildlife populations. It will also track vehicles travelling through forest routes, monitor patrolling, forest fires and human-wildlife conflicts. Pawan Kalyan suggested introducing an e-Gastu mobile application to improve accountability among field staff. The app would monitor patrolling, attendance, route guidance, safety measures and submission of reports. He also proposed integrating it with the existing Forest Portal and Single Sign-On systems.

Clashes over CJP school inspection in Jaipur, Ashutosh Ranka blames 'BJP goons'

Jaipur. (Agency)

A planned visit by Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) workers to a government primary school in Jaipur turned hostile after locals opposed their presence and forced them to leave. The CJP workers had reached Rampura-Kanwarapura village to discuss the condition and arrangements at the government school. Party co-convenor Ashutosh Ranka was also expected to visit the campus. However, a confrontation broke out over the visit and the locals subsequently staged a protest outside the school. Ranka, however, rejected the suggestion that those opposing the visit were locals and accused the BJP of sending "goons" to disrupt the CJP's efforts to inspect government schools. Ranka, however, rejected the suggestion that those opposing the visit were locals and accused the BJP of sending "goons" to disrupt the CJP's efforts to inspect government schools. In a post on X, Ranka said, "These are not the villagers from there, but goons summoned by the BJP." Ranka, in a separate tweet, also alleged that children

were being taught in a cowshed "among buffaloes" and claimed that attempts to raise the issue were being blocked through political pressure. The confrontation comes days after the Rajasthan's BJP government introduced restrictions on visits by outsiders to government schools, requiring prior permission from school principals and written approval for photography and videography. The restrictions were issued after the CJP announced plans to inspect government schools that it claimed were suffering from poor infrastructure, teacher shortages and inadequate basic facilities.

Ranka had said the party had received requests from several districts, including Jaipur, Ajmer, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Dhrolpur, Bharatpur, Kota, Barmer and Hanumangarh, to inspect schools allegedly facing such problems. The Rajasthan Education Department subsequently issued a circular citing the need to protect children's safety, privacy, dignity and welfare. Under the new rules, outsiders cannot enter government school campuses without prior permission from the principal, except government

CJP workers faced opposition during a planned visit to a government primary school in Jaipur. Co-convenor Ashutosh Ranka accused the BJP of sending "goons".



officials visiting for authorised official work. Visitors must record their details in the school's visitor register. The directions also bar visitors from entering classrooms and other areas where students are present unless accompanied by authorised school staff. Photography, videography, interviews, audio recording and live-streaming involving students, teachers or school activities will require prior written permission from the principal. The government has said the restrictions are aimed at protecting children's privacy and safety. The restrictions have also triggered criticism from Rajasthan Assembly Leader

of Opposition Tika Ram Jolly, who accused the BJP government of attempting to prevent scrutiny of government schools. He threatened a "civil disobedience movement" if the order was not withdrawn and said the Congress would oppose the restrictions.

20 kg MDMA monthly: Kerala busts biggest synthetic drug racket, 9 arrested

According to Kerala Excise Minister M Liju, the arrests were made under 'Operation Thunder', launched as part of the department's anti-drug campaign. He said the accused ran the trafficking network under the name 'KB Cartel'.

Thiruvananthapuram. (Agency)

Kerala's Excise Department has busted what it described as the state's biggest synthetic drug racket, arresting nine people, including two women from Kozhikode, over an alleged network planning to smuggle five to 20 kg of MDMA into the state every month.

Excise Minister M Liju said on Thursday night that the arrests were made under 'Operation Thunder', launched as part of the department's anti-drug campaign, 'Mayangilla Kerala'. According to the minister, the accused ran the trafficking network under the name 'KB Cartel'.

The case began with the arrest of a 20-year-old woman and a man from Kondotty after 3.5 kg of MDMA was seized

from them. Following the arrests, a special team was formed to investigate the network



and trace the source of the drugs. The probe was subsequently expanded to other states, leading to the arrest of seven more people.

Liju said the investigation involved operations in Maharashtra, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, with women excise officials also participating. He said the probe was kept highly confidential and details were not shared with the media, allowing investigators to trace the alleged network and identify its links. Several of those arrested were also wanted in connection with commercial narcotics cases registered in different states, the minister said. Liju congratulated the Excise officials involved in the operation and called for a collective effort to tackle drug trafficking in Kerala. The operation, he said, had uncovered an alleged network planning to bring large quantities of MDMA into the state on a monthly basis.

'Day in and day out... police fire one shot and an accused is hit on the knee or below': Allahabad High Court

Court orders CBI probe into a May 2025 encounter in which a rape accused was shot in both legs, raises questions about the "haste" in prosecution, conviction.

Lucknow. (Agency)

Ordering a CBI probe into the "encounter" in which a 36-year-old rape accused was shot in both legs in May last year in Shravasti district of Uttar Pradesh, the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court observed earlier this week, "... day in and day out... whenever the police apprehend a person, it often gives rise to another FIR alleging that when the accused was apprehended, he indulged into indiscriminate firing against the police team. Normally, not even a pellet touches the uniform of any police person, and all of them escape unhurt. The police fire one shot, and it hits the accused on his knee or below it." The court was hearing a police case against the accused, of "attacking" them during the May 11, 2025, encounter. In his order on August 13, Justice Subhash Vidyarthi pointed out several loopholes in the police version, including how 13 personnel were travelling in one police vehicle and the "shooting skills" of the SHO.

He directed the CBI to complete the probe in three months, with the next hearing on November 23. The court also directed the trial court to pass a fresh order on the discharge application of the convict, against



the police chargesheet, after providing him adequate legal aid. Convicted in two other cases of sexual assault, all involving minors, it is not the first time the 36-year-old has won a court case against police. Sentenced to death for the rape-murder of a child in 2012, the accused was acquitted by the

Supreme Court after spending 12 years in jail. In the latest case against him, he was sentenced to life on October 3, 2025, by Additional Sessions Judge/Special Judge (POCSO), Shravasti, for the alleged rape of a six-year-old belonging to his village. He was on the run when he was held following the encounter. The 36-year-old was first accused in 2011 of molesting a 10-year-old girl. The District Court, Shravasti, sentenced him to four years of simple imprisonment. By then, a case had been registered against him over the rape and murder of a six-year-old girl, leading to the death sentence by the Sessions Court in 2014. This order, upheld by the High Court, was set aside by the Supreme Court in 2024.

As per police, on May 9, 2025, not long after he was acquitted by the apex court, the 36-year-old and two others abducted and raped a six-year-old and attempted to murder her. While the other two were apprehended, the 36-year-old went on the run.



identification. Later, Arvind identified the body as that of his wife, Kavita.

Following directions from the Haridwar police official, police formed four teams to investigate the murder and identify the accused. The teams conducted searches in different areas and examined footage from around 216 CCTV cameras. During the investigation, police spotted the Brezza car in the CCTV footage and found it suspicious. Police then increased surveillance and checking along connecting routes.

The investigation revealed that Kavita's daughter Unnati was in a relationship with Aakash Chauhan and that her mother opposed the relationship. Police said this opposition led Unnati to plan the murder with Aakash. According to police, one of the accused held Kavita while the other slit her throat with a knife. They then threw her body near the Mangalore canal bridge. Police have arrested both Unnati and Aakash Chauhan and recovered the vehicle and knife used in the murder.

'Bandi Singh' protesters call shutdown in Punjab; transport, markets to be hit

Chandigarh. (Agency)

A Sikh body demanding the release of Sikh prisoners, or "Bandi Singhs", who have remained behind bars for decades despite completing their sentences, has called for a seven-hour shutdown across Punjab today.

The shutdown, from 7 am to 2 pm, is expected to affect markets, road transport and train services and educational institutions, with several organisations backing the call. The Qaumi Insaaf Morcha has been protesting for the release of Sikh prisoners who, it says, have remained behind bars for decades despite having completed their sentences or becoming eligible for release. A central demand is parole for Jagtar Singh Hawara, who is serving a life sentence in connection with the 1995 assassination of former Punjab Chief Minister Beant Singh.

The broader "Bandi Singhs" demand relates to Sikh prisoners convicted in cases linked to

militancy during Punjab's insurgency in the 1980s and 1990s. Besides Hawara, the Morcha has sought the release of Balwant



Singh Rajoana, convicted in the Beant Singh assassination case, and Devinderpal Singh Bhullar, who was convicted in connection with the 1993 Delhi bomb blast case.

The Qaumi Insaaf Morcha has been maintaining a prolonged protest at the Chandigarh-Mohali border since January

2023, demanding action on the release of the prisoners. The Morcha had attempted to march towards the Punjab Governor's residence on August 15 to press for their demands, especially for Hawara's parole to meet his ailing mother. Chandigarh Police had stopped the protesters with barricades after warning that they would not be permitted to proceed. Police used water cannons and tear gas after some protesters attempted to breach the barricades. Police also claim that protesters threw stones, injuring some personnel. Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann has met the Governor and supported a 10-day parole for Hawara.

WHO HAS BACKED THE SHUTDOWNCALL

The bandh has received backing from several Sikh and farmers' organisations. The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) has extended its support and announced that its offices and

institutions will remain closed on Friday. Its executive committee meeting scheduled for Friday has also been shifted to Saturday. The Shiromani Akali Dal (Punjab) and SAD Waris Punjab De have also backed the shutdown.

Farmers' organisations, including the Bharatiya Kisan Union (Rajewal), have extended support, while Kisan Mazdoor Morcha leader Sarwan Singh Pandher has appealed to people to make the bandh successful. The SAD (Punjab) has accused the government of suppressing voices demanding the release of the Bandi Singhs and urged people to participate in the shutdown.

SCHOOLS, UNIVERSITY EXAMS AFFECTED

The Federation of Private Schools and Association of Punjab, which represents more than 7,500 private schools, has announced a holiday today, citing student safety.

Dimagi Naxals: Strangers in their own land

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's reference to "dimagi Naxals" has created quite a flutter. While Congress leader Jairam Ramesh's claim—that the description was about all opposition parties—was an attempt at playing the victim card, Union Minister Kiren Rijiju brought some clarity to the issue. Let's examine what exactly was said by the PM: "For years, those with Naxal mentality had their place in the power corridors. They were in government committees as advisors. Maoist thinking impacted policies. We have succeeded in getting rid of armed Naxals in the jungles, but dimagi Naxals (intellectual Naxals) are looking for opportunities to create violence, unrest... They want to drag the society on the wrong path. These dimagi Naxals have to be identified and isolated, and connect the youth with the mainstream."

Unlike the mostly-forest-dwelling Naxals who openly espoused violence, urban Naxals and dimagi Naxals provide intellectual arsenal. Whether it's the Congress, the BJP, or any regional party in power, they oppose government systems—openly or clandestinely. They try to be seen as anti-establishment even when they themselves take advantage of the establishment at times. The PM's word of caution is timely, too, as Naxals and their sympathisers are increasingly getting frustrated. But though the reference hit a chord, like urban Naxals, it's not easy to identify dimagi Naxals—a term that may be loosely translated as 'thought anarchists'. Many such people have made deep inroads into media, academia and intelligentsia. They are often Janus-faced, and hence identifying them is difficult. It is, therefore, useful to know a set of symptoms that mark them. The first and the most dreadful symptom is an oblique acceptance of violence and anarchy as pathways towards revolution. They may not openly indulge in violence, but somewhere down the line, they also don't entirely reject violent ways. Naxals indulge in open violence and dimagi Naxals try to theorise on it. They believe violence is essential to establish deterrence. It was Charu Mazumdar's conviction that "he who has not dipped his hands in the blood of class enemies is not worthy of being called a communist". Such acts from the past were described in an online journal as recently as 2008. Second is anarchy, which walks hand-in-hand with violence. Destruction is the key to this so-called revolution. Dimagi Naxals believe in abiding by what B R Ambedkar described as the "grammar of anarchy". In a passionate appeal at the last meeting of the Constituent Assembly, Ambedkar had said, "Now that we have constitutional methods at our disposal, we must use them to obtain the socio-economic objectives set for our country." Yet, while proclaiming themselves as parts of the civil society, dimagi Naxals turn a Nelson's eye on many things uncivil and indecent. According to some of them, the more aggressively one uses cuss words, the greater revolutionary he or she is. Dimagi Naxals are not entirely anti-establishment. When someone goes against their own organisations, he or she may be shown the door. While one may partly understand their anger against the establishment, they rarely share clarity on what should be the new thing to replace it.

All those who consider patriotism a bad word essentially belong to the category. They are even more set against the notion of cultural nationalism because, in the Indian context, the mainstream of our culture flows parallel to Hindu ethos. Beyond that, they consider anything imbued with the fragrance of Indian soil inferior. They have concluded that Machiavelli is superior to Chanakya and Shakespeare to Kalidasa. They relish describing Ganga as Ganges and Hanuman as monkey-god. They care two paise for India's ancient culture, much less for Ramayana and Mahabharata. If you eulogise these epics, they would brand you as sectarian. They do not recognise Indian traditional knowledge systems, but take pleasure in pooh-poohing

Unhealthy signs for health research

Proposed national policy reflects a centralised approach to agenda implementation

THE Department of Health Research (DHR), a wing of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, has proposed a national health research policy. The department has been in existence for almost two decades, but it has woken up only now to the fact that India lacks a dedicated policy on health research. As per the R&D data released in July, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the flagship agency for health research in the country, receives just 3.3% of the national R&D funding, while defence and space get 32% and 15%, respectively. India's expenditure on R&D itself is abysmally low — 0.84% of GDP compared to China's 2.58%.

Among the obvious goals of the new health research policy is to increase the expenditure on biomedical and health R&D. The target is to increase health research investment as a share of GDP from the current 0.024% to 0.072% by 2037 and 0.15% by 2047. While it may appear to be a big jump, it is far too low compared to India's current and projected disease burden as well as emerging health challenges. Moreover, the timelines for the proposed increase are too far away, targets are non-binding and without any budgetary support in the pipeline. How the proposed increase will be achieved is more problematic. The policy says, "Public investment shall rise progressively, complemented by responsible private, philanthropic and non-governmental investment." This formally opens the doors for private investment in health research. The nature of private investment that the government wants to encourage should cause greater concern. The policy says that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) money from private companies will be allowed to be used for R&D projects in public institutions, and the DHR will formulate necessary policies to facilitate such funding. The approach is different from existing public-private partnerships for drug or vaccine development involving pharma companies and public institutions under specific projects such as the development of Covid-19 vaccines. If CSR funds are allowed from any company — be it pharma or otherwise — or a philanthropic organisation promoted by a company, it may lead to biased research or a hidden agenda like manufacturing "scientific doubt" in contentious topics like environmental health (impacts of air pollution, tobacco, alcohol), occupational health, food safety and climate change. It is ironic that on the one hand, the government has stifled field research studies by some of the leading health NGOs and public health institutes in the name of foreign contribution regulations, and on the other hand, it is opening the doors for the industry and also foreign foundations to conduct health research. For domestic researchers, scientific collaboration with foreign researchers would still need a permit from a screening committee of the health ministry.

