

India fastest-growing major economy, offers strong investment opportunities: Sitharaman

New Delhi. (Agency)

India is the world's fastest-growing major economy and offers investors a combination of scale, sustained growth, a young population, expanding consumption and rapidly deepening capital markets, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said while pitching the country to Canadian investors.

Addressing prominent members of the Indian business community in Toronto, Sitharaman said India offered Canadian investors with a long-term horizon an investment proposition that was difficult to match.

"India offers a combination that is difficult to match: scale, sustained growth, a young population, expanding consumption and rapidly deepening capital markets," she said. Sitharaman said India's transformation was structural, driven by rapid urbanisation, a growing middle class and world-class digital infrastructure, creating opportunities across virtually .

'Politically motivated': India rejects 'highly malicious' remarks by UN racial discrimination committee

New Delhi. (Agency)

India on Wednesday rejected the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination's observations concerning the country, saying the observations "politically motivated" and "highly malicious".

In an official statement, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) noted that it has taken note of the remarks released by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination following India's 11th periodic review under ICERD, conducted in Geneva on August 11-12.

The MEA clarified that the exercise constituted a routine treaty-body review, in which India participated in a spirit of constructive engagement. It stressed that India's commitment to combating racial discrimination remains firm and unwavering.

Throughout the review process, India underscored its constitutional safeguards, comprehensive legal framework, pluralistic ethos, and continuous efforts directed at safeguarding disadvantaged communities.

"While we will respond to the Committee's observations through the established procedure, the inter-Ministerial delegation, which was led by the Solicitor General of India, Shri Tushar Mehta, had already rejected the sweeping generalisations, unsubstantiated allegations, or tendency to exceed the Convention's mandate during the review meeting," the MEA stated.

"India rejects any politically motivated highly malicious references in the report with all the contempt that it deserves," the ministry added.

Build system to spot threat 20 years ahead: Amit Shah's security plan for India

New Delhi (Agency)

At the National Security Strategy Conference, Amit Shah called for a security system that can spot threats 15 to 20 years early. He said stronger coordination, technology and early intervention are essential for India's internal security and 2047 goal.

Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah, speaking at the concluding session of the two-day National Security Strategy Conference (NSSC) in New Delhi, said India must build a proactive security system that identifies emerging threats 15 to 20 years in advance and prevents them from turning into major challenges. He said security policy must not focus only on dealing with existing threats but must study international and national trends and anticipate potential problems before they emerge. Shah said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has set the goal of making India a developed country by 2047 and that strong internal security is the first condition for achieving that objective. He said India must maintain a strong and stable security environment if it wants to lead the world across sectors.

FOCUS ON IDENTIFYING FUTURE

CHALLENGES TODAY

Shah said the most important message of the National Security Strategy Conference was that India must make its security system



predictive rather than reactive. He said tackling a problem after it becomes serious proves to be more difficult and costly, while identifying early warning signs and acting on them proves more effective.

He said the NSSC should study international trends over the next 15 to 20 years and determine what new problems could emerge

in the future. Security agencies must then prepare strategies now to prevent those challenges. Shah said the country's responsibility does not end with sustaining today's successes. Security agencies and police forces must also imagine the threats that could emerge in the coming years. He called for institutionalising a security approach based on "identify first, act later".

LESSONS FROM NAXALISM, NARCOTICS AND THE NORTHEAST

Shah said previous governments could have avoided decades of challenges if they had visualised the problems of narcotics, Naxalism and the Northeast during their early stages.

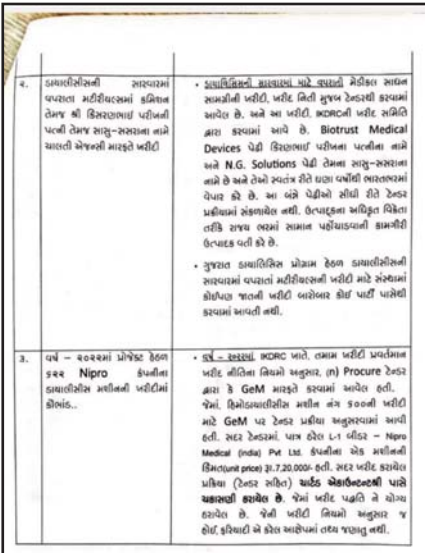
He credited the Centre, state police forces, central agencies and the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) with working together to eliminate challenges in these three major internal security hotspots. He also credited security forces and state police with these successes and said better coordination between the Centre and states can help

Small Employees Sacrificed to Save Big Crocodiles": Kiran Parikh Hits Back at ₹83 Crore IKDRC Scam Allegations

Allegations of a Congress-BJP nexus and a 40% commission racket in PMO funds send shockwaves through Gujarat's political circles as demands for an independent probe intensify.

MAHANAGAR METRO

Ahmedabad. The allegations of an alleged 83 crore rupee dialysis equipment scam at the Institute of Kidney Diseases and Research Centre (IKDRC), Ahmedabad's renowned kidney hospital, have heated up the political atmosphere across the state. Responding to the severe accusations leveled by Congress spokesperson Parthivraj Singh, Kiran Parikh has broken his silence, dismissing all the charges as completely fabricated and baseless. While rejecting the allegations against himself and his family's company, Kiran Parikh clarified that the Biotrust company has been operating in this sector with full transparency since 2013. He stated that their company always advances based on merit and never participates in any direct tenders. He emphasized that approving tenders is the responsibility of the tender committee, of which he is not a member. He further added that to this day, neither Biotrust nor he has ever received any show-cause notice, warning, or objection letter from the hospital management. Defending his family, he stated that his wife possesses the constitutional right to conduct business independently anywhere in the country. He maintained that the nationwide sale of dial-



ysis equipment worth 83 crore rupees was executed strictly according to rules and merit. Parikh pointed out that similar complaints were filed in the past, after which IKDRC sent a report to the government, and his wife's company had already been given a complete clean chit at the Health Secretary level. Making a grave counter-allegation, Kiran Parikh claimed that a conspiracy is underway to divert public attention from the actual corruption and larger scams taking place within the hospital. He alleged that small, contractual workers are being used as scapegoats. He questioned



how low-level employees, who possess absolutely no administrative authority, could possibly authorize the purchase of dialysis machines worth crores of rupees. He reminded the public that past irregularities regarding the purchase of machines for the dialysis center were previously exposed in a CAG report. Those purchases were finalized solely with the approval of the then Health Minister and Health Secretary. Despite this clear evidence, the high-ranking officials were protected, while innocent junior employees were suspended from their jobs. Adding a sensational new twist to the entire controversy, Parikh claimed that a covert nexus has formed between the Congress and the BJP to cover up the real scams happening at the kidney hospital. According to sources, massive corruption is

actively flourishing within the institution. Furthermore, shocking allegations have emerged suggesting that a commission of up to 40 percent is being siphoned from the Prime Minister's fund, a revelation that has sent shockwaves through the administrative corridors of Gandhinagar. It is being said that such corrupt officials are actively tarnishing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a corruption-free administration. The biggest question that now remains is whether the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) will take cognizance of this entire episode and order an independent investigation. All eyes are now fixed on what steps the state government will take to address this widely debated 83 crore rupee controversy and the deep-rooted network of corruption stretching all the way to Gandhinagar.

No one should engage in 'narrow politics': Mayawati on hijab row

New Delhi. (Agency)

Amid the ongoing hijab controversy, BSP supremo Mayawati on Wednesday called for such disputes to be resolved locally through mutual understanding, cautioning against their use for "narrow politics".

The former Uttar Pradesh chief minister said the Constitution, framed under the leadership of Dr B R Ambedkar, guarantees equal rights to people of all religions and communities. "Everyone has the right to live a peaceful and happy life on the basis of the religious scriptures, religious customs and beliefs of all faiths," she said in a post on X, urging people to respect the sanctity of religious beliefs and practices.

On the issue of wearing hijab to schools, Mayawati said, "Instead of giving these matters undue importance and turning them into legal disputes in courts, they should be resolved at the local level through mutual understanding and wisdom between school management and the government and administration." Mayawati said such an approach would ensure that no one gets an opportunity to engage in "narrow politics" under the guise of such disputes.

"The BSP is an Ambedkarite party that guarantees respect for all sections of society and the safety of their lives, property and religion," she said, urging people to refrain from commenting on sensitive matters concerning any religion, religious scriptures or beliefs. Her remarks came days after the Allahabad High Court dismissed a petition filed by a minor student of a private school in Prayagraj seeking permission to wear a hijab with the school uniform.



Vijay scrapping Parandur a costly call? How badly does Chennai need a second airport?

Tamil Nadu CM C Joseph Vijay has scrapped Parandur as the site for Chennai's second airport and promised an alternative. DMK chief MK Stalin, whose government selected the site, has called the decision an 'irreversible setback'. But how urgently does Chennai need another airport? Will Vijay's decision prove costly?

New Delhi (Agency)

With the Delhi-NCR and the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) now operating their second airports, and the announcement of a second one at Kalyani near Kolkata, Chennai looked set to join the list of Indian urban centres with multiple airports. But Chennai's journey to joining the list is now back at the site-selection stage after Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay on Monday scrapped the Parandur project, the proposed site for the city's second airport. It's important to note that the Vijay government has not cancelled the plan for Chennai's second airport. The TVK government has cancelled the site near Parandur (around 70 kilometres south-west

of Chennai), which the previous DMK administration had finalised for the project.



Vijay said the government would look for an alternative site for the proposed greenfield project.

Reacting to the move, former Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin, in a post on X, called the announcement "an irreversible setback for

Tamil Nadu's growth."

"Tamil Nadu's interests cannot be mortgaged for petty political considerations... Taken without foresight, planning or consultation, this decision by the TVK government is a devastating blow to the employment dreams of Tamil Nadu's youth," the DMK supremo said.

By scrapping Parandur after years of planning, clearances and land acquisition, Vijay has effectively sent Chennai's second-airport project back to the drawing board. So, how costly is Vijay's decision to scrap Parandur? And how badly does Chennai need a second airport when decongestion of the existing Chennai International Airport (in the heart of the city in Meenambakkam) is only one part of the argument?

QR codes set to replace defunct SOS boxes for highway emergencies

Noida.(Agency)

With most of the 86 SOS boxes on DME and NH-9 rusting, damaged or non-functional due to cable faults, vandalism or neglect, NHAI has installed QR-code signboards at over a dozen locations to help commuters seek emergency assistance. According to NHAI, the project information signboards with QR codes along the national highway stretches will provide relevant project-specific information and emergency helpline numbers to commuters. "Along DME and NH-9 from UP Gate to Dasna, about 10 quick response (QR) codes have been installed, while we are in the process of installing 25 such codes on DME from Dasna to Meerut stretches and 12 on Dasna to Hapur stretch of NH-9. Commuters have to scan the code, and a web page with multiple options, like emergency response, helpline number, will pop up, and commuters, as per their need, can click on it," an official said. NHAI claims the new system is GPS-enabled, so the control room will get exact coordinates from where the request has been raised, and within 10-15 minutes, ambulance service, crane service or towing facilities could be availed of. In case of crashes, the "golden hour", the first 60 minutes after a severe crash or injury, is crucial for saving the lives of accident victims. NHAI, in its Aug 12 order, said ambulances have to mobilise within two minutes of accepting a ticket and reach crash sites within 10 minutes for incidents up to 10 km away.

Two foreign nationals held in Greater Noida with 1 kg narcotics

Noida.(Agency)

Two foreign nationals, including a woman, were arrested in Greater Noida on Tuesday for allegedly possessing and smuggling narcotics, with police recovering 1 kg of a white powder suspected to be a prohibited substance. The arrests were made in a joint operation by the Surajpur police station team and the intelligence unit following information about foreign nationals allegedly involved in drug trafficking. Acting on the tip-off, a team raided a house opposite the stadium in Bhuda village and detained the two suspects. Police said the seized substance, estimated to be worth around Rs 20 lakh, was recovered along with four mobile phones, two electronic weighing scales, a black bag and four polythene packets allegedly used for packaging. ADCP Central Noida Swatantra Singh identified the accused as Sabi Joel, 32, a resident of Yaounde, Cameroon, and Amada Latifa, 33, from Agbor in Delta State, Nigeria. The white powder has been sent for forensic examination. Police said its exact composition and whether it constitutes a prohibited narcotic substance will be established only after the laboratory report. During questioning, the accused allegedly failed to produce their passports. Police said the intelligence unit has informed the concerned embassies and is verifying their immigration records, entry into India and other documents. A case has been registered at Surajpur police station under Sections 8 and 21 of the NDPS Act and Section 23 of the Immigration and Foreigners Act.

Amid infra protests, school toilets come under scanner in Noida

Noida.(Agency)

Amid protests over basic facilities in govt schools, the Noida administration has stepped up sanitation monitoring. In two directions, the district magistrate has ordered regular cleaning of council schools in rural and urban areas, including toilets and urinals. A district-level task force will inspect sanitation facilities, with photographs to be uploaded on the Prerna portal, an inspection module. The move comes amid a wider churn in Uttar Pradesh's govt school system, where a series of student protests over the past month have brought basic infrastructure back into sharp focus. In districts such as Fatehpur, Lucknow, Unnao, Hamirpur and Kannauj, students have protested over issues ranging from dirty toilets and inadequate drinking water to teacher shortages, poor food, non-functional fans and dilapidated buildings. The state govt has since directed officials to verify complaints flagged on social media and introduced a 14-point checklist covering basic facilities in around 40,000 schools. The concerns are not limited to the state. Schoolchildren in several states have recently raised similar demands, with access to clean toilets, safe drinking water and basic infrastructure emerging as common grievances. In Noida, the first direction reiterates that sanitation workers deployed in rural areas must clean both the outer and inner premises of primary and upper-primary schools on a roster basis. The basic education officer will monitor the work through block education officers. Any lapse will be placed before the district-level Kayakalp Monitoring Committee, chaired by the DM, for action. The second direction covers council schools in urban areas, including those falling under the notified area of the Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority. It says cleaning staff must continuously maintain school premises and sanitation facilities. Last week, the Ghaziabad administration formed a three-member team to inspect schools. The team, comprising a block education officer, block development officer and an engineer, will assess infrastructure, basic facilities and other arrangements in schools across the district. DM Ravinder Mander told TOI, "The officials will inspect schools, speak to students and submit a detailed report after completing the survey. Deficiencies found during the inspection would be addressed and necessary corrective measures taken.

Notice served to PAUL outlet after worm found in sandwich, samples sent to laboratory

Gurgaon.(Agency)

Haryana food safety department on Tuesday inspected PAUL cafe at One Horizon Centre and served a notice to the outlet after a customer complained of finding a live worm inside a sandwich served there. Samples of sandwiches and mayonnaise used by the outlet were collected and sent to a state food testing laboratory for analysis. Gurgaon's food safety officer Sandeep Kumar said the department was informed about the complaint by a journalist on Monday. He inspected the outlet around noon on Tuesday and collected the food samples. "A notice has also been served to the establishment seeking an explanation regarding the presence of the worm in the sandwich. Further action would depend on the laboratory findings,"



Kumar said.

Kumar said the management acknowledged during the inspection that an insect or worm was visible in the food item. He added, "The management told us that it could have entered with the raw

material used to prepare the sandwich, particularly during the monsoon. However, ensuring food served to customers is safe, hygienic and fit for consumption remains the responsibility of the food business operator."

The Dreadful Outcome of a Momentary Obsession: When a Gadget Devoured an Entire Family!

