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Akhilesh Yadav's 'Angry Young Man' vs Yogi's Ajay Seth in Samajwadi Party's AI film

New Delhi (Agency)

The intensifying political sparring in the run-up to the upcoming Uttar Pradesh Assembly election has heated up with the Samajwadi Party taking a sharp dig at Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath with yet another AI-generated video. At a press conference, party chief Akhilesh Yadav unveiled a short AI-generated motion film, inspired by the '80s trend, imagining a no-holds-barred conversation between himself and the



UP CM. The film cast Yogi Adityanath as the antagonist and Akhilesh Yadav as a messianic figure representing the downtrodden. It depicted the Chief Minister dressed like a Bollywood villain from a bygone era, seated in his lair and surrounded by his lackeys. He is shown smoking a cigar and boasting about his public relations (PR) machinery, which he claims can manage his image and shape public perception despite allegations of misgovernance under the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government led by him.

Eggs, tomatoes thrown at ex-Union Minister's convoy in Punjab; he alleges AAP plot

New Delhi. (Agency)

BJP leader and former Union Minister Ravneet Singh Bittu on Friday claimed that eggs and tomatoes were thrown at his convoy and vehicles were attacked while he was on his way to Pathankot to attend a BJP yatra against drugs. Bittu blamed the ruling AAP for the attack and alleged that those surrounding his convoy were heard shouting, "Surround them, beat them, kill them". He also claimed that some



of the attackers were carrying weapons. "Today, we were supposed to take out a yatra against drugs because this Aam Aadmi Party government and drug addicts are all colluding, and this is what they have been doing for the last four and a half years," Bittu alleged, narrating the incident. He claimed that around 500 people were present at the spot when his convoy passed through the area. "There were around 500 people there. I passed through them in my vehicle. I have Z-plus security, with around 100 security personnel accompanying me. The local DSP and an SP were also there with the police for their protection," he said.

Mamata Banerjee's party

rebel camp get new name, symbol after TMC's EC freeze

Bengaluru(Agency)

The Election Commission on Friday allotted separate interim names and election symbols to the two rival factions of the Trinamool Congress after freezing the party's existing name and symbol. The faction led by Mamata Banerjee was allotted the name 'Mamata All India Trinamool Congress' and the election symbol 'football player', while the rebel faction was allotted the name 'Democratic Trinamool Congress' and the election symbol 'envelope'. The symbols are temporary and will apply to the upcoming by-election, the Election Commission specified, as the tussle for control of West Bengal's Opposition party continues unabated. The fresh identities were allotted a day after the Election Commission froze the 'All India Trinamool Congress' name and its traditional 'flowers and grass' symbol, temporarily removing both from the ballot for the October 6 West Bengal bypolls. This barred either faction from using the political identity associated with the TMC for nearly three decades. The Commission's interim order came against the backdrop of a rebellion led



by Ritabrata Banerjee against Mamata Banerjee, which began within the TMC legislature party after its defeat in the Assembly polls in May and later spread to Parliament, eventually reaching the party's name and election symbol. The EC said the matter required substantive determination under the existing laws. The two groups were directed to submit three preferred names and three

The Election Commission allotted the 'football player' symbol to Mamata Banerjee's faction and the 'envelope' symbol to the rebel camp for the October 6 West Bengal bypoll.

free symbols by 11 am on Friday. The EC subsequently allotted the two factions their interim identities for the upcoming bypoll. The Mamata camp was allotted the name 'Mamata All India Trinamool Congress', along with the 'football player' symbol, while the rival faction was allotted the name 'Democratic Trinamool Congress' and the 'envelope' symbol. The Commission approved both as temporary arrangements for the bypoll. The decision is significant for the Mamata Banerjee-led faction, whose hand-drawn 'flowers and grass' symbol has been central to the TMC's political journey since its formation in 1998 after Banerjee broke away from the Congress. The symbol became a potent expression of the party's grassroots identity over the last 28 years and has featured prominently on ballot papers, flags and campaign material as the TMC evolved into a major political force in West Bengal. The Mamata-led Trinamool camp called the EC order freezing the party's name and symbol illegal and reacted sharply to the decision. TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee rejected the order, calling it "illegal" and "contrary to law".

Serious allegations include promoting a previously penalized employee to three powerful administrative posts and unconstitutional recruitment practices.

Dr. Pranjal Modi has allegedly continued as the illegal in-charge Vice-Chancellor for six years while appointing his wife as Dean and closing a probe against himself.

Mahanagar Metro Desk

Ahmedabad: In Gujarat's highly sensitive and prestigious medical institutions—IKDRC (Institute of Kidney Diseases and Research Centre) and GUTS (Gujarat University of Transplantation Sciences)—the current reality is not about patient care, but rather a game of abuse of power, financial scams, and unchecked nepotism. Evidence released by Rajnikant Makwana has completely exposed the administrative hollow core of these institutions. Let us understand how rules and laws are being flouted to abuse power in these institutions: The Accused Becomes the Judge: Mockery of Natural Justice A serious complaint regarding irregularities was filed against Dr. Pranjal Modi, the in-charge Vice-Chancellor of GUTS. To investigate this complaint, it was sent to the Director of IKDRC. However, the real twist happened here—Dr. Pranjal Modi himself is the Director of IKDRC! He signed off on the complaint filed against himself and closed



the case. Making a mockery of the law where "the accused becomes their own judge," the principles of natural justice were torn to shreds. Illegal 'In-Charge' Rule for the Past 6 Years According to The Gujarat University of Transplantation Sciences (Amendment) Act, 2024, the appointment of a Vice-Chancellor can only be made on a fixed 5-year contract basis through a public advertisement and the recom-

mendation of a search committee. The law has no provision for a permanent "in-charge" post. Despite this, without any advertisement or search committee, Dr. Pranjal Modi has illegally occupied this position since October 2020 (for the past 6 years). Husband as 'Vice-Chancellor' and Wife as 'Dean': Pinnacle of Nepotism Dr. Pranjal Modi himself serves as the Chairman of the Board of Governors. Ignoring the in-

stitution's highly senior and qualified professors, he appointed his own wife, Dr. Manisha Modi, as the Dean of GUTS. This is a clear-cut case of Conflict of Interest and blatant nepotism. Triple Charge' and Promotion Rewarded to a Guilty Employee In 2015, Assistant Accountant (Class-3) Kamal Modi was proven guilty in a fake medical bill claim scam involving his mother, and an inquiry committee recommended a major penalty against him. However, instead of being punished, he was promoted and handed the three most powerful administrative and financial posts simultaneously at GUTS University: Registrar, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), and Chief Accounts Officer. Unconstitutional Recruitment Without NOC When the university initiated a recruitment process for the permanent post of CAO, Kamal Modi was appointed without obtaining the mandatory 'No Objection Certificate' (NOC) from his parent department (IKDRC).

Amit Thackeray backs cousin Aaditya after he's named in FIR in Disha Salian case

Raj Thackeray's son, Amit, backed his cousin Aaditya Thackeray in the Disha Salian death case, saying that the latter could never be involved in such a matter. His backing came as the CBI opened a fresh probe and named Aaditya in the FIR after the Bombay High Court's intervention.

New Delhi (Agency).

- MNS leader Amit Thackeray on Friday defended his cousin and Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray, saying he could never be involved in the Disha Salian death case. His remarks came days after Aaditya said he had never known or met Salian and alleged that political rivals were trying to damage his reputation by linking him to the case. The remarks came as the CBI registered an FIR in the case, without naming any accused, in line with Bombay High Court directions on a petition filed by Salian's father. The High Court had earlier ordered a CBI

probe and criticised the Mumbai Police for not registering an FIR for six years. Speaking to reporters, Amit Thackeray, son of MNS chief Raj



Thackeray, said, "I don't know how to look at this, but as a brother I can tell you that Aaditya can never be involved in such a thing." Disha Salian, the 28-year-old former

manager of late actor Sushant Singh Rajput, died on June 8, 2020, after falling from the 12th floor of a residential building in Mumbai's Malad area. The Mumbai Police had registered an accidental death report and later said, after an inquiry, that it was a case of suicide. A week later, Rajput was found dead in his Bandra apartment on June 14, 2020, leading to speculation about a possible link between the two deaths. On September 2, the Bombay High Court ordered a CBI probe into Salian's death and pulled up the Mumbai Police for failing to register an FIR for six years, saying its investigation raised more questions than answers.

Chirag Paswan says food processing can take India from farms to global brands

Union Minister Chirag Paswan said in Thane that food processing is strengthening farmers and micro-enterprises. He said the sector is helping India add value, create rural jobs and take local products global.

Thane (Agency).

Union Minister Chirag Paswan on Thursday said the food processing sector is playing a key role in ensuring fair value for agricultural produce, supporting entrepreneurs and helping rural families move towards self-reliance. He said India should not be known only for agricultural production, but also for high-quality branding and value addition in global markets. Speaking at the 'Aashirwad Ka Diya' event at the Collectorate Office in Thane district of Maharashtra, Paswan highlighted the sector's growth over the past decade and the Centre's efforts to strengthen it through various



schemes. The event was organised under the 'Sewa Sankalp Abhiyan' and 'Sewa Diwas' initiatives of the Ministry of Food Processing Industries. Senior officials, including Joint Secretary Preet Pal Singh and Thane District Collector Shrikrishna Panchal, were present at the event. Paswan said the sector's Gross Value Added rose to Rs 2.24 lakh crore in 2023-24 from Rs 1.34 lakh crore in 2014-15. He also said the share of processed food in India's total agro-food exports increased to 20.4 per cent. He said the food processing sector plays an important role in ensuring fair value for farmers' produce, empowering local entrepreneurs and steering rural families towards self-reliance.