The whole approach seems to be to centralise and



bureaucratise health research at all levels. The policy talks of a National Health Research Agenda that will set the priorities at the macro level and a three-tier governance architecture to implement the agenda. At the top would be the National Health Research Stewardship Committee to provide overarching strategic direction. It will be headed by the Principal Scientific Adviser and include several bureaucrats (secretaries of scientific departments) as members. At the second tier will be the DHR, acting as the central nodal implementing agency, and the third tier would be the ICMR, tasked with scientific and technical execution.

The proposed governance system undermines the role of states, ignoring the fact that public health is primarily a State subject and 'Medical Education and Research' is in the Concurrent list of the Constitution. By authorising the central stewardship committee to set the health research agenda, states will be reduced to mere implementers. "States and Union Territories will support alignment with local health needs and translation into programmes, service delivery and public health action," the policy says. The policy marks another important shift — allowing Ayurveda and other systems of medicine to get access to the research kitty meant for modern medicine in the guise of promoting "integrative health". This is despite such systems having dedicated research funding from the Ayush Ministry and mechanisms operated by it. This is bound to give rise to "validation science", wherein traditional remedies like cow urine could be subjected to modern research so that they could be "scientifically

validated." This is already happening through projects funded by other research agencies like the Department of Science and Technology. India is not only a geographically and culturally diverse country but also has myriad health needs as well as disparities in access to health systems. Health indicators and challenges of Kerala, for example, are completely different from those of Bihar or Odisha. Instead of making states implement a "top-down" agenda, states should be guided and helped to build and develop their own health research infrastructure based on their priorities and needs. Geographic Reference

Health research is not just about testing new technologies or developing new vaccines and drugs. Its outcomes are supposed to guide health policies and budgets. Much of it is about ways to improve the functioning of health systems and healthcare delivery to achieve better outcomes. Health research is a continuous and dynamic process, closely linked with social and economic factors. For instance, health problems of many marginalised groups and communities like urban poor and tribal people are often understudied. A large number of medical colleges have been opened in recent years. They need to be oriented to conduct research on health topics in their respective regions. The idea of developing a dedicated health research policy addresses a long-felt need. However, the direction the policy is seeking to take — a centralised approach to developing a research agenda, giving the private sector a prominent role and integration of traditional medicine in the modern health research agenda — is rather unhealthy.

Wish for sobriety on social media as BJP aims at poll prep in reshuffle

Mhaskey specialises in generating Instagram reels, the social media tool Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently urged all his ministers to adopt as Gen Z voters prefer it

Weeks after the BJP landed in a pickle following a massive mess in a performance-sensitive ministry, the party revamped its leadership team in the hope of getting back to business. Coming seven months after Nitin Nabin was picked as BJP's national president, the shake-up has introduced a curious mix of youth and experience. If feisty Smriti Irani led the list of headline inductions, the axe fell most conspicuously on IT cell chief Amit Malviya. There were two Muslims in the eight functionaries inducted from poll-bound Uttar Pradesh. Nabin effort at revitalising the party's cells with fresh leadership saw the admission of 12 women in the core team, six of them as vice-presidents. As for the South, two each from Andhra Pradesh and Kerala, and one each from Karnataka and Tamil Nadu found place. But inexplicably, Telangana was blanked out. Irani's comeback, as general secretary for UP, comes at a time the party faces its toughest electoral test in the most populous state. She had been left out in the cold after her 2024 loss at



Amethi. Seasoned general secretary Vinod Tawde will manage the poll preparations.

The opposition is counting on voter fatigue after a decade of Yogi Adityanath's rule and disillusionment among a

section of Gen Z voters. Besides, the political damage done by the donation theft at the Ayodhya Ram temple is uncertain, though a probe team constituted by the UP government gave a clean chit to former temple trust general secretary Champat Rai. Since the BJP is keen on wresting Punjab, Sandeep Pathak, a recent defector from AAP, was inducted into the national team.

However, the biggest talking point was the replacement of the abrasive Malviya with Chhattisgarh leader Deepak Mhaskey to revamp the party's IT team. Mhaskey specialises in generating Instagram reels, the social media tool Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently urged all his ministers to adopt as Gen Z voters prefer it. If Mhaskey—whose team members have deleted some of their abusive older posts, as if to start with a clean slate—can discipline the BJP troll army to use sober language and verified facts, it would be a welcome change in the national social media discourse.

For safer human-animal borders

➤ The challenge in managing human-wildlife conflicts is less about deciding who entered whose territory than about how the administration responds. India should learn from its successes in disaster management. Training, equipment and practised coordination are more important than having a response plan

As India's National Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation Strategy (2021-26) reaches the end of its first implementation cycle, policymakers have an opportunity to rethink what the next phase of wildlife governance should prioritise. India has every reason to be proud of its conservation journey. Its successes are well recognised. The next challenge, however, lies not in protecting wildlife alone, but in strengthening institutions that respond when conflict occurs. To be clear, this is not a question of intent, nor of the absence of policies, protocols or strategic direction. India already has the right building blocks. The challenge now lies in operationalising them consistently across resource-constrained landscapes where limited manpower, specialist capacity and infrastructure can slow implementation precisely when timely, science-based responses matter most.

Every human-wildlife conflict leaves behind more than physical damage. A family may lose a loved one, a farmer may lose livestock or a season's crop, and communities are left fearful about what comes next. At the same time, immense pressure falls on frontline forest officials to identify, capture or manage what is believed to be the "problem animal", often under intense public scrutiny and within hours of an incident. Human-wildlife conflict is unlike most public policy challenges because people and wildlife are often victims of the same circumstance rather than adversaries by choice. As settlements expand and wildlife populations recover, the boundaries between human and wildlife use have become increasingly blurred. The question is often less about who entered whose territory than about how the State responds when conflict occurs. The true test of any wildlife strategy is in how confidently the system can act when conflict occurs. When response mechanisms are unable to keep pace with

the demands of conflict situations, both people and wildlife bear the cost. Delays in scientific confirmation, including DNA analysis where required, can postpone decisions on whether repeated incidents involve the same animal. Compensation may take longer to process. Communities lose confidence in official processes. Frontline officers are forced to make difficult decisions under pressure, sometimes without timely access to specialist veterinary, forensic or scientific support. In the absence of credible information, demands for immediate action grow, increasing the risk that decisions are driven more by urgency than evidence. This is where the next phase of India's strategy should focus. The first phase rightly identified priorities such as better coordination, stronger community engagement, improved scientific management and greater use of technology. Several states have begun experimenting with AI-enabled early warning systems, digital monitoring and strengthened rapid response mechanisms. The next step is to move from identifying priorities to defining operational standards.

First, India needs to strengthen response readiness. Every serious incident should trigger a coordinated and time-bound response, from mobilisation of trained personnel and scientific evidence collection to laboratory processing, incident verification, compensation initiation and public communication. Scientific tools such as DNA analysis are invaluable, but their value depends on timely collection, accredited processing and rapid reporting. The objective is not simply faster science; it is faster, more

credible decision-making. An equally important, and often overlooked, element of response readiness is public communication. Communities affected by conflict need



timely, transparent information, not only on what action is being taken, but why particular protocols exist and how decisions are reached. Clear communication can help build confidence in processes, manage public anxiety and reduce pressure for immediate intervention. Second, the country must invest in specialised capacity. The increasing complexity of conflict management demands stronger multidisciplinary support. Frontline personnel everywhere need to be supported by wildlife veterinarians, forensic specialists, trained rapid response

teams and modern field equipment. The real test of any protocol lies not in its design, but in its consistent execution under field conditions.

Third, the conversation on financing should shift from creating new schemes to making better use of existing ones. India supports conservation through several central and state programmes. The opportunity now is to deploy these resources more strategically while leveraging complementary sources of finance. Corporate social responsibility can support capital-intensive assets such as wildlife ambulances, rescue equipment, forensic labs, communication systems, drones and training facilities. Philanthropic organisations and multilateral partners can help pilot innovation, technology and research before successful approaches are scaled up.

One opportunity worth considering is developing a common national framework for conflict response. Rather than creating another institution, such a framework could establish common service standards, strengthen accreditation and training, promote interoperable technology, benchmark state capacities and encourage greater convergence across programmes. India's experience in disaster management offers an important lesson: preparedness is built not only through policy, but through clearly defined roles, standard operating procedures, trained personnel, interoperable systems, regular mock drills and capacity building. Human-wildlife conflict warrants a similar shift, from well-intentioned policy to operational readiness that is consistent, science-led and effective.



5 sights to tick off in Gulmarg

The country's premier, and possibly only bonafide ski resort town, Gulmarg and its pine-fringed meadows encircled by Mount Apharwat and surrounding snow-capped mountains have been part of popular culture and Bollywood since aeons. Even today, the 'meadow of flowers,' attracts droves of visitors in the summer who come here to ride in the world's second highest cable car, play golf, and take hack rides to the glaciers at Khilanmarg and further up to Al Pather Lake. In the winter, Gulmarg transforms into a faux Alpine ski resort with its famed powder attracting extreme skiers from across the world. Gulmarg is a four hour drive from

Srinagar.

Maharani Temple

With its bright red sloping roof framed against the snowy peaks in the background, this small Shiva temple presents a striking picture in a corner of the main meadow in Gulmarg. Its claim to fame is derived from Bollywood: the site where the popular 'Jai Jai Shiv Shankar,' song in yesteryear's hit 'Aap Ki Kasam,' was shot, it's a popular spot with visitors for a photo-op. It's also a big destination during the festival of Shivratri.

Gulmarg Golf Club

The Gulmarg Golf Club, is amongst the most

spectacular courses in the country, possibly the world, to tee it up at. With 18 holes stretching over 7505 yards, including the 665 yard par-5 fourth hole, coupled with the elevated tees, up and down fairways, and penalising rough, it presents a severe test of physical and golfing abilities. It is also the highest green course in the country and indisputably the most authentic Scottish links-style layout in the land.

Al Pather Lake

A gorgeous alpine lake, accessible after an arduous trek past a ridge of Mt. Apharwat (reached via the cable car) Al Pather remains frozen for most of the year. While serious

trek from Gulmarg—a one-day affair—most people will find the taking a pony ride up adventurous enough. Al Pather Lake's environs are freezing, even in the summer, and susceptible to sudden showers. It's essential to carry woollens and adequate protection against the elements.

Khilanmarg

You can trek up from the Gulmarg bus stand if you like but a more prudent way up involves perching yourself on the back of a pony. After a bone-crunching hour long ride, Khilanmarg emerges in view as a carpeted meadow of flowers in the summer, and a frozen expanse of snow in the winter. There's some ice in the upper reaches even in the summer months and there are sled-operators who'll take visitors on hair-raising ride from one end to the other. Scenic views abound from almost any corner—the southeast edge affords magnificent vistas of the twin peaks of Nun and Kun.

Gulmarg Gondola

A huge attraction: lines start forming at the gondola ticket office almost two hours before it opens in the morning. The cable car takes visitors all the way up to Mt. Apharwat Mountain (3747 metres) from where you can get panoramic Himalayan views including major peaks like the Nanga Parbat. The ride has two phases: those who're not comfortable with heights can opt to come back from the Kondoori valley a mere 400 metres up the mountain. Tickets can also be booked at the tourist office in Srinagar or online.



The clear azure sky suddenly changes colours and a darker shade of grey begins to envelop the atmosphere. It looks as if the sky was perennially missing the floating grey clouds in its vicinity. The rainiest place on planet earth for a substantial period in the past, Sohra in local parlance or Cherrapunjee as the world knows, creates a heavy concoction of flowing rivers, cool breeze, swaying trees and hot noodle soups. There is a thick cover of mist that greets anyone whose footsteps cross these undulating green valleys. Cherrapunjee still retains the charm of a British summer retreat with solitary dilapidated bungalows and remnants of colonial churches dotting the verdant valleys in between the prolific number of hotels that have conjured up recently in these parts. Cherrapunjee is the second largest town after the capital city of Shillong in Meghalaya and lies at a distance of close to 56 km from Shillong. There are regular cabs available from Shillong for a 2 hour drive to Cherrapunjee. The sight of the waterfalls in the monsoon season from July-September is the prettiest but this place also offers cosy retreats and nature walks during the winter months from October to February.

Dainthlen Falls



About 2 km away from Cherrapunjee, one comes across this fall which is just 5 km away from the road. The splendour of this falls is enhanced by the presence of large number of natural potholes, much bigger in size and dimension than the regular ones on the metallic roads. The view of this waterfall tumbling down from a height of close to 80-90 m is from its source and provides a good opportunity to follow the path all the way to the bottom. There is a small legend associated with the name of this fall. According to locals, there was a huge demon python by the name of Thlen who was drenched in greed and power. Some brave men caught the animal and destroyed its hood with a huge stone near this fall. Some of the marks present on the stones are still reminiscent of the violent struggle of that snake, say the naysayers. As a result, this fall got this name. The turbulence of this fall gathers a lot of steam during the monsoons compared to the rest of the year.

Mawsmat Cave

To the south of Cherrapunjee Market, about 6

km away, lies the village of Mawsmat. At the village, a small clearing in the grasslands amidst the forests surrounding it leads to the entrance of this cave. This is a popular cave among the tourists and beginners alike. This cave is not very long and provides ample opportunity to see the stalactite and stalagmite formations of water dripping along the limestone walls. This is fully lighted and divided into old and new sections. A small entrance fee is charged from the tourists for entering this cave. A torch would be extremely handy in regions of narrow openings where the main source of light gets obstructed by the close proximity of the people in the queue. For the caving enthusiasts, there are some technical and challenging caves in Jaintia Hills where proper caving gears are required to do explorations. The population of bats inside the cave is almost negligible here due to excessive lighting and heavy visits of the regular tourists here.

Kynrem Falls

Kynrem Falls, located at a distance of 12 km from Cherrapunjee in the East Khasi Hills district is a three-tiered waterfall covering a distance of 305 m vertically. The base of the falls passes through the motorable road that goes all the way to Bangladesh and a small bridge provides movement for vehicles and people across this waterfall. The fall spreads out in two different streams or rivulets with each of them gaining momentum by getting merged while flowing down the last leg of the third tier. The source of this fall originates from Thangkharang Park. It's the 7th highest waterfall in India and due to its seasonal nature; this waterfall is best enjoyed during the monsoons. The roaring din of the cascading fall poses a healthy competition to the noisy cicadas all around the neighbourhood of this fall.