Mahanagar Metro Desk

Where has the blind race for material comforts and show-off in today's modern civilization brought us? A heartbreaking and spine-chilling incident has recently come to light. "A momentary obsession... and the entire family is gone!" This is not just a sensational headline, but a mirror to the mindset and bitter reality of the current generation. The Fatal Illusion of the Virtual World- Murlidhar Chandgude, Sangeeta Chandgude, and their 19-year-old son Krunal Chandgude—a smiling, happy family was swallowed by time. The catalyst was just a single gadget: an 'iPhone'. Who could have ever imagined that a small argument at home regarding the stubborn demand to buy an expensive phone, and subsequently paying its EMIs (installments), would one day take such a horrific turn? Driven by impulse during the dispute over the iPhone's installments, the 19-year-old youth leaped to his death from a mountain. Life had barely begun for him, yet he sacrificed his precious life for the sake of a phone. The Agony of Fatherhood and Motherhood The story does not end here; it becomes even more tragic from this point. In a desperate attempt to save his beloved child jumping into the deep valley, the father tried to



catch his hand and plunged down with him. How can a father stand by and watch his child die before his eyes? This was the same father who had worked tirelessly, sweating blood to raise his son. On the other hand, witnessing both her husband and son perish before her very eyes, the mother, Sangeeta-ben, suffered an unbearable shock. Unable to endure this heart-wrenching sight, she also jumped from the same mountain

and ended her life. A single moment of impulse destroyed the home of a happy family. A Serious Social Reflection Does the cost of a phone surpass the value of their sacred blood and years of nurturing by the parents who taught them to walk by holding their fingers in childhood, and the father who sacrificed all his happiness to fulfill his child's dreams? This is a question every youth and social thinker needs to ask themselves



today. In today's virtual world of social media and obsession with brands, the younger generation has become so blinded that they are forgetting the true value of relationships. Things are meant to be used by people, and people are meant to be loved. However, today, objects are loved, and people are used. Final Thought: Think Before You Insist No expensive item or gadget can ever be greater than your family's happiness and their lives. There is no gadget in this world greater than parents, and no brand more valuable than their love. This is a humble appeal to young friends: do not take any such step in a fit of rage or momentary stubbornness that leads to the end of your entire family. Cherish relationships, because a lost phone can be replaced, but a lost family can never be brought back.

— Author: Rupesh Solanki

'Gurgaon rains again expose Congress-era drainage gaps'

GURGAON.(Agency)

As heavy rain once again brought Gurgaon to a standstill, BJP MP Rao Inderjit Singh has blamed development carried out during the Congress era for the city's long-standing waterlogging woes, saying construction over traditional drainage channels has left the city struggling to cope with excess rainwater. Singh said to news agency ANI, Gurgaon's waterlogging problem dates back years and is primarily linked to the blocking of old natural drains that once carried water from the Aravalli hills towards the Yamuna. "Waterlogging has been occurring in Gurgaon for years. The main reason is that development has taken place over the old, traditional drains that used to carry water from the hills to the Yamuna. We are still dealing with the consequences of this development that happened during the Congress era today," Singh said. The Gurgaon MP said the city's existing measures provide only temporary relief and suggested constructing underground tunnels along the routes of the old drains to restore the natural flow of rainwater. "The only way to fix this now is to construct underground tunnels, similar to those built for the Metro, along the paths of the old drains to channel the water through those original routes," he said. Describing the current approach as a "Band-Aid" solution, Singh said



attempts to block or divert water at one location only shift the problem elsewhere. "What we are doing right now is essentially a 'Band-Aid' solution. It offers some relief, but if we block the water in one place, it finds a way out elsewhere," he said. Singh said the government was working on a permanent solution and that efforts were underway to arrange the funds required for the proposed infrastructure. His remarks came as Gurgaon again witnessed severe waterlogging following heavy rainfall on Monday and Tuesday. Several major roads and residential areas were inundated, with water levels reaching around two feet at parts of Basai Road and Pataudi Road in Old Gurgaon. The situation was compounded by traffic

congestion during peak office hours, while road cave-ins were reported at two locations. At IFFCO Chowk, a portion of the service road along the Delhi-Gurgaon Expressway caved in, creating a sinkhole around 10 feet wide. Officials said a 1,000-mm-diameter master sewer line runs beneath the affected stretch and preliminary inspection indicated possible leakage, which may have washed away soil below the road. The stretch was barricaded and traffic towards the U-turn flyover was affected. Officials said the exact cause would be determined after dewatering and inspection of the sewer line. The latest disruption came after around 70 mm of rain was recorded in just 35 minutes on

Monday, which submerged several roads and underpasses. Around 15 vehicles, including nine school buses, were stranded at Subhash Chowk, leaving more than 300 schoolchildren stuck for several hours. The repeated flooding has also triggered criticism of the civic administration, with residents complaining about prolonged traffic jams and inadequate drainage despite the installation of hundreds of rainwater harvesting systems. The district administration meanwhile issued advisories for schools and encouraged companies to allow employees to work from home. The Gurgaon Municipal Corporation has also begun exploring longer-term technical solutions, including options discussed with professors from IIT Gandhinagar for managing rainwater at key waterlogging hotspots. Rao Inderjit Singh, a six-term Lok Sabha MP, represents Gurgaon and is one of the prominent political figures from southern Haryana. A former Congress member, he joined the BJP ahead of the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. Singh has also represented the erstwhile Mahendragarh constituency twice. Over his political career, he has been associated with several development initiatives in the region, including infrastructure projects and the setting up of the Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority.

Light earthquake shakes Shimla, Chamba; no damage reported

Shimla. (Agency)

Earthquake tremors were felt in Himachal Pradesh's Shimla and Chamba districts for a few seconds early Wednesday, with no loss of life or property reported so far, officials said. According to the National Center for Seismology (NCS), a magnitude 4.0 earthquake struck Shimla at 5.46 am, with its epicentre at a depth of 10 km at 31.387° north latitude and 77.787° east longitude. Earlier, a magnitude 2.5 earthquake was recorded in Chamba at around 4.38 am. "We received an alert from the NCS. We have not received any information about any loss in Shimla district. However, we are on alert," an official of the Shimla administration said.

The State Disaster Management Authority said the situation is under control across the affected areas, with no reports of damage. Himachal Pradesh lies in the highly earthquake-prone Seismic Zones IV and V. In a recent draft, the Bureau of Indian Standards proposed placing the entire Himalayan region in Seismic Zone VI, classified as extremely vulnerable, but withdrew the proposal after an administrative review. The existing Zones IV and V classification remains in force.

The region has a history of devastating earthquakes. The 1905 Kangra earthquake, which also affected Chamba, claimed more than 10,000 lives and remains one of the deadliest seismic events in the region.

40 schoolchildren rescued from burning bus in Morbi

Ahmedabad. (Agency)

All 40 children on board a school bus were rescued after the vehicle caught fire in Morbi district's Tankara area on Tuesday, police said. No injuries were reported in the mishap, they confirmed.

The bus, which belongs to Arya Vidyalayam, was taking the children to Tankara town from the school when its engine caught fire near Mitana village around 1 pm. Four cops in a PCR van stationed nearby and the bus driver came to the children's rescue before the fire enveloped the bus, police officials said.

According to the officials, fire tenders reached the spot only after the rescue was complete since the nearest fire station was in Morbi city, about 20 km away.

"The officials who responded to the emergency call tried to first douse the fire using the extinguisher from the bus and another one from the PCR van, but to no avail. The four police staff and the bus driver evacuated the 40 children, aged five to eight years, from the burning vehicle. All children were rescued in time with no injuries," said Inspector JD Zala of Tankara police station. Morbi SP Mulesh Patel praised Head Constable Jayendrasinh Indubha, Constable Dashrathsinh Ghanshyamsinh, PCR van driver Divyesh Valji Bhargamadiya, GRD Jawan Himanshu Rajesh Sakariya and the bus driver for their efforts.

'Great Green Wall' to come up along coast in Andhra

VIJAYAWADA. (Agency)

For the first time in decades, Andhra Pradesh has embarked on an ambitious plan to develop a 'green fortress' along its coastline with palm groves as a natural shield against cyclonic winds and coastal erosion.

Under the Great Green Wall of Andhra Pradesh initiative, the Forest Department has launched a drive to collect and plant 55 lakh palm seedlings across 5,499 hectares.

As part of the three-tier Great Green Wall, mangrove forests have been accorded priority as the first line of natural defence, while palm groves constitute the second tier.

The approach seeks to create a continuous and layered green buffer with different types of vegetation performing complementary ecological functions. The restoration of mangroves will help protect tidal and wetland ecosystems, while palm groves on suitable coastal stretches can provide an additional barrier against strong winds and soil erosion.

Notably, Andhra Pradesh's natural coastal defences have faced severe degradation for decades with mangrove areas encroached upon, wetlands converted into illegal ponds and lakhs of palm trees felled for various purposes.

Against this backdrop, Deputy Chief Minister (Environment and Forest) Pawan Kalyan has laid emphasis on strengthening AP's natural coastal protection systems.

Palm belt to shield AP coast, curb soil loss & boost biodiversity

The Great Green Wall initiative seeks to revive these vital ecosystems by expanding mangrove forests and establishing extensive palm groves.

Why a voice match, not a raid, makes Maharashtra's corruption case against its judge

Judge was named in FIR after clerk allegedly accepted Rs 15 lakh for favourable order; agency awaits sanction to file chargesheet

Mumbai. (Agency)

In a first in nearly a decade, the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) has sought sanction to prosecute an additional sessions judge of the Mumbai City Civil and Sessions Court, who was named as an accused in a corruption case last year.

The ACB sent its request for sanction to the Law and Judiciary Department in July. The department has since forwarded it to the Bombay High Court for a decision by the competent authority. A chargesheet in the case will be filed only after the sanction is received, a senior ACB officer said.

The judge, who is currently under suspension, was named in an FIR registered in November 2025 after the ACB arrested a clerk-cum-typist for allegedly accepting Rs 15 lakh from a complainant in return for a favourable order in a civil dispute. The ACB has alleged that the clerk had demanded and

accepted the bribe on behalf of the judge.

The move is significant as there has been no instance in the last decade of the ACB seeking prosecution sanction in a case involving a sessions judge, according to officials familiar with such cases. The Bombay High Court has, however, taken disciplinary action against judges named in corruption cases. Last year, it dismissed another additional sessions judge who had been named in a corruption case in Satara. A senior ACB officer confirmed that sanction, mandatory under the Prevention of Corruption Act before a court can take cognisance of offences allegedly committed by a public servant, had been sought.

"In this case, forensic analysis of the conversation between the arrested accused and the judge was necessary to establish his

role, as he was not arrested red-handed accepting the bribe. After a report from the



State Forensic Science Laboratory confirmed the conversation and matched the voice sample, we decided to seek prosecution sanction from the concerned department," the officer said.

"It is our procedure to collect concrete

evidence before sending a request for prosecution sanction. As this case involved a member of the judiciary, we wanted to complete a thorough probe before seeking sanction," the officer added.

The judge was not arrested in the case. The clerk, Chandrakant Vasudev, was granted bail in December 2025. A departmental inquiry against the judge is yet to be initiated, an official said.

Under Section 19 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, prior sanction is required before a court can take cognisance of an offence allegedly committed by a public servant in the discharge of official duties. The

provision is intended to protect public servants from prosecution based on false or frivolous complaints. The law states that the competent authority should decide on a proposal for sanction within three months of receiving it.

They hid TET exam papers in their shoes for Rs 8,000. Now, their trial nears

Police are also likely to file a chargesheet in the next 10 days against the 16 accused, naming Bijendra Gupta as the mastermind.

Mumbai. (Agency)

The Maharashtra government last week approved the appointment of a Special Public Prosecutor in the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) paper leak case that led to the exam originally meant for June 28 being postponed. According to an official, considering the gravity of the case, the government approved the proposal put forth by the Thane Police. The official further said that this case will be tried by a Bhiwandi court, which is designated as a special fast-track trial court to carry out trials in exam leak cases. PM Narendra Modi had announced that special fast-track courts would be set up to try examination malpractice cases in the wake of the NEET paper leak controversy and the nationwide student protests that followed. A senior officer from Thane Police told The Indian Express, "We had sought government

permission from the Maharashtra government to appoint a special public prosecutor in the case, given the sensitive nature of the case. The same was approved



by the government, and Ajay Misar has been appointed as the Special PP in the case."

When it comes to sensitive or complex cases, the government designates a specific, experienced outside lawyer to handle a particular criminal case instead of using the

regular panel of public prosecutors available for other cases being tried in the same court.

An officer said the police are also likely to file a chargesheet in the next 10 days against the 16 accused, naming Bijendra Gupta as the mastermind. According to the officer, while they have a 90-day period to file a chargesheet in the case which extends to September last week, they will likely file a chargesheet under sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Maharashtra Prevention of Malpractices at

University, Board and other Specified Examinations Act, in the next 10 - 12 days. "Our probe has found that Bijendra Gupta was the mastermind and we have technical evidence like calls exchanged between the accused, CCTV footage along with seizures made from the residence of the accused including fake documents to prove the crime," the officer said.

Naked walk, a 51 km question: Gujarat UPSC aspirant's mystery death

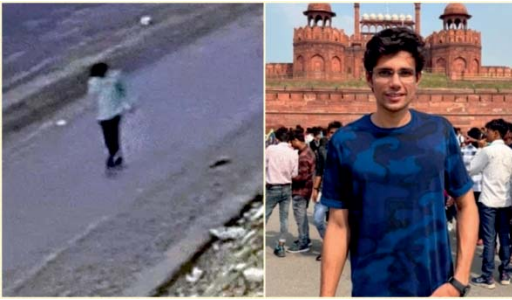
Vadodara. (Agency)

Twenty-one sightings on CCTV, a purported video of the young UPSC aspirant stripping naked before setting off on his alleged 51-kilometre walk, and a missing set of clothes – the Gujarat government's latest report in the death of Rajkumar Jaat has added new twist to a case the central mysteries of which remain unresolved.

Where are the clothes that the deceased man was originally wearing?

And could the 23-year-old have walked a distance of 51 km alone in 11 hours and 29 minutes to reach the point where his body was eventually found after he was allegedly crushed by a heavy vehicle? These questions appeared in sharp focus before the Gujarat High Court on Tuesday (August 25) as the state placed on record a fresh report on the investigation in

the case. On July 28 this year, the High Court had directed a closer examination of the circumstances in which Jaat was found walking naked on a highway in the hours



before his death. Justice M R Mengdey recorded in an oral order on Tuesday that Public Prosecutor Hardik Dave had produced the further report in the case.

Jaat, a UPSC aspirant from Gondal in Rajkot district, had gone missing on March 2, 2025.

His body was recovered on March 9 near an overbridge at Targadhia on the Rajkot-Ahmedabad highway – about 51 km from the spot he was last seen. It was believed that

Jaat had been run over and killed by a bus on the highway, and police registered a case treating the death as a road accident. Dave played a purported video recovered during the investigation that allegedly showed Jaat removing his inner clothes before beginning his purported walk. The state submitted that investigators had found "several videos of the deceased on his own mobile phone in which he was seen in a similar condition and exhibiting similar behaviour".

These videos, the state told the court, were "referred to an expert [in psychoanalysis] for an opinion on whether Jaat's behavioural pattern could indicate that he was under the influence of an intoxicating substance".

'Karnal ka baap kaun hai?' Why this question is reverberating across the Haryana town

The Balmikis and the Rors hold separate shows of strength as a killing and an encounter throw up questions of caste and shine light on a budding gangster culture

Karnal. (Agency)

It began reportedly as a contest between two young men over who was the "baap (godfather)" of Karnal. It has ended up as a show of strength between two caste groups,

with a gangster basking in the spotlight. The saga began with the brazen killing of Biru Balmiki, 25, on the evening of August 5. Two men drew up beside him as he rode his Scooty on Hansi Road and shot him in the head. Karnal, which has only emerged as an epicentre of state politics since Manohar Lal Khattar became the chief minister in 2014 and made it his pocket borough, was stunned by this targeted hit.

More was to follow. Angry over Biru's killing, the Balmiki community brought Karnal to a halt, with community leaders from across the region joining a sit-in held at Karnal, along with Hindu Raksha Dal members.

Local BJP MLA Jagmohan Anand promised swift justice. As protesters shouted "goli ke badle goli (a bullet for a bullet)", the MLA reportedly told them, "Sham tak result milega, kore kaaagaz pe dastakhat kara lo (You'll have a result by the evening, get my

signature on a blank paper if you want)." On the morning of August 7, less than two days after Biru was killed, police shot down the two alleged shooters – Harsh, 23, a Ror from



Kala Majra near Nilokheri, and Birbal, about 29, a Dalit youth from Matarwa Kheri in Kaithal – in an alleged encounter.

The Rors, a small but influential upper caste group spread across Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan – which counts javelin

thrower Neeraj Chopra and Haryana Speaker Harvinder Kalyan among its own – now took up the hatchet. Pointing out that Harsh and Birbal were not named in the original FIR, they accused police of killing them in a staged encounter.

On Monday, the Rors held a mahapanchayat in Karnal, calling it the biggest-ever "rosh pradarshan (expression of anger)" in the town's history. Nirmal Singh Staundi, a former vice-president of the National Ror Mahasabha, sought justice for Harsh and action against MLA Anand.