Man found dead inside truck cabin

Noida.(Agency)

A 37-year-old truck driver was found dead inside the locked cabin of his truck with no visible injuries on his body, near Kasna in Greater Noida on Wednesday afternoon. Locals informed police on the emergency helpline around 3pm that a man was lying unconscious inside the cabin of a truck parked along a road in Ladpura village. A team reached the spot and found the door and windows locked from inside. They rushed the man, Pawan Sharma, to a nearby hospital but doctors declared him dead on arrival. Police believe Pawan, a resident of Enchora village in Bulandshahr, was transporting potatoes from Aligarh when he stopped his truck to get a night of sleep in Kasna. "We found no wounds or injury marks on his body and suspect he may have died due to suffocation while sleeping inside the truck cabin," said Pankaj Sharma, station house officer of Kasna police station. He said the cause of death would be established only after the forensic examination. The body was sent for an autopsy which confirmed that there were no internal or external injuries on Pawan's body. But police are also examining the circumstances under which the truck was parked and the events preceding his death, the SHO said.

Court sentences man to 10 years' RI for raping minor girl

Noida.(Agency)

Three years on, a Pocco court in Nuh has sentenced a man to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment for raping a minor. The court also imposed a fine of Rs 20,000 on the convict. The case dates back to Dec 23, 2023, when the 17-year-old girl had stepped out of her house to dispose of garbage, according to the prosecution. Police said the accused allegedly took her towards the hills on the pretext of helping her and raped her there. The complaint also alleged that two unidentified men with him assisted in the offence. The girl raised an alarm, following which a neighbour reached the spot and the accused fled, police said. A case was registered at Rozka Meo police station on the next day. Police arrested the accused and filed the case before the court after collecting evidence. Additional sessions judge and Pocco special court judge Dr Ashu Sanjeev Tinjan convicted the accused on the basis of evidence and witness testimony and pronounced the sentence on Wednesday. The convict was sentenced under relevant provisions of Indian Penal Code and Section 4 of Pocco Act. Denying any leniency, the court observed that such persons accused of such a heinous crime against a minor should not be shown any leniency to send a strong message to society. The court awarded 10 years of rigorous imprisonment.

Manesar mayor inspects civic works amid stalled approvals



Noida.(Agency)

Manesar mayor Inderjeet Kaur Yadav on Thursday inspected ongoing development works in Nakhrola and Naurangpur villages, including construction of internal roads, and directed officials to ensure that prescribed construction standards were followed and projects completed within the deadline.

Yadav checked the quality of material being used at the sites and reviewed the progress of the works. She warned the agencies executing the projects against lapses and said development works were being undertaken to improve public facilities.

"I have instructed the agencies concerned to use construction material as per the prescribed specifications and maintain quality throughout the projects," she said.

The inspection comes amid concerns over the pace of civic development in Manesar, with meetings of Municipal Corporation of Manesar's House and Finance and Contracts Committee (F&CC) not being held since March. The House last met on March 16, while the F&CC meeting was held on March 21.

Residents said the prolonged deadlock has affected the approval and execution of development projects and delayed resolution of civic problems. Officials have attributed the deadlock to friction between the mayor and some councillors, which they said has disrupted the functioning of the civic body. Development projects worth around Rs 137 crore are currently awaiting approval. Earlier on Thursday, Yadav also inaugurated work on a stormwater drainage line in Sikanderpur Bada village to address waterlogging in the area. The project, estimated to cost around Rs 40 lakh, is aimed at improving drainage and reducing the accumulation of rainwater. Ward 19 councillor Ravi Yadav said the village and adjoining areas face severe waterlogging during the monsoon, with inundated roads becoming difficult to use. "The stormwater line will improve the drainage system of the village and help residents during the rains," he said. The mayor also directed officials and agencies to adhere to project timelines so that residents can benefit from the completed works at the earliest.

A Distinguished Name of Simplicity, Grace and Selfless Service: Shri Bharatbhai Khimjibhai Kavatara

Mahanagar Metro Desk

Author: Rupesh Solanki,

Bhachau, Kutch: A person's true character is not defined by wealth or position, but by simplicity, sensitivity, a spirit of service, and a sense of responsibility towards society. In the public life of Bhachau, the name of Shri Bharatbhai Khimjibhai Kavatara can be mentioned with respect as a rare and gentle personality possessing these qualities. Shri Bharatbhai Khimjibhai Kavatara is continuously associated with the field of education as the Managing Trustee of Shri Vani Vinayak Arts and Commerce College, Bhachau; Government Higher Secondary School, Bhachau, managed by Shri Leva Patidar Boarding; and Saraswati Vidyalaya, Bhachau, managed by Shri Leva Patidar Boarding. His personality is a beautiful blend of simplicity, grace and purity of heart. His commitment to encouraging teachers and students,



along with his keen interest in educational activities, is particularly noteworthy. "The hand that supports someone in rising higher, leaves behind a generosity that lives far beyond time." As a respected citizen of Bhachau and a prominent leader of the Patel community, he also plays an active role in social life. As a worker of the Bharatiya Janata Party, he is also associated with various social and organizational

activities. His affection for students and his efforts to encourage them are particularly noteworthy. Recently, on 15 August, Independence Day, during the patriotic activities organized at Shri Leva Patidar Boarding, Bhachau, he provided financial assistance of more than one lakh rupees to encourage the students. Such efforts to promote patriotism, talent and self-confidence among students are truly commendable. His spirit of service is not limited to educational institutions. He also extends his support, according to his capacity, on various religious and social occasions. His service as a donor of Mahaprasad during religious events held at various temples reflects his generous and service-oriented nature. "Giving does not diminish wealth; it enriches compassion. Service is never insignificant; it makes life truly meaningful." In today's world, a person's success is often measured in terms of wealth and

prestige. At such a time, individuals who understand their social responsibilities and contribute to education, students and society according to their capacity become a source of inspiration. The personality of Shri Bharatbhai Khimjibhai Kavatara also reflects this very spirit. One of his distinctive qualities is the beautiful combination of management with simplicity, relationships with grace, generosity with selflessness, and education with sensitivity—all of which are clearly reflected in his personality. For society to progress, it needs not merely ideas, but individuals who are committed to positive action, cooperation and selfless service. People like Shri Bharatbhai Khimjibhai Kavatara, who are dedicated to service, are contributing to creating an atmosphere of encouragement in the fields of education and social life. This is undoubtedly worthy of appreciation.

Gurmeet Choudhary and Isha Malviya's 'Tum Mere Ho' Combines Romance with Action-Adventure Thrill, Releasing on October 23

Mahanagar Metro Desk

Ahmedabad: When love turns into obsession, the journey is never smooth. Gurmeet Choudhary and Isha Malviya will be seen together for the first time in the film 'Tum Mere Ho'. This film also marks Isha Malviya's Bollywood debut. Packed with love, emotion, action, and adventure, the film is scheduled to release in theaters on October 23. The makers have released the first posters of the film, which offer a glimpse into the deep emotional bond between Gurmeet and Isha and the dynamics of their relationship. With the fresh pairing of Gurmeet Choudhary and Isha Malviya, 'Tum Mere Ho' is not just a standard love story. The film will also feature action and adventure alongside romance. The posters hint that their relationship goes through numerous difficult situations, with every step of their love bringing a new



challenge. Speaking about the film, director Ashish Panda said, "Bringing the depth and intensity of love to the big screen through Tum Mere Ho is very special to me. This is not just a story of beautiful moments, but a tale of emotions, struggles, and situations that test a relationship between two people. We wanted to

create an intense love story that also carries the thrill of action and adventure, giving audiences a gran cine experience." Sharing his experience of working with Gurmeet Choudhary, Ashish said, "Working with Gurmeet as both an actor and a producer was a very smooth and wonderful experience. It never felt like we were just making a film; it felt like we were collaborating on a story straight from the heart. Gurmeet brought the exact intensity and conviction required for his character and completely immersed himself in this world." Regarding Isha Malviya, Ashish noted, "Isha Malviya brings a softness and emotional depth to her character while portraying its strength remarkably

well. She was so perfect for this role that we didn't even need to consider anyone else. Her Bollywood debut makes this film even more special. I hope audiences connect with the emotions of Tum Mere Ho and fully experience the love, action, and adventure showcased in the film." Starring Gurmeet Choudhary and Isha Malviya, Tum Mere Ho is directed by Ashish Panda. The film is produced by Reva Creative House and Debaguru Films. The music is by Saregama, and PVR Pictures is distributing the film. The film's producers are Aarti S. and Debina Bonnerjee. Its story and screenplay have been written by Niranjan Iyengar and Purva Naresh. The film's music features contributions from Mithun, Sanju Rathod, Vivek Verma, Krishna, and Uddipan Sharma. Filled with love, passion, action, and adventure, Tum Mere Ho will release in theaters on October 23, 2026.

buses, to add new routes too

Noida.(Agency)

Noida Authority is planning to add 225 electric buses to its existing fleet of 100 and set up bus stops across the city to strengthen public transport. The expanded fleet will allow new routes to be introduced, connecting more sectors and villages. Ridership has also risen sharply, with around 1.5 lakh passengers travelling on e-buses in July and 3.4 lakh in Aug. Officials said the buses are generating around Rs 5 lakh in revenue per day.