Living Root Bridge

Living Root Bridges are century-old natural shoots of the banyan fig trees grown around the vicinity of large and small rivers which in turn aid in providing a means to cross the bridges by entangling those shoots from opposite banks. As the shoots gain strength with time, the bridges become more and more robust. The phenomenon is unique and endemic to this part and travellers from around the world come to see the miracle of these living root bridges. There is a small village known as Tyrna, about 2 km from away from Cherrapunjee where the journey to these living root bridges begins. Across 25000 steps covering a distance of close to 3.5 km, the village of Nongriat is the focal point of the famous Double Decker Living Root Bridge.

There are two layers of bridges on the river here as according to local tales, the lower living Root Bridge got submerged in a heavy deluge around 40 years back. As a result, a higher elevated living root bridge above this one was conceived to tide over this problem. Contrary to the popular belief, the living Root bridges are more sturdy compared to the steel wire ones and provide a firm footing on the base for easy movement all along. The small natural swimming pools around this bridge provide

good source of relaxation after a hard day's hike. There is also a small guest house on the other side of the bridge run by Meghalaya Tourism that caters to tourists here.

Wakaba Falls

It's a tiered waterfall close to 170-190 m in height and provides a stupendous beauty of surrounding canyon all around its vista. The fall lies at a distance of 15 km from Cherrapunjee towards Shillong. The fall becomes completely invisible during the winter months with thin streams of water creating a pattern reminiscent of the crisscross pattern of the hair strands at the back of a woman's head. The beauty of this fall comes alive during the monsoon months as the garrulous water makes its way through huge boulders and vegetation in and around the canyon. Sometimes heavy mist envelops the entire canyon and sighting the waterfall turns into a peek-a-boo through the dense layer. One needs to have a bit of luck and patience to witness its full glory. There are some good viewpoints all around the canyon to witness the magnificence of this waterfall.

Nohkalikai Falls

Close on the heels of 340 m drop, the tallest plunge waterfall in India is a vista to behold. The mist around the valley of this fall along with the sad legend associated with the name of this fall creates a mystic aura that engulfs the canyon all around. The name 'Nohkalikai' in Khasi language refers to 'Jump of Likai'. According to the folklore of this region, Likai was a married woman living along with her daughter and husband. Her husband died and she had to remarry but due to little means of income she had to become a porter and remain away from her home and child for long hours during the day.

Whenever she was at home, she would give full attention to her child. As a result, her jealous husband killed the infant and cooked her after throwing away her head and bones. Likai returned home and ate the meat but soon realized her folly and went mad with rage. With remorse and guilt, she jumped off the cliff close to the waterfall and hence the waterfall got the name 'Nohkalikai'. A calm and serene turquoise pool of water at the base of this waterfall illuminating death as a placid end to

all tumultuous means creates a wonderful contrast to the gushing volume of this fall from the cliff. There is a flight of stairs that lead close to the base of this fall and also provide terrific vantage points to enjoy this waterfall.

Thangkharang Park

This park is situated at a distance of 12 km from Cherrapunjee and the source of Kynrem Falls lies in this park. This park provides ample prospects for travellers to revel in the panoramic view of the moorish plains of Bangladesh far ahead. The sight of serpentine roads along the valleys from this park is a joy to watch. There are two foot bridges within the park which provide wonderful view points to vast rolling green valleys and the water logged plains behind them. This park also hosts the famous Khoh Ramrah rock popularly known as the Shiva Rock.

This rock is a huge piece of stone in the shape of a lingam that stands precariously on the other side of the park opposite to the entrance. This park is also a fantastic place to enjoy the usual 4 o'clock rains that grace this part of the region every day in the evening during the monsoon season.

Top attractions in Cherrapunjee



With a coastline of 485 km along the Bay of Bengal, Odisha is home to some of the best beaches in India. From Balasore to Ganjam, these pristine and beautiful beaches have everything to offer to a visitor from a clean sea bed to turquoise blue waters to golden sparkling sand. Travellers can lie back and witness sea waves crashing melodiously on the shore or engage in fun-filled activities, including fishing with the local fishermen, besides uninterrupted sunbathing. Many of the beaches are surrounded by casuarina vegetation and palm trees, which add to the beauty. Almost all the unspoilt beaches are perfect destinations for travellers looking for tranquillity as well as adventure. Here's a look at the most scenic beaches of Odisha.

Paradip Beach

Paradip Beach in Jagatsinghpur district offers a gorgeous view of the Bay of Bengal. In fact, the beach is located on the confluence of the Mahanadi River and the Bay of Bengal. It has clear blue water, large stones on the shore and a good marine drive road. The place is ideal for a family trip, where one can go swimming or enjoy a stroll by the shimmering water. It is 94 km from Cuttack and 125 km from Bhubaneswar and connected by good roads. Although beautiful, the beach is rough many a times, particularly the two km stretch from Hanuman Temple to Sandakhuda in Paradip and the one km shoreline at Siali. These beach stretches have been identified as Scritically-vulnerable zones and are very risky for sea bathing. There is a lighthouse near the beach, which is armed with the latest differential global positioning system. There are several other attractions nearby. Visitors can relax at the sylvan gardens of Smurti Udyan, a place dedicated to the people who lost their lives in the 1999 Super Cyclone. The musical fountain inside the park is worth a watch. Odisha's biggest aquarium, the Paradip Marine Aquarium, is also located in the Paradip city. It has 28 tanks with different species of fish. Paradip is also famous for its port, one of the oldest in the world. It stands testimony to the rich maritime heritage of the region.

Gopalpur Beach

Situated 16 km away from Berhampur, Gopalpur-on-Sea is a splendid retreat for avid beach lovers. From golden sands to clear blue waters, the beach has everything that can entice visitors. Besides a sun-kissed beach, Gopalpur-on-Sea offers glimpses of its past glory as a commercial port. The crumbling walls and pillars of an ancient jetty can still be found on the beach. In fact, Gopalpur was once a bustling maritime zone in Odisha and a sea port through which early settlers of Southeast Asia sailed off. Established during the British rule, the port stopped functioning in 1942 during the Second World War. There are ruins of several bungalows and mansions belonging to the European merchants, which give it a colonial look. A red-and-white striped lighthouse also stands on the popular beach. Commissioned in 1871, it is one of the oldest lighthouses in the state. Every year during Kartika Purnima, people sail tiny boats made of banana stems and paper, with lamps, betel leaves, crackers, fruits and coins in them, to mark the rich maritime history of Gopalpur-on-Sea. The beach is well connected by an excellent all-weather road which branches off from NH-5 on the outskirts of Berhampur. Regular bus services, taxis and auto rickshaws are also available.

Astaranga Beach

Astaranga Beach is another popular beach resort near Puri. The beach offers an enchanting view of the horizon which becomes uncommonly colourful during sunset. In fact, the name Astaranga is a combination of two Odia words—asta (sunset) and ranga (colourful)—and this is why it's also called a photographer's delight. The beach is also a popular fishing destination for Puri district.

Puri Beach

This destination certainly needs no introduction. This beach in the pilgrim city of Puri is the most popular beach in Odisha and the largest in the country. The splendid beach stretches up to seven km and is a round-the-year destination for both domestic and international travellers. Visitors can enjoy both the sunrise and the sunset, sunbathe, sit back on the beach and watch local fishermen pulling their catch or mending their nets play with the waves, along with listening to the melodious rendition of the striking waves. Compared to other beaches in the country, the Puri Beach is

13th-century Sun Temple at Konark, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. According to historians, the ships took the Sun Temple as a reference point in the sea during the maritime trade between Odisha (Kalinga), Bali, Java and Sumatra. Later, a lighthouse was constructed on Marine Road in 1967 to guide the ships. As there are several mythological tales associated with the beach, a week-long Chandrabhaga Mela is organised here every year to honour the Sun god. Every year during December and January, the Tourism Department of the Government of Odisha hosts an annual International Sand Art Festival on the sidelines of the popular Konark Dance Festival at the World Heritage Site. The Chandrabhaga Beach can be visited anytime during the year and there are a lot of luxury and budget accommodations near the beach and the Sun Temple. There are also many restaurants and refreshment stalls near the beach. Visitors can purchase beautiful seashell handicrafts from stalls on the beach at affordable prices. People can hire taxis from Bhubaneswar or Puri to reach the destination.

Baliharchandi Beach

Swaying casuarina trees, an unending stretch of golden sand and the turbulent sea form the picturesque landscape of Baliharachandi Beach. Located 27 km away from Puri, the beach is a popular round-the-year picnic spot. A swim in the tumultuous sea is a delight for those seeking adventure. Besides the clean blue sea, the beach is famous for the temple of goddess Harachandi close by. The temple's sanctum sanctorum houses an asta bhuja (eight-armed) Mahisamardini Durga, who is worshipped as goddess Harachandi. She is regarded as the goddess of water and navigation who protects fishermen. All tourists coming to the beach make it a point to pay obeisance to the deity. A small river flows into the sea just 200 m away from the temple, and can be crossed in a boat for just Rs 5. On the other side of the river, there is a massive sandy dune with casuarina trees that makes for an ideal picnic spot for travellers. While the summer in Baliharchandi is extremely humid and hot, the beach experiences a tropical monsoon climate. The best time to plan a visit to Baliharachandi Beach is between the months of October and March. The beach is accessible with good roads, with the nearest railway station at Puri.

Balighai Beach

Situated eight km on the north-eastern side of Puri, Balighai is a pristine beach that remains relatively undiscovered. It is situated at the mouth of the Nuanai River, off the Konark-Puri Marine Drive road. The beach is also a nesting site for the endangered Olive Ridley sea turtles who visit the beach every year from December to January for mass nesting. Migratory birds can be seen here during the winter months. In the evening, one can also

enjoy deep fried seafood at shacks on the beach. Other attractions near the beach are the Balihirana Deer Sanctuary, where visitors can spot the endangered Balihirana antelope and Indian blackbucks; the Sea Turtle Research Centre, and small temples like Barahi, Lakshminarayan and the Amareshra. In fact, the temple of goddess Barahi dates back to the 9th century and is related to early forms of tantric worship. There are very few accommodations in the area, except for some luxury resorts in the Konark-Puri Marine Drive road. Visitors can stay in Puri and hire a taxi to reach the beach. The best time to visit the beach is between October and March.

Aryapalli Beach

Far from the hustle and bustle of city life, the silvery, quiet beach of Aryapalli is ideal for unwinding. At a distance of 30 km from Berhampur, the golden beach is surrounded by casuarina plantations and crystal-clear blue waters. While the weather is a little humid in the noon, it is pleasant towards early morning and evening. During the sunrise and the sunset, the azure sky offers an amazing colour play. Unlike other beaches, Aryapalli does not have many vendors on the shore to hound visitors. After sunbathing at the beach, visitors can go round the hamlets nearby, inhabited by Telugu-speaking fishermen, and know the socio-cultural aspects of their lives. The Sand Mineral Project lies in the vicinity, and is another attraction that cannot be missed. The area near the beach has a number of resorts and sea-facing hotels that are equipped with all amenities. The ideal time to visit Aryapalli is between the months of October and June, when the weather is at its best. Travellers can reach Arypalli beach through a taxi or an auto-rickshaw after getting down at the Chatrapur railway station in Ganjam district. The beach is just eight km from the railway station. One can also hire a taxi from Berhampur city as the National Highway passing through the beach is also well-maintained.

Chandipur Beach

Chandipur beach in Balasore district is the only beach in the eastern India where the sea recedes up to five km daily at low tide and returns during high tide, offering a truly unique sight. Adding to the beauty are the casuarina trees dotting the area. When the tide returns, fishermen rush to collect the small fishes that the waves leave behind at the shore. The beach is replete with small red crabs that emerge from tiny holes on the sea bed and rush towards the vanishing water during low tide. It is equally captivating to watch the sunrise and sunset at the beach. Touted as one of the finest beaches of Odisha, Chandipur is just 16 km east of Balasore and easily accessible by road. A visit to the beach is not complete without a stroll on the dry sea bed with a packet of jhalmuri and coconut water in hand. After reaching Balasore, visitors cab hire an auto-rickshaw or taxi to reach Chandipur. There are plenty of accommodations near the beach. The Tourism Department of Odisha has a Pantha Nivas. Other places of interest like Remuna, Panchalingeswar, Aradi and Chandaneswar also lie close by.

Balaramgadi Beach

Soak up the sun at the wonderful beach of Balaramgadi, which lies at the convergence of the Budhabalanga River with the Bay of Bengal in Balasore district. Calm and clean, the beach is just two km away from Chandipur Beach. Here, a tourist can enjoy the sun, surf and the sand amidst casuarina plantations. While a walk on the beach in the evening is rejuvenating at any time of the day, the sunrise and sunset cast an especially magical spell. Besides swimming in the turbulent yet clean waters, one can take part in adventure sports, fishing and boat rides. Visitors wishing to fish in the sea can seek the help of local fishermen who will readily volunteer to take their boat for a small price. Smaller in comparison to Chandipur, Balaramgadi Beach is for those who want to unwind away from the cacophony. Visitors can hire an auto-rickshaw from Chandipur Beach to Balaramgadi, which is roughly an hour away. There are limited accommodations here and visitors have to stay near Chandipur Beach. The drive from Chandipur to Balaramgadi is a beautiful one, with green casuarina trees on both the sides.



Centre notifies Master Plan for Delhi-2047: From high-rise housing to private sector developers, city opens up

The Union Minister said the plan will prove to be a milestone in shaping the future of the Capital. "The Master Plan envisages the development of around 40 lakh new affordable housing units, with a focus on meeting the future housing requirements of the city," he added.

Delhi. (Agency)

Delhi is set to shed its low-rise image. After a five-year delay, the Master Plan for Delhi (MPD)-2047 was notified by the Centre on Thursday, unlocking large tracts of the Capital for high-rise housing, dense development and greater private-sector participation. Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Manohar Lal, Lieutenant Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu and Chief Minister Rekha Gupta unveiled the plan, which aims to address Delhi's growing housing and commercial space crunch as its population is projected to rise from the current around 2.2 crore to 3.2 crore by 2047. The Union Minister said the plan will prove to be a milestone in shaping the future of the Capital. "The Master Plan envisages the development of around 40 lakh new affordable housing units, with a focus on meeting the future housing requirements of the city," he added. He added that the implementation of the plan

would be boosted by the "triple engine sarkar" in Delhi, referring to the BJP being in power in the Centre, the state and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi.