The Rors are also demanding a probe by the CBI or a sitting High Court judge, and reject the SIT appointed by the government.

They also want the SP to be transferred while the probe is on.

Biru's father Tony and his cousin Ravi Sauda tell The Indian Express the encounter was justified: "Had Biru killed someone, he would have also."

Dimagi Naxals': Warning After silent Guns

For nearly six decades, Naxalism has been a destructive political experiment. Born in Naxalbari in 1967, it did not remain a local revolt for long. It developed into a revolutionary doctrine that rejected India's parliamentary system. From the forests of eastern India to the tribal belts of central India, Naxalism created a parallel ecosystem of fear. For the ordinary citizen of these areas, Naxalism was never a fashionable intellectual proposition. It was fear. It was a gun outside the village. It was a road that could not be built. It was a policeman who might not return home.

That history matters because the extraordinary decline of Naxalism in recent years did not happen by accident. It was the result of political determination, security operations, intelligence coordination and development pursued under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with Union Home Minister Amit Shah driving the execution of the government's strategy. Government figures show how dramatically the threat has receded: LWE-related violent incidents fell from 1,936 in 2010 to 234 in 2025. Deaths of civilians and security personnel fell from 100.

Argument beyond forests

The collapse of Naxalism makes Modi's warning about "dimagi Naxals" significant. An ideology does not necessarily disappear merely because its physical infrastructure collapses. Naxalism was always sustained by more than violence. It required a narrative—one that could portray the Indian state as the principal source of injustice, explain away the violence of Naxals as "resistance" and repeatedly shift the moral focus from those who picked up gun to the state that confronted them.

This is why the ideological dimension deserves scrutiny. The question is much more uncomfortable: when does sympathy for a grievance become sympathy for an ideology that rejects the constitutional order itself? A democracy must protect dissent, but it should not be expected to provide ideological respectability to political violence. The Binayak Sen episode became one of the defining controversies around the Naxal debate. Sen was convicted by a Chhattisgarh trial court in 2010 in a case involving links with Naxal figures and was sentenced to life imprisonment; the Supreme Court granted him bail in 2011. He became a celebrated figure among sections of India's civil-liberties establishment.

After his release, he was appointed to a Planning Commission health-related steering committee. Sonia Gandhi, meanwhile, chaired the National Advisory Council during the UPA years, an institution that brought together politicians, activists, academics and civil-society figures and was frequently criticised by its opponents for exercising substantial policy influence. The political significance lies in the ecosystem. Afzal Guru became an object of political and campus controversy, with sections of the political establishment and student politics turning his execution into a debate about the Indian state, rather than keeping the victims of the Parliament attack at the centre of the national memory. Burhan Wani was not a Naxal, but his death in 2016 produced enormous public mobilisation in Kashmir. Rahul Gandhi should not be casually labelled a Naxal. But his political choices deserve scrutiny. The Congress has every right to oppose the Modi government. What it cannot escape is the question of whether its politics increasingly rewards confrontation. When Youth Congress workers staged a shirtless protest at the India AI Impact Summit and Gandhi praised them as "Babbar Sher", the episode offered a glimpse of a political culture increasingly comfortable with provocation as a substitute for argument. The protest was not Naxalism. The point is larger: mainstream politics must not import the language of permanent institutional distrust from the political fringe.

Main Vaapas Nahin Jaunga

New Delhi must strategise to enforce stability in its neighbourhood

The Mecca Joint Defence Agreement signed by Türkiye, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan on August 7 continues to be in the spotlight. Against the backdrop of the ongoing US/Israel-Iran conflict, its geopolitical and military ramifications are being closely examined in the context of West Asia. For India, however, strategic prudence demands that this pact be viewed through the lens of Operation Sindoor. Following India's May 2025 missile strikes against Pakistan's terror infrastructure, the latter avoided a prolonged, conventional escalation by engaging in high-intensity drone and electronic warfare before seeking an early ceasefire. During this conflict, while the bulk of Pakistan's hardware and technical support came from China, Türkiye's supply of unmanned aerial vehicles and electronic warfare devices underscored Ankara's willingness to back Islamabad against New Delhi. Four months after Op Sindoor, Pakistan formalised a mutual defence pact with Saudi Arabia, guaranteeing that aggression against either country would be considered aggression against both. IndiaNews Focus On the diplomatic front, Pakistan, notwithstanding its severe domestic political fragmentation and fragile economy, has adroitly leveraged recent security crises into political capital. Its alignment with Washington and its high-risk role as a key mediator between the US and Iran have demonstrated Islamabad's knack for exploiting its geopolitical weight. India's security planners need to focus on two imponderables. First, would a future Indian military strike against terrorist infrastructure or military targets in Pakistan enable Islamabad to invoke the collective defence provisions of its pacts? Second, could this agreement pave the way for a viable, long-term Türkiye-Pakistan military-industrial axis, underwritten by Saudi Arabia? The answers would have a crucial bearing on India's strategic calculus. For decades, India maintained a decisive conventional military edge over Pakistan on land, in the air and at sea, and it was Islamabad's desperation to bridge this gap that drove its relentless pursuit of nuclear weapons. After the 1998 tests, while mutual nuclear deterrence held firm, India's edge in conventional deterrence steadily eroded due to two main factors: the rise of the China-Pakistan axis — posing a two-front threat — and Islamabad's deployment of tactical nuclear weapons under a "Flexible Response" doctrine designed to counter India's putative "Cold Start" strategy. India's post-Uri surgical strikes (2016) and post-Pulwama airstrikes (2019) showed that while New Delhi could call Pakistan's nuclear bluff, it had yet to re-establish effective conventional military deterrence. The

destruction inflicted on Pakistan's military by Op Sindoor was intended to project "deterrence by punishment", but before its efficacy could be confirmed, the Mecca Agreement may have disturbed the balance of power in the subcontinent and given encouragement to hotheads in Islamabad. IndiaNews Focus

India's strategic planners must now formulate doctrines and acquire capabilities tailored to this emerging reality. Deterrence relies on certitude: India's response must



guarantee punishment so swift and so severe that neither of its two adversaries (China and Pakistan) ever doubts the cost of provocation and the accompanying loss of face in the international arena. Rebuilding credible conventional deterrence will require heavy investment in creating war reserves for extended conflicts by quickly absorbing technological, logistic and operational lessons from the Ukrainian and Iranian battlefields. Awaiting urgent redressal is our government's flawed and lethargic decision-making mechanism that has resulted in severe capability gaps in recent decades. Examples: the progressive erosion in the IAF's combat aircraft strength; the inordinately delayed development of an indigenous jet engine that will impact its 5th- and 6th-generation aircraft projects; imposition of the ill-conceived and debilitating Agniveer recruitment/training scheme on the military; slippages in the Navy's diesel submarine and aircraft carrier projects, and many others.

India's uniquely hazardous security predicament is embodied in having two nuclear-armed adversaries as well as strained relations with others in the neighbourhood. Moreover, while its own defence-industrial base may take a decade or more to reach

maturity, it remains substantially import-dependent. The ongoing geopolitical turmoil should leave us under no illusion that dependence on external sources for military hardware can be perilous for national security. IndiaNews Focus Thus, the urgent question that needs New Delhi's focus is not whether India can prevail in a two-front confrontation, but how it can find a "breathing spell" of stability/tranquillity to allow uninterrupted progress towards technological self-reliance. The threats posed by China and Pakistan are qualitatively different, and each deserves the closest attention of our highly regarded diplomatic corps. For Islamabad, Kashmir is not merely a territorial dispute; it serves as a pivot on which the military establishment's domestic credibility rests. A settlement of Indo-Pak disputes by eliminating the so-called "existential threat" posed by India would demolish the military's raison d'être. As for Beijing, it views the unresolved Line of Actual Control as a strategic lever to keep India geopolitically boxed into South Asia. The settlement of territorial issues would permit India to bring strategic focus on maritime capabilities and the Indo-Pacific, where China is most vulnerable. India cannot match China's defence spending or technological prowess overnight, but it can manage the border to avoid unintended

escalation. Achieving this demands three priorities: active diplomatic and military contact, relentless infrastructure building, and a forward-leaning military posture that will ensure that — unlike the past — any future Chinese incursions incur painful costs. On this front, the goal is steady stabilisation for the long haul. With regard to Pakistan, India should maintain a firm military posture and a zero-tolerance policy on terrorism, while quietly exploring back-channel diplomacy to test whether the Generals can be incentivised to shun cross-border terrorism. With senior RSS leaders such as Mohan Bhagwat and Dattatreya Hosabale signalling support for people-to-people dialogue, such outreach is unlikely to trigger domestic backlash and could pave the way for a viable modus vivendi on the western front.

This dual-track approach rests on a clear strategic calculus: while Pakistan remains bogged down by economic distress, tensions on the Durand Line and ethnic unrest, its enhanced international standing and newly minted security alliances could embolden renewed adventurism. India must strategise to enforce stability in its neighbourhood.

Supreme Court's industry definition: Change without much practical consequence

The reformulated test would operate prospectively and would not affect pending or decided cases under the repealed Industrial Disputes Act, 1947

An expansive definition of the term 'industry' that has stood for close to five decades has survived a Supreme Court review, though the court has sought to add layers to its interpretation. The nine-judge bench delivered its judgement on August 20. What emerged from the 498-page judgement, uploaded later, was more complicated than the initial impression the verdict created.

The reference before the bench was whether the 'triple test' evolved in Bangalore Water-Supply & Sewerage Board (1978), which laid down what constitutes an 'industry' under the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, remained valid. Justice V R Krishna Iyer's three-fold test covered systematic activity, employer-employee cooperation, and the production or distribution of goods or services to satisfy human wants. The absence of a profit motive was irrelevant. The test thus brought hospitals, charitable institutions and public bodies within its sweep. The exemption covered sovereign functions such as the



judiciary, law and order and defence.

Chief Justice Surya Kant, writing for himself and Justices Satish Chandra Sharma, Alok Aradhe and Vipul M Pancholi, proposed a reformulation of the test. He added a discernible commercial character resembling trade or business and sought to expand the exemptions for sovereign functions. But the reformulated test would

operate prospectively and would not affect pending or decided cases under the repealed 1947 Act. He also made clear that the bench was not deciding the meaning of 'industry' under the Industrial Relations Code, 2020.

This is where the composition of the judgement matters. The Chief Justice and three other judges supported the reformulation. Justices B V Nagarathna, Dipankar Datta, Ujjal Bhuyan and Joymalya Bagchi opposed the need to alter the 1978 test, stressing its importance for workers amid changing economic conditions. Justice P S Narasimha, however, held that the exercise had become unnecessary because the 1947 Act had been repealed and the 2020 Code had not been examined. The important point is that the broad definition has not simply disappeared. The 1978 triple test will continue to apply to pending cases under the repealed 1947 law. The reformulated test will apply only to cases arising after the judgement.

Faithline | Dharma in translation

➤ Outright social subversion and valorising moral character way above the accident of birth are repeatedly found in the gitas. Thanks to committed scholars like Bibek Debroy, thick volumes of ancient wisdom are available in simple, accessible language

The incident of the ill-behaved tourist at Kargil led me to muse on where we may find therapeutic thoughts, and the late Bibek Debroy's name shone brightly. Besides his prodigious public service record as an economist, Debroy translated the Mahabharata, Bhagavad Gita, Harivamsa (an abridged Mahabharata), Vedas, no less, and Valmiki's Shrimad Ramayanam. His services to the Puranas were no less monumental. He translated the Bhagavata Purana, Markandeya Purana, which contains the 'Devi Mahatmyaham' recited every year during Durga Puja, the Brahma Purana, Vishnu Purana, Shiva Purana and Brahmanda Purana. Besides Manmatha Nath Dutt (1855-1912), he is the only other person to have translated both the Mahabharata and Ramayana into unabridged English. For his translations, he received the Bhandarkar Memorial Award from the venerable Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune. The institute has compiled the entire Mahabharata into a critical edition with the painstaking efforts of committed scholars over nearly five decades, consulting 1,259 manuscripts. The completed critical edition of the Mahabharata came out in 19 weighty volumes in 1966. Debroy gamely translated our scriptural heritage into English in the service of modern Indians, many of whom are trapped in the English language by their colonial education. Written in simple, accessible language, with footnotes, his labours of love found favour with the Indian public for their reverse engineering—using the English language to re-possess these ancient spiritual texts.

Debroy's last legacy to us was Sacred Songs: The Mahabharata's Many Gitas. A gripping 684-page book, it has 25 chapters, each devoted to a gita: 24 from the Mahabharata and the Pandava Gita, which exists outside

the Mahabharata. The Bhagavad Gita, or Song of God, not included here, is of course the gita of gitas. But other gitas bejewel the unabridged Mahabharata, a gita being a philosophical or advisory passage that can be sung or chanted. The Sanskrit verses in each such gita are pleasingly printed above Debroy's English translation and his explanation of each compact verse. As the Chandogya Upanishad said with satisfaction about the education of Satyakama Jabali, who did not know who his father was, "Nothing was omitted, yes, nothing was omitted".

The first gita in this volume is the Shounaka Gita. It is named for an ancient rishi in the Naimisharanya forest—today's Neemsar in modern Uttar Pradesh. Shounaka advises a depressed Yudhishtira in the Vana Parva or forest section of the Mahabharata. He tries to instill detachment in Yudhishtira, saying that attachment causes all misery and that Yudhishtira should ideally "Perform karma, but also renounce it". This anticipates the Bhagavad Gita's best-known words, 'karmanyevadhi karaste ma phaleshu kadachanah', meaning, 'You are entitled to perform actions but not automatically entitled to their results'. This is popularly understood to mean, 'Keep going anyway because that's what life is about'. The Dharma Vyadha Gita is from a beloved Indian story, also from the Vana Parva. It is told by Rishi Markandeya, a favourite of the Pandavas and Sri Krishna, because he is a fantastic storyteller. On one

occasion, he tells them how a butcher taught a Brahmin. The butcher, Dharma Vyadha, schooled a conceited scholar named Kausika. Kausika has left his old parents to fend for themselves, whereas Dharma Vyadha lovingly looks after his. He teaches Kausika about the nature of



dharma, including emotional responsibility, and sets the scholar right on several matters. Dharma Vyadha being a butcher is of no consequence, for that too is a genuine profession in society, and a butcher is as capable of dharmic righteousness, in this case more so, than the Brahmin. It is delightful to be able to access their actual

conversation through Debroy's lucid text. The Nahusha Gita occurs as a dialogue between Yudhishtira and Nahusha, an ancestor of the Pandavas, who was expelled from heaven and cursed to take the form of a python by Rishi Agastya. He coils himself around Bhima, and Yudhishtira must set him free by conversing with Nahusha. When Nahusha pointedly asks who may be considered a 'Brahmin', Yudhishtira responds that a Brahmin "is one in whom truthfulness, charity, forgiveness, good conduct, lack of cruelty and compassion are seen". Not otherwise. This view, like the Upanishads, posits categorically that 'caste' is indicated by character, not by birth. This pattern of outright social subversion, and valorising moral character way above the accident of birth, is repeatedly found in these ancient gitas, which amaze and gladden the modern reader. In their various ways, these gitas also emphasise the harm done by the 'Shad Ripu', or six enemies of the mind, found in every human being. Everyone has to fight them. They are kama (lust), krodha (anger), lobha (greed), moha (attachment to people and things), matsarya (jealousy) and alasya (laziness).

These enemies of the mind tend to spoil our lives. So, there is much useful advice here for a modern reader to consider in our stressful, violent times. The perspective from these gitas is that things were always stressful; there was always anger, jealousy, injustice or sheer bad luck.



Paneer Tandoori Recipe

How to make Paneer Tandoori

Step 1

Wash the paneer under running water and cut it into cubes. Then, mix the paneer cubes with ginger paste, garlic paste, curd, meat masala and kasoori methi. Marinate it for about 20 minutes. Put it into a tandoor or grill it on both the sides.

Step 2

Now, put 2 tbsp oil in a pan and heat it over moderate flame. Add the grilled paneer pieces into it. Sauté it for some time, cover and cook. Once the whole thing gets reduced into gravy form, add some more kasoori methi and mix it well.

Step 3
Season the dish with salt according to your taste. Your dish is ready to be served. Serve it hot with roti or parathas, or even rice.