Noida CEO Krishna Karunesh said the new buses will be added to the existing fleet in three to four months. "Around 125 of these will be operated by UPSRTC, while 100 buses will ply under the Gross Cost Contract (GCC) model. We are also conducting a survey to identify locations where bus stops need to be developed," the CEO said.

Under the GCC model, the govt/Authority controls the bus network, while a private company operates and maintains the buses. UPSRTC operates the city bus service in coordination with Noida, Greater Noida and Yamuna authorities in the district — with the



authorities deciding routes, fares, timings and other operational aspects. In Noida, the buses currently operate on five routes originating from the Botanical Garden bus stand and terminating at Gaur Chowk and Ek Murti in Greater Noida West, Noida International Airport, Sector 62, Surajpur Collectorate and Anand Vihar in Delhi. Buses operate from these stops at 20-minute intervals. With the increase in fleet size, new routes will be introduced to connect more sectors and villages. Noida has also issued a helpline number (1800-180-2877) for residents to submit suggestions and complaints.

"The bus service has made commuting easier and affordable. But the network needs to be expanded further. More buses, fixed timings and properly marked bus stops would reduce waiting time. At present, besides the Botanical Garden bus stand, I do not find any other bus stand in the city and people do not know where they can find buses," Gaurav Kumar, a commuter, told TOI. He said that once the bus network is good and reliable, people will prefer to use it instead of taking personal cars, autos or cabs for last-mile connectivity. Chief minister Yogi Adityanath launched the city bus service on June 12 with 100

buses — 50 in Noida and 25 each in Greater Noida and the Yamuna Expressway area. These buses also connect to Noida International Airport. Since the fleet hit the roads, however, commuters have pointed out several struggles, with the absence of designated stops along these routes emerging as the biggest issue. Many commuters along these routes have complained about a lack of a timetable or any relevant information, which makes planning commutes harder for the students and workers who regularly take these routes.

While four dedicated shelters have been built in the city, they remain largely unused so far. A previous TOI report highlighted the chaos at the Botanical Garden bus stop, which is the starting point for at least four routes in Noida. Street vendors were found to be encroaching on the premises while overflowing drains created unhygienic conditions. Autos, e-rickshaws and private buses parked along the stop only added to commuters' struggles here. Officials TOI spoke to at the time said that they were still fine-tuning operations and that the infrastructure would take a little more time.

Pune bizman reported 'abducted' from Mumbai airport by wife returns after 'secret' Malaysia trip with woman gets cancelled

MUMBAI (Agency).

A 46-year-old Pune-based laundry businessman, whose wife had reported him missing from Mumbai International Airport and alleged that he had been abducted, turned up at Sahar police station on Wednesday night, telling

"business trip". However, police said he had actually planned to travel with a woman friend. She was stopped during immigration clearance after officials found she was carrying an old passport. The two subsequently cancelled their trip. According to the FIR, earlier that morning, after two friends dropped him at the airport, he called his wife from a landline and claimed that he had surrendered his mobile phone because of an immigration-related issue.

At around 3.35pm, he made a WhatsApp video call and told his wife that the issue would soon be resolved. His phone was subsequently switched off and his friends were unable to contact him. Concerned about his whereabouts, his wife approached Sahar police, following which an abduction and kidnapping case was registered.



police that he had switched off his phone and gone to CST with a female friend after their Malaysia trip was cancelled. The businessman was scheduled to fly to Kuala Lumpur on Monday night for what he had told his family was a

was subsequently switched off and his friends were unable to contact him. Concerned about his whereabouts, his wife approached Sahar police, following which an abduction and kidnapping case was registered.

With 4,000-km yatra, Punjab BJP turns anti-drug campaign into pre-election political roadshow

"... The main leaders will be in the rath and local district vehicles will follow..." said Punjab BJP spokesperson Pritpal Singh Baliawal.

Patiala (Agency).

WITH A vehicle leading a convoy of over 100 vehicles, the Punjab BJP is set to launch its 13-day 'Nasha Mukti Yatra' on Friday, turning its anti-drug campaign into a statewide political roadshow ahead of the 2027 Assembly elections. Four yatras, beginning simultaneously from Pathankot, Fatehgarh Sahib, Fazilka and Talwandi Sabo, will collectively cover nearly 4,000 km and all 117 Assembly constituencies before converging in Jalandhar on September 30, where Union Home Minister Amit Shah is expected to address a concluding rally. The first yatra will be flagged off from Pathankot on September 18 by BJP national president Nitin Nabin. Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta will flag off the second from Fatehgarh Sahib on September 19, Union Law Minister Arjun Meghwal the third from Fazilka on September 20, and Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan the fourth

from Talwandi Sabo, Bathinda, on September 21. "... The main leaders will be in the rath and local district vehicles will follow..." said Punjab BJP spokesperson Pritpal Singh

families affected by drug addiction and drug-related deaths from across Punjab shared their experiences. Punjab BJP president Kewal Singh Dhillon said the party would turn the issue into a people's movement. "This is a pain that cannot be endured or tolerated. This pain has reached every household in Punjab today," he said.

The testimonies were pointed at the state's dereliction of issue. A mother from Abohar whose son died after drug addiction said: "... We work hard to support our families. We do not want free schemes — we want freedom from chitta." Former Punjab BJP president Sunil Jakhar alleged prisons had become safe havens for drug smugglers and accused CM Bhagwant Mann of inducting gangsters into the party — citing induction of Gurpreet Singh Sekhon, described by Jakhar as a gangster-turned-politician, into AAP.



Baliawal. The yatra follows a 'Mavan Mangdian Jawab' (Mothers Demand Answers) programme organised in Chandigarh on Thursday, at which over 50

Public flogging of handcuffed men: Gujarat government issues notice to senior IPS officer

On July 14, Rajdeepsinh Nakum, then a DCP in Surat, allegedly made 4 men in handcuffs walk on the road, frequently assaulting them with a stick. After videos went viral, Gujarat HC took up the matter.

Vadodara (Agency).

The Gujarat government informed the Gujarat High Court on Thursday (September 17) that a show-cause notice had been issued to an IPS officer who is accused of publicly flogging, humiliating, and parading handcuffed persons. This sets in motion disciplinary proceedings against the officer. Government Pleader G H Virk made the submission before a Division Bench of HC Chief Justice Sunita Agarwal and Justice D N Ray, which is hearing a public interest petition (PIL) about the alleged incident that took place in Surat on July 14. The state informed the court that the Gujarat Director General of Police (DGP) had "concurred with the findings of a preliminary inquiry" by the Additional Commissioner of Police (Crime), Surat City. The report of the inquiry had been placed before the court in a sealed cover earlier.

A month ago, the High Court had asked why the officer, Rajdeepsinh Nakum, who was Deputy Commissioner of Police in Surat city at the time of the incident, was still in

his post. During a hearing on August 14, the court had verbally told the state that "the least you must do" was to transfer Nakum out of Surat. Videos of the alleged incident, which went viral on social media, purportedly showed Nakum and 15-20 other police officers parading four handcuffed men on the road and repeatedly assaulting them



with lathis. The four men who were being beaten were identified as Ayaz Malek, Imran Khan, Rajik Shaikh, and Shahrukh Shah, all of whom had been booked in a rioting and attempt-to-murder case at the Salabatpura police station in Surat. Nakum had told The Indian Express in July that there were "criminal cases against the accused and they had created terror in their areas, so we

paraded them in their own residential area so that people know that police are vigilant and such activities will not be tolerated". Virk submitted before the court on Thursday that the preliminary inquiry report had been placed before the state Home Department with the recommendation of the Inspector General of Police (Law and Order).

His submissions were recorded in an oral order dictated in open court. The High Court directed the state to bring the progress of the disciplinary proceedings on record, and posted the matter for October 19. In its oral dictation of the order, the court said: "The Home Department upon examination of the material and the recommendation, and being of the prima facie view that the act of the officer concerned while functioning as in-charge DCP Zone 2 attracts Rule 3(b)(1) and Rule 3(2) of the All India Services (Conduct) Rules 1968, has initiated action by issuance of show-cause notice dated 14-9-2026 to the officer concerned wherein 15 days' time has been granted to...furnish his explanation."

Allahabad HC sets aside vigilance inquiry against IAS Abhishek Prakash in disproportionate assets case

Lucknow (Agency).

The Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court on Thursday set aside the Uttar Pradesh Government's March 2025 orders of suspension, disciplinary proceedings and a Vigilance inquiry into the alleged "disproportionate assets" of then Invest UP CEO and Industry Department Secretary, IAS Abhishek Prakash. Prakash's suspension was revoked in March this year, and he is currently posted as Secretary, Department of General Administration. However, the Vigilance inquiry against him was still underway, which has now been quashed by the High Court. The action against Prakash was initiated on the basis of a complaint filed by an official of a private company, with the then Chief Secretary alleging bribe was demanded from him in lieu of clearing a government project for the company. The complaint was made on March 20 last year, and one Nikant Jain was also accused of playing the role of mediator between him and the Invest UP official.

A case was also lodged at Lucknow's Gomti Nagar police station against Jain, and he was arrested and sent to jail. However, the case and chargesheet against him was quashed by the High Court in February on the basis of the complainant's affidavit stating he had filed the complaint under wrong impression. In its Thursday order, a single bench of Justice Rajeev Singh cited the High Court's February decision and observed that the complainant himself admitted in his affidavit filed before this Court in the case of Nikant Jain that the complaint was filed under wrong impression. It added, "Therefore, when a foundation goes, the rest of the edifice falls as per the principles of

Allahabad High Court raps 'hasty inquiry, departmental proceedings' ordered on the same date of the complaint filed against the then Invest UP CEO in lieu of an affidavit.