"I have no hesitation in admitting that when there are different governments, there tends to be a lack of coordination... The Centre, state and municipality all have the same mindset now," he said.

Building up

Unlike neighbouring Noida and Gurgaon, Delhi has not witnessed large-scale private sector development and remained dominated by low-rise plotted housing and cooperative group housing. MPD-2047 seeks to change that by relaxing density and height restrictions and making large-scale private development more viable.

Height restrictions have been removed across most of Delhi, except the Lutyens' Bungalow Zone, airport areas and villages along the city's borders. Density restrictions have been loosened up in large parts. The

private sector has been incentivised to come in and start playing a bigger role in large-scale development and redevelopment.

18 lakh homes around Metro corridors

The biggest push is expected from the transit-

aims to create the maximum possible number of houses, shops, offices and recreational spaces near public transport facilities. More than 200 sq km along Metro corridors have been opened for dense, high-rise development, with a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) — total size of all floors one can build compared to the size of the land — of 500.

To ensure availability of smaller and affordable homes, developers will have to use 65% of the permissible construction for flats with a carpet area of less than 60 sq m.

High-rises along UER-II

High-rises are expected to come up on either side of the Urban Extension Road II, which cuts across Outer Delhi's Narela, Bawana, Mundka and Najafgarh. Under the High Density Corridor Development policy, an FAR of 400 has been granted for 250 m on either side of the expressway. One-fifth of the permissible FAR will have to be utilised for smaller flats.



Demolitions return to DLF Phase 3, revives fight over homes, rentals and 'illegal' buildings

Delhi. (Agency)

The demolition machines are back in DLF Phase 3, sitting on the edge of Gurgaon's gleaming Cyber City — reopening an old urban battle over who the neighbourhood is really meant to serve. On one side are homeowners who say their once orderly plotted neighbourhood has been transformed into a maze of seven-to-eight-storey illegal commercial tenements, paying guest facilities and choked sewers. On the other are landlords and property owners who argue that the neighbourhood has become an indispensable affordable



housing hub for the corporate workforce of Cyber City and Udyog Vihar. The resumption of the enforcement drive by the Department of Town and Country Planning's (DTCP) brought the fault line into sharp focus. On Tuesday, officials sealed four large multi-storey properties, including a 28-room PG allegedly operating from premises owned by a local councillor and demolished illegal structures carved out of stilt parking spaces.

The protest

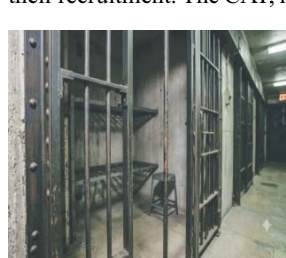
The conflict spilled onto the streets on Wednesday, when hundreds of landlords and property owners gathered at Amar Shaheed Raja Rao Tularam Park for a Maha Panchayat. They urged the Haryana government to frame a pragmatic workforce-housing policy instead of relying on demolitions.

'Discrepancy' in ID verification records: 49 Prison department officials to lose job

Delhi. (Agency)

As many as 49 officials of the Delhi Prisons department will be terminated from service with the Delhi High Court last week setting aside a Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) order that had put a stay on their termination. The affected employees include nine assistant superintendents, 39 warders and two matrons. The action followed a recommendation from the Delhi Subordinate Services Selection Board (DSSSB), which flagged inconsistencies in the identity verification records of the recruits.

In December 2023, the jail authorities had discontinued the services of 50 officials after discrepancies were allegedly detected in their biometric records and photographs during a verification exercise linked to their recruitment. The CAT, however, put a stay on their termination. Only one of them, identified as Ashok Kumar, never joined work. An order signed by the officer in charge of the Establishment Branch, Prison Headquarters, said: "Accordingly, the Impugned Orders of the Tribunal dated 30.04.2024, 27.05.2025.



04.03.2025 and 25.02.2025, challenged in the present batch, are set aside. However, it is declared that the appointment of the Respondents shall stand cancelled." "Consequently, the interim orders passed by the Tribunal in the respective Original Applications, insofar as they continued the Respondents in service, shall stand vacated. The Respondents shall not be entitled to consequential benefits flowing solely from the orders of the Tribunal which have been set aside by this Court," the order stated. Officials said the verification exercise covered 477 prison personnel, appointed in 2020. According to the department, discrepancies were detected in the records of 50, posted across the Tihar, Mandoli and Rohini prison complexes. The employees are currently on probation. Following the DSSSB report, the Prison department issued notices seeking an explanation from those concerned before proceeding with termination of their services.

Karol Bagh heist: 2 men smash SUV window, flee with Rs 2 crore jewellery

Two men allegedly smashed the SUV's rear window with a catapult and fled with three bags and a suitcase containing jewellery.

Delhi. (Agency)

Jewellery worth over Rs 2 crore was stolen from a jeweller's SUV in Delhi's Karol Bagh by two men who allegedly smashed its rear window and fled with three bags and a suitcase on Wednesday. Police suspect the men had been following the vehicle. Three people have been detained for questioning in connection with the case. The jeweller, Kanhaiya Lal, runs

a jewellery business called SKG Kundan Crafts. He had come to Delhi on August 18 along with his son, Dhruv Soni, and a staff member on business. The group stayed at a hotel in South Delhi. On August 19, Lal met several jewellers at the Greater Kailash-M Block market before heading to Karol Bagh for another business-related visit.

According to his police complaint, he was carrying three backpacks and a suitcase. The backpacks contained gold and diamond jewellery, a laptop and an Aadhaar card, while the suitcase contained clothes.

Police said around 5.30 pm, the group parked their SUV on Arya Samaj Road, opposite a Canara Bank branch. Lal, his son and the employee left the bags

and suitcase inside the vehicle and went to a nearby Bikanervala restaurant to eat something. Police said two men on a motorcycle had allegedly been following the SUV for some time.



When the group went inside the restaurant, the suspects allegedly approached the parked vehicle and used a catapult to break the rear window.

'Triple engine sarkar' will boost Delhi Master Plan implementation: Minister

Delhi. (Agency)

With the government notifying the Master Plan for Delhi-2047 on Thursday, Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs Manohar Lal said the implementation of the plan would be boosted by the "triple engine sarkar" in Delhi, referring to the BJP being in power at the Centre, at the state level and also in control at the Municipal Corporation of Delhi.

Announcing the plan's provisions at a press conference, the Minister was asked if there was anything in the document to ensure effective implementation. He said it was "true that there is a multiplicity of authority in Delhi", with the Union government and the Delhi Development Authority under it, the New Delhi Municipal Council, the Delhi government, the Delhi Jal Board and other agencies.

"The opportunity we have now is that,

not just a double engine, but we have a triple engine government. If you see all the masterplans, right from 1962 to the 2021 one, there hasn't been this kind of opportunity," he said. He said that over the years when the plans were



implemented, different parties were in power in Delhi and the Centre. "I have no hesitation in admitting that when there are different governments, there tends to be a lack of coordination... The Centre, state and municipality all have the same mindset now," he said, with

Delhi Lieutenant-Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu and Chief Minister Rekha Gupta seated next to him.

In a report tabled in Parliament earlier this month, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India had flagged lack of implementation of some provisions of the Master Plan 2021. The CAG had recommended that "The Master Plan of Delhi may be monitored regularly as per the prescribed periodicity". Meanwhile, sources in the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs said that the regional plan for the National Capital Region, being prepared by the NCR Planning Board, was likely to have a horizon year of 2047, instead of the earlier planned target of 2041. So far, the master plans have followed a 20-year period anchored by the decadal Census, for example, 2001 and 2021. This time, the government has decided to plan till 2047, when India completes 100 years of Independence.

Cancer drug racket accused | Hospital employees, traders, middlemen: Inside the 'medicine syndicate'

Delhi. (Agency)

A medicine meant to reach a cancer patient allegedly changed hands again and again — moving from hospital stores into the hands of middlemen, traders and distributors before resurfacing in markets. Seventeen people, police said, formed the links in this alleged interstate chain, stretching from Delhi-NCR to Haryana, Mumbai and Hyderabad.

The accused, police said, were not a single organised group operating from one place. They occupied different points in the alleged supply chain — hospital employees who allegedly diverted medicines, intermediaries who connected suppliers to buyers, traders who moved the drugs between cities and retailers who allegedly sold them.

The beginning

The probe began with the arrest of Abhishek Vaishya (26) on July 12, a day after seven teams of the Inter-State Cell, under the supervision of ACP Ramesh Lamba, conducted simultaneous raids at multiple locations. Inspector Kamal Kumar was also involved in the operation.

"A resident of Laxmi Nagar, he was allegedly procuring anti-cancer medicines through unauthorised channels and supplying them further since 2022. Registers, diaries, electronic devices, packaging material, medicines and Rs 4 lakh were recovered from his premises," DCP (Crime Branch) Aditya Gautam said. Over the next 18 days — between July 13 and 31 — 16 more were arrested. Shubham Kumar Chaudhary allegedly bought and sold anti-cancer medicines for cash without valid invoices, while his younger brother, Suraj Chaudhary, allegedly helped him with the supply chain. The brothers were allegedly working together since 2024. Gagan, a wholesale medicine trader from Indirapuram, allegedly procured anti-cancer injections from Satish Kumar and supplied them to Vaishya. Satish, who had worked at a medical store for about a decade, allegedly acted as an intermediary between Gagan and Mukesh, based in Gurgaon.

Mukesh allegedly procured anti-cancer medicines from hospitals and supplied them to pharmacists and brokers. Police recovered 12 vials, other medicines, packaging material and Rs 16.5 lakh from his vehicle.

As news of Sajjan Kumar's death spreads, handful of supporters gather at Safdarjung

Kumar, who had been lodged in Delhi's Tihar Jail since he was sentenced to life imprisonment in 2018, died at Safdarjung Hospital on Thursday afternoon.

Delhi. (Agency)

A group of around 30 supporters gathered outside the police chowki near Safdarjung Hospital after news of the death of former Congress MP Sajjan Kumar, convicted in the 1984 anti-Sikh riots in Delhi, spread on Thursday. Kumar, who had been lodged in Delhi's Tihar Jail since he was sentenced to life imprisonment in 2018, died at Safdarjung Hospital on Thursday afternoon. According to a statement from the hospital, he had been brought in by police at around 11 am with an "altered sensorium." The statement added that Kumar, who suffered from multiple ailments including blood pressure issues and Parkinson's disease, died around 12:30 pm. By Thursday evening, his family was waiting inside

the police chowki near the hospital while the legal procedures required for the release of his body, since he died in custody, were completed. The crowd outside numbered around 30 people, most of them former supporters from his days as an influential Delhi Congress leader. Kumar was elected to the Lok Sabha from Outer Delhi three times since 1980, but resigned from the party in December 2018 after being convicted in the 1984 anti-Sikh riots case. The case was related to the killing of five Sikhs at Raj Nagar Part I in Palam Colony on November 1-2, 1984, and the burning down of a gurdwara in Raj Nagar Part II. Among those present was his 65-year-old long-time personal secretary, Kailash Khurana, who had accompanied him to every court hearing over the years. Incidentally, Kumar's appeal



against his 2018 sentencing was scheduled to be heard on Thursday. "His Mahila Congress leader Pushpa Satbir hearing was listed for today. He was in very poor health," Khurana said. Other former colleagues who were present near the hospital included former Nangloi MLA Bijender Singh and Delhi

Mahila Congress leader Pushpa Satbir Singh. "We will leave the house with the body in the morning tomorrow. It'll be kept at Madipur, in his former office," said Bijender Singh.

IRDAI bars Niva Bupa from opening new offices for six months

MUMBAI. (Agency)

Niva Bupa Health Insurance has been barred from opening any new places of business for six months by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), after the insurer failed to comply with prescribed expense management limits for the 2024-25 financial year.

Niva Bupa disclosed the regulatory order in a filing to the stock exchanges. The company said it is evaluating the order and will take appropriate steps to safeguard the interests of its stakeholders. The regulatory action relates to Niva Bupa's non-compliance with the prescribed limits on expenses of management for the financial year 2024-25.

Under the order, the insurer cannot open any new places of business for six months. Niva Bupa, however, said the issue relates to the 2024-25 financial year and that it has subsequently been compliant with the applicable regulations.

The company said it was in compliance with the IRDAI (Expenses of Management, including Commission of Insurers) Regulations, 2024 for the full 2025-26 financial year, which ended on March 31, 2026, as well as for the April-June quarter of 2026. It also said it is on track to remain compliant with the regulations for the ongoing financial year. The insurer also clarified that its compliance position has improved since the period for which the regulatory action was taken. According to the company, it has complied with the expense management regulations during FY26 and the first quarter of the current financial year. The order restricts the opening of new business locations for six months, but the available details do not indicate that Niva Bupa has been barred from continuing operations at its existing locations.

Tata cars to get costlier by up to Rs 25,000 from September 1. Details here

New Delhi. (Agency)

Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Ltd. will increase prices across its car and SUV portfolio by up to Rs 25,000 from September 1, making its vehicles more expensive for buyers from next month.

The price hike will cover both internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles and electric vehicles (EVs), the company said in a press release on Friday. The increase will vary across models and variants rather than being a flat Rs 25,000 hike across the entire range. Tata Motors has not specified which individual models or variants will see the maximum Rs 25,000 increase in its announcement.

Instead, the company said the price revision will apply across its portfolio, with the extent of the increase varying by model and variant. This means the actual impact on buyers will depend on the car and variant they choose. The hike will apply to both Tata's ICE vehicles and electric cars, according to the company.

WHY IS TATA MOTORS HIKING PRICES?

Tata Motors said the price revision is aimed at dealing with higher costs faced by the company. "This price revision is being undertaken to partially offset the impact of rising input costs and sustained inflationary pressures," the company said.

Asian shares are mixed following Wall Street losses as US Treasury's moves fail to calm markets

HONG KONG. (Agency)

Asian shares were mixed on Friday following a retreat on Wall Street as a US Treasury Department plan to boost its government debt buybacks had only limited capacity to calm markets.

US futures edged higher.

Japan's Nikkei 225 fell 0.2 per cent to 66,080.25. South Korea's Kospi climbed 0.9 per cent to 6,914.09. Hong Kong's Hang Seng added 0.7 per cent to 25,888.36, while the Shanghai Composite index was unchanged at 3,903.81.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 was trading 0.3 per cent lower at 9,053.90. Taiwan's Taixex gained 0.4 per cent, while India's Sensex was 0.1 per cent lower.

The Treasury Department announced Wednesday that it will at least double the size of its planned purchases of longer-term government debt, while Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent signalled on Thursday that the repurchase programme could be larger.