Paneer Tandoori is a scrumptious and easy-to-make North Indian recipe as it uses readily available ingredients in the kitchen like paneer, curd, meat masala and ginger-garlic paste. If you are done with garam masala loaded paneer dishes like Paneer Butter Masala, Kadhai Paneer and Shahi Paneer, this paneer recipe is a welcome variation as it uses meat masala. It is a kids

favourite curry recipe and an ideal dish which can be served on anniversaries and kitty parties. One important tip that you should keep in mind while making this recipe is that you need to marinate the paneer pieces well so that the flavours are properly absorbed. Serve this easy paneer recipe with rice, naan or paratha. It also

pairs well with garlic naan, missi roti and biryani. A must try paneer recipe for parties and special occasions. You can also garnish this paneer recipe with onions rings for that extra crunch!
Ingredients of Paneer Tandoori
400 gm paneer
2 tablespoon refined oil

1 tablespoon salt
For Marination
1 tablespoon ginger paste
3 tablespoon meat masala
4 pinches kasoori methi powder
1 tablespoon garlic paste
1/2 cup yoghurt (curd)

As the New Year is on us, there seems to be an emphasis on back-to-the-basics and healthy gluten-free products. There'll be a resurgence of superfoods, the emergence of a 'Better for You' category of foods and even ingredients like seaweeds. Mixology will take on a whole new complexion. Chef Shivan Khanna, Executive Sous Chef, The Taj Mahal Hotel, New Delhi, lists his trends for 2018:

- * Increased demand for hyper-local ingredients – guests are keen to try dishes which are made from locally-sourced ingredients because they help achieve superior taste quality, they benefit society at large and are also a sustainable method of procurement.
- * Increased focus on health and wellness – there is a growing demand for gluten-free products and people's desire to cut back on white carbs is changing the way recipes are now being crafted.
- * Resurgence of superfood — This trend also finds its way back to the increased focus on health and wellness. People want to consume more and more foods such as carobs or millets which are potent and packed with nutritional benefits.

Here's what'll tickle your Palette



- * Emergence of 'Better for You' category of foods. In today's environmentally conscious world, guests are looking for products which are neither harmful to the environment nor to their individual selves. This category includes ingredients which are cage free, pesticide free, free-range dairy products and the like.
- * Focus on plant-based protein – there has been a surge in vegetarianism over the past few years. As a result, there is now more interest in

- food made with plant-based proteins. Chefs are embracing ingredients such as tofu, quinoa, and tempeh (made using soy).
- * More advanced methods of mixology – cocktails will see their own set of trends in 2018. We are expecting there to be an increased use of fresh ingredients and homemade mixes, as well as use of different methods of cocktail preparation like smoking and grilling. There is also expected to be a shift from to more flavorful spirits that have greater character like bourbon and rum.
- For Achal Aggarwal, Executive Chef, Hilton Chennai, the accent will be on green tea and pop-up restaurants
- * Hotels may start serving green tea made with leaves. What we get is tea dust.
- * Many dishes will have green tea as an ingredient owing to its health benefits.
- * Star hotels may go for pop-up restaurants (restaurants that would change its cuisine every month – say Chinese one month, Indian the next and so on). Five star hotels have the infrastructure and manpower for this.
- * Hotels will have more live counters as part of their



Focus on plant-based protein - there has been a surge in vegetarianism over the past few years. As a result, there is now more interest in food made with plant-based proteins. Chefs are embracing ingredients such as tofu, quinoa, and tempeh.

- buffet. Two benefits — it gives the customers the satisfaction of having freshly cooked food and hotels in turn can cut waste.
- * Vegetarianism will gain further ground amongst people.
- * Demand for exotic vegetables and dishes made with such vegetables would go up.
- Chef Mangesh Hinge of Chevon had a rather different take.
- * Seaweed: Seaweed is low in calories and is filled with nutrients, you can buy packaged seaweed and enjoy with your favorite dish.
- * Goat meat, since it is much leaner than chicken and is lower in calories, saturated fat, sodium, and cholesterol. A 100-gram portion of goat meat has about 122 calories, which is considerably less than pork's 179 and chicken's 162.
- * Floral flavours: Edible petals is the upcoming trend which is making its way to common people's kitchen from the high-end eateries. When infused in or cocktails, they have implausible health benefits, lowering high blood pressure, easing stomach aches, and potential to aid in weight loss.

5 low-cal recipes to try this weekend



1/4 c skimmed milk
2 tsp honey
1/2 tsp almond slivers

Method

- Put all the chopped fruits in a blender.
- Add yoghurt, skimmed milk and honey and blend until smoothie and frothy.
- Pour smoothie into a glass and sprinkle it with almond slivers. - Serve garnished with pineapple and apple pieces.

Colourful Veggie Juice

Ingredients

1 Carrot, cubed
1/2 Beetroot, cubed
1 tomato, cubed
4-5 spinach leaves, chopped

1/2 tsp lime juice

1/2 tsp ginger juice

1/4 tsp pepper powder

1 indian goose berry, grated

A pinch of black salt and chat masala

2 c water

Method

- In a blender, add chopped carrot, beetroot, tomato and spinach leaves.
- Add lime juice, goose-berry, black salt, pepper powder and water and blend until smooth.
- Add a pinch of chat masala and mix well.
- You can spike it with some chilli powder.
- Serve chilled or at room temperature.

Baked Kidney Beans and Oats Kebab

Ingredients

1/2 c kidney beans, boiled and mashed
1 c roasted oats
3 tbsp olive oil
A pinch of asafoetida
1 tsp cumin seeds
1 tbsp garlic pste
1 tbsp ginger, finely chopped
1 onion, grated
1 c tomato puree
2 tbsp tomato ketchup
1 tsp garam masala
1 green chilli, finely chopped
2-3 tbsp coriander leaves, chopped
1 tsp fat-free yoghurt, Chilli powder and salt to taste

Method

- In a non-stick pan, pour olive

oil and add a pinch of asafoetida, cumin seeds, garlic and ginger.

- Then add onions and saute well.

- Add the tomato puree, ketchup, chilli powder, garam masala, green chillis and salt.

- Once the masala starts to leaves sides, add whipped yogurt, coriander and mashed kidney beans.

- Cook for 5 minutes.

- Let it cool for a while.

- Add roasted oats to it and mix well, let it cool.

- Now, make elongated kebabs from the mixture.

- Pierce skewers into them and bake for 10 minutes.

- Serve hot with green chutney.

Fruit Curd

Ingredients

1 c hung curd
2 tsp organic honey
1/4 c strawberries, chopped
1 kiwi, chopped
1/4 c blueberries
2-3 mint springs
1/4 c apples

1 tbsp walnut, raisins and almonds for garnishing

Method

- Whisk hung curd and organic honey.

- When fluffy, add chopped strawberries, kiwi, apples and blueberries. Mix well.

- Garnish with lots of walnuts, raisins and almonds and mint springs.

- Serve fresh and chilled.



to indulge in good food without adding on those extra inches? Try out these easy to make healthy recipes.

Sprouts and Corn chaat

Ingredients

1 c sprouted green moong
1/2 corn
1 medium cucumber finely chopped
1 large tomato, chopped
1/2 tsp organic ghee
1/2 tsp cumin seeds powder, roasted
1/2 tsp pepper powdertra

1 green chillies, chopped
1 tsp coriander leaves, chopped
1/4 c water
Salt to taste

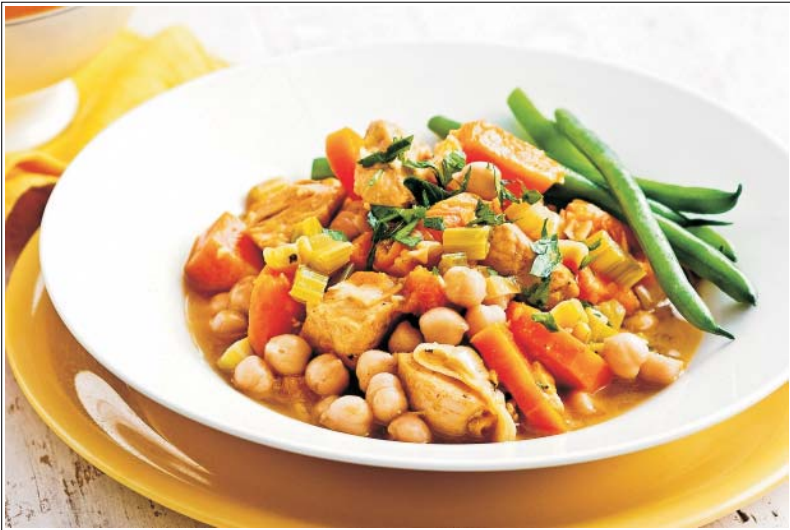
Method

- In a pressure cooker, add organic ghee.
- To this, add sprouted moong and corn, pepper powder and stir for a minute.
- Add 1/4 cup of water and pressure cook for one whistle.
- Drain water and reserve it for soups. Toss into a serving bowl.
- Add cumin seeds, chopped chillies, coriander and salt.
- Mix well and serve.

Frothy Pineapple and Apple Smoothie

Ingredients

1 c pineapple pieces
2 c apple pieces
1 c yogurt



How to keep food fresh naturally

ndering why your fruits and veggies lose the freshness in just one day? Well, the problem must be in the way you are storing them. TOI gets you the solution...

- Never store apples with any other vegetables or fruits. Apples emit certain gases which make the other good items rot. Similarly, never store tomatoes and cucumber in the same compartment as even tomatoes emit gases which can make the cucumber rot.
- Always store items like eggs with the pointed side downward to keep them fresh longer.
- Store cheese with a few cubes of sugar in an air tight container as the cubes absorb the moisture from the cheese and help it stay fresh for a longer period of time.
- Keep a potato in your refrigerator. The potato absorbs bad smells from cooked food or even otherwise and also absorbs gases in the fridge, thus helping other things stay fresher. But you must change the potato every few days.
- Always store radish in a vessel with water to keep it crisp.



Powder Your food

Extract your 'pound' of nutrition with spoons full of exotic food powders. Dusting icing sugar on brownies or topping your espresso with some hot chocolate? Nah... not in an age when you can sprinkle so much more goodness! The powder that sits on top of your food isn't just a topping or garnish anymore. It's a superfood elixir - empowering your food in unimaginable ways. From a purple berry grown in the Amazonian rainforests to a tea highly-favoured by Buddhist monks, a host of rare food items are being powdered to add benefits to our diets.

With an increased interest in well-being and the nutritional inadequacy of modern-day diets, it is now imperative to top our food intake with extra nutrition. Food powders work wonders in this area since they can be consumed without any major alteration to the taste, look or smell of the food. They slip in



conveniently into our food regime without much hullabaloo. Just grind it, dust it and consume it. Most 'superfoods' like flaxseeds, chia seeds, matcha tea and goji berries are foods with acquired tastes - so it's far easier to consume them in their powdered state. "These powders typically consist of a bulk, powdered version of a superfood(s) in a raw, natural state. You can mix the powder in water, smoothies, juices or any other beverage for consumption. Most are carefully processed, freeze-dried or cold temperature-processed to ensure that all

the whole food nutrients are kept intact and not denatured," says Manjari Chandra, consultant therapeutic nutritionist. **HEAPFUL OF HEALTH** Who would imagine that a dash of powder in food could go reduce the risk of chronic age-related diseases such as cancer, heart disease and Type-II diabetes? Or that it could

actually help you overcome clinical depression... Of course, it won't happen overnight, but research proves that consistent intake of nutritionally-advanced food items can make you a healthier, saner version of yourself. "Chia seeds, for instance, help control blood sugar levels, prevent blood clots, reduce high blood pressure, reduce inflammation and improve digestion. Now, there are many ways to consume chia seeds - they are eaten raw with foods, made into a pudding or better still powdered and added to cereals, soups, and desserts. Grinding chia seeds is a convenient and wholesome way of eating them as the nutritional contents of the

seeds are retained when they are ground into a powder," maintains Chandra. Similarly, whole flaxseeds can be rather hard to chew, so ground flax is a better option. Just sprinkle it on your crunchy salad, dust it on a slice of tiramisu or add it to a homemade granola bar.

MUST-TRY FOOD POWDERS

Maca: This native Peruvian plant from the radish family is now readily available in powder form. It is widely used and is believed to boost libido, increase endurance and balance hormones by experts. The best way to get maca into your daily diet is by adding the powder directly into juices and smoothies. The taste will barely be detectable, and yet you'll reap the goodness of this superfood. **Matcha:** It is a supercharged green tea with an antioxidant potential almost 100 times the amount of regular green tea. It is nutrient-dense. Buddhist monks have been drinking matcha for centuries when meditating since it is known to increase alertness and concentration. Add a heaped teaspoon of matcha green tea powder into your breakfast daily and see the difference it makes.



'Khiladi Rijiju, one reel please,' Congress taunts as Parliament complex is flooded

Congress in Kerala tweeted a video showing flooding at the Parliament premises in Delhi following heavy rain on Tuesday. It tagged Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju, calling him a 'khiladi' in a mock reference to his recent Arunachal Pradesh river-swimming reel.

Delhi. (Agency)
Union Minister Kiren Rijiju recently shared a video of himself swimming in a river in his home state of Arunachal Pradesh. He explained the techniques one must adopt to tackle the gushing waters of the state's rivers, even calling himself a "khiladi (pro)". The Congress on Wednesday used the clip to take a swipe at Rijiju as videos of waterlogging in the Parliament complex went viral following heavy rain. "Yahan ka khiladi Kiren Rijiju, one more reel please," the Congress Kerala account posted, sharing a video of the waterlogged Parliament complex. In the tweet, the Congress also took a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi and said his

austerity measures led to the new Parliament turning into an indoor water park, so his ministers could shoot reels. It was an



apparent swipe at the PM's recent message to NDA ministers about focusing on reels and social media to woo the Gen-Z voters. "As an austerity measure, Modiji has turned

the new Parliament into an indoor water park, so ministers can shoot viral swimming and diving reels without wasting taxpayers' money travelling to Arunachal," it tweeted.

KIREN RIJIJU VS CONGRESS

The matter started on August 23 after Rijiju tweeted a video of him swimming in Arunachal. He was seen diving into a river and showcasing several swimming strokes. It was part of a fitness banter between him and Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi. "Never go to deep water, if you do not know swimming. Many people have drowned in the river. The rivers in Arunachal Pradesh are huge and very deep," he captioned the post, which has garnered 3.2 million views so far. A few hours later, he responded to the same thread, saying that swimming in Arunachal rivers is nothing

like in Yamuna or usual pools, hailing himself as a pro in the task. "Some people might think swimming in gushing rivers of Arunachal Pradesh is like swimming in pools or rivers like Yamuna. In raging rivers, our head should be up, not down & body should be more upright, not straight as we keep in swimming competition. Mein yahan ka khiladi hun," he wrote. He even responded to comparisons with Gandhi and said that the Congress MP "may take training" for such activities but for Rijiju, it's "normal routine in life". "My life is full of adventures)." A day later, the minister claimed that some Congress leaders were trolling him for his swimming techniques. He asserted that swimming in the "toughest rivers" has been an easier task for him since childhood, reaffirming himself as the "khiladi".

'Better half' becomes 'bitter half' if issues in marriage not resolved: Delhi HC

Delhi. (Agency)

The "better-half becomes the bitter-half" if marital issues are not addressed and resolved in time, the Delhi High Court has observed while acquitting a man convicted of attempting to kill his wife by forcing insecticide down her throat. Justice Vimal Kumar Yadav made the observation while allowing an appeal filed by Nafe Singh against a 2004 trial court order sentencing him to three years' imprisonment. In its August 24 order, the high court cited an "inconclusive" forensic trail and inconsistencies in the woman's testimony. It noted that she had made material improvements during cross-examination, including changing her account of a "beating-induced" abortion, which she later conceded had occurred naturally. The court also noted that Singh had arranged for his wife's hospital admission and paid the initial deposit. While pronouncing the order, Justice Yadav said recent instances of spouses resorting to extreme violence against each other were "incomprehensible some decades ago". "The better-half becomes the bitter-half if issues are not taken care of and resolved as soon as possible," the judge said, adding that relationships could take an "undesirable" turn if not handled carefully. According to the prosecution, the couple married in 2000 but their relationship soured within a year.

Probe into woman's disappearance

The Delhi HC on August 24 directed Delhi Police to register a missing person case and probe a woman's disappearance from a Rohini ashram. The court also ordered an inquiry into the ashram's affairs and funding.