'Sublato Fundamento Cadit Opus'. Once the complaint made by the official of the company is found to be false, as the complainant himself has admitted, the entire proceedings based upon the said complaint also fall."

The bench ordered to set aside the state government orders issued in March last year of Abhishek Prakash's suspension, disciplinary proceedings, and the entire Vigilance inquiry opened against him. Prakash had filed a writ petition praying for setting aside of the proceedings against him.

The case

Prakash's counsel submitted before the court that the petitioner, an IAS officer of 2006 batch, was posted as Secretary, Department of Industry and Infrastructure Development, and Chief Executive Officer, Invest UP, when a complaint was filed by one Biswajit Datta, official of SAEL, Solar P6 Private Limited on March 20, 2025.

The complaint was filed with the Chief Secretary of Uttar Pradesh, stating that his company was willing to establish a unit for manufacturing parts to be used in solar cell and solar energy, and an online application was submitted before Invest UP.



Women, Minors Among 27 Bangladeshis Detained Without Valid Documents In Assam

Police said none of the 27 detainees possessed documents that could establish their legal status in India.

Raipur (Agency).

Assam Police has detained 27 Bangladeshi nationals, including men, women and minors, in two separate operations in Guwahati and Rangiya after they were allegedly found staying in the state without valid documents. Authorities said the detainees are likely to be "pushed back" to Bangladesh once the required legal process is completed. The group was intercepted in two separate operations on

Force (RPF).

The second group, comprising 15 people, was intercepted after the train crossed Rangiya railway junction. They were subsequently debarked at Bongaigaon railway station and handed over to Assam Police for further action. Police said none of the 27 detainees possessed documents that could establish their legal status in India. According to officials, the detainees hail from different parts of Bangladesh, including Dhaka, Sunamganj, Gopalganj, Bagherhat, Khulna and Mymensingh. Investigators are also examining whether any broker or intermediary facilitated their entry into India through Meghalaya. Deka said the Border Police has approached the concerned Deputy Commissioner seeking an expulsion order. Once the order is issued, the



Wednesday. According to Deputy Commissioner of Police (Border), Kulendra Nath Deka, 12 people were first detained from the Assam State Transport Corporation (ASTC) campus in Guwahati after police received information about a group of suspected illegal migrants.

During questioning, the detainees provided information about another group travelling on the Jammu Tawi Express, Deka said. Acting on the lead, the Border Police alerted the Government Railway Police (GRP) and the Railway Protection

detainees will be sent back to Bangladesh, he said. Preliminary questioning has indicated that most of the detainees entered India in search of employment. "Most of them entered India in search of jobs. Criminal cases will be registered and further investigation will continue," the officer said. The investigation is now focused on determining the circumstances under which the group entered India and whether any individuals or networks assisted their movement into Assam.

"Like Rohith Vemula": Dalit Scholar Accuses Tamil Nadu Ministry Of Harassment, They Deny

Bharathidasan is pursuing a PhD in Tissue Engineering and Regenerative Medicine at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

Chennai (Agency). A Dalit research scholar from Tamil Nadu, who is pursuing his PhD in Malaysia with government funding, has accused the state's Social Justice Department of harassing him. Bharathidasan, in an emotional video on social media, alleged that his educational future is at risk because funds for his second year of research have not been released, despite his submission of accounts and university documents.

"The Tamil Nadu Social Justice Department is harassing me the same way Rohith Vemula was harassed," Bharathidasan alleged. Bharathidasan is pursuing a PhD in Tissue Engineering and Regenerative Medicine at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. In the video, he alleged that the university could "eliminate" him if the funding problem continues, and said his research and



educational aspirations could be derailed. "Don't torture me mentally. I can then see what alternative sources I can try to pursue my studies in India or anywhere else," he said, adding that he is not well.

The allegations have triggered a political row, with former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK president MK Stalin backing the scholar and asking Chief Minister Vijay to clarify the government's position. But the Tamil Nadu government has strongly rejected

the allegations.

Social Justice Minister Vanni Arasu denied that the government stopped the scholar's scholarship, saying the issue relates to the submission and verification of expenditure documents. The minister also described the allegations as an attempt to defame the state government. The Social Justice Department, in a detailed statement, says Bharathidasan was sanctioned assistance of up to Rs 36 lakh a year for three years under the Annal Ambedkar Overseas Education Scholarship scheme. For his first year, 2025-26, the government says the full Rs 36 lakh was released. For the second year, 2026-27, it says Rs 12 lakh has already been released towards university fees and living expenses. The government therefore maintained that Rs 48 lakh has already been released for the first two years.

Bullets rain in Punjab: Another ASI shot dead; 2nd cop killed within a week

AMRITSAR (Agency). An Assistant Sub-Inspector of the Punjab Police was shot dead while on motorcycle patrol in Amritsar late on Thursday night, police said.

ASI Harjit Singh was patrolling near Bhagatwala Grain Market when unidentified assailants opened fire, according to initial reports. Singh was critically injured in the shooting and was taken to hospital, where he later died while undergoing treatment. Punjab Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav paid tribute to the officer in a post on X. "Our brave police officer, ASI Harjit Singh of district Amritsar, has laid down his life in the line of duty," Mr Yadav said, adding that the Punjab Police stood firmly with the bereaved family. Chief Minister Bhagwant



Mann has announced an ex-gratia payment of ₹1 crore for Singh's family. An additional ₹1 crore insurance payout will be provided to the family by HDFC Bank, officials said. The killing comes amid a series of attacks on

police personnel in Punjab. Days earlier, an unidentified group calling itself the "Tehreek-e-Taliban Hindustan" (TTH) claimed responsibility for the shooting of an Assistant Sub-Inspector near Ajnala. The officer survived the attack. The group later threatened to target the officer again, according to reports. The emergence of the little-known group has prompted questions among intelligence agencies over its origins and whether it is a new militant outfit or an attempt by an existing banned organisation to establish a presence in Punjab. There has been no claim of responsibility for the killing of ASI Harjit Singh so far. Police are investigating the circumstances of the shooting and the identity of those responsible.

Why the world remains numb to the genocide in Gaza

In a metaphorical sense, the newspaper is like a second skin. It absorbs the morning reader's reactions. It absorbs his consternation, his indifference, his need for gossip, his sense of silence and his helplessness. In many ways, a newspaper also creates a field of interactions and responses. Probably the most interesting of these is the reader's response. I wish to talk of some of them. I found that many readers who have been reacting to my research recently seem to think it's dated. They seem to think I belong to a different era and speak a different kind of radicalism, which is both old-fashioned and outdated. The example I would like to cite is the debate on Gaza, or when one discusses truth commissions or violence.

The Gaza Strip is almost forgotten today. It is now a piece of real estate. Donald Trump has taken over. But Gaza, at one time, should have promoted and instigated imagination into a festival of resistance. Trump has, in a way, created a new America. When one talks to younger individuals, they respond that Trump emphasises the distance from the old America. They point out that my understanding of Vietnam—as an example of radicalism—is outdated. To me, it was an articulation of music, philosophy, politics. There were a range of responses, from paediatrician Benjamin Spock's to philosopher Noam Chomsky's. Vietnam also managed to combine folklore and music, from the works of Joan Baez to that of Bob Dylan.

The students who read this, interacted and reacted with laughter. They said Vietnam is embalmed. Trump's new politics is much more pragmatic and much more calculating. They said Vietnam is a feat of memory; it's a piece of taxidermy.

AI in sports video 2AI in sports video 2
Not many of them knew what was happening in Gaza. But many seemed to know the morphological features of Israel's F-21 aircraft. They knew quite a bit about the big plane's technical details. What was missing is any sense of what happened to the people. The death of tens of thousands of children was missing. When I pointed out that this was the time for a different kind of interaction, they seemed indifferent. And it's this indifference—the silence, the sense of erasure—that one must capture. This problem came out in an acute—and at the same time, intellectually abstruse—form. For me the Truth Commission of Desmond Tutu was a demanding idea, but a brilliant one. It was a series of experiments on everything from a confession to the very idea of violence. The commission's work was transmitted in over six local languages. It turned every spectator into a witness—someone who had to judge what to evaluate, who had to morally take a stand on the nature of apartheid, against violence.

Tutu made it a brilliant form between translation and the vernacular. The Truth Commission led to a new kind of politics in South Africa, with a new kind of involvement. And it's this involvement—where spectatorship turns into a moral act of a witness—that one seems to be missing in Gaza. It seems to be missing even in the aftermath of the apartheid. It's in this context that I realised a problem with memory. Memory distances, encloses and includes in a club-like way. Today, memory has become a major excluder because, to a certain extent, the new generation does not remember the old wars. It cannot understand concentration camps. Nor can it in any way be involved in responses like those to the Vietnam War. The sense of violence has changed. Violence is triage, violence is genocide. Whenever we speak of it, we conduct an act of storytelling, which highlights persons, biographies and sociographies around the event. But violence today is not the old kind of brutality. It is abstract and to a certain extent, it's captured and relayed in numbers. And in a way, these numbers tend to turn violence into an impersonal affair.

The other half of heat crisis

The Union govt has made a good start by recognising heatwaves as a natural calamity. But the absence of a localised, statutory definition may lead to uncertainty over legal and administrative responses. For preventive planning, we need to see it through a municipal lens

India has taken a significant step in recognising the growing threat posed by extreme heat. The Union government recently stated in Parliament that the home ministry has included heatwaves in the list of natural calamities under operational guidelines for the administration of state disaster response funds (SDRF) and the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) during 2026-2031. This decision follows the recommendations of the 16th Finance Commission, which advocated the need to include heatwaves considering the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events to climate change. India recorded 4,853 cases of heat-related illnesses between March 1 and July 26 this year.