The announcement temporarily brought down government bond yields, which have been elevated under concerns about high inflation partly caused by the war in Iran and rising US government debt. Higher yields tend to slow the broader economy due to increased borrowing costs across the financial system and can undercut stock prices. But analysts said they expect the effect on bond yields to be temporary. The yield of the US 10-year Treasury was at around 4.71 per cent early Friday, up from nearly 4.64 per cent on Thursday and back to around the level before the Treasury department's announcement. The 30-year Treasury yield was at about 5.26 per cent, up from 5.18 per cent on Thursday. In Asia, bond yields also rose again. Japan's 10-year government bond yield, which had been trading near 30-year highs, rose to 2.88 per cent from around 2.83 per cent on Thursday.

Gold, silver jump over 5% this week: Is it still the right time to buy?

With gold and silver climbing this week, investors face a tough call: chase the rally, hold their positions or cash out?

New Delhi. (Agency)

Gold and silver are back in the spotlight, and this time the rally is being driven by more than just investor demand for safe-haven assets. Falling US Treasury yields, a weaker dollar and fresh geopolitical tensions are giving precious metals another push higher.

At 12:50 pm on Friday, MCX gold was trading at Rs 1,60,815 per 10 grams, up 0.87%, while MCX silver was at Rs 2,45,456 per kg, gaining 0.91%. Precious

metals have also had a strong week. According to Dr Renisha Chainani, Chief Research Officer (CRO) at Augmont, gold and silver have gained more than 5% this week.

WHY ARE GOLD AND SILVER PRICES RISING?

One of the biggest triggers has been the latest move by the US Treasury. The Treasury has announced plans to at least double its long-term debt buybacks in the coming quarter. The move is aimed at helping contain borrowing costs and has pushed US Treasury yields lower.

A fall in US bond yields tends to support gold because investors earn less from interest-bearing assets. At the same time, a weaker US dollar makes dollar-priced gold more affordable for buyers using other currencies. "Precious metals have jumped more than 5% this week after the US Treasury Department

announced plans to at least double its long-term debt buybacks in an effort to contain borrowing costs, driving Treasury yields and the dollar sharply



lower," said Chainani. The move has therefore created a favourable backdrop for both gold and silver.

IRAN TENSIONS ADD ANOTHER LAYER OF SUPPORT

Geopolitical tensions are also keeping investors cautious.

Oil prices have extended their gains as the US prepares sweeping new economic sanctions against Iran. The two sides remain locked in a standoff over the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most important routes for global oil shipments. US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has said the US would impose what he described as the "toughest sanctions in history" on Iran. For financial markets, any escalation around the Strait of Hormuz could have wider consequences, particularly for energy prices and inflation. This uncertainty can also push investors towards assets such as gold, which is traditionally viewed as a safe haven.

US TREASURY BUYBACKS REMAIN A KEY MARKET SIGNAL

The US Treasury's debt-buyback plan is another factor that investors will be watching closely.

When does EPF stop earning interest? EPFO explains rules for inoperative accounts

New Delhi. (Agency)

Your EPF account may continue to exist even after you stop working, but that does not necessarily mean it will keep earning interest forever. The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has now highlighted an important point that many salaried employees may not be aware of. In a post on X, EPFO said that members who take early retirement before the age of 55 can continue to earn interest on their EPF balance until they turn 58. After that, the account becomes inoperative.

RETIRING BEFORE 55? YOUR EPF CAN STILL EARN INTEREST

Consider a person who retires at the age of 54. The person may no longer

receive monthly EPF contributions from an employer, but that does not mean the existing EPF balance immediately stops earning interest.



Under the current framework, interest can continue until the member reaches 58. So, in this example, the four years between leaving employment and turning 58 remain important for the EPF balance. The same principle applies to someone who retires at 52 or 53.

The account can continue earning interest until the member reaches 58, subject to the applicable EPF rules.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE AGE OF 58?

Once the member reaches 58, the account becomes inoperative under the applicable rules and interest is no longer credited. The distinction is important: an inoperative account does not mean the money has disappeared. The EPF balance remains associated with the member. The issue is that the balance no longer earns interest once the account becomes inoperative.

The government had earlier clarified that, under the EPF Scheme, interest is credited up to the age of 58 and not after an account becomes inoperative.

Vu launches new Glo Mini-LED TV in India: Price, features and more

MUMBAI. (Agency)

The new Vu Glo Mini-LED TV comes in four screen sizes and features QD Mini-LED technology, AI-based picture enhancement, Dolby Atmos and gaming-focused features. Vu Televisions has expanded its smart TV portfolio in India with the launch of the Glo Mini-LED TV. The new television combines a QD Mini-LED panel with AI-based image processing, a 50W audio setup and features aimed at gamers and OTT viewers. The Glo Mini-LED starts at Rs 42,500 and will be sold in 43-inch, 50-inch, 55-inch and 65-inch variants. It will be available from August 7 through Amazon and Vu's retail network across the country.

QD MINI-LED DISPLAY AND AI PROCESSING

The biggest highlight of the new TV is its QD Mini-LED panel, paired with Full Array Local Dimming. The technology divides the backlight into independently controlled zones, allowing the TV to adjust brightness across different parts of the screen. This is intended to improve contrast, particularly between dark and bright areas. The television can reach up to 600 nits of HDR brightness and supports both Dolby Vision and HDR10. Vu has also equipped the TV with its VuON AI Processor. It uses a set of AI-based features to process

and enhance the picture, including AI Picture Quality, AI Colour Enhancement, AI Contrast Optimisation and AI Upscaling. The company says the processing is not limited to 4K content and can also be used to improve the appearance of cable TV, regional channels and compressed streaming content. The TV has 2 GB RAM and 16GB of internal storage, along with G52 HDR Graphics.

120 HZ REFRESH RATE AND OTHER GAMING FEATURES

The Glo Mini-LED also comes with several features aimed at gaming. It has a 120Hz High-Speed Refresh rate and supports Variable Refresh Rate (VRR), Auto Low Latency Mode (ALLM) and a dedicated Game Mode. On the audio front, Vu has fitted the television with a 50W 2.2-channel VuFX system. It consists of dual speakers and two dedicated woofers. Dolby Atmos is supported, along with Dialogue Enhancer and Surround Mode.

The television runs on Google TV and offers access to personalised recommendations and streaming services. Users can also control the TV using voice commands. It supports Chromecast, Apple AirPlay and Apple HomeKit, and comes with two Bluetooth-enabled voice remotes.

Bengaluru couple earns Rs 2.5 lakh a month, but is trapped in debt. Here's why

New Delhi. (Agency)

A 29-year-old Bengaluru man and his wife bring home a combined Rs 2.5 lakh every month. They do not party much, rarely eat out and say they try to live relatively simply.

Yet, the family is caught in a debt trap.

A recent Reddit post by the man has struck a chord online after he laid out how a series of big expenses — a wedding, a house renovation, multiple loans and mounting credit-card bills — left him struggling despite what appears to be a healthy monthly income. The post is a reminder that a high salary does not necessarily mean financial security. What matters is how much of that income is already committed before the month has even begun.

WHERE THE MONEY IS GOING

The man said his combined post-tax household income is Rs 2.5 lakh a month. But a significant part



of it is tied up in EMIs and other fixed expenses. That adds up to about Rs 2.09 lakh a month, leaving only around Rs 41,000 before accounting for other irregular expenses, emergencies or unexpected costs. And that is where the problem lies.

WHAT EXACTLY HAPPENED?

The financial pressure, according to the man, began after two major expenses came in quick succession. His wedding cost more than Rs 30 lakh, which he said was partly funded by selling stocks. He later had to take a Rs 5 lakh personal loan at an interest rate of 9.1% after falling short of cash at the last minute.

At the same time, his family undertook a Rs 35 lakh renovation of their house, including the construction of an additional floor that could eventually be rented out. He put Rs 15 lakh from his savings into the project and borrowed another Rs 20 lakh.

He also has a car loan with around Rs 3 lakh still outstanding. The result is that much of what was once his savings has either been spent or converted into an illiquid asset, while the loans taken for these expenses continue to generate monthly obligations.

Can NSE trade its shares on its own platform? Explained

IANs cited sources from a news website and reported that the National Stock Exchange (NSE) is looking to trade its shares on its own platform, while remaining formally listed only on the BSE.

New Delhi. (Agency)

Can the National Stock Exchange (NSE) allow trading in its own shares on its platform? The question has gained prominence after a report suggests that NSE is exploring the 'Permitted to Trade' (PTT) route to allow its shares to be traded on NSE while remaining formally listed on the BSE. IANs cited sources from a news website and reported that the National Stock Exchange (NSE) is looking to trade its shares on its own platform, while remaining formally listed only on the BSE. Under the existing regulatory framework, self-listing of a



stock exchange is not permitted, it added. It further noted that the exchange would therefore need approval from the market regulator — the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) — for its shares to be admitted for trading on its own platform. However, the PTT framework allows securities to be traded on NSE without being formally listed on the exchange. Companies admitted under the mechanism continue to remain listed on

their primary stock exchange.

Earlier in May, NSE had issued FAQs and clarified the framework for securities admitted under the PTT category on its mainboard segment. Under the framework, companies are not required to execute a separate listing agreement with NSE, while existing disclosures made to the primary exchange are considered sufficient. However, trading in PTT securities remains subject to

NSE's surveillance and regulatory mechanisms. Securities admitted under PTT can subsequently seek full listing on the exchange, subject to applicable eligibility conditions, while the exchange retains the authority to suspend or prohibit dealings, it added. If approved for NSE, the arrangement would mean the exchange remains formally listed on the BSE while its shares could also be traded on NSE, giving investors an additional trading venue. The development comes ahead of NSE's proposed initial public offering. The exchange filed its draft red herring prospectus with SEBI in June for an IPO comprising an offer for sale of 14.89 crore equity shares. NSE's listing plans were first initiated in 2016 but were delayed amid regulatory scrutiny related to the co-location controversy. Separately, NSE reported an 8.2 per cent sequential decline in consolidated revenue from operations to Rs 4,560 crore for the quarter ended June 30, while net profit rose 8.7 per cent to Rs 3,120 crore.

Trapped inside jewellery store and surrounded by local residents, thieves dial 112 for Gujarat 'police help'

Surat.(Agency)

An attempted jewellery heist saw an unusual turn when the alleged thieves, fearing they would be beaten up by the public, called the police control room and turned themselves in after being trapped inside the store they had targeted. The incident took place in the coastal town of Sanjan in Umargam taluka of Gujarat's Valsad district early Thursday. The burglars, originally from Uttar Pradesh and staying in Mumbai – Dinesh Sonkar (32), a resident of Boisar and Vipin Pathak (27), a resident of Nalasopara – broke into BR Jewellery in Sanjan around 3 am on Thursday. According to the police, the duo had cut the lock to open the shutter and enter the store. They were packing the ornaments, valuables and cash into their bags when neighbours woke up, hearing the noises. Meanwhile, there was a power outage as a result of which local residents came out of their homes. A friend of shop owner Manish Sharma, who lived opposite the store, woke up to the sounds and raised an alarm, and several people gathered near the store. Meanwhile, the local residents downed the shutter, trapping the thieves inside. Sharma also turned up at the site soon.

Scared that the public gathered outside would beat them up, one of the burglars, Sonkar, called the emergency helpline number 112, which led the police to the spot. Talking to The Indian Express, Umargam police inspector H D Tuvur said, "Dinesh Sonkar called the Emergency helpline number and said that they were trapped in a jewellery shop, surrounded by people.

14 gunshots fired in public: Gangster shot dead inside Haryana court complex

Chandigarh.(Agency)

Gangster Vinod Panu alias Kana was shot dead, and one of his associates was injured after two men opened indiscriminate fire inside the Hisar court complex in Haryana on Thursday afternoon. The police said around 14 rounds were fired, triggering panic and chaos across the premises. The incident occurred around 2.30 pm when Kana and his associate entered through the court gate for a court appearance in a case. According to preliminary information, two men riding a motorcycle opened fire on them. According to eyewitnesses, lawyers and litigants were seen running for cover during the firing. Police rushed to the spot and shifted the injured men to a government hospital, where doctors declared Kana dead. "The police have arrested one of the accused allegedly involved in the firing. His identity cannot be revealed now as he is being interrogated," Mayank Mudgil, Assistant Superintendent of Police, Hisar, said. The police said 31 criminal cases had been registered against Kana. His record included the murder of Sanjay alias Bittu Sharma, the nephew of Lalit Sharma, who serves as the personal assistant to Hisar MLA Savitri Jindal.

Gujarat's groundwater under growing stress

AHMEDABAD.(Agency)

Gujarat's groundwater stress is rising, with extraction increasing faster than natural replenishment, according to the Dynamic Ground Water Resources of India, 2025 report of the Ministry of Jal Shakti. The state's groundwater extraction level rose from 54.21% in 2024 to 55.95% in 2025, while recharge remained largely unchanged. The Central Ground Water Board's (CGWB) 2025 assessment shows Gujarat extracted 14.33 billion cubic metres (bcm) of groundwater against an annual extractable resource of 25.61 bcm. Groundwater extraction rose from 13.86 bcm in 2024 to 14.33 bcm in 2025, a 3.4% year-on-year increase. Meanwhile, annual groundwater recharge remained unchanged at 27.58 bcm. The rising extraction, despite virtually stagnant recharge, pushed Gujarat's groundwater extraction stage from 54.21% to 55.95%, signalling mounting pressure on the state's groundwater resources. Agriculture accounted for 13.25 bcm, or 92.5%, of groundwater extraction in 2025. Domestic use was 0.88 bcm and industrial extraction 0.20 bcm, according to the CGWB. The figures underline the state's dependence on groundwater for farming and its sensitivity to rainfall and irrigation demand. Of 252 assessment units, only 181 are Safe. The remaining include 31 Semi-Critical, three Critical and 25 Over-Exploited units. Another 12 units are saline, putting nearly one-fourth of Gujarat's groundwater systems under pressure or degradation. North Gujarat is the worst affected. Banaskantha has an extraction stage of 121.47%, with eight of its 14 units Over-Exploited, including Dantiwada, Deesa, Palanpur and Tharad. Patan and Mahesana recorded extraction stages of 118.57% and 108.74%, respectively, with multiple Over-Exploited and Critical units.

10 injured as crane collapses onto railway wires, structures in Mumbai's Kurla

The hydraulic crane was lifting an excavator at an under-construction 17-storey building in Kurla when part of it fell.

Mumbai.(Agency)

At least 10 people, including two children, were injured after part of a hydraulic crane at an under-construction building in Mumbai's Kurla collapsed onto high-tension railway overhead wires, nearby slum huts, and a road early Friday, damaging several structures and vehicles. The Chunnabhatti police said they received information at around 4 am that a part of the crane had collapsed. "We reached the spot and rescued several people. They were sent to local hospitals," Manisha Kulkarni, Senior Police Inspector, Chunnabhatti Police Station, said.