No onion, sugar shortage, fresh stock to be procured if prices go up, says CM Rekha Gupta

Delhi. (Agency)

The Delhi government said that there is currently no shortage of onions or sugar. However, if prices rise further, it will ensure that residents do not have to bear the additional burden. The government will procure onions and sugar from NAFED, a Central government institution, and make them available at various locations across in city at procurement rates. The Delhi government will bear transportation and other related expenses.

In view of the possibility of a further rise in onion and sugar prices, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta directed the department to prepare a detailed action plan. This includes arrangements to make affordable onions available through camps at various locations across Delhi. She also directed officials to initiate the process of procuring onions from NAFED.

The Central government has also taken steps to supply onions to states and areas facing shortages. The department has been asked to monitor the supply received by Delhi, ensure its proper distribution in the market and prevent hoarding. Necessary action will be taken against those found violating the rules. Food and Supplies Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa said the government's effort is to ensure that Delhi residents do not have to bear any additional burden if onion prices rise further. He said onions would be sold at the price at which they are made available by NAFED, while the Delhi government would bear transportation and related expenses. Sirsa said the Central government has prescribed quantity limits to prevent hoarding of sugar. The Delhi government will also take action under these provisions if sugar is found stored beyond the prescribed limit.



IIT Delhi student's death case: Police book unidentified persons for abetment to suicide

Investigators are also obtaining the student's counselling records and other relevant information from the institute as part of the probe.

Delhi. (Agency)

Delhi Police have registered a case of abetment to suicide against unidentified persons in connection with the death of a 31-year-old M.Sc. Physics student of IIT Delhi, who allegedly jumped from a building on the institute campus on August 22, officials said. The student allegedly died by suicide after jumping from the front side of the Lecture Hall Complex, where he had gone after entering the

IIT Delhi campus through the main gate around 8 am.

According to the preliminary inquiry, the student took a lift to the sixth floor of the building before allegedly jumping from the front side. He was rushed to the institute's



campus hospital, where he was declared brought dead. A PCR call regarding the incident was received around 8.30 am at

Kishangarh police station, following which a police team reached the campus. A crime team and a forensic science laboratory unit were also called to collect evidence.

Police had earlier said that no suicide note was recovered from the spot. A mobile phone found in the student's pocket was seized and is being examined.

Investigators are also obtaining the student's counselling records and other relevant information from the institute as part of the probe. Police have now registered a case under the relevant provisions of abetment to suicide against unidentified persons. The circumstances leading to the student's death and the role, if any, of others are being investigated, officials said.

Waterlogging hobbles city for second day in row

Delhi. (Agency)

The roads continued to look like small-size lakes for the second consecutive day as heavy rain on Tuesday exposed the capital's fragile drainage and traffic infrastructure, with several key roads, underpasses, markets and residential colonies inundated. At the Kishanganj underpass, vehicles were seen struggling to move through the accumulated water, resulting in bottleneck. Two trucks remained stuck for a very long time there, causing traffic jams. In Mahipalpur, water covered large portions of the road, forcing schoolchildren to walk hand-in-hand as they negotiated the flooded stretch. Outside Safdarjung Hospital, severe waterlogging made vehicular movement difficult, while the road outside AIIMS was in an equally poor condition. The stretch outside RML

Hospital, the airport road remained waterlogged, adding to misery of commuters.

The situation was no better in central Delhi. Videos from outside the new Parliament building showed a significant portion of the road



submerged. Waterlogging was also reported at Zakhira Underpass, Connaught Place, Sadar Bazaar and Kamla Nagar. Azad Market in particular was badly

affected, with large parts of the market under water and shops remaining shut. On Baba Khark Singh Marg, footpaths were submerged, leaving pedestrians with little space to walk. Several colonies in Karol Bagh were also affected. Hanuman Temple, Shivaji Stadium Metro station and parts of Moti Bagh witnessed the same chaos.

The morning rush hour turned into a nightmare for office-goers and students. Commuters travelling between Delhi to Noida reported journeys of one-and-a-half hours. The school buses were also delayed. For parents, the disruption was more than an inconvenience; it meant hours of uncertainty. "My child usually reaches home by 1 pm, but today he was delayed by nearly an hour. The bus got stuck in Trilokpuri because the roads were flooded, and we had no clear information about when it would move," said a parent from IP Extension, Sampada Jain.

Why Mumbaikars are fighting to save FIFA-standard Neville D'Souza ground

Mumbai has no shortage of football fans or aspiring players. But for many young footballers, quality grounds remain out of reach. With Neville D'Souza ground facing a proposed change in land use, players and coaches fear Mumbai could lose a rare pathway from amateur football to the professional game.

Delhi. (Agency)

"For district-level football, there is nothing else like Neville D'Souza ground. If this goes away, there would be nothing left," said Mumbai-based lawyer and football enthusiast, Tushar Sinha. He has played at the ground in Bandra West as an amateur, and has been closely involved with Mumbai football since 2013.

That's what is at stake as the 8,450-square-metre football ground faces a proposed change in land reservation from a playground to a convention and exhibition centre. In effect, the move by the BMC would remove the plot's legal protection as a playground and allow it to be developed as a convention or

exhibition centre, subject to final State approval.

Sinha grew up near the ground in Bandra, and has been a part of fan clubs supporting Mumbai Football Club and the Indian team. Speaking to India Today Digital, he recalled how he watched the Neville D'Souza ground evolve from an exhibition space into a professional-standard football facility.

Like thousands who have honed their football skills at this Bandra ground, Sinha is concerned about losing one of the few spaces where children, amateur players and young footballers can experience something close to professional football. It has a FIFA-standard artificial turf, stands,

dressing rooms and other facilities associated with a professional football venue.

While the BMC has approved the



proposal, but the reservation change still requires the Maharashtra government's approval. Meanwhile, the Bombay High Court has restrained the BMC and the

State government from taking further steps. "Children in Mumbai have been playing on mud grounds, on Azad Maidan and Oval Maidan, all their lives. Finally, they got a grass ground which is actually a professional-level turf," he said.

And the alternatives, he argued, are not really alternatives for the majority of players. "Even if you see Andheri Sports Complex and the DY Patil stadium, these don't really cater to district-level games. An Indian Super League team can play there, but that doesn't mean they are accessible to everyone," he said. "We keep complaining that we have never played the World Cup, and that we are very far away from that."

Instagram chief admits
touting teen safety tool
while omitting it was barely used

OAKLAND. (Agency)

Adam Mosseri, who oversees Instagram at Meta, admitted in a California court on Tuesday that he touted newly launched safety tools for teens without disclosing low adoption rates from early testing several years ago. With more than three billion users around the world, Meta is fending off accusations by a coalition of 29 US states that it deliberately designed its products to hook children and gather their data while misleading the public. The trial entered its second week on Monday and is expected to last through late September. A lawyer with the Colorado Attorney General's office, Jason Slothouber, questioned Mosseri about the low usage of the tools, known as Take a Break and Quiet Mode, which were launched in 2021 and 2023, respectively. Other witnesses have testified over the past week that these tools weren't effective, though Mosseri pushed back on the idea that adoption remains low. "This is one feature with a disappointingly low usage rate which since this time has significantly improved," Mosseri said. On December 8, 2021, Mosseri testified at a Congressional hearing about the negative impacts of social media on young people. One day before, Meta published a blog post, authored by Mosseri, about rolling out new safety features for teens. "Early test results show that once teens set the reminders, more than 90% of them keep them on," the blog post says. However, that number referred to the number of people who kept it on after turning it on.

Uniform fixed deposit rates
across all branches for
amounts and tenure from 1
October 2026: RBI rules
explained

New Delhi. (Agency)

Reserve Bank of India's latest notification -- Urban Co-operative Banks -- Interest Rate on Deposits Second Amendment Directions, 2026, has revised instructions pertaining to disclosure of interest rates on deposits. The revised directions shall come into effect from 1 October 2026 and is applicable to commercial banks, small finance banks, regional rural banks, local area banks, payment banks, and urban cooperative banks. The RBI notification mandates that interest rates payable on deposits, including bulk deposits, shall be strictly as per the schedule of interest rates disclosed in advance on the bank's website. However, interest rates payable on bulk deposits shall be disclosed on the bank's website at 10:00 am with a grace time of 10 minutes, latest by 10:10 am, on each business day. Furthermore, the RBI says, that the interest rates offered on deposits, including bulk deposits, shall be uniform across all branches and for all customers and there shall be no discrimination in the matter of interest paid on the deposits, between one deposit and another deposit of similar amount, accepted on the same date, at any of its offices.

Which Indian manufacturing
sectors are actually
becoming self-reliant?

MUMBAI. (Agency)

From smartphones and solar modules to electric vehicles and telecom equipment, India is making more of the products it once imported. Yet a product being assembled in India does not necessarily mean its value chain is local. What matters more is how much of the components, materials and technology that go into it are also made domestically. That distinction is becoming central to India's manufacturing push. A recent NITI Aayog report, prepared with Crisil, argues that the country's ambition must move beyond expanding production toward deeper value addition, stronger domestic capabilities, and greater participation across global value chains. Across automobiles, smartphones, EVs, solar and telecom, the picture is therefore mixed. Some sectors have developed deep supplier ecosystems, while others have become good at making the final product but still depend heavily on imported inputs. Automobiles have the deepest established ecosystem. India's automobile industry has one of the country's most developed manufacturing networks, with a large base of component makers supplying domestic and global vehicle manufacturers. The NITI Aayog-Crisil report points to localisation efforts, close Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) collaboration and joint ventures with global component companies as factors that have helped Indian auto-component manufacturers become increasingly integrated into global supply chains. Auto-component exports also reached about \$7.5 billion in FY2025, with Indian suppliers serving markets across Europe, North America and Asia. With this supplier base already in place, the next challenge is to extend localisation into more advanced automotive technologies.

Air India turns to Tata, Singapore Airlines
for \$1.5 billion as losses mount: Report

The carrier and its budget unit Air India Express posted combined losses of \$2.33 billion in the fiscal year ended March, more than double the prior year's losses. The losses have also weighed on Singapore Airlines' profits.

Kolkata. (Agency)

Air India is seeking about \$1.5 billion in fresh equity from its owners Tata Sons and Singapore Airlines, months after the second-largest Indian airline posted a record annual loss, two people familiar with the matter told Reuters. It would be one of Air India's largest publicly reported requests for shareholder funding since Tata took control of the former state-owned carrier in 2022. It highlights the challenges facing the airline as it undergoes a multi-billion-dollar revamp, including the refurbishment of its existing fleet. The carrier and its budget unit Air India Express posted combined losses of \$2.33 billion in the fiscal year ended March, more than double the prior year's losses. The losses have also weighed on

Singapore Airlines' profits. "Air India wants the funds immediately, though the infusion is likely to happen in tranches.



Singapore Airlines would need to contribute its share of the proposed infusion for the investment to go through," one of the sources said. It is seeking the funding in the form of fresh equity, the two people said. Discussions are ongoing and no decision has been

taken on the request, they added, declining to be named as they were not authorised to discuss the matter publicly. Singapore Airlines, which owns around 25 per cent of Air India, said it was working closely with Tata Sons to support Air India's transformation programme, but declined to comment on the airline's finances. AIR INDIA'S TURNAROUND EFFORTS Air India has also been hit by Pakistan's airspace ban on Indian carriers, disruptions to its international network from the US-Israeli war with Iran and the fallout from a deadly crash last year that killed 260 people. Its funding request comes as Tata Sons Chair N. Chandrasekaran prepares to step down in February following months of disagreements.

Sensex, Nifty gain as oil prices
ease on Strait of Hormuz hopes

New Delhi. (Agency)

Stock markets opened higher on Wednesday, tracking gains across global equities as a sharp fall in crude oil prices offered some relief to investors amid signs of progress on reopening the Strait of Hormuz. The BSE Sensex gained 292.31 points, or 0.38%, to 77,948.40, while the Nifty 50 rose 32.65 points, or 0.13%, to 24,367.20 around 9:55 am. The Sensex opened at 77,892.10, while the Nifty opened at 24,341.95. The positive start came as oil prices eased after Iran resumed talks with Oman on managing the strategic waterway, raising hopes of a possible reopening of the Strait of Hormuz and a smoother flow of global oil supplies. "Two factors which are positive for the market today" are the latest ceasefire developments between the US and Iran and initiatives to resume shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, said Dr V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Investments Limited. He noted that Brent crude had fallen to around \$86.3 a barrel, adding that the decline was significant because elevated crude prices had been a major constraint on the Indian market. Vijayakumar also pointed to a decline in US bond yields as another positive for equities globally. "The dip in bond yields in the US (10-year at 4.64%) is a mild positive for equity markets, globally," he said. PSU BANKS LEAD, BROADER MARKET

STAYS FIRM The broader market also opened higher. Nifty 100 rose 0.21%, Nifty 200 gained 0.23% and Nifty 500 advanced 0.27%. The Nifty Midcap 50 and Nifty Midcap 100 gained 0.31% and 0.30%, respectively, while the Nifty Smallcap 100 rose 0.36%. India VIX fell 2.88% to 10.76. Among sectoral indices, Nifty PSU Bank was the biggest gainer, rising 1.42%. Nifty Private Bank gained 0.81%, Nifty Financial Services 25/50 advanced 0.77% and Nifty MidSmall Financial Services rose 0.66%. Nifty MidSmall IT & Telecom gained 0.58%, Nifty Media rose 0.54%, Nifty MidSmall Healthcare advanced 0.42%, Nifty Financial Services ex-Bank gained 0.63% and Nifty Pharma added 0.22%.

Pothole accident in India: Who is liable
and how can you claim compensation?

New Delhi. (Agency)

The cyber city of India, Gurugram, yet again finds itself waterlogged this monsoon. With traffic continuing to



pass over the damaged part of the road, another hurdle of potholes is presented to the people. After a wide portion of the road caved in, Gurugram's IFFCO Chowk saw a massive sinkhole being created within minutes. It left behind a 25-foot wide crater, posing a serious hazard for the commuters. In fact, the problem is not limited to Gurugram. Every year across Delhi-NCR, as the monsoon arrives, the pothole crisis transforms from an inconvenience into a public health emergency.

The statistics paint a grim picture: at least 19 accidents and 6 deaths occur daily across India due to potholes, with the fatality rate increasing from 0.27 in 2013 to 0.42 in 2022, according to a report by Factly.in. But beyond the headlines of tragedy lies a fundamental question that haunts every Indian who has suffered at the hands of negligent road maintenance: Can we actually hold the government accountable for these losses? Can families seek compensation for deaths, injuries, and property damage caused by potholes on public roads? The answer, according to legal experts, is a resounding yes -- but the path to justice is neither simple nor guaranteed. Dheeraj Gupta, Advocate and Managing Partner, Peritia Law Chambers, said that an individual who suffers injury or material loss due to potholes is entitled to initiate legal action against the government or the responsible statutory authority. "Since the right to access any part of the country, with certain exceptions and restrictions under certain circumstances, is a fundamental right guaranteed under Article 19(1)(g) of the Constitution, and the right to safe, well-maintained, and motorable roads is recognised as a part of the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution of India, it is the responsibility of the State to develop and maintain the roads directly under its control," said Gupta.

Asian shares mostly rise
as oil prices fall and
hope grows for AI

TOKYO. (Agency)

Asian shares mostly rose in early Wednesday trading, as investors kept an eye on the ongoing talks over reopening the Strait of Hormuz, which remains largely shut down because of the war in Iran. The global interest in artificial intelligence continued to boost some regional issues, while declining oil prices helped gear up optimism in oil-importing nations like Japan. Resource-poor Japan imports virtually all its oil. Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 rose 0.6% in morning trading to 66,227.55. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 dipped 0.2% to 9,142.60. South Korea's Kospi jumped 1.6% to 6,849.92. Hong Kong's Hang Seng gained 0.8% to 25,712.29, while



the Shanghai Composite edged up 0.7% to 3,917.04. Oil prices continued to fall. Benchmark U.S. crude dropped \$2.06 to \$80.30 a barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, lost \$2.31 to \$86.27 a barrel. Tensions between the United States and Iran seemed to ratchet higher after the Trump administration announced new sanctions to further hurt Iran's economy. Brent's price zigzagged between \$72 and \$102 last month as hopes rose and fell that the United States and Iran could reach a deal. The top diplomats of Iran and Oman met on Tuesday to discuss a phased approach to managing ship traffic through the Strait of Hormuz. The talks came after an oil tanker was disabled in an attack off the coast of Oman, underscoring the ongoing dangers for shipping companies attempting to use the waterway while it's under Iranian control. A delegation from Pakistan also held talks with Iran's president on reviving negotiations to end the Iran-U.S. conflict, the Pakistani military said. Pakistan Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said a meeting with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian had been "very positive and productive." The yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 4.63% from 4.70% late Monday and from 4.74% at the end of last week. That's a significant move for the bond market, though the 10-year yield remains firmly above its 3.97% level from before the war with Iran sent oil prices and worries about inflation much higher.