The notification acknowledges the serious risks posed by extreme heat to people's lives. It will change how governments will allocate funding, assign institutional responsibilities and respond to heat risks. At the same time, this decision raises a more fundamental question: can heat be governed only as a disaster?

Heatwaves, in their rudimentary form, significantly differ from our traditional conceptions of a 'disaster'—a word that evokes a sense of visible destruction, urgency and immediacy of relief actions and active management of a natural mishap in real time during floods or earthquakes. Often characterised as a 'silent disaster', heatwaves do not leave a trail of visible destruction or widespread mortality that renders ad hoc approaches ineffective for long-term relief. Unlike conventional disasters, heatwaves require a priori planning and preventive interventions rather than the one-off responses that characterise disaster management. Such planning requires coordinated action across multiple sectors, including worker safety, urban design, public health, water management and land-use planning—often well before the onset of a heatwave.

Inclusion of heatwaves as a natural calamity does not automatically imbue a statutory definition for heatwaves under the Disaster Management Act, 2005. The present operational definition by the Indian Meteorological Department for heatwaves is bereft of statutory value and does not include wet bulb temperatures or other local meteorological factors as triggers to declare the onset of heatwaves. The absence of a statutory definition that

accommodates their localised and geographically variable manifestations may lead to uncertainty over when legal and administrative responses ought to be suitably triggered.

The recent couching of heatwaves in the language of the DM Act crowns the 'district' as the fulcrum of authority and action. This diverges from the ground reality as due to geographical topography, it is in cities that the impacts of the urban heat island effect are more profoundly and viscerally felt. Municipal governments possess a clear and localised understanding of heat risks, reflecting the diverse microclimates, settlement patterns and living



conditions that characterise urban areas. They are therefore better equipped to tailor responses to local realities. However, this nuanced understanding does not readily translate into action because tackling heat is not a statutory municipal function. Consequently, municipalities lack dedicated funding that can be readily mobilised for cooling interventions. While framing heat as a disaster does provide access to an increased share of funding through the NDRF, states must navigate a slow and cumbersome administrative process to secure these funds. This often undermines the timely deployment of disaster-responsive measures at the grassroots level, making the funding mechanism ill-suited to the disaster framing of heat events. The intensity of heat experienced within cities is shaped by several factors: urban planning, which determines land-use patterns; building

regulations, which influence local temperatures; and tree cover, which moderates neighbourhood microclimates, among many other factors. All of these are shaped by the everyday functions of municipal governments. Therefore, strengthening urban heat resilience requires more than disaster response measures.

It also warrants integrating considerations of heat into the legal and regulatory frameworks that govern how cities are planned, built and managed. For example, building byelaws and zoning regulations can promote passive cooling through standards for ventilation, reflective roofing materials and climate-responsive design.

City master plans can identify vulnerable communities and prioritise targeted interventions in heat-vulnerable settlements. Legislation governing trees can support the expansion and protection of tree canopy in areas experiencing severe heat stress. Municipal legislation must also institutionalise coordination between planning authorities, public health departments, labour departments and disaster management authorities, ensuring that heat resilience is integrated across sectors rather than addressed in isolation. Conforming with a disaster framing for heat, cities are increasingly developing heat action plans to respond to severe heat stress, these plans largely focus on short term emergency measures rather than addressing the root cause of what makes people vulnerable to heat. For example, several action plans suggest that street vendors and gig workers avoid outdoor work during the hottest hours of the day. Such advisories overlook the harsh realities workers face, who cannot avoid outdoor work without risking the loss of their daily income. When we reduce heatwaves to a disaster, we limit ourselves to a reactive post facto approach to the crises. Such an approach does not answer the difficult questions: how can buildings be designed better? How can green cover be increased? How can vulnerable groups be safeguarded from the impact of extreme heat? The most effective response lies in recognising that heat is not just a disaster management issue, it is also a climate issue, a public health emergency, a labour concern and a question of justice. Until then, a government that focuses only on heatwave alerts for the afternoon but overlooks those living in poorly-ventilated houses at night is only addressing half the crisis.

With the US weaponising the final frontier, space treaty needs an update

Justifying weapons in space by citing threats from unnamed "adversaries" is nothing short of threatening the planet while pursuing narrow national security

In a move that could trigger a perilous space-based arms race, the US on Monday admitted to deploying "on-orbit space control weapons". While the nature of weapons installed remained classified in the US air force secretary's announcement, experts warned it could take weapons of mass destruction literally to the next frontier.

The deployment threatens the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, signed by at least 118 countries including India, the US, China and Russia (as part of the erstwhile Soviet Union). It bans WMDs in space and prohibits militarisation of celestial bodies, including building military bases and conducting weapons tests. It, however, does not ban conventional systems or counter-space technologies in low-Earth orbits. But the 'known unknown' of the weapons deployed begs the question: how far are we from a nuclear arms race in space? Several countries have for long been capable of a space arms race. In January 1975, the Soviet Union remotely fired 20 shells from the Salyut-3 space station. China and India have destroyed their own defunct satellites using missiles fired from the ground in



2007 and 2019, respectively. None of this, however, violated the 1967 treaty. China and Russia have also developed space-based capabilities for electronic warfare. The US deployment is not an overnight decision. In January 2001, the US Space Commission headed by Donald Rumsfeld, then the defence secretary, recommended a space policy to empower the US

President with "the option to deploy weapons in space to deter threats to, and, if necessary, defend against attacks on US interests". The following year, the US's withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty allowed it to pursue space-based missile defence. Those early moves culminated in Donald Trump creating the US Space Force in 2019 during his first term as President. So, the US plan to weaponise space has been in the making for at least a quarter century. Defending mankind from incoming comets, meteors or asteroids using weapons is one thing—a technology tested by the European Space Agency's 2014 Rosetta mission. But justifying weapons in space by citing threats from unnamed "adversaries" is nothing short of threatening the planet while pursuing narrow national security. Several countries' move towards commercial mineral extraction in space is also weakening the 1967 treaty's bar against national appropriation of celestial resources. It's time to update it keeping mankind's safety firmly in view.

Veg diplomacy offers food for thought

Dietary choice must not become an ideological weapon or a symbolic element of Indian identity

AMONG the highlights of the BRICS summit in New Delhi last week was the vegetarian gala dinner for visiting dignitaries. The choice was presumably aimed at showcasing India's diverse food cultures and offering visitors a taste of what they were unlikely to be served in their own countries. Non-vegetarian dishes were conspicuous by their absence. India does have a wide variety of vegetarian food, perhaps more than any other country in the world. From green vegetables and lentils to bread and rice preparations, each region of the country offers something unique. Indian culinary traditions also include a range of dairy and fermented foods, prepared in remarkably different ways. Indian curd is not simply a version of Western yoghurt. It has myriad avatars, from kalan and avial in South India to mishti doi in Bengal, shrikhand in Maharashtra and a wide range of raitas across the country. Yet serving a vegetarian platter to foreign dignitaries was not merely a celebration of India's food cultures. It also clearly carried a cultural and political message. In India, vegetarianism is associated with purity, and those committed to a vegetarian culture often see themselves as "kinder" people, and hence superior to those who eat meat, which obviously requires the killing of animals, birds or fish. Perhaps the most commonly eaten meat worldwide is beef. For many Indians (read Hindus), the cow is holy and slaughtering it is a crime in many states of India. There have been several cases where even the suspicion of cow smuggling for the purpose of slaughter was provocation enough for a lynching. Against this background, presenting an exclusively vegetarian menu as a symbol of Indian cuisine is not quite as simple or innocuous as it might appear. While this may showcase India's cultural riches, it also carries other messages, apparently directed at the domestic audience.

Some BRICS member nations may have meat dishes integral to their cuisine. Even the oils used in cooking in many of these countries may be derived from animal fats. What if they hosted a gala dinner for a vegetarian Indian dignitary, featuring a variety of their meat delicacies, with no vegetarian options available? Would this be viewed as showcasing the cultural diversity of their countries, and appreciated in that spirit? Instead, such an arrangement would be seen as highly unusual and distasteful in any international diplomatic setting today.