According to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), the hydraulic crane was being used to lift an excavator to the top of a ground-plus-17-floor under-construction building, where Sunny Company was carrying out demolition work. During the operation, part of the crane fell, damaging overhead railway wires and nearby structures in Qureshi

Nagar, as well as the road in Samrat Ashok Nagar. The crane also damaged the compound wall of a Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA) building

positioned at the site, it tilted and fell towards an adjoining structure. The ground at the location was soft, which appears to have affected the stability of the crane," it said in a statement.

"MMRDA immediately mobilised the required machinery and manpower, and removal of the fallen crane is being undertaken on priority. The site has been secured and all necessary precautionary measures are being taken," it added. The Authority said it is providing all necessary medical care and support to the injured. According to BMC, eight injured people were taken to Sion Hospital, and two were shifted to Kurla Bhabha Hospital. Senior Police Inspector Kulkarni said that out of the 10, two people are in hospital and the others have been discharged.

Dr Navin, Assistant Medical Officer, Sion Hospital, said a three-month-old boy and a 10-year-old boy were among those being treated. The other injured are aged between 19 and 63 years and are in stable condition, he added.



In 'dry state' Gujarat, a barcode warning after toxic liquor kills 7

Ahmedabad.(Agency)

In the aftermath of seven deaths due to contaminated liquor, authorities in Gujarat's Bhavnagar have warned the public against bottles of a whisky brand with a particular barcode. The move is ironic in a state that has been under prohibition since 1960s. The State Monitoring Cell, Gujarat's specialised agency to implement prohibition, has found in its investigation that the seven victims drank from bottles with a common barcode: 8901522000665. This barcode was printed on bottles of the IMFL – Indian-Made Foreign Liquor – seized and found to contain contaminated liquor. Senior police officers The Indian Express spoke to have not commented on how many such bottles have been recovered, and how many are estimated to be out in the market. "Everyone is requested to note that the photo of the bottle and the sticker on it, which was

consumed by people at Vartej Police Station in Bhavnagar, due to which people died and were seriously injured, is presented below. If any person has such a bottle or alcohol with a sticker on it, then they should immediately



destroy it and not consume it," the State Monitoring Cell said in a statement. "If any person has consumed the bottle or alcohol with the sticker shown below, they are requested to immediately get their health checked at the nearest hospital. Keep in mind

the barcode mentioned in the photo of the bottle and the number shown below it," it added. Asked why the State Monitoring Cell had asked people to destroy liquor instead of handing it to police, which could keep a count of the number of bottles seized and in circulation, an investigator said, "Who will come forward to implicate themselves as having purchased liquor in a state with prohibition? The next best thing was to appeal to people to destroy it. Our first priority is to stop any more people from consuming the tainted liquor. Everything rest follows."

What probe has found so far The investigation so far has revealed that an ill-informed attempt to distill liquor led to the tragedy. In fact, one of those allegedly involved in the liquor-making is among the victims. Forensic lab reports have shown that the drink consumed by the victims contained 38.59 per cent methanol, a highly toxic substance not found in licensed alcoholic beverages.

4 in 10 voters missed in 25 Maharashtra seats. Every one of them is a city seat

Lucknow.(Agency)

In Maharashtra's 25 of 288 Assembly constituencies, all of which are urban, the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) forms of over 40 per cent voters could not be collected – their names would not find place in the draft roll that would be published on August 31. An analysis of constituency-wise data accessed by The Indian Express has found that of the 25, 17 are in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, seven in Pune and one in Nagpur.

These 25 constituencies have 1.10 crore electors, of whom 48.17 lakh, or 43.7 per cent, could not be traced. This account for nearly a quarter of all uncollected forms in the state. Statewide, forms of 2.07 crore of Maharashtra's 9.78 crore electors, or 21.16 per cent, could not be collected.

Those voters are liable to be left out of the draft roll and will then have to file a claim to get their names back on it. Bhiwandi East seat recorded the highest rate, 49.11 per cent, nearly two-and-a-half times the state average.



Forms of almost half its electoral (1.84 lakh of its 3.76 lakh voters) could not be collected. Colaba seat follows at 46.98 per cent, Khadakwasla at 46.64, Nalasopara at 46.43 and Kothrud at

46.26. Kalyan Rural and Hadapsar complete the list of seven seats where forms of more than 45 per cent of voters went uncollected. Rate and volume tell different stories. Nalasopara has the largest number of uncollected forms anywhere in the state – 3.07 lakh of 6.62 lakh voters – because its electorate is far bigger. Hadapsar follows with 2.98 lakh, Panvel 2.83 lakh, Khadakwasla 2.78 lakh and Kalyan Rural 2.52 lakh.

Many Booth Level Officers blame the urban concentration on the difficulty of reaching voters. Dense housing clusters, high-rise buildings and a highly mobile population make door-to-door verification harder. In Mumbai, Thane and Pune, residents have reported BLOs not reaching individual homes, with forms left at building gates instead.

Haryana notifies Rs 7.5 lakh compensation for deaths in police custody

Mumbai.(Agency)

The Haryana government has notified a policy providing Rs 7.5 lakh compensation for deaths in police custody caused by torture, inhuman treatment or negligence, with at least 50% of the amount to be recovered from the salary of the guilty police officer, an official on Thursday said.

The Haryana Home Department notified the policy through a Gazette notification following the intervention of the Haryana Human Rights Commission (HHRC) while adjudicating a complaint filed by Pinjore resident Parvesh Sharma.

In his complaint, Sharma had alleged that despite being granted regular bail by a Kalka court, he was illegally detained by the police on July 15, 2025, and allegedly subjected to physical assault and third-degree torture, following which his condition became critical. He had also alleged that the Home Department denied him any compensation. During the proceedings, Commission member Deep Bhatia took serious note of the allegations and questioned the adequacy of departmental action against the police personnel concerned, as well as the denial of compensation. The Commission observed that torture, assault and illegal detention in police custody constituted serious violations of human rights and emphasised that departmental penalties alone were insufficient to address such cases.

'I attended classes but can't speak': 1,268 auto and cab drivers get notices on Day 1 of Marathi test

Flying squads tested 8,217 taxi and auto drivers across Maharashtra on Thursday. In the Mumbai region, 604 of 3,995 were served notices. Each has a month to learn, or lose the badge for three.

Mumbai.(Agency)

At Dadar's Swaminarayan Temple on Thursday, the usual bustle of taxis picking up passengers gave way to roadside Marathi tests, with RTO officials stopping drivers and asking them to respond in Marathi to everyday requests about destinations, fares, travel time, UPI payments and routes. By the end of the first day of the crackdown, 8,217 drivers had been tested across Maharashtra, with 1,268 notices issued to those found lacking the required Marathi knowledge, including 604 notices among 3,995 drivers tested across the Mumbai Metropolitan Region.

The figures marked the first day of enforcement of the Maharashtra Transport Department's requirement that taxi and autorickshaw drivers demonstrate a working knowledge of Marathi. Flying squads were deployed across Mumbai and

the Mumbai Metropolitan Region. An RTO officer said the assessment was based on 15 to 16 questions. "The process is very simple. We have a list of 15 to 16 questions based on which we are analysing whether the driver knows Marathi. If he fails, then we are issuing notice to him," the officer said.

The exercise, officials stressed, is not meant to test fluency. The idea is to determine whether a driver can understand and respond to the basic Marathi needed while dealing with passengers. "The questions which are issued by the government help to analyse whether the driver has knowledge to carry out the business. He should be able to answer the questions of the passengers. It is not expected that the driver will have proficiency in the language," the officer said. For some drivers, the first day exposed the difference between attending a Marathi class and being confident enough to use the language. Taxi driver Arvind Mourya, who

had attended the classes, was served a notice. "I have attended the classes, but I am not very confident to speak. I will take YouTube classes and speak the language.



After one month they will check my proficiency in the language and I am sure I will be able to crack it," he said. Another driver, Iqbal Ahmed, said his work

requirement is intended to ensure that taxi and autorickshaw drivers can understand passengers and communicate with them in Marathi. schedule had prevented him from attending the classes. "We are all drivers and have a busy schedule due to which I was unable to attend the classes, but now that I have been served notice I will learn the language," he said. The checks also led to a heated exchange with one taxi driver, who insisted that he knew Marathi but questioned why the exercise was being conducted. During the argument, he accused officials of bringing "politics" into the language issue and repeatedly questioned the need for the checks. Officials and others at the spot attempted to calm him down as the exchange continued. The Transport Department says the

Gujarat teachers get online portal for service-related matters

Ahmedabad.(Agency)

The Gujarat government has launched an online portal for schoolteachers to help them avail provident funds, get their leaves sanctioned, recover salary arrears and resolve other service-related issues. Named 'Seva Samadhan', the portal aims to help nearly three lakh teachers spend more time in classrooms than in government offices, officials said. The portal can be accessed even from a smartphone, thus cutting down the red tape associated with government processes, they added.

"Issues arising during the entire span of a teacher's service journey, from appointment to retirement, are consolidated into one portal, which is accessible from anywhere", said one of them. The officials said teachers spend an estimated six months or more visiting government offices to resolve service-related issues. One of the most common issues was the migration of fixed-pay teachers hired as vidya sahayaks to permanent staffers. The Directorate of Primary Education hires teachers as Vidya Sahayaks for a fixed term of five years after which they are made permanent on a higher pay grade. According to the Akhil Bharatiya Rashtriya Shaikshik Mahasangh, an RSS-affiliated teachers' body, at least 5,500 teachers were due for full grade pay this year. Of them, around 250 had approached the association to escalate their issue to the government.

Education department officials said teachers would get 'demotivated', which would impact their performance in the classroom, if the pay grades they were eligible for were not effected, entitled leaves or leave travel allowance not processed, and so on. "The cumulative effect was lost teaching time, delayed resolution of legitimate service matters, and a governance process that ran on scattered paper trails rather than accountable digital records.

NEWS BOX

Marcus Rashford gets Carrick's backing as Man Utd future hangs in the balance



New Delhi. (Agency)

Manchester United manager Michael Carrick has praised Marcus Rashford's attitude and physical condition after the England forward returned to the club following his loan spell at Barcelona, but his long-term future at Old Trafford remains uncertain. Rashford spent last season on loan at Barcelona, helping the Catalan club win the title, after previously falling out of favour under former United manager Ruben Amorim. The academy graduate had also spent time on loan at Aston Villa before moving to Spain. With the new Premier League season approaching, Rashford remains one of the biggest talking points around United. However, Carrick has been impressed by what he has seen since the forward returned to training.

"It's been pretty obvious since Marcus came back training with Kobbie (Mainoo) and Licha (Lisandro Martinez) pretty much in Dublin that he's come back fantastically well," Carrick told reporters on Thursday ahead of United's trip to Hull City. He's enjoying his football, he looks fit, he looks sharp, he looks strong, he looks ready to play football. So I've been delighted with him since he's come back."

RASHFORD READY TO PLAY

Rashford returned to the United squad during the club's recent training camp in the Republic of Ireland before making his first pre-season appearance against AC Milan in Wroclaw last Saturday. He came on as a second-half substitute in the final pre-season fixture. Carrick also suggested Rashford could have a role through the middle if required, although he stopped short of identifying it as the forward's best position.

Carlos Alcaraz is set to return from a wrist injury and defend his US Open title

NEW YORK. (Agency)

Carlos Alcaraz is ready to return from injury to defend his U.S. Open title. "Here we go," Alcaraz posted on his social media pages Thursday, with one picture showing him in front of the U.S. Open logo. The seven-time Grand Slam champion has been sidelined since April because of a right wrist injury, forcing him to miss both the French Open and Wimbledon.

Alcaraz won his second U.S. Open title last year, beating Jannik Sinner in the final. He then won the Australian Open and his next tournament, part of his 22-3 start to this



season. But after winning his first match in the Barcelona Open, Alcaraz withdrew from the tournament because of the injury. He is still ranked No. 2 despite his absence. Photos and videos on social media had shown Alcaraz on the practice court, so it appeared he was on the verge of returning during the hard-court swing preceding the U.S. Open before he withdrew from the Cincinnati Open. That tournament is ongoing, and during a match Wednesday night commentators speculated whether Alcaraz would attempt to come back to play a Grand Slam tournament without preparation. The top-ranked Sinner has also been out of action, not playing since winning the Wimbledon title. He pulled out of the Cincinnati tournament with a right knee injury, saying he would focus on being ready to play in New York. Their injuries should create more intrigue for the last Grand Slam tournament of the year than there was in 2025, when they had met in the final at both the French Open and Wimbledon, and were widely expected to do so again in New York.

India teams clear first hurdle at Hockey World Cups. But what's the road ahead?

India's men's and women's teams have negotiated difficult group stages to reach the second phase of their World Cups. Now the margins shrink, with the men chasing lost points and the women facing the tournament's most ruthless attacks.

New Delhi. (Agency)

Sometimes, the toughest part is getting out of the pool stages. The Indian men's and women's teams know all about that after ensuring that they made it to the second phase of the tournament. The men's and the women's teams finished second in their groups respectively to make it to the next round of pool games, where the stakes will be even higher. The path to reaching the phase was anything but easy. If you take the

case of the men's team, they won their first match against Wales, but suffered a hammering loss to England. This meant that the clash with Pakistan was a do-or-die clash. They were able to dig deep in the end and secure a 5-3 win to progress.

As for the women's team, it was more about showing themselves that they belonged on the big stage. Since the Tokyo Olympics, Indian eves were looking for a spark to reignite the fire in them. Missing out on the Paris Olympics and being dumped out of the Hockey Pro League in 2025 meant they had to look for answers. They went back to the reliable hands of Sjoerd Marijne, who came in with a different set of people working with him and a new vision. The younger crop of talent had the quality and willpower to succeed and they were able to find draws against China and England and scored a massive 6-1 win over South Africa. Their draw against England was a testament to their character and resilience as they held on and thwarted every single attack thrown at them.

Now both teams await tougher opponents, who will throw bigger challenges as they look to make it to the semi-finals.

WHAT INDIA DID RIGHT IN GROUP STAGES

When it comes to the men's team, there are a



lot of things they were able to get right when it comes to creating chances. The penalty corner conversion has been good, with captain Harmanpreet Singh scoring five goals so far. Field goals seemed to be coming at a premium during the first two games, but India found two against

Pakistan, thanks to Abhishek. For the women's team, they have shown different facets to their game. What has been great to see is the intensity they have maintained in all the matches without a significant drop off in energy. They haven't depended on one

person for all the goals with everyone chipping in during the matches against China and South Africa. Against England, it was the goalkeepers Savita and Bichu Devi who stole the show with their impressive saves. The defence also remained compact and alert to thwarting danger at all times.