14 days under watch, Rs 2.6 crore gone: The
digital arrest behind a Rs 27,850 crore bust

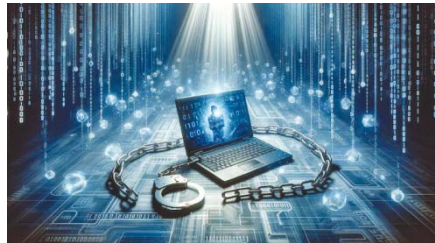
Under the revised conditions, imported raw sugar must be converted into refined sugar within two months and the refined sugar must also be sold within the same period, the government said.

New Delhi. (Agency)

For two weeks in May 2025, a woman in Goa was never alone. She was on a video call she could not end, watched constantly by callers posing as investigators, told she was under criminal scrutiny and had to prove her innocence to make it stop. Between May 21 and June 2, 2025, under that unbroken surveillance, she transferred Rs 2,60,33,634, over Rs 2.6 crore, into accounts she was told were "Secret Supervision Accounts." She filed

an FIR at the Cyber Crime Police Station in North Goa. That single complaint set off an Enforcement Directorate (ED) investigation that would eventually surface a network spanning 20 states, 163 FIRs, and transactions worth more than Rs 27,850 crore. FOLLOWING THE MONEY TRAIL Investigators started where every case like this starts: tracing where her Rs 2.6 crore actually went. It did not sit anywhere. Within hours of each transfer, the money moved through a first layer of dormant and newly opened bank accounts, accounts that appeared to have been created and left inactive specifically so they could be activated the moment stolen funds needed somewhere to land. From there, it fractured further, split across more than 400 beneficiary accounts through a combination of bank transfers, cash withdrawals, self-cheques and payment gateways. Each of those channels leaves

its own kind of trail, and each was used deliberately, ED officials say, to make the movement of one victim's money look like hundreds of unconnected, everyday transactions. The trail did not



end there. It led investigators to an interconnected cluster of commodity trading, travel and foreign exchange firms, several of which held valid Reserve Bank of India licences as Full Fledged Money Changers, entities legally entitled to convert rupees into foreign currency for travellers and

businesses. According to the ED, that legitimacy was the entire architecture of the operation. The network existed to take cyber-fraud proceeds, which arrive in bank accounts looking like perfectly ordinary credits, convert them first into cash, and then convert that cash into foreign currency through licenced channels, laundering stolen money using the same infrastructure genuine currency exchange runs on. The scale, once investigators added it up, was extraordinary. These entities together had carried out banking transactions exceeding Rs 27,850 crore. They had deposited close to Rs 2,904 crore in cash, and of that, Rs 584.70 crore had gone through Bulk Note Acceptance Machines alone, spread across 61,448 separate transactions at multiple locations. The ED's own assessment of this pattern was blunt: cash handling on a scale.

BMC floats Rs 9.2cr tender for Kala Ghoda Phase 2A devpt

Mumbai.(Agency)

BMC on Tuesday floated a Rs 9.23 crore tender for Phase 2A of the Kala Ghoda precinct development project, which will involve upgrading roads, footpaths, drainage, landscaping and street lighting in the heritage precinct of south Mumbai.

The project will cover four roads-Chamber of Commerce Lane, Forbes Street, Nagindas Master Road and Nanik Motwani Road. Local BJP corporator Makrand Narwekar said, "In the first phase of the project which was inaugurated in July this year by the Maharashtra chief minister, roads in Kala Ghoda area such as V B Gandhi Marg (Forbes Street), Ropewalk Lane, Saibaba Road, Rutherford Street, and B Bharucha Road have been renovated with redesigned streets, improved lighting, open-air cafe seating and landscaped public spaces."

"Now, in the second phase, we are taking on additional roads. We have already spoken to Mumbai traffic police to get these made pedestrian-only zones on weekends. The next phase of this project will include robotic parking of vehicles at Kala Ghoda junction with a plaza around it." The road works will include clearing the sites, removal of temporary structures, shifting or relocation of essential utilities, street poles, traffic signals and road signboards, excavation and construction of road layers. The project will also include the installation of basalt and granite cobblestones, repair and construction of chambers and installation of recessed chamber covers with ducts.

5 killed, 20 injured as bus rams iron rod-laden truck in Telangana

Bengaluru.(Agency)

Five people were killed and around 20 others sustained serious injuries after a private travel bus rammed into an iron-rod-laden container from behind in Telangana's Suryapet district on Wednesday.

The accident occurred at around 4.30 am on the Hyderabad-Vijayawada National Highway when the private bus, carrying 42 passengers, was travelling from Hyderabad to Eluru in Andhra Pradesh. According to police, the bus rammed the truck from the rear.

The impact caused the iron rods loaded on the container to pierce into the bus, worsening the severity of the accident. Several passengers became trapped inside the mangled bus and cried for help.

Police carried out a rescue operation for more than an hour to pull the injured and trapped passengers out of the bus. The injured were shifted to nearby hospitals for treatment. The accident caused a major traffic jam on the Hyderabad-Vijayawada National Highway.

Based on a preliminary investigation, police said the truck is suspected to have already hit a road divider before the bus collided with it from behind. Further investigation is underway, police added. Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy expressed condolences over the deaths in the accident and conveyed his sympathies to the bereaved families.

Kerala adds 820 beds in four medical colleges to ease space crunch

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM.(Agency)

In an attempt to put an end to the difficulties being faced by patients seeking treatment at government medical colleges and addressing the shortage of space, the health department has added 820 new beds in Thiruvananthapuram, Kottayam, Thrissur, and Kozhikode medical colleges.

The move is part of an initiative announced by Health Minister K Muraleedharan to ensure that no patient is forced to lie on the floor due to a shortage of beds.

"At Thiruvananthapuram Medical College, we identified as many as 80 patients lying on the floor. As part of the initiative, we shifted the fever clinic to Pulayanarkotta Chest Disease Hospital. Thus, we now have an additional 300 beds. In Kozhikode and Kottayam, we have added 160 beds each, while in the Thrissur Medical College, we have set up two additional wards, adding 200 beds," said an official with the Department of Health.

The minister, in July, had said no patient should be made to lie down and that the government has taken steps to end the practice of accommodating patients on the floor in state-run medical college hospitals.

"With the help of the superintendent and the staff at the medical college hospitals, we estimated the number of additional patients by cross-checking the inpatient register and bed strength. The additional beds have been arranged based on the numbers we have collected," said the official.

Two booked for claiming demolition of shops 'under AMC's watch'

Later, the AMC clarified that the shops in the Nana Chiloda area of Ahmedabad were demolished by the landowner and that the civic body had no role in it.

Ahmedabad.(Agency)

After the events in Surat's Nasirnagar weeks ago, another demolition kicked up a row in Gujarat. Two employees of a security agency were booked in a police case after they allegedly claimed that some shops were being demolished on the orders of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC). Later, the AMC clarified that the shops in the Nana Chiloda area of Ahmedabad were demolished by the landowner and that the civic body had no role in it.

Rajesh Shankar Yadav (32) and Kamal Manoj Pamnani (32) of Rajpur Security Agency were charged with impersonation of a public servant following a complaint by Narendra Babu Patel, Town Development Office (TDO) Inspector, North Zone. Yadav and Pamnani were purportedly heard saying in a viral video that the demolition was being carried out at the behest of the AMC.

"The private land comes under the jurisdiction of Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation (GIDC) Naroda. AMC issued no

demolition order. The two shops running on rent were demolished by the owner of the property," Vishal Khanama, in-charge Deputy Municipal Commissioner (North Zone) told The Indian Express.



Patel stated in the FIR: "At 3:45 pm on August 24, I saw a video of some people demolishing shops next to a petrol pump in Nana Chiloda on the Ahmedabad-Himmatnagar highway. In the video, people were seen saying that it was being done on the orders of the AMC."

The complainant said he and his boss, Deputy Estate Officer Vikram Katariya, inspected the

site. There, we found that three shop owners had demolished portions of their shops that were encroaching the road. But there were three other shops near the boundary of Naroda GIDC whose encroached portions, the accused alleged, had been demolished by the AMC," stated the FIR.

The complainant said he called the police and filed the complaint. The security agency's personnel were booked under BNS sections 204 (impersonating a public servant) and 54 (abatement).

Police Inspector BM Kataria of Naroda police station said the police would arrest the two men and investigate why they claimed on video that the demolition had been carried out by the AMC. "Nana Chiloda comes under GIDC Naroda Executive Authority. So, there is no question of us issuing any demolition order. Instead, there was some dispute between the tenants and the owner. This piece of land was purchased from GIDC, but later auctioned by the Bank of Baroda after the previous owner failed to pay the amount. So the existing owner got these shops demolished."

Fake liquor factory busted in Gujarat's Kutch after Bhavnagar hooch tragedy

Police uncovered a fake liquor factory in Kutch and seized nearly 10,000 bottles after the Bhavnagar hooch tragedy. The raid has widened Gujarat's probe into methanol-tainted spurious liquor and its supply chain.

Kutch.(Agency)

The Maharashtra anti-conversion law that toughens legal provisions against forced conversion comes into effect August 28. Its shadow has already fallen on Christian congregations across the Mumbai Metropolitan Region. At prayer halls in Vasai, Virar, Mira-Bhayandar and beyond, local pastors are asking worshippers to do something there have been nine FIRs linked to five such disruptions between April and July.

Pattern of prayer, protest

Typically, a prayer meeting is held on a Sunday, often in a rented hall, school, banquet hall or home. People identifying

themselves as Bajrang Dal or VHP workers object, often alleging that Hindus are being converted. Police are called, both sides are



taken to the station, and in some cases an FIR follows. In the Bhavnagar incident, officials

said 67 people had consumed liquor containing methanol, a highly toxic substance, packed in bottles bearing the name of a popular IMFL brand. The State Monitoring Cell, a special unit that tracks illicit liquor and gambling operations across Gujarat, is investigating the source of methanol and other chemicals, the transporters involved, and those linked to procuring and moving raw materials used to make spurious liquor. The Kutch seizure has come days after the Bhavnagar tragedy, in which 13 people died after consuming spurious liquor, with the police probe now covering the manufacture, supply and movement of fake liquor and its raw materials.

Andhra Pradesh HC directs govt to file counter on 34% BC quota in local polls

VIJAYAWADA.(Agency)

The HC on Tuesday directed the government to file a detailed counter

explaining how it proposes to justify 34% reservations for BCs in local body polls, along with data and statistics supporting the quota.

A Bench comprising Chief Justice Lisa Gill and Justice Challa Gunaranjan adjourned the matter to September 2. Appearing for the State, senior SC counsel Devadatt submitted that there was no rule mandating that reservations must not exceed 50%. He argued that States could provide reservations beyond 50% based on conditions and referred to SC Constitution Bench judgment in the Krishnamurthy case. He said the government would file a detailed affidavit explaining its

position.

The Bench directed the government to place all reservation data and statistics before it and specifically explain how



the proposed 34% BC quota could be legally justified.

The PIL was filed by advocate Tandava Yogesh, challenging G.O. Nos. 105 and 1065 issued by the State government

providing 34% reservations for BCs in local body elections.

Previous ruling cited

During the hearing, Yogesh argued that the SC Constitution Bench had held in the Krishnamurthy case that total reservations should not ordinarily exceed 50%. He also referred to the High Court's December 2019 judgment in the Birru Pratap Reddy case, in which the court had struck down the then government's decision to provide 34% BC reservations after the total reservation reached 59.85%. He submitted that the government had subsequently

revised the BC quota in accordance with the HC's directions and conducted the elections. He further informed the court that the HC's decision had been upheld by the Supreme Court.

Priyadarshini and the little savings that make a big difference in Kerala

KOCHI.(Agency)

As the UDF government completes 100 days in office, the impact of its free travel scheme for women on KSRTC ordinary buses — one of its first promises to be implemented — is coming under close scrutiny. TNIE reporter Abhirami Anil and lensman T P Sooraj travelled alongside women passengers to gauge, first-hand, whether the cash-strapped, loss-making KSRTC's free-travel initiative is making a meaningful difference in the lives of Kerala women.

In the dim early morning light, a KSRTC bus stood at the Ernakulam South bus stand, waiting to begin another trip to Guruvayur. There was nothing unusual about the bus at first glance. But the destination board carried a name that has begun to mean something different to many women in Kerala — Priyadarshini Shree Sajjanya Yathra.

The bus left South almost empty. At Boat Jetty, however, the quietness began to disappear. Four women in their 60s stood near the bus, looking around for the board they had heard about. They appeared unsure at first, scanning the bus and then looking at one another. Then came a small wave of recognition, one pointed towards the board, the others followed, and the four friends and relatives climbed aboard with smiles.

Andhra doctors suspend strike over stipend, retirement age after court intervention

The Andhra Pradesh Junior Doctors Association has suspended its strike after the High Court asked doctors to resume services and the government to resolve their demands within two weeks. The pause restores patient care for now, but the association says it may return to court if talks fail.

Amaravati.(Agency)

The Andhra Pradesh Junior Doctors Association has temporarily called off its strike, saying it did so in the best interests of patients and to ensure continuity of care. The association said it expected the state government to respond to its demands and reach an amicable solution at the earliest.

APJUDA said the Andhra Pradesh High Court had asked it to end the strike and continue patient services, while directing the government to resolve the issues within two weeks. It said the strike had only been suspended for now and that its pursuit of justice would continue through other means, including legal options if no settlement was reached. In a release issued late on Tuesday, the association said the High Court had appreciated the efforts of doctors in managing healthcare in the state and had acknowledged their genuine demands. It quoted the court order as saying, "The Divisional Bench of High Court of Andhra Pradesh instructed AP JUDA to call off

strike and continue patient services and further directed the state government to resolve the issue within two weeks."

APJUDA also said the court had assured it that it could approach the bench again if its demands were not resolved within the two-week period ending on September 7.

Andhra Pradesh Health and Medical Minister Y Satya Kumar Yadav said on Tuesday that the government would take an appropriate decision after examining the stipend and other benefits given to junior doctors in other states.

The junior doctors have mainly sought an increase in stipend and have also opposed the proposed increase in the retirement age. APJUDA said its demands included a stipend hike for interns, postgraduates, super-speciality postgraduates and senior residents with effect from January 1, 2026, strict adherence to National Medical Commission rules for the recruitment of

non-medical faculty, and opposition to raising the retirement age to 65 years.

The association said it had been submitting



representations to government officials, including the health minister, since December 2025 seeking the stipend increase, but had received only verbal assurances and no official written response. It also said it was ready for negotiations and had agreed to reduce its demand for a 30 per

cent stipend hike to 15 per cent.

A public interest litigation was filed by a social activist against the government and APJUDA on August 24. APJUDA said the first hearing took place without notice to the association or its representatives, after which the High Court directed the petitioner to serve notice on it.

The association said it received the notice late on August 24 and represented itself before the High Court on August 25. Following the court's directions, APJUDA members met Minister Yadav and senior officials, discussed the next course of action, and another round of talks was scheduled for August 27. APJUDA said it had issued an official strike notice on July 21, stating that a phase-wise strike would begin on August 4, but postponed it by a week after the Health Department sought more time. With no written assurances or government order, it began the phase-wise strike on August 10.

NEWS BOX

I can hear the national anthem: Ancy Sojan's Asian Games prep begins with a dream



Bhubaneswar. (Agency)

When young Indian badminton sensation Ayush Shetty was drawn against World No. 1 Shi Yu Qi, coach Vimal Kumar asked him to write a note on his mirror: "17th August is a bad day for Shi Yu Qi." Ayush saw those words every day in the build-up to the Badminton World Championships in Delhi. When he finally stepped on court, he made them come true, beating the defending champion in three games and pulling off one of the tournament's biggest upsets. For Indian long jumper Ancy Sojan, the process has been remarkably similar.