More importantly, the symbolism of an exclusively vegetarian national cuisine also carries a cultural message. Rather than presenting India in its grand diversity, it projects a narrow and limited version that belongs to only a small minority of Indians. More than an exposition of India's cultural specificity, it is an ideological message that stigmatises a large majority of Indians who have always been meat-eaters. Meat-eating is popular not only among Muslims and Christians in India. According to available data, more than two-thirds of India's Hindus eat meat. Even beef is common in some pockets of the country across religious groups. According to the National Family Health Survey (2019-21), more than 70% of Indians reported eating non-vegetarian food. This proportion was above 95% in the southern, eastern and north-eastern states. The proportion of those who reported themselves as vegetarians in West Bengal and Telangana was merely 1%. In contrast, vegetarianism was predominant in only four states of north-western and western India, with Rajasthan reporting the highest



proportion of vegetarians (73%), followed by Haryana (69%), Punjab (67%) and Gujarat (60%). The association of vegetarianism with Hindu religious beliefs is also misplaced. While this may be true for certain communities and caste groups, Hindu dietary practices have always been diverse, and vegetarianism was never a universal practice. Nearly a decade ago, while I was doing fieldwork in Himachal Pradesh, many respondents told me that slaughtering or sacrificing goats was part of local rituals in Shaivite temples. This is also true of many other Hindu communities' rituals across the country. Indeed,

food in India has a prominent caste dimension. Privileging vegetarianism as the authentic and superior food culture of Indians stigmatises members of Dalit communities who have, across regions, been meat-eaters. The Sanskrit norm of vegetarianism invariably presents them as inferior Hindus. The same holds true for the so-called Scheduled Tribes, who are mostly meat-eaters. Equally importantly, promoting vegetarianism has nutritional implications. Meat proteins are far more bioavailable than plant proteins. Even soybean, considered one of the best sources of plant protein, is barely 75% as bioavailable as the same quantity of chicken. Add to it the fact that animal amino acids are closely comparable to human ones, and it becomes obvious why meat diets would be better sources of protein than plant diets. Dr Sylvia Karpagam highlights this point in her recent book, *The Meat of the Matter: How the Politics of Food Shapes Our Health* (HarperCollins). She states that the politicisation of food has serious implications for Indians' nutritional health, particularly for children from poorer backgrounds. A clear example is the discontinuation of eggs from the mid-day meal programme across many states over the past decade. She argues that popular media, mostly ideologically driven, spreads prejudice against non-vegetarian food, which remains a better source of nutrition. While vegetarians should have the freedom to eat whatever they like, their dietary preference must not become an ideological weapon. It should certainly not become a symbolic element of Indian identity.



While checking the Maldives off my list of beach retreats, I felt an inexplicable sense of pride and joy. Pride for pulling off my second international travel seamlessly, and joy for discovering a place I'd love to keep going back to.

Maldives is paradise Period!

A holiday in the Maldives is like entering the world in a picture postcard where a turquoise sea gently laps the virgin sands as warm sunlight peeks through dense coconut groves, and everything is happy as the day is long. One full-fledged flight from Colombo and a seaplane ride from Male (capital of the Maldives), and you are in an island like Robinson Crusoe's where the sea dazzles you with its brilliance like its tropical sun, and the verdant wilderness comes into its own.

If you are arriving at an odd hour in Colombo and halting the night at the airport transit hotel like us, the anticipation for the onward journey can kill you especially if you haven't flown in a seaplane before, and that too, over a gorgeous reef-dotted ocean that changes colours as often as the clock time. Scheduled for an early morning flight from Colombo to Male, we could hardly sleep the night and landed up several hours early at the departure terminal only to discover that there were more like us, even those who chose to snuggle up and catch a wink instead on the waiting chairs. Finally, a little after sunrise we were aboard the SriLankan sailing among the clouds in the faint orange light of dawn enjoying as we did even the not so savoury vegetable burger and tea, musing about dreamy beaches and translucent waters.

Be glued to your window when landing in Ibrahim Nasir International Airport, Male, for you don't want to miss the vista to probably one of world's most scenic

airports surrounded by a cobalt blue sea dotted with white speed boats and a strip of tarmac running through its center. But once you arrive, the immigration clearance can be a bit of a dampener as the procedure is lengthy and you find yourself standing in a long queue that barely moves. About an hour later you'll be on the little red bus to the air taxi terminal, or if you please, the speed boat jetty. Now since our resort Adaaran Select Meedhupparu is on an island about 132 kilometers off the Male coast, we thought it best to fly and enjoy the magnificent aerial views. To not carry a good camera on a trip like this is sacrilege as you'll hover over a string of islands, sometimes from up close, sometimes from far behind. And you'll fly over brilliant patches of corals in colours unimaginable the whole time you are airborne.

Forty-five minutes hence we were careering across the bay towards a picturesque wooden pier. As we emerged the last monsoon shower came down sending the resort staff in a tizzy over equipping us with an umbrella and towel each. What a welcome! But none complained. There was so much to behold, the livid sky, the relentless downpour over a colourful sea, the tropical vegetation sapling green in the rain, a white beach, the endangered Maldivian Fruit Bats flying for cover, and divers scampering to the head of the pier. It was surreal, and I couldn't wait to explore the whole 42 acres of this rain and sun drenched wilderness.

In time for lunch, our host led us through a path among overhanging vines and creepers

that opened up to a thatched gazebo-style dining area. The rain had let up by then, the birds were singing again, and we were sitting down to a buffet meal of lobsters, crabs, sauteed vegetables and curries to go with a glass of chilled white wine. It was the beginning of our tropical experience.

We walked around the island a little more before we thought it best to confirm with a staff member the way to our beach villa. The property has on it an array of beach villas scattered around the island affording brilliant sea views. Ours had its deck almost jutting into the sea with a watchtower adjacent to it. First I walked into the sea to get a closer view of the corals, a stone's throw away from the shore. The sand is so soft that it sinks under your feet and can hence be slippery. Don't be surprised to see snorkellers lurking around the shore, for marine life abounds right from there. Simply swim up to your nearest reef and watch the magic unfold as baby Angel fish, Tiger fish and Parrot fish swim out of its crevices.

For fish spotting and some refreshing sea breeze, we walked up the pier on the other end of the island that straddles the reef all the way to the deep blue sea. You'll spot Angel fish in royal blue with yellow strips, the yellow and black striped Tiger fish, the aqua blue Parrot fish with dark blue fins and stingrays swim around with gay abandon. You can sit on the pier for hours and watch the gorgeous marine life. Divers love to launch into the waters from this point. Besides, the pier is a vantage point to get a panoramic view of the beach, the island and its luxurious water villas that stand on

stilts over the water in perfect symmetry. Their decks have a private pool and a staircase that goes down to the sea, a happy arrangement for diving enthusiasts. Dark clouds were gathering once again, and we decided to head to the poolside bar for a good sundowner. Evenings here are usually about guzzling beer over a game of cards, a quick table tennis match before settling down with a drink or reading in solitude, though the bar gets a lot of action by way of karaoke nights and some live orchestra.

The highpoint of a stay here is certainly the fish feeding session in the night at the pier when the dainty, colourful ones are replaced by predators like Jack fish, Barracudas, Tunas that invade the waters in shoals in search of food. You need to finish dinner early and find yourself a spot on the busy pier to witness this fascinating feeding session where portions of raw fish and crabs are hurled at the shoals of big fish by the hotel staff. My heart went out to the lonely yellow-necked turtle who tried in vain to get through the labyrinth of powerful fish.

Sunset cruise, jet skiing and dolphin spotting, bird watching are among other activities you can pursue at the resort. Else you can pull your sunbed onto the beach and spend hours reading and soaking up the sun. When making your way from one end of the island to the other through the jungle, remember to mind your head as the Fruit Bats hang quite low from the branches and give amused



glances if you ran into them.

If unwinding is your idea of a holiday, you shouldn't miss out a nice, rejuvenating therapy at the spa. Typically the spa therapies offered here are avant-garde. After a sauna and steam bath, we went in for a traditional Balinese full body massage with hibiscus aroma oil followed by a refreshing cucumber facial performed by expert masseurs from Bali. Though a tad expensive, you get good bang for your buck. So much so that I went back the next day for a foot massage and manicure!

Seafood lovers, this is your place. From tunas, crabs, prawns, squids, lobsters, cuttlefish, to oysters your options are aplenty. Added to your rice, your broth, grills and curries, they are a core ingredient in every meal. But just as wonderful is sipping the nectar from fresh fruits anytime of the day you please.

At the end of our fourth and last night in the Maldives we still hadn't had our fill of its unpredictable showers, the bright morning sunshine, swimming with fish, the striking colours of the sea reflected in the open sky, the large meals and endless swigs of wine. Like in answer to our prayers it began to rain without ceremony as we took our seats in the little aircraft ready to fly out of paradise.



White sands, clean beaches and sun beds, are just a few things that will catch your eye in Cape Town. But the city has much more to offer



Cape Town's gorgeous white sands

There's something about Cape Town—this photogenic South African city is like a favourite child in a large swaggering family, loved to death by tourists and South Africans alike. And this glittering city with a lifestyle unmatched anywhere in Africa is one of the most geographically isolated of the world's great metropolises.

Indeed the city by the bay seems to be perpetually on holiday — Cape Tonians are forever sipping wine at open-air cafes, swinging up to iconic Table Mountain in a cable car, listening to strolling musicians at the vibey Victoria and Albert Waterfront... And the ideal prelude to a South African itinerary is a heliflip over Cape Town prior to exploring the conventional sights.