WHAT INDIA NEEDS TO IMPROVE ON

For the men's team, it is the defence that is being a headache at the moment.

While going forward, goals have been coming in, they have also been conceding a lot.

India finished with eight goals conceded, with most of them coming off defensive errors. Often the defenders have been found wanting, and that has led to India conceding many.

India vs Bangladesh series could be pushed back again, says BCB chief Tamim Iqbal

Dhaka. (Agency)

India's scheduled tour of Bangladesh could be pushed back yet again, with the two cricket boards still discussing the dates for the six-match series. With the opening ODI currently scheduled for September 3, the uncertainty has also forced the Bangladesh Cricket Board to keep its domestic calendar flexible.

India are due to play three ODIs and three T20Is during the tour, which was already moved from August 2025 to September 2026. However, the BCCI has not publicly confirmed the itinerary, while BCB president Tamim Iqbal said talks over the series are still continuing. "Both boards remain in discussion about the India series. The dates may be shifted here or there," Tamim said at a press conference in Dhaka. The uncertainty became more apparent after the BCB announced its

Game Development Trophy, a competition involving Under-17, Under-19 and Under-



23 players. The tournament is currently scheduled at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur from August 28 to September 9, overlapping with India's proposed tour. "Both boards remain in discussion about the India series. The dates may be shifted here or there," Tamim said at a press conference in Dhaka.

The uncertainty became more apparent after the BCB announced its Game

Development Trophy, a competition involving Under-17, Under-19 and Under-23 players. The tournament is currently scheduled at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur from August 28 to September 9, the lack of a public confirmation from the BCCI has kept questions over the tour alive, particularly with the September 3 start date now approaching.

Relations between the two boards also went through a difficult phase earlier this year. Tensions followed the Kolkata Knight Riders episode involving Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman and later intensified when Bangladesh declined to travel to India for the T20 World Cup, overlapping with India's proposed tour.

AUS vs BAN: Renshaw returns as Australia resist dropping Lyon for 2nd Test in Mackay

Bengaluru. (Agency)

Australia have made just one change to their XI for the second Test against Bangladesh in Mackay, bringing Matt Renshaw back to the top of the order as they look to level the series after their surprise defeat in Darwin.

Renshaw replaces Jake Weatherald, who has been dropped after just one Test, and will return to the opening role he occupied earlier in his Test career. The 30-year-old last played a Test for Australia in 2023, when he featured in the middle order during the tour of India. His return to the top of the order revives memories of his breakthrough Test campaign in 2016-17, when Renshaw scored his maiden Test century against Pakistan as a 20-year-old. Australia had also considered making a significant change to their bowling attack, with the conditions in



central Queensland prompting discussions over whether Nathan Lyon could be left out in favour of Scott Boland and an all-pace attack. However, selectors ultimately decided against the gamble, with Lyon retaining his place for the Mackay Test.

LYON RETAINS HIS PLACE

Australia had twice opted for all-seam attacks in pink-ball Tests last year, but Lyon's omission from a red-ball Test when fit would have represented a far more significant call. The veteran spinner has therefore retained his place as Australia attempt to respond to their defeat in Darwin and avoid losing the two-match series. Pat Cummins had indicated on the eve of the match that selectors wanted more time before settling on the make-up of the attack.

Ex-Australia star hits maiden T20I century after switching allegiance to Portugal

New Delhi. (Agency)

Former Australian cricketer Moises Henriques marked his international switch to Portugal in emphatic fashion, smashing his maiden T20I century just three matches into his new career for the European nation. Henriques struck 111 off just 51 deliveries against Czech Republic in the Men's T20 World Cup European qualifier on Thursday, August 21, producing a blistering innings that featured 12 boundaries and seven sixes. The veteran all-rounder walked in at No. 3 after Portugal lost a wicket from the opening delivery but wasted little time settling into his innings. His aggressive knock propelled Portugal to 211/6 before rain intervened, with the hosts eventually securing a 91-run victory via the Duckworth-Lewis method. The result gave Portugal their fourth consecutive victory of the tournament and

kept their hopes of reaching the 2028 ICC Men's T20 World Cup firmly alive.

HENRIQUES MAKES INSTANT IMPACT



Henriques' century is particularly significant given that he never managed to score a hundred during his international career with Australia, despite representing the country 44 times across Tests, ODIs and T20Is. The 38-year-old ended his Australian cricket career only last month

before switching his international allegiance to Portugal, the country of his birth. He has now taken on the additional responsibility of captaining Portugal in his first tournament with the side. The former Australia international has made an immediate impact. His 111 against Czech Republic took his tally to 178 runs from three innings at the qualifying tournament, making him the leading run-scorer in the competition. Henriques' remarkable start has added another dimension to Portugal's qualification push. The European side have won all four of their matches so far and are now set for a crucial encounter against fellow unbeaten side Spain on Friday. Spain have also won four consecutive games in Group A, most recently recording a nine-wicket victory over Bulgaria. The winner of the Portugal-Spain clash will progress to the regional final on the qualification pathway for the 2028 ICC Men's T20 World Cup.

Lionel Messi's jersey fetches six times more than Cristiano Ronaldo's at auction

A Lionel Messi-worn Barcelona shirt has comfortably won the auction battle against a Cristiano Ronaldo jersey from the same collection. The Argentine's signed 2012 shirt fetched more than six times the price of Ronaldo's Real Madrid jersey.

Chester,. (Agency)

Football memorabilia from the Manchester United dressing room has produced a clear winner, with a jersey worn by Lionel Messi during his Barcelona days fetching 66,107 USD (Rs 56.4 lakh) at auction. A Cristiano Ronaldo jersey from the same collection, meanwhile, sold for 10,601 USD (Rs 9.05

lakh). Both pieces came from the personal collection of former Manchester United masseur Rod Thornley, who spent years working closely with the club's first team. But the Messi jersey carried a particularly unusual backstory, with Thornley securing it through a personal request to Gerard Pique before Barcelona's 2012 visit to Old Trafford. "I messaged Gerard Pique a couple of days before the game and said, 'I never ask you for anything, but I need Messi's shirt from this one'."

The request paid off after the match. Pique took Thornley into the Barcelona dressing room, where Messi was still wearing the jersey from the goalless pre-season encounter. At the end of the game Gerard came into our dressing room, grabbed me, and walked me straight into theirs. Messi still had the shirt on his back." Messi then took off the shirt, signed it and personally handed it to Thornley.

"He took it off, signed it to me while I sat there with him, and shook my hand. It was incredible," Thornley recalled.



WHY MESSI'S SHIRT FETCHED SO MUCH

The jersey's appeal extended beyond its association with Messi. It was match-worn, signed by the player and came with a story

that linked two of football's biggest clubs and one of the game's biggest stars. Ronaldo's jersey came from his Real Madrid period and was issued for a match during the 2014-15 season.

Unlike Messi's, it was not worn by Ronaldo during the game, although it carried a personal message for Thornley. The former United staff member had worked with Ronaldo during the Portuguese forward's time at Old Trafford, adding a personal connection to the item despite its lower auction value.

RYAN GIGGS SHIRT ALSO MAKES AN IMPACT

The collection contained several other pieces connected to Manchester United legends. A Ryan Giggs shirt from United's 4-0 Champions League victory over Olympiacos in 2002 sold for 10,103 US dollars (Rs 8.62 lakh).

Aditya Dhar Reacts To Wife

Yami Gautam's

Nayyi Navelli First Look: 'So This Is What I Married Into'

Yami Gautam is stepping into supernatural territory with her next film, Nayyi Navelli. The fantasy family entertainer is set for a Dussehra release this year, and the first look has already prompted some playful banter between the actress and her filmmaker husband Aditya Dhar.

Soon after Yami announced the project on social media, Aditya shared the poster with a cheeky comment about his wife's new on-screen avatar. Yami, unsurprisingly, had a comeback ready.

Aditya Dhar Teases Yami Gautam Over Nayyi Navelli

Yami introduced Nayyi Navelli with its first poster and a caption that offered a hint about what audiences can expect from her character.

"Nayyi Navelli ???2???2???2???2???2- Daayan This Dussehra, get ready for India's very own fantasy family-entertainer!" she wrote, confirming that the film will arrive in cinemas on October 16, 2026.

Aditya Dhar then reposted the announcement on his Instagram Stories and poked fun at the supernatural twist surrounding Yami's character. "So this is what I married into!" he wrote. Yami didn't let the remark pass. Responding to her husband, she joked, "Hahaha... writer saahab...aap filmon mein try kyun nahin karte. Intezar kijiye 16 October ka."

Her response translates to, "Writer sir, why don't you try working in films? Wait until October 16."

Yami Gautam Turns A Mysterious Bride

The first look places Yami at the centre of the film's unusual world. Dressed as a traditional bride, she is seen confronting a monster-like creature, immediately establishing the fantasy element of the story. Nayyi Navelli revolves around a seemingly ideal bride who arrives in a dysfunctional household in Meerut. Her presence appears to work wonders for the family, turning their chaotic home into a happier place.

There is, however, one person who isn't entirely convinced. Her brother-in-law begins to suspect that the family's apparently perfect new bahu is hiding something far more sinister. His doubts eventually raise the possibility that she might not simply be an unusually capable daughter-in-law, but an otherworldly force. The premise brings together supernatural elements with humour, family dynamics and adventure rather than positioning the film as a conventional horror story.

Who Is Behind Nayyi Navelli?

Nayyi Navelli is directed by Balaji Mohan, whose filmography includes projects across Tamil and Malayalam cinema. The screenplay has been written by Himanshu Sharma and Divy Nidhi Sharma. Aanand L Rai and Himanshu Sharma are producing the film.

The project also brings Yami into a genre considerably different from several of her recent screen outings. Instead of a straight drama or thriller, Nayyi Navelli places her inside a fantasy-driven story built around a North Indian family and the mystery surrounding its newest member.



No Change In 'Spirit' Release Date; Prabhas' Film To Clash With Salman Khan's SVC63 On Eid 2027



In April this year, Salman Khan announced that his upcoming film SVC63, co-starring Nayanthara, will hit theatres on Eid 2027. Notably, Sandeep Reddy Vanga's upcoming film Spirit starring Prabhas was also slated to release during the same festive period. Over the past few months, there has been speculation over whether either film will move its release date to make way for the other. Recently, a few reports claimed that Spirit has been postponed to another date, to avert a box office clash with Salman Khan's film with Vamshi Paidipally. However, the makers of Spirit have now dismissed the reports.

Spirit Release Date Not Postponed

A T-Series spokesperson told Zoom that Spirit has not been postponed, and will arrive on March 5. "We are very much on track with the release of Spirit. The film is slated to release on March 5, 2027, and there is absolutely no change to the announced release date. We are working as per schedule and are gearing up to bring the film to audiences worldwide on March 5, 2027," said the spokesperson. This isn't the first time that the makers have dismissed rumours about Spirit's postponement. Earlier in May, T-Series had issued the same statement after rumours suggested that the Prabhas starrer would be postponed.

Spirit marks the first collaboration between Prabhas and Sandeep Reddy Vanga, making it one of the most anticipated projects in Indian cinema. Initially, the film was reported to be starring Deepika Padukone as the female co-lead but the actress walked out of the project due to failed negotiations. After her exit, Triptii Dimri was roped in to play the lead, marking her Telugu cinema debut.

The cast also includes Vivek Oberoi, Prakash Raj and Kanchana. The first look poster of the film was unveiled on New Year 2026. In the striking visual, Prabhas was seen flaunting his wounded back, stitched with multiple bandages, while Triptii Dimri calmly lit his cigarette—an image that sent social media into a frenzy.

Emraan Hashmi Once Revealed His On-Screen Image Nearly Became A Hurdle In His Marriage To Parveen Shahani



Emraan Hashmi's 'serial kisser' image may have been a big part of his Bollywood identity, but it also came with its share of real-life complications. The actor once opened up about how his on-screen image initially became a hurdle when he wanted to marry his longtime girlfriend, Parveen Shahani. The couple tied the knot in 2006, and have been going strong for over two decades. However, the 'Awarapan 2' actor once revealed that his wife's family initially opposed their marriage. Assuming his on-screen image reflected his real personality.

When Emraan Hashmi Revealed His Wife's Relatives Were Apprehensive Of Their Marriage

Earlier, in an interview with Shubhankr Mishra, Emraan Hashmi admitted that some of Parveen's relatives weren't entirely supportive of their decision to tie the knot. "Some of her relatives had 'dikkat' (problems) at the very beginning. I had a strong image, you see. They were like, 'Wow, she's going to marry Emraan Hashmi?' They had never met me; I'm talking about distant relatives," he said. However, he said that the reservations faded once they got to know him personally.

Emraan Hashmi Recalled Parveen's Family Initially Had Doubts About Him

In an interview with Ranveer Allahbadia, Emraan revealed that he was already dating Parveen when he started shooting his first film. "I was already dating her when I started shooting my first film, but before that, we were still figuring things out. Our relationship began in 2003. We used to hang out. We were in the same group and had common friends. She was in HR College and I was at Sydenham. We met through our common friends, and after 2003, we found our relationship growing stronger. We got married three years later, in 2006. So it was very difficult for her family to wrap their heads around this boy who had this particular, weird label attached to him. They wondered, 'Is he the right fit for our daughter?'" recalled Emraan.

When asked whether her family instantly accepted him, the actor replied, "There was no acceptance. There was pushback in the beginning. There was an assumption that I was a certain kind of person... that it bleeds into your real personality. They started feeling that the image they saw on screen was how I would be in real life as well. But then I had to do some convincing. I had to go and meet the family and say, 'That's not me.'

Gauahar Khan

Reveals Husband Zaid Darbar's 'Underarm Fetish': 'He Smells It, Then Tells His Sister'

Gauahar Khan has opened up about her husband Zaid Darbar's "underarm fetish". Gauahar said that Zaid thinks her underarms always smell fresh, so he likes to sniff her and tell his sister that his wife has soft skin. Gauahar and Zaid made this revelation in a chat with Neha Dhupia and her husband Angad Bedi.

In a now-viral video, Neha asked about Zaid's "underarm fetish". Gauahar was shocked and asked, "Where did you get this information from? What all have you seen? Are you in our bedrooms?" Zaid said, "Matlab aisa kuch nahi hai yaar. Mujhe aisa lagta hai ki baby skin, haan, ekdam aise mulayam type."