On Saturday, August 22, Ancy competed in the World Athletics Silver-level meet in Bhubaneswar, an event crucial to her build-up for the Asian Games. Ancy won the event with a jump of 6.71 metres, comfortably beating Shaili Singh's 6.56m, who took home the silver medal. For Ancy, however, the best jump of the night was average. She knew that she was nowhere near her best. Speaking to India Today after the event, Ancy revealed that she was struggling with an injury that kept her far from her best. "I have a little bit of a knee issue going on, and I have not been able to take off on the jump the way I want to. I am looking forward to the Asian Games. I am really tired because I started my season quite early. I want to take rest now and then arrive at the Asian Games fresh," Ancy said.

THE POWER OF VISUALISATION

2026 has been a big year for Ancy Sojan. She broke the long-standing national record of the legendary Anju Bobby George with a 6.88m effort in Bhubaneswar in June. She also has three jumps in excess of 6.70m, making her one of the strongest contenders for Gold at the Asian Games.

Her 6.88m national record, combined with three consecutive jumps beyond 6.70m, has made Ancy one of the strongest contenders for gold at the Asian Games. The Gold at the Asian Games in 2023 was won by China's Xiong Shiqi with a 6.73m effort. Ancy finished with a silver there with 6.63m.

Will Pucovski, who retired at 27 due to multiple concussion injuries, sues school



New Delhi. (Agency)

Former Australia cricketer Will Pucovski, whose promising cricket career was cut short at the age of 27 due to multiple concussion injuries, has taken legal action against his former school. Pucovski has sued his school over the first serious head injury he suffered as a teenager.

First reported by Code Cricket, Pucovski's lawyers have filed a statement of claim against Brighton Grammar, alleging that the Melbourne private school failed in its duty of care after he suffered a concussion during an Australian rules football training session in 2014. Pucovski was 16 at the time. The incident has taken on greater significance in light of what followed. Pucovski went on to suffer 13 documented concussions during his cricket career before an independent medical panel recommended that he retire from the sport in 2024. He was considered one of the biggest batting talents in Australia during his formative years in professional cricket.

The legal case centres on what happened immediately after that first concussion at Brighton Grammar. Pucovski was knocked unconscious during the football training session but, according to the reported statement of claim, returned to training within minutes of being hit. He subsequently missed months of school because of the effects of the injury. Speaking at a Lord's Taverners event earlier this year, Pucovski described the incident in striking detail and said he had never felt the same after that day.

Serena and Alcaraz give New York a show to remember at US Open mixed doubles

Serena Williams returned to Arthur Ashe Stadium with Carlos Alcaraz in the US Open mixed doubles event. Their brief run ending in the quarter-finals gave the revamped format the star power and theatre organisers sought.

Mackay. (Agency)

It was a sensational pairing, one that existed for just two matches but produced enough magic to linger long after the scoreboard had stopped. Serena Williams was on fire. Four years after her tearful farewell from the US Open and the sport, the 44-year-old returned to Arthur Ashe Stadium and reminded tennis fans that time had done little to dull her serve, reflexes or competitive fire. And standing alongside her was Carlos Alcaraz. The unlikely pair

became one of the biggest attractions of the revamped US Open Mixed Doubles Championship, grinning and giggling their way through their opening-round win before their run ended in the quarter-finals. The first-round match against Erin Routliffe and Lloyd Glasspool was everything the New York crowd had hoped for. Williams served bombs, returned with power and produced the kind of quick reactions at the net that had made her one of the greatest players in tennis history. Alcaraz, at times, looked almost like a fan himself. The Spaniard joined in with his own athleticism and touch around the net, but there were moments when his reaction to Williams' shots said everything. One point saw the pair scrambling across the court, combining power, speed and reflexes before earning a huge roar from the crowd. For Williams, this was a return to the biggest stage in American tennis after her emotional farewell in 2022. For Alcaraz, it was his first competitive appearance in almost five months after a wrist injury. 'COOL PAIR'

He admitted afterwards that he was nervous. "I think everyone could see, I double-faulted the first point. So I was really, really nervous," Alcaraz said. "Playing alongside Serena, it's still



competition, full crowd. I was out for almost five months. I almost forget how I feel stepping on the court once again. Williams, he said, made the comeback easier. "It was just a couple games. She made it really easy for me. Just trying to enjoy and go for it every time." Williams was enjoying herself

too. "The same thing. Just have fun," she said. "This is such a bonus for us to be out here. To play with Carlos is honestly so cool. We're just out here having fun." That chemistry helped turn the mixed doubles event into something more than a sideshow. The US Open introduced the revamped format in 2025, moving mixed doubles into a standalone slot before the singles tournament and putting some of the sport's biggest singles names on the court. The debut was a commercial success, with sellout crowds and a star-studded field, although some established doubles players criticised the format for marginalising specialist pairings. The second edition again produced its share of drama. Top seeds Novak Djokovic and Aryna Sabalenka were beaten in the first round by Henry Patten and Katerina Siniakova, the experienced doubles pair winning 1-4, 4-2, 10-2. Siniakova sealed the upset with an ace. But even that could not compete with the spectacle of Serena and Alcaraz sharing a court.

US Open: Roger Federer beats Andy Roddick on return, wows fans with vintage backhands

Roger Federer rolled back the years on his return to Arthur Ashe Stadium, dazzling a packed New York crowd with trademark backhand winners. Federer played Andy Roddick, and beat his longtime rival and friend in a 6-3 exhibition win.

New Delhi. (Agency). (Agency)

Roger Federer rolled back the years at Arthur Ashe Stadium as the five-time US Open champion returned to the iconic court for the first time since 2019, dazzling fans with a 6-3 win over longtime rival Andy Roddick in an exhibition match. The Swiss legend may have retired from professional tennis, but there were moments when it felt like he had still got it in him to play at the highest level. Federer produced trademark backhand winners and exquisite passing shots, leaving Roddick and a packed Arthur Ashe Stadium mesmerised as the two former rivals turned back the clock in New York. The 45-year-old needed just 35 minutes to get the better of Roddick in the one-set exhibition contest, breaking the American in the eighth game before holding his nerve to serve out the match. But the score was almost beside the point.

This was about Federer being back on Arthur Ashe Stadium, the court where he created some of the most memorable chapters of his extraordinary career. The



packed stands gave the Swiss a hero's welcome, with fans sporting the familiar RF logo as Federer walked back onto the world's biggest tennis stadium for the first time in seven years. And Federer gave them plenty to cheer about.

He began with a backhand winner down the line in the second game, immediately showing that the shot which became one of the defining features of his game had not deserted him. Roddick responded with his trademark power on serve, but Federer continued to find ways to make a particularly brilliant backhand passing shot in the sixth game brought the crowd to its feet as Federer stepped up the pressure on Roddick. He court look smaller than it really was. The American, who is almost 44, fought back with the booming serves that had made him one of the most feared players of his generation. The two former US Open finalists kept the contest competitive, even if there were no ranking points or Grand Slam stakes on the line. Federer eventually found the decisive opening in the eighth game, breaking Roddick at love to move 5-3 ahead.

Badminton back to 15 points: Is it feeling the heat from pickleball and padel?

New Delhi. (Agency)

For 20 years, badminton has been played to 21. From January 2027, it will be played to 15. That sounds like a small change, but it is not. The 2026 BWF World Championships in New Delhi will go down as the last edition played under the familiar three-games-to-21 format. From January 4, 2027, badminton will return to three games of 15 points, with the game still able to stretch to 21 in a setting situation. The BWF members approved the change in April after a long period of testing and consultation. For a sport that has spent the best part of two decades living with 21, the question is obvious: why change now? The official answer is player welfare, workload, scheduling and the need to make matches more consistent in duration. Thomas

Lund, the BWF secretary general, is emphatic that there is no radical reinvention. "It's not a revolution. It's an



evolution of the scoring system," Lund said in Delhi, which hosted the BWF World Championships last week. But a harder question hangs over the sport: is it also looking over its shoulder? Pickleball and padel have exploded across markets where traditional racket sports

have long been established, and tennis has had to confront that competition more openly. Novak Djokovic recently proposed a radical rethink of tennis scoring, suggesting four-game sets and no-ad scoring while retaining the best-of-five format at Grand Slams. His argument was that matches should fit more comfortably into a two-hour window and become easier for modern audiences to follow. It's no longer a secret that established racket sports are not just competing with each other for elite audiences, but for court space, participants, time and attention. In Britain, tennis clubs are now grappling with how to accommodate padel without allowing it to cannibalise tennis infrastructure. The debate is not simply about which racket sport is better; it is about space, accessibility, economics and, ultimately, who gets people's time.

Bruno Fernandes only 2nd Portuguese after Ronaldo to win PFA Player of the Year



New Delhi. (Agency)

Manchester United captain Bruno Fernandes has joined Cristiano Ronaldo as only the second Portuguese player to win the PFA Player of the Year award, after a sensational 2025-26 season in which he broke the Premier League record for assists.

Fernandes provided 21 assists in the Premier League last season, the most by any player in a single campaign, while also scoring nine goals as Manchester United finished third in the English top flight. His performances earned him the award, which is voted for by members of the Professional Footballers' Association. The 31-year-old becomes only the second Portuguese player to receive the honour after Ronaldo, who won it in consecutive years in 2007 and 2008 during his first spell at Old Trafford. Fernandes' recognition also extends Manchester United's dominance in the history of the men's award. United players have now won the PFA Player of the Year award 12 times, more than any other club in England and Wales. Fernandes was particularly influential under Michael Carrick, who gave the United captain and the rest of the front four greater freedom in attack. "Bruno can just create moments. He's bright. I think that little bit of freedom suits him. He's got a natural brain," Carrick had said in February. The award caps another remarkable chapter in Fernandes' Manchester United career. Since joining the club in 2020, he has scored 110 goals and provided 106 assists. He reached 200 goal involvements in just 314 Premier League appearances, with only Wayne Rooney reaching the landmark faster for United.

ICC, BCCI must not let Sooryavanshi, Yashasvi off for bad behaviour: Manjrekar

New Delhi. (Agency)

Former India cricketer Sanjay Manjrekar has called for stronger action against Indian youngsters Vaibhav Sooryavanshi and Yashasvi Jaiswal over their recent on-field confrontations, warning that allowing such behaviour to go unchecked could encourage players to repeat it. Manjrekar's comments came a day after Jaiswal and Sri Lanka pacer Asitha Fernando were each fined 25 per cent of their match fees and handed one demerit point by the International Cricket Council for their altercation during the second Test in Colombo. Both players admitted to breaching Article 2.12 of the ICC Code of Conduct, relating to inappropriate physical contact. The incident occurred after Fernando dismissed Jaiswal for 45 on the opening day. Fernando appeared to give the Indian opener a send-off, following which

Jaiswal turned back and confronted him. The two came face-to-face, with Jaiswal's helmet making contact with Fernando's forehead, before players intervened to separate them. For Manjrekar, however, the issue goes beyond the Colombo incident. Drawing a comparison with Sooryavanshi's confrontation with Sri Lanka A players earlier this year, he questioned the consequences being handed to Indian players for such incidents.

"Vaibhav for Ind A recently & now Jaiswal if you keep letting them get away with such behaviour, you train them to repeat such behaviour. It's not good for the sport & crucially their own future too," Manjrekar posted on social media, tagging the ICC and BCCI. Vaibhav Sooryavanshi had been involved in a heated exchange with Sri Lanka A players after India A lost a Super

Over in a tri-series match in Dambulla in June. The confrontation involved physical contact, with Sooryavanshi appearing to shove Sri Lanka A's Vishen Halambage.



The incident sparked questions about whether the teenager would face disciplinary action. BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia, however, said the Indian board had no role in the matter, pointing out that disciplinary decisions in such incidents

rested with the match officials and relevant cricketing authorities. He instead urged the India A players to concentrate on their game rather than get distracted by "collateral issues". That episode has now acquired a different significance after Jaiswal's latest confrontation. Jaiswal, meanwhile, has also pushed back against criticism of his conduct. Responding to a Cricbuzz video in which commentator Harsha Bhogle said the best response would have been for him to walk away, Jaiswal wrote: "If you don't know what he said, then please don't make your judgment."

"If someone crosses the line, we need to let them know. This India will fight and reply," he added. Harsha Bhogle had acknowledged that Jaiswal may have been provoked but felt the Indian opener's combative nature had got the better of him.

Sonam Kapoor

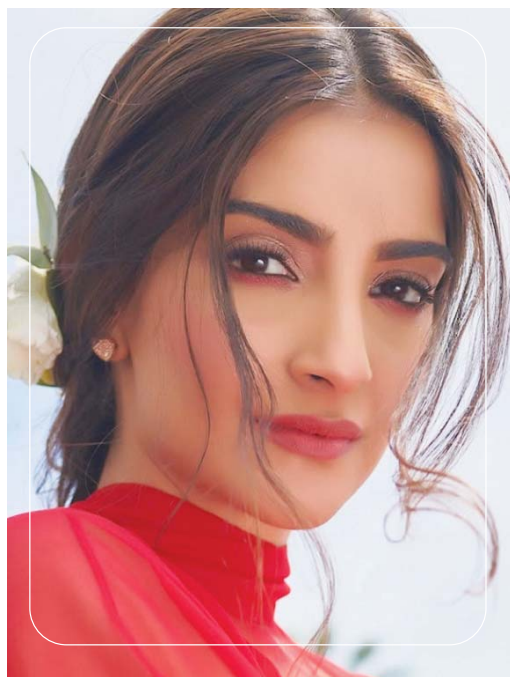
Reacts As 722 Mumbai Auto, Taxi Drivers Get Notices Over Marathi Test

Since August 20, transport officials have assessed 5,211 drivers, including 3,942 across the Mumbai Metropolitan Region. Among those checked in the MMR, 722 drivers were found unable to speak Marathi and were subsequently issued notices. The Maharashtra State Transport Department had set August 15 as the deadline for drivers to learn Marathi after making knowledge of the language mandatory.

Amid this, Sonam Kapoor has reacted to the same on Instagram. She commented on a post by journalist Faye D'Souza by writing, "Huh (sic)" Mumbai autorickshaw drivers began a three-day strike on Monday to oppose the Maharashtra government's rule making Marathi mandatory for commercial vehicle drivers. The drivers said the requirement could increase their financial burden, especially for those with limited formal education. The protesters also blocked traffic on Kandivli Link Road while raising concerns over the language rule and the penalties for failing to comply. Some drivers said older members of the community were struggling to learn Marathi within the given deadline.

Meanwhile, talking about Sonam Kapoor, she is yet to return to the big screen. Sonam Kapoor married Anand Ahuja in 2018 and welcomed their first son, Vayu, in August 2022. She continues to divide her time between Mumbai, Delhi and London due to her personal and professional commitments. On March 29, she and Anand welcomed their second son, Rudralokh.

The actress' last film was Blind in 2023. After Vayu's birth, Sonam was expected to return to films with the screen adaptation of Anuja Chauhan's Battle For Bittora, which was scheduled to begin production in 2025. Following the birth of Rudralokh, she made her first public appearance at her cousin Anshula Kapoor's wedding to Rohan Thakkar in Mumbai on July 6. Sonam has so far kept both her children's faces away from social media. Her elder son Vayu turned four on August 20.



Ishaan Khatter Breaks Up With Rumoured GF Chandni Bainz After 3 Years Of Dating? Here's What We Know



Actor Ishaan Khatter has reportedly broken up with his rumoured girlfriend and Kuala Lumpur-based model Chandni Bainz. It has been reported that the couple, who had been dating since 2023, parted ways after things changed between them and Ishaan started spending more time apart.

It was in 2023 when rumours of the two dating each other surfaced, but ever since, neither of them has confirmed the reports. However, their constant sightings, pictures and videos of them walking hand in hand made the public believe that something was brewing between the two. However, a Filmfare report has now confirmed that the two have parted ways, though there has been no official confirmation of a split from the alleged ex-couple.

Meanwhile, recently, Ishaan's collaboration with Sara Arjun and their chemistry has won hearts. Their pairing and on-screen chemistry have caught the attention of social media users, with fans showing growing interest in their dynamic. The buzz intensified after several behind-the-scenes glimpses from the shoot surfaced online, giving audiences a glimpse of their camaraderie and chemistry.

Who Is Chandni Bainz?