There are a myriad fun things to do: revel in a wine tasting session in Groot Constantia, one of the oldest and most beautiful wine estates where wine making began in the country; hang out at Planet Champagne and Cocktail Bar at Mount Nelson Hotel with a pre-dinner champagne or cocktails; sample the sumptuous High Tea at Table Bay hotel;

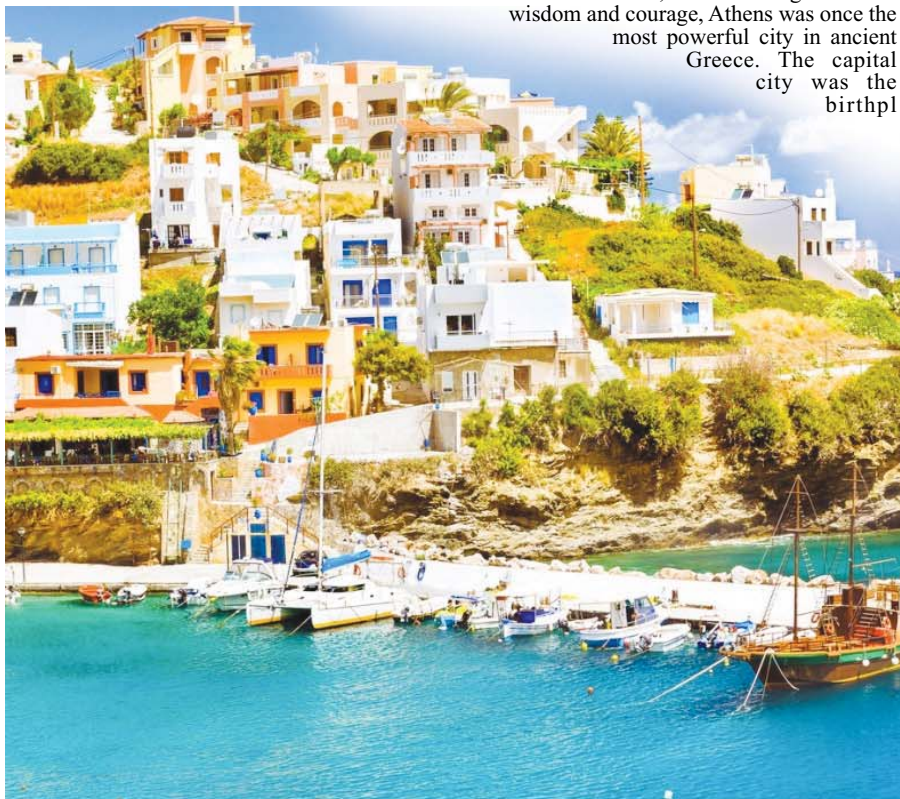
wind up at trendy Balducci's for a drink after a shopping spree at V&A Waterfront.

Shopaholics can also head for Greenmarket Square for bargains from across the African continent and to Stylish Cavendish Square and Tygervally Shopping Centre.

Canal Walk is Cape Town's biggest and busiest mall; Pan African Market in Long Street brims with trinkets and artefacts from across the continent.

On a spa trek in Cape Town you're spoilt for choice - the ones at The Vineyard Hotel, Cape Grace and Table Bay are outstanding. In the meantime, kids can have fun at Two Oceans Aquarium at the Waterfront; Ratanga Junction is a theme park with thrilling rides and a sense of fun. A 90-minute drive away is the picturesque town of Hermanus, which offers the best landbased whale watching. In the waters around Gansbaai village nearby, go shark cage diving or spy resident Bryde whales. The famous Southern Right Whales come a-calling between June and November.





Picture postcards from

Greece

Santorini, Athens, Mykonos and Thessaloniki—just a few reasons why Greece's old-world charm attracts travellers from across the globe. With over 60 inhabited islands, stellar historical sites that span four millennia, picture-perfect Mediterranean beaches and towering mountain ranges—it's easy to understand the lure of this country.

Athens

Named for Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom and courage, Athens was once the most powerful city in ancient Greece. The capital city was the birthplace

of democracy, theatre and Western civilisation, and its cultural richness and history is evident in its architecture.

Acropolis in Athens

When the sun hits the Acropolis' high, stony hill, its monuments—made with Pentelic marble—gleam a brilliant white. Crowned by the famous Parthenon, it stands sentinel over Athens, visible from almost anywhere within the city.

Santorini

With multicoloured cliffs soaring over 300 m from a sea-drowned caldera, Santorini rests in the middle of the indigo Aegean Sea. With Cycladic white-washed homes that line the cliff tops and breathtaking blue-domed churches that spill along the terraced rocks, Santorini is the quintessential Greek isle.

Oia, Santorini

Perched on the northern tip of the island, the village of Oia is known throughout the world for its quiet life and fantastic sunsets. Sage green slopes filled with wildflowers, sun-bathed verandas and busy streets packed with shops, taverns and cafés—you will struggle to find a more stunning Cycladic village.

Mykonos

The low-lying, sun-drenched island of Mykonos in the Aegean has always been considered to be one of the most elegant Greek islands. From celebrities and writers to archaeologist and students, everyone has been lured by the island's glitzy nightlife and charming cafés.

Meteora

One of the most extraordinary sights in mainland Greece, the Meteora is a group of monasteries built into and on top of huge pinnacles of smooth rock. Seeking retreat from the expanding Turkish occupations at the end of the 14th century, the Eastern Orthodox monks found a perfect asylum in this

region's almost inaccessible rock pillars.

Delphi

Believed to be the centre of the earth in Greek mythology, Delphi has always been a place of historic and spiritual significance. It is home to the Sanctuary of Apollo, a fascinating pagan religious complex set on a stunning cliff, which comprises classical temples, a theatre and a stadium.

Mount Athos

Also known as 'Holy Mountain', Mount Athos is home to 20 orthodox monasteries, thousands of monks and an invaluable collection of frescoes and religious art. Now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the monastery only allows male visitors to enter its intriguing and awe-inspiring bastion.

Mount Olympus

Traditionally regarded as the legendary home of the ancient Greek gods, Mount Olympus is a landscape of spectacular plateaus and ridges. It is believed that it was here that Zeus mounted his throne, Hades ruled the Underworld, and Poseidon rocked the seas.

Lindos

Reached by foot or through Lindos' popular mode of transport—the donkey—this towering acropolis' landscape is filled with picturesque white-washed houses that tumble down towards the Lindos Bay. The town itself is a magical maze of hidden alleys packed with boutiques and effervescent bars and cafés set in old sea captain's houses.

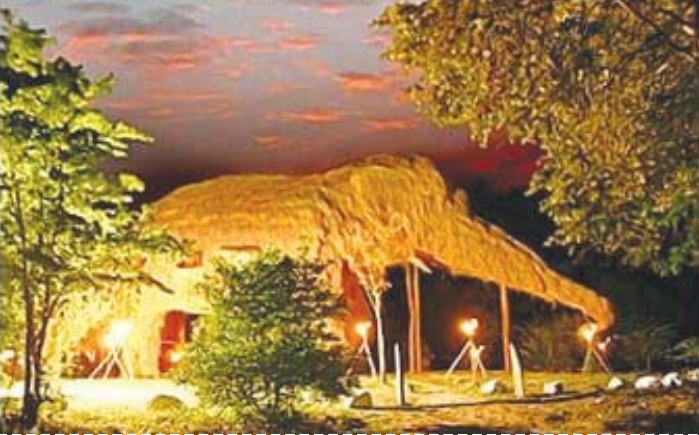
Sailing in Greece

With endless blue seas and countless islands, Greece is a sailor's paradise. Exploring Greece by sea puts you in touch with a side of this country you'd otherwise miss. Sail the islands of Aegina and the car-free Hydra, or take a two week tour along Mykonos and Santorini—this is the best way to get up-close and personal with this idyllic country.

Picture postcards from Greece

With a coastline punctuated by superb beaches, sun-bleached ancient ruins and a mountainous interior that urges you to dust off your hiking boots and explore—Greece inspires anyone with a cultural bone in their body.

Unusual hotels around the world



V8 Hotel, Germany

The V8 Hotel in Stuttgart is a car lover's haven. Part of an auto museum called Boblingen's Meilenwerk, the rooms in this hotel are guaranteed to rev the engine of any car enthusiast. The four-star hotel has 34 rooms, of which 10 have undergone extreme makeovers that allow you to sleep in a Mercedes, Morris Minor, Cadillac or Volkswagen. Collectors of classic cars may even park their car in glass viewing boxes, so that others can see the repair and service taking place.

Palacio de Sal, Bolivia

Located on the edge of the world's largest salt flat—the Salar de Uyuni—Palacio de Sal is a hotel built entirely out of blocks of salt. Everything from walls to furniture is constructed using pure salt and the only rule that guests are required to follow is 'Don't lick the walls!' This luxury hotel also features a golf course, a dry sauna, a steam room, a whirlpool and its own saltwater baths. Featuring chalk-white huts that blend beautifully with the salty landscape, the hotel provides excellent grounds for star-gazing.

Treehotel, Sweden

Having to haul your luggage up a treetop is worth it, when the dwelling is as undeniably cool as Sweden's Treehotel. Floating ethereally in the evergreen forests, this hotel is composed of five

individually designed 'treerooms,' each of which is created in collaboration with leading Scandinavian architects. The most distinctive room is a particularly futuristic suite that reflects the forest surroundings from its mirrored cubical walls. Other accommodation options include a bird nest look-alike, an alien UFO suite and a spacious cabin wedged between the trees.

Propeller Island City Lodge, Berlin

If the eccentric, avant-garde ethos of Berlin could be captured in one hotel, it would be the Propeller Island City Lodge—where a stay is akin to spending the night living in a work of art. Every room has a radically unique ambience constructed entirely by German artist Lars Stroschen. A preppy prison cell with coffin beds; a room covered with mirrors and a suite where upside-down furniture dangles from the ceiling and your beds are hidden beneath the floor—the rooms at this hotel range the gamut from kinky to creepy.

Jukkasjärvi Ice hotel, Sweden

For a few months each year you can experience a sensationalised Eskimo lifestyle in Jukkasjärvi, the world's first and largest hotel that's built entirely out of ice and snow. Every year, around 50 artists head to Sweden to help rebuild the structure, thus resulting in a hotel that looks a little bit different each time. The hotel also features a bar, with glasses made of ice, and an ice chapel that's popular amongst marrying couples. Each year the hotel receives applications from artists all around the world to

design imaginative suites and the actual construction of the structure starts in November, finally opening up for the guests in January.