Gauahar added, "He also thinks that my underarms smell fresh all the time, so he wouldn't care." Zaid said, "I wouldn't do anything; I just touch that. I just touch that, and I smell that." Gauahar said, "He smells it, and then he tells his own sister, 'Dekh kitni acchi khushbu aa rahi hai.'" This revelation left Neha Dhupia and Angad Bedi in splits. This

video has gone viral on social media.

Gauahar, Zaid's Families Opposed Their Marriage Due To Age Gap

In the same interview, they also talked about how their families opposed their marriage as Gauahar is 6 years older than Zaid. "He proposed marriage to me within one month, and the families opposed the idea. They even raised questions regarding the age



gap. We were very clear that if anyone has any issues in coming to the wedding, they can skip it. But the nikah was perfect. I didn't expect him to cry, but he did during my entry," Gauahar recalled. Zaid added, "I didn't stop for around 10 minutes. I couldn't stop after looking at her." Gauahar and Zaid got married on December 25, 2020, in the presence of their close friends and family members. They are now parents to two sons: Zehaan, born on May 10, 2023, and Farwaan, born on September 1, 2025.



NEWS BOX

Two ships carrying 22 Indians hijacked off Yemen, Somalia

world.(Agency)

Two commercial vessels carrying a total of 22 Indian nationals have been hijacked in separate incidents off Yemen and Somalia, according to officials and maritime security reports.

The Seamull tanker, also known as SIBU 1, with 16 Indians among its 20-member crew issued a distress call as it was approached 136 nautical miles east of Al Mukalla, Yemen, according to shipping monitor Vanguard."The tanker has reportedly been boarded by six armed persons, who are now in control of the vessel and redirecting it towards Somalia," said the EU's Maritime Security Centre Indian Ocean (MSCIO).eports said the crew was safe, although the vessel's movements were being monitored.The United States sanctioned the Seamull tanker in December last year as one of the vessels in Iran's "shadow fleet" accused of exporting Iranian oil using deceptive shipping practices.It is one of four operated by UAE-based Qatrat Alnada Almasi Ship Management that transported Iranian petroleum products, including naphtha and gasoil, on multiple occasions and made port calls to Houthi-controlled ports in Yemen.Separately, the Cameroon-flagged M/V LUTUF was hijacked off Somalia's Puntland coast on August 17.

Pakistan's Imran Khan sent back to Adiala jail after brief hospital stay

world.(Agency)

Former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has been taken back to Adiala Jail after being briefly transferred to Shifa International Hospital in Islamabad, his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party said on Friday.The transfer to the hospital followed a Supreme Court order issued on August 18, directing authorities to move Khan from prison for medical examination and treatment. The court had ordered that he be examined by a medical panel, including specialists and his personal physician.

The Pakistani government challenged the Supreme Court's decision to send Khan to the private hospital, arguing that it could create legal complications for the prison system.Khan, 73, has been in prison since August 2023 and faces multiple legal cases. His party and family have raised concerns about his health, while the government has disputed claims that he requires urgent medical treatment.

Charter plane carrying eight crashes near remote radar site in western Alaska

JUNEAU.(Agency)

A charter plane carrying eight people crashed Thursday near a remote radar site in western Alaska, a federal official said.Clint Johnson, the National Transportation Safety Board's Alaska region chief, said two pilots and six passengers were on board. He did not immediately have details on their status.The



plane took off from Anchorage and is believed to have crashed early Thursday afternoon on approach to Cape Newenham, he said. The information received so far is preliminary, he said.The Alaska Rescue Coordination Center said it launched a search and rescue mission after receiving a report of an "aircraft incident" near the Cape Newenham Long Range Radar Site. It said additional information would be released as it became available and did not respond to questions.

Two organizers of Hong Kong's Tiananmen vigils convicted in national security case

HONG KONG.(Agency)

Two former organizers of Hong Kong's annual vigils in remembrance of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown were convicted by government-approved judges Friday of inciting others to overthrowing China's communist system. Lee Cheuk-yan and Chow Hang-tung, former leaders of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China, were charged in 2021 under a China-imposed national security law that has effectively crushed the city's previously thriving pro-democracy movement. The alliance was also found guilty.Lee and Chow are expected to be sentenced at a later date. They both had pleaded not guilty and face a maximum prison term of 10 years.

According to a press summary given to reporters at court, the three judges said the prosecution proved that the alliance's call

for "end one-party dictatorship" did not aim to demand that the Communist Party return to the system of multiparty cooperation under the constitution, but to end its leadership status under the constitution.They were also satisfied with the arguments that the "end" in the phrase carried the meaning of "overthrowing" and "undermining" and the defendants "intentionally encouraged supporters of the alliance to wait for the right time to carry out the goal of 'end one-party dictatorship' with unlawful means," the summary said.

Lee and Chow smiled and waved at the public gallery before they left the courtroom.Hong Kong had an active pro-democracy movementThe verdict is among the latest involving Hong Kong's once-vibrant pro-democracy movement, which has largely been dismantled by Hong Kong and Chinese authorities.

For three decades, the candlelight vigil

organized by the alliance was the only large-scale public commemoration of the Tiananmen crackdown that took place on Chinese soil. It drew tens of thousands of



people annually to mourn the victims. The event was banned in 2020 during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, weeks before Beijing imposed the security law on Hong Kong to quell the 2019 massive anti-government protests.

Observers said their trial symbolized the

erosion of freedom of expression in the former British colony, which returned to Chinese rule in 1997.Eric Lai, a senior fellow with the Georgetown Center for Asian Law, said the charge of inciting subversion was commonly used in mainland China to criminalize the acts of human rights lawyers, activists and intellectuals, including late Nobel laureate Liu Xiaobo."We can see to what extent the court in Hong Kong falls into the level of the party-led judiciary in the mainland through the criminal verdict," he said.The vigil organizers were accused of inciting the overthrow of China's ruling partyDuring the trial, prosecutors said the case was not political and focused on what they viewed as a call by the alliance to incite others to overthrow the leadership of China's ruling Communist Party through unlawful means, pointing to "ending one-party rule," one of the group's core demands.

A question looms over Harry's return to the UK. Can he rebuild his relationship with Prince William?

LONDON.(Agency)

The royal family's long-running American soap opera is returning to Britain. The question is whether it will blossom into a happy reunion or descend into anger, division and chaos.Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, plan to return to the United Kingdom from California in a matter of weeks. They have already enrolled their children, Prince Archie, 7, and Princess Lilibet, 5, in British schools so they can start the autumn term with their classmates.News of the surprise decision, which broke late Wednesday in stories published by the Telegraph and Sun newspapers, has sparked widespread discussion about where the couple will live, who will pay for their security and whether

they will return to royal duties one day.But perhaps the most difficult issue is whether Harry can repair his once-close relationship with Prince



William, the heir to the throne, which was decimated by Harry's very public complaints of mistreatment at the hands of Buckingham Palace staff, racism in the royal family and the failings of the monarchy. There are also concerns that Harry and Meghan could try to upstage William and his

wife Catherine, when they once again share the British stage."That will be something for the palace to deal with ..." Craig Prescott, an expert on the U.K. constitution and the monarchy at Royal Holloway University of London, told The Associated Press. "They wouldn't want Meghan and Harry's presence in the U.K. here to overshadow the work of the monarchy, and there will have to be some discussion and allowance for that."Harry and Meghan wanted their children to grow up British

The couple are expected to live at a private, nonroyal residence outside of London and they won't resume their royal duties, which they gave up when they moved to the exclusive Southern California community of Montecito six years ago, British media reported late Wednesday.

California lawmaker Aisha Wahab becomes first Afghan-American elected to US Congress

The progressive Democrat defeated Bay Area Rapid Transit Director Melissa Hernandez even after a swell of spending by outside groups opposing Wahab in the race's final stretch.

SACRAMENTO.(Agency)

California state Sen. Aisha Wahab will serve out the rest of former Rep. Eric Swalwell's term after securing victory Thursday in a special election.Swalwell, a Democrat who was running for California governor, ended his campaign and resigned from Congress in April after he was accused of sexual assault and harassment, which he denies. Wahab will represent the state's 14th Congressional District, which covers parts of Alameda County on the eastern side of the San Francisco Bay, through Swalwell's term ending in January.She will be the first

Afghan American to serve in Congress.The progressive Democrat defeated Bay Area Rapid Transit Director Melissa Hernandez even after a swell of spending by outside

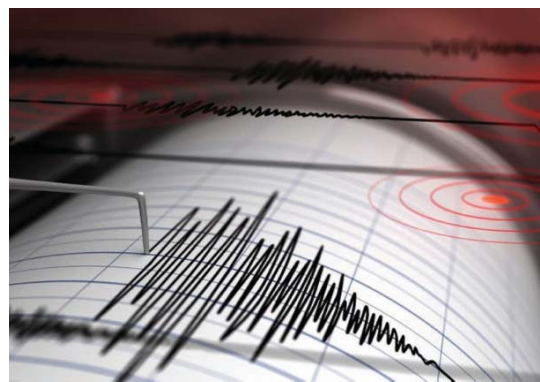


groups opposing Wahab in the race's final stretch. She said her victory shows her district "cannot be bought.""I will fight for this district that raised me," Wahab said in a statement. "From foster care to Congress, this journey shows the possibility of the American Dream." The conclusion of the race to replace Swalwell comes as criminal investigations continue into the

sexual assault allegations he faces. Over the weekend, federal agents seized electronic devices from Swalwell at the San Francisco airport and later searched his home in Washington, D.C., according to a person familiar with the matter who was not authorized to publicly discuss an ongoing investigation and spoke on the condition of anonymity. Swalwell's attorney did not immediately respond to an email and phone message seeking comment.Wahab became the first Afghan-American elected to public office in the U.S. when she won a Hayward City Council seat in 2018.

She has championed housing affordability and access in her time in the Legislature and throughout her campaign. She also wrote a bill in 2023 to ban caste-based discrimination, which garnered national attention.

Strong 6.7-magnitude quake strikes southern Peru: USGS



LIMA.(Agency)

A strong 6.7-magnitude earthquake struck southern Peru on Thursday, US seismologists said, with authorities reporting minor injuries to three people, according to a preliminary report.

The epicenter of the quake was located about 40 kilometers (25 miles) northwest of Upahuacho, and nearly 800 kilometers from the capital Lima. It struck at 1 pm local time (1800 GMT), at a depth of 99 kilometers, according to the United States Geological Survey.Peru's earthquake follows two major quakes in the region since June: a double earthquake in Venezuela on June 24 that killed over 6,400 people and a powerful tremor in Colombia last week that left nearly 300 people dead.In Peru, at least 22 homes, six schools and 12 medical centers have been impacted by the quake, the preliminary report found, as officials continue making damage assessments.nstitute of Peru (IGP) put the magnitude at 7.2 and said the quake occurred at a depth of 108 kilometers.Emergency teams have been deployed to the Andean towns of Puquio and Coracora. Images broadcast by Peruvian media showed rocks and earth tumbling down hills around Coracora in Ayacucho region, the closest town to the epicenter, which has a population of about 10,000."The population has responded. They evacuated and took shelter," the town's mayor Yony Odon told state television in a telephone call, saying he was hopeful there was no major damage.The earthquake "was felt with moderate to strong intensity in several departments," the National Institute of Civil Defense wrote on X.A 4.2-magnitude aftershock was also felt at 4:30 pm local time, the IGP reported.The tremor was also felt in Cusco, Arequipa and even Lima, although with lesser intensity,AFP journalists said.

Trump warns of 'economic D-Day' against Iran, but Tehran is well acquainted with sanctions

NEW YORK.(Agency)

Nearing the six-month mark of the Iran war and facing diminishing stockpiles of key weapons, the Trump administration is touting a crushing financial campaign against Tehran, promising an "economic D-Day" against a country that has so far



withstood nearly five decades of punishing American sanctions.With sparse details, President Donald Trump announced this week that the U.S. would be imposing an "unprecedented" level of economic warfare and isolation on Iran, aiming to force its leadership to cave to demands to end its nuclear program and fully reopen the

crucial Strait of Hormuz to oil and natural gas tankers.It reflects the dire reality Trump faces with an increasingly unpopular war he can't seem to end just months before pivotal midterm elections that will decide whether his Republican Party keeps control of Congress. Whether out of desperation or strategy, the president is refocusing America's might on bringing Iran to its knees through an accelerated sanctions campaign against one of the most economically penalized countries in the world.The immediate response from Iran hawks has been praise and a call for patience as it plays out, while other analysts warn that Trump is refusing to learn the lessons of his predecessors.In an interview

Thursday on CNBC, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent offered a small glimpse of what may be ahead, threatening secondary sanctions on nations and companies that conduct business with Iran.He did not say exactly whom would be targeted as part of this next phase of the administration's "Operation Economic Fury.

First group of deportees arrives in troubled Haiti after US ends TPS program

CAP-HAITIEN.(Agency)

The U.S. deported more than 160 people to Haiti on Thursday for the first time since the Trump administration won a legal battle to end Temporary Protected Status for some 350,000 Haitians.The plane landed in the northern Haitian city of Cap-Haitien because the main international airport in Port-au-Prince is considered too dangerous. The U.S. government currently has a ban on U.S. commercial flights to Haiti's capital through early September because of ongoing gang violence.The deportees were clad in white, and many covered their faces out of safety as journalists filmed their arrival. Nearly all declined to talk, with some fearing being targeted by gangs that control an estimated 70% of Port-au-Prince and swaths of land beyond.The deportees included TPS holders and Haitians who had served prison sentences, said Jean Négot Bonheur Delva, director general of Haiti's National Office of Migration."It is not the

Haitian state that asks for them to be sent back," he said. "Our mission is to welcome migrants of forced return. ... We welcome



them with the aim of accompanying them to their home."

Deported Haitians search for a home Delva noted that some of the deportees were not born in Haiti, although they are of Haitian descent.He said that several deportees planned to travel to Haiti's southern region, a dangerous journey because gangs control the main routes leading to that area and are

known to randomly open fire on vehicles passing through.Others are going to Haiti's western region, he said."There is one migrant who knows nothing about Haiti because he said he was coming from the Dominican Republic; that's where he was born," Delva said.He said the government would attempt to reunify him with any potential relatives in Haiti or the Dominican Republic, where his mother and father live.Immigration officials in Haiti on Thursday offered deportees a maximum of \$65 and something to drink and eat."Those who cannot reach their homes today, we will host them in secure spaces and the next day the process will continue until all migrants return home as they should," Delva said.Delva did not say how many of the 161 deportees were TPS holders who had been living and working legally in the U.S. since 2010.In late June, the U.S. Supreme Court allowed the TPS program to end, affecting some 1 million people from more than a dozen countries.