Chandni Bainz was born in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. She starred in a Singapore TV drama called My Mother's Story. Not just this, she was also a part of a Malaysian TV series called Ghaib. Chandni is currently in India and is working as a model. As claimed by the entertainment portal, Chandni wants to act in Hindi films.

Ishaan Khatter's Work Front

Most recently, Ishaan was seen in Neeraj Ghaywan's Homebound, which also featured Vishal Jethwa and Janhvi Kapoor in pivotal roles. The film went on to garner international attention during its festival run and was considered a strong awards contender, though it did not make it to the final Oscar shortlist.

Sunita Ahuja Unfollows Govinda On Instagram Amid His Alleged Affair With Komal Rani Swarnkar



Sunita Ahuja has reportedly unfollowed Govinda on Instagram amid ongoing tensions in their marriage and rumours surrounding his alleged relationship with Komal Rani Swarnkar.

Sunita Ahuja has reportedly unfollowed Govinda on Instagram, and the couple is now no longer following each other on social media. The ongoing tension between Sunita Ahuja and Govinda does not seem to be dying down anytime soon, even after the former withdrew the divorce case.

While the two were publicly slamming each other, Sunita's withdrawal of the divorce case led people to believe that their differences had been resolved. However, Sunita later claimed that she withdrew the case because Govinda planned to marry his rumoured girlfriend, Komal Rani Swarnkar. Now, this new development has again raised eyebrows.

While both Sunita and Govinda aren't following each other on social media right now, News18 could verify that they were following each other earlier.

Sunita Ahuja made her first public appearance after withdrawing the divorce case in Jaipur, and it was reported that the Lock Upp fame actress had embarked on a spiritual trip. She was supposed to leave for Khatu Shyam Ji on Monday, where she would offer prayers and seek the blessings of Baba Shyam.

Sunita Ahuja On Withdrawing Divorce Case?

Govinda's legal move comes amid renewed attention on his marriage to Sunita Ahuja. The latest controversy began after Sunita's conversation with Rakhi Sawant, in which she explained why she had withdrawn her divorce petition.

Sunita claimed that she took back the case after learning that Govinda was planning to marry actress Komal Rani Swarnkar. Govinda's manager, Shashi Sinha, has denied the claim and said there was no second marriage in the offing. He also maintained that Sunita remained Govinda's wife.

Kangana Ranaut

Calls Kriti Sanon's New Ad 'Creepy', Asks 'Would You Tie Your Brother Rakhi In Bikini?'

Kangana Ranaut has also reacted to Kriti Sanon's new Rakhi advertisement which has become the talk of the town for all the wrong reasons. On Monday evening, Ranaut took to the stories section of her Instagram handle and took a jibe at actor Kriti over her advertisement, which has drawn online criticism. While the ad is facing backlash over Kriti's bralette-style blouse, Kangana has also called it 'creepy' now.

"It's a wonderful time to be a woman, our closets are full of variety of clothes, today's woman is a global woman, from cocktail dresses to lehnga cholis, jeans to saris, bikinis to salwar kameez, from all the options that are available to us today why would you tie your brother a Rakhi in your bikini/undergarments? Where are all your styling options? Ha ha the advert looks intentionally creepy (sic)!" she wrote.

What Is The Controversy?

Recently, Kriti Sanon featured in an advertisement in which she was seen dressed in an off-white ensemble featuring a bralette-style blouse, a cape and a draped skirt. The contemporary styling became one of the biggest talking points after the advertisement surfaced online. A section of users felt the outfit was inappropriate for a campaign centred around a traditional Indian festival.

Several comments questioned why the actress had been styled in the particular ensemble for a Raksha Bandhan advertisement. One social media user went as far as describing the choice as "extremely shameful."

The criticism, however, wasn't restricted to Kriti's clothes. Another moment from the campaign showed Kriti interacting with a dog who barks at



her. She then ties a rakhi around the dog's neck, bringing the pet into the Raksha Bandhan celebration.

The sequence was seemingly intended to portray the dog as part of the family, extending the festive sentiment beyond the conventional brother-sister relationship. That interpretation didn't work for everyone.



NEWS BOX

At least 14 newborns killed in hospital fire in Pakistan's Islamabad

WORLD.(Agency)

At least 14 newborn babies have died after a fire broke out in the neonatal nursery of the gynaecology ward at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) in Islamabad on Wednesday morning, according to rescue officials and local media reports. The fire broke out at around 7 am reportedly after an air-conditioner compressor exploded inside the nursery. Islamabad's Chief Commissioner Sohail Ashraf said an emergency fire call was made just before 7 am local time Wednesday. Rescue teams rushed to the spot and controlled the fire.

In a statement, according to the Dawn, the Islamabad administration said that the fire broke out on the third floor of the Mother and Child Hospital's ward. It said that rescue teams rushed to the scene, with six fire brigade vehicles and four ambulances taking part in the rescue operation.

"The fire was immediately brought under control and the children were immediately shifted to the intensive care unit," it said, adding that 14 babies had died. It said that an inquiry committee headed by the additional deputy commissioner general had been formed to investigate the incident, the report added.

Mark Carney, the former central banker who said 'no' to Trump

MONTREAL.(Agency)

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney is more seasoned as a banker than a politician but has shown a confident touch in standing up to US President Donald Trump and navigating a trade war that threatens his nation's economy.

"We are masters in our own house," the prime minister said on Saturday, just hours after breaking off trade talks with the United States and ordering his negotiators back to Ottawa. Despite the risks this decision poses to Canada, which is heavily dependent on exports to the US, Carney can boast of broad support, with 76 percent of the public praising his stance toward Washington, according to a weekend poll. "Mark Carney has the means to achieve his ambitions because the country is behind him," says Genevieve Tellier, a professor of political science at the University of Ottawa.

After Washington slapped Canada with 50-percent duties, Canada on Tuesday announced counter-tariffs of its own. Former head of Canada's central bank, Carney, 61, was not known for his charisma -- unlike his flamboyant predecessor Justin Trudeau, from the same Liberal Party -- but has nevertheless managed to kindle a patriotic flame among Canadians weary of American attacks.

South Korea says Russian military planes entered its air defence zone

SEOUL.(Agency)

South Korea said on Wednesday it had scrambled fighter jets in response to Russian military aircraft entering its air defence zone, the second such incursion in weeks. The relationship between the countries has worsened since South Korea joined Western sanctions following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and since Moscow built stronger ties with North Korea. Seoul's defence ministry said multiple Russian aircraft had entered and then left its air defence identification zone over the East Sea, also called the Sea of Japan. "South Korea's military detected the Russian aircraft before they entered the zone and deployed Air Force fighter jets to prepare for any contingency," it said, without giving details. The Russian aircraft did not violate South Korean airspace, it said.

Iran says Hormuz strait still closed despite transit corridor talks

TEHRAN.(Agency)

Iran and Oman are discussing a temporary transit corridor and mine-clearing for the Strait of Hormuz, but Tehran warned on Wednesday that the vital waterway will not be reopened unless the United States ends the war. Washington has announced fresh sanctions aimed at pressuring Iran into submission, with Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent threatening the Islamic republic with "economic asphyxiation".

During talks in Tehran, foreign ministers from Iran and Oman discussed a "phased framework" that included setting up a "joint temporary navigational corridor through the Strait of Hormuz and an agreement to implement a joint project to clear the Strait of mines," according to a statement.

The two countries, both coastal states bordering the strait, have sought to hammer out a plan to regulate transit through it, as laid out in a June US-Iran memorandum of understanding. Iran's top diplomat Abbas

Araghchi said on Tuesday that the proposed framework is "case in point" showing how his country's "commitment to peace and stability is matched by steadfast diplomacy with our neighbours". Nearly six months after the United States and Israel went to war against Iran, traffic through the Hormuz strait remains largely paralysed, disrupting global oil markets. Tehran has blockaded the crucial waterway -- which normally carries around one fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas exports -- while Washington imposed a naval counter-blockade on Iranian ports. Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi warned on Wednesday that no military vessel will be allowed to pass through the Hormuz Strait. "We closed the Strait of Hormuz before the United States imposed an economic blockade because the United States failed to fulfil its commitments under the memorandum of understanding," Gharibabadi said, according to state news agency IRNA.

The US and Canada could pull back from an all-out trade war. It's not clear that they will

They've done it before. "If there is political will, there is an off ramp," said former US trade negotiator Wendy Cutler.

WASHINGTON.(Agency)

The US and Canada have ramped up their trade war, hitting each other with steep new tit-for-tat tariffs. Despite the bravado coming from both sides of the border, though, analysts suspect the longtime allies will eventually strike a deal to end a conflict neither really wants.

The prospects for compromise looked bleak Tuesday, with Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney reacting to new

50% US tariffs on certain Canadian goods by responding in kind on about \$20 billion worth of American imports, including steel, dairy products, appliances and farm equipment. "You're at war when you get attacked. We got attacked," Carney, who came to power last year on the promise that he'd stand up to US President Donald Trump, said over the weekend. Doug Ford, Ontario's populist premier, told The Associated Press on Monday that he was ready to escalate even further by cutting off his province's shipments of electricity and critical minerals to the United States.

Soon after, Trump declared his intention to hammer the Canadian auto industry with another set of import taxes if the Canadians don't "fall in line." With the



breakdown threatening to harm one of the world's largest trading relationships and clouding efforts to renew the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement that Trump negotiated during his first term, experts cautioned that there's still time to pull back from the brink of an even bigger trade war. They've done it before. "If there is political will, there is an off ramp," said

A Montana man killed 8 relatives, including 4 kids, at Sunday dinner, family says

BILLINGS, Mont.(Agency)

A man killed eight of his relatives, including four children, as they gathered for Sunday dinner at a home outside Billings, Montana, weeks after his parents asked him to move out, a family member told The Associated Press. Brad Ireland, whose former wife and two children were among the dead, identified the shooter as 44-year-old Alan Smith. Smith's parents, who were also killed, had asked him to move out, but he returned on Sunday and opened fire, Ireland said. The victims represented four generations of the blended family, ranging from a great-grandmother in her 90s who used a wheelchair to a 7-year-old girl, according to Jennifer Mercer, a

neighbor and family friend who set up an online fundraiser to help cover funeral costs and other expenses, and was authorized to release these details. Gunshots followed by an inferno. Police responded to the home on Sunday evening and heard gunshots coming from out back, just before the house was completely engulfed in flames. Investigators confirmed Tuesday there were eight victims, including four children, and that the suspect had suffered a self-inflicted gunshot wound and later died. The investigation has been complicated by concerns about the structural integrity of the house after the fire burned it to its foundation, said Jeff Stovall, a spokesperson for the Billings Police Department. Firefighters fought the blaze until

around 1 a.m. Monday, according to Billings Fire Department Chief Matt Hoppel. The home is in a subdivision outside of city limits that's not required to have fire hydrants. Efforts to fight the fire were delayed until the site was secure, allowing the blaze to tear through the home.

12-year-old calls 911

Among those killed were Ireland's ex-wife, Megan Ghekiere, and their two children, Owen Ireland, 13, and Chloe Ireland, 7. Also killed were Ghekiere's two stepchildren with her current husband: Landon Ghekiere, 15, and Charlotte Ghekiere, 12.

"The one thing we do know is that Charlotte was the hero," Mercer said. "Charlotte called 911 and she tried to save her family. And that's something the family does want out there.

Low on fuel, Indian Harop accidentally hit Pakistan's Kirana Hills nuke facility during Operation Sindoor: Ex-CDS

Former CDS Anil Chauhan said an Indian Harop loitering munition accidentally struck Pakistan's Kirana Hills after running low on fuel during a failed radar-hunting mission in Operation Sindoor.

World.(Agency)

An Indian Harop loitering munition accidentally struck Pakistan's Kirana Hills near Sargodha during Operation Sindoor after running critically low on fuel, former Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan has said, according to a NDTV report. Speaking at the Vivekananda Centre in New Delhi, Chauhan reportedly clarified that the incident was completely unintentional and that India did not deliberately target Pakistan's nuclear

facilities.

According to Chauhan, the Israeli-designed Harop was deployed in the Sargodha area to locate and destroy Pakistani military radar installations. However, the munition failed to



identify its intended target and continued searching while consuming its available fuel.

The drone eventually ran critically low on fuel. With its flight endurance exhausted, it descended and struck the Kirana Hills area, located

approximately 10 kilometres north of Sargodha. The incident attracted attention because Kirana Hills has been linked to Pakistan's nuclear programme, raising concerns over the potential impact on sensitive infrastructure. Indian officials, however, have maintained that the area was not intentionally targeted.

Chauhan's account is consistent with earlier remarks by Air Marshal A K Bharti, who served as the Indian Air Force's Director General of Air Operations during the conflict. Bharti had also rejected claims that India deliberately targeted Pakistan's nuclear facilities.

Chauhan's remarks offer further clarification on the Kirana Hills incident, stressing that the strike was an unintended consequence of a failed radar-hunting mission rather than a deliberate attack on Pakistan's nuclear infrastructure.

Social media use on the rise among Australian under-16s after ban: data

SYDNEY.(Agency)

Australian under-16s are increasing their use of social media apps such as Instagram and Tiktok despite a world-leading ban, data provided by a parental control software company showed Wednesday. Australia implemented legislation barring children from social media platforms in December, with the UK, France and others following suit. Youngsters' use of social media fell across the board when the legal restrictions were first implemented, data from parental control app Qustodio showed. But since then their social media activity has climbed -- even approaching pre-ban levels for some apps. The use of apps TikTok, Instagram and



Snapchat among 10-12 year olds and 13 to 15-year olds was on the rise, data from parental control app Qustodio showed. In the case of video-sharing site TikTok, 25.9 percent of 13-15 year-olds are still using the app -- just over a percentage point lower than before the ban came into force. And use among 10-12 year olds was just 0.06 percentage points below where it was before the ban. "They could be accessing these platforms with VPNs, or obfuscating their ages," Yasmin London, Global Online Safety Expert for Qustodio, said. "But it could really be as simple as they're just accessing these apps because the restrictions aren't working." The data also showed children increasingly turning to messaging platform WhatsApp, which is not affected by the ban. Qustodio said the data was gathered by analysing anonymised monthly social media app usage among Australian children and showed the percentages of kids that had used the app for more than five consecutive minutes at least once in a given month. Australian officials have said the ban is designed to protect children from online bullying and "predatory algorithms". A team of Australia-based researchers in a peer-reviewed study published in June found little evidence to suggest teenagers have turned away from social media as a consequence, however. New Zealand's government also this week said it would introduce legislation that could see firms like Meta fined up to 10 percent of their global revenue if they fail to comply.

More than 50 kidnapped as violent gang attack in Haiti leaves 47 dead

The attack pierced the belief that security in the troubled Caribbean country was improving.

TORONTO.(Agency)

At least 47 people were killed and more than 50 others kidnapped when armed men attacked a once-peaceful community near Haiti's capital earlier this week, the United Nations said Tuesday. It is believed to be one of the largest mass kidnappings in Haiti in recent years, and one gang leader is threatening to kill the hostages if authorities kill any gang members as they try to secure the community nestled in the hills above Port-au-Prince.

Sunday's attack on Kenscoff pierced the

belief that security in the troubled Caribbean country was improving. "This is a major political and security test, for the government, for the police and for the international mission," said Romain Le Cour, head of the Haiti Observatory at the Global



Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime. He said the threat of executing hostages is a trap: If forces don't act, they've failed to protect them; if they do and hostages die, the gangs will blame the state. Kenscoff resident Marc Paul 42, said gangs kidnapped his brother, stepmother, stepfather and two

cousins. He said his 16-year-old niece also was kidnapped and raped but was able to escape and has reunited with him. "I had to run over bodies," he said as he recalled how he fled the attack. "I can't sleep knowing all these people died."

Paul and his family had already lost their home to a previous gang attack in January 2025, but he said it was not as violent as Sunday's attack. Paul was upset about the video the gangs posted: "My brother is probably going to die. A threat posted on social media. A video posted on social media, the gang leader threatened Vladimir Paraison, director of Haiti's National Police. "Paraison, if any of our soldiers are hurt, I will kill all of them," he said, referring to the hostages. The gang member identified himself as Izo 2, a reference to Izo, or Johnson André, one of Haiti's most powerful gang leaders. Le Cour said Izo 2 is also known as "Didi" and leads the armed group in Kenscoff on behalf of and in coordination with Izo and other gang leaders.