Kakslautanen, Finland

A crystal clear view of the Northern Lights from your own private igloo is exactly what Hotel Kakslautanen in Finland offers. Nestled amidst the wilderness, the hotel promises the best views of the Aurora Borealis and you can choose to stay either in a glass igloo, a log cabin or a snow igloo. Each igloo is fitted with thermal glass walls and ceilings that insulate the interior to keep it warm at night.

Jumbo Stay, Sweden

Spend the night onboard a real jumbo jet thanks to the Jumbo



For the adventurous and quirky globetrotter, conventional hotels are a thing of the past. Whether you still harbour a childhood dream of living in a treehouse, or you love cars so much that you'd give anything to sleep inside one, there's a crazy hotel somewhere to fit your vacation needs. Here are a few of the world's most eye-popping and intriguing hotels

Stay hostel in Stockholm. Housed in the Arlanda Airport, the hotel is actually a decommissioned 747-200 jetliner that offers visitors the pleasures of first-class air travel, while staying firmly on the ground. Accessed via a 15-minute walk from the main terminal or via a five-minute shuttle bus, the hostel holds 79 beds and has a luxury suite, offering panoramic views of the airport, built inside the cockpit of the jet.

Dog Bark Park Inn, Idaho

For dog lovers looking to take a trip to Idaho, this is the perfect place to stay overnight. Dog Bark Park Inn is a whimsical two bedroom bed and breakfast that is shaped like a beagle and boasts of a number of dog-themed design choices. To add a dash of quirk to the hotel, the toilet is disguised as a fire hydrant! Lovingly known as 'Sweet Willy' by local residents, this unique building was created by wood-carving enthusiasts Dennis and Frances, who spent eighteen months building the structure. The guesthouse can be reserved from April through October for up to four people at a time.

The Hobbit Motel, New Zealand

From outside, these two self-contained underground dwellings look like they have come straight from Tolkien's Middle-earth. Don't worry if you're not three foot tall with hairy feet, everyone is welcome at the Hobbit Motel. This unusual motel was built using polystyrene blocks, keeping it cool in the summer and warm in the winter. Each Hobbit unit is built into the hillside, much like the hobbit holes from 'The Lord of the Rings', and can accommodate up to six people.

Giraffe Manor, Kenya

It's not everyday that you can enjoy a gourmet meal in a quaint historic mansion as giraffes lean in through the window over your shoulder. Giraffe Manor is located on a 140-acre sanctuary for one of the most endangered subspecies of giraffes in the world. The manor, which has ten guests rooms, offers up plates of giraffe food that you can feed to these hungry guests so they don't go after your breakfast.

N Chandrasekaran reappointed Tata Sons chair, but third term may not be final yet

A legal opinion obtained by Tata Trusts says Tata Sons could not validly reappoint N Chandrasekaran without majority backing from its nominee directors. The view intensifies a wider dispute over governance, listing and the group's ownership structure.

Delhi. (Agency)

N Chandrasekaran has been reappointed as Tata Sons chairman for another five-year term, but the decision may not be the final word on his continuation at the helm of the Tata Group's holding company. The reason lies in how the reappointment vote was decided. Tata Trusts and its affiliated trusts hold around 66% of Tata Sons' equity and have two nominee directors on the company's board. At the board meeting on Thursday, Tata Trusts chairman Noel Tata voted against Chandrasekaran's reappointment, while the other Trusts nominee, Venu Srinivasan, voted in favour. This left the two Tata Trusts nominees divided on the resolution. The deadlock was then broken by independent director Harish Manwani, who was chairing the meeting and exercised his casting vote in favour of

the reappointment. So, while the Tata Sons board has passed the resolution, a question remains: can the casting vote of an independent director settle a matter where the 'Tata Trusts' two nominee directors



themselves did not have majority support? This is where the legal challenge to Chandrasekaran's third term comes in. A legal opinion obtained by Tata Trusts from former Chief Justice of India D Y

Chandrachud has reportedly taken the view that the affirmative vote of a majority of the Trusts' nominee directors is a separate

declared Chandrasekaran's reappointment invalid. The Chandrachud opinion is a legal opinion obtained by Tata Trusts, not a

WHY THE TATA TRUSTS' ROLE MATTERS

The starting point is Tata Sons' unusual ownership structure. The Tata Trusts and affiliated trusts together hold around 66% of the equity of Tata Sons. The Trusts are therefore the company's majority shareholders and have two nominee directors on the board. Noel Tata is one of those nominee directors. But the fact that the Trusts hold a majority of the shares does not, by itself, mean that Noel Tata can simply overturn a board decision. The important question is different: what voting rights do the Trusts' nominee directors have under the Articles of Association of Tata Sons, and what happens when those two nominee directors do not agree? That is the point at the heart of the current dispute. On Thursday, Noel Tata voted against Chandrasekaran's reappointment. Venu Srinivasan voted in favour. With the two nominee directors split, Manwani's casting vote was used to break the deadlock and the resolution went through.

requirement. Chandrachud's opinion is that Manwani's casting vote cannot be used to override that requirement, reported Times of India. That does not mean a court has

judicial ruling. But it gives the Trusts a legal basis to question whether Thursday's board resolution was sufficient to complete the reappointment.

Heard in Chandni Chowk: 'No one carries cash now, merchants have to bear UPI fee'

Delhi. (Agency)

The wedding and festive season rush is back in Chandni Chowk. The lanes are packed with shoppers picking up lehengas, sherwanis and sarees. But for traders, the buzz comes with a new worry – a 0.4% fee on UPI transactions above Rs 2,000, which the merchants will have to pay from October 15. At Novelty Creations, where wedding clothes start at Rs 10,000, proprietor Rohit Khanna had been counting on the season to bring in good business. Now, he is calculating what the new charge could mean for his margins. "Almost all our products cost more than Rs 2,000 and everyone pays by UPI now. So, we will have to bear the charges. Along with the competition, a businessman's primary obstacle to growth is the government," he said. "Our expenses are increasing every day. There is inflation, personal income tax, then GST and now this," Khanna said, adding that his income had been "severely disproportionate" to his expenses. Ajay Kumar Mittal, proprietor of a Lucknowi Chikankari store, echoed Khanna.

"Initially, they forced us to shift to UPI. Now, 10 years later, they have levied charges. Some politicians say 0.4% is nothing. But in aggregate, for small traders like us, it is a huge number," he said. While there have been murmurs about switching back to cash transactions, Rakesh, a manager at another wedding garment store in the area, said that asking customers to make the switch is impractical. "No one carries cash around these days. Even if we ask our customers to get the money from ATMs, most of them don't work in Chandni Chowk and there is always a huge queue in front of the very few that do," he added.

Krishi Bhawan mosque panel seeks clarity on fate of structure, urges preservation or alternate prayer site

Delhi. (Agency)

The Delhi High Court on Thursday sought the Centre's response in a plea expressing apprehension that the Qadeemi Masjid on the Krishi Bhawan premise, which is undergoing redevelopment, may be removed. As reported by The Indian Express earlier, though the Qadeemi Masjid — situated in the open court at Krishi Bhawan that is over 100 years old — does not figure in the list of structures to be removed, it also does not



appear in the map of the proposed new building in detailed drawings attached with the tender. The mosque is not a protected monument under the Archaeological Survey of India, but figures in a list of Waqf properties, published in the Delhi Administration's Gazette of 1970. Justice Anish Dayal issued notice to the respondent authorities, which includes the Central government, Central Public Works Department (CPWD), North Delhi Municipal Council, as well as the Delhi Waqf Board, seeking their responses within four weeks. The CPWD, under the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), floated a tender on January 19 for the construction of Common Central Secretariat (CCS) buildings 4 and 5, at the site of the Krishi Bhawan and Shashi Bhawan. Qadeemi Masjid, through its caretaking committee, in a petition before the HC, is seeking that the Centre, through the MoHUA, CPWD and NDMC be restrained from demolishing or removing the mosque. In the scenario where retention of the mosque at its existing location is deemed to be "genuinely unavoidable or incompatible with the approved redevelopment", the petitioner is seeking that a "reasonable, proximate and adequate alternative prayer facility" be provided.

Teen Gang-Raped, Killed By 4, Including 3 Minors In Delhi, Body Eaten By Dogs

According to the police, the body of the 17-year-old had decomposed to such an extent that its gender could not be immediately ascertained.

Delhi. (Agency)

Four persons, including three minors, allegedly gangraped a 17-year-old girl in Delhi, stabbed her to death and then dumped her body in an open field where parts of it were eaten by dogs. The horrifying incident, according to the police, came to light when the decomposed body of the victim was found on September 13 days after the rape and murder. According to the police, the body had decomposed to such an extent that its gender could not be immediately ascertained. Police said the girl and the accused persons were known to each other and she was travelling with them in a tempo when the crime took place. They allegedly drank together inside a

tempo before the girl was sexually assaulted, stabbed to death and her body disposed of. Police said the girl's decomposed body was found near



Jaipal Rana's field in Swaroop Nagar area on Kushak Road in Northwest Delhi on September 13. Some parts of the body had also been eaten by stray

dogs, and one of her hands was found separated from the body, police added. The girl had not been reported missing by her family. Police said her family told them that she would often leave home and return after a few days. A case was registered under relevant sections of the BNS and the POCSO Act. As there was no apparent eyewitness and the identity of the perpetrators was initially unknown, police teams analysed more than 50 CCTV cameras covering the area and adjoining routes. During the analysis, a tempo was noticed moving near the scene around the relevant time. Its registration number was not clearly visible due to darkness, following which investigators tracked its movement across multiple CCTV locations.

Car hits bike, drags it half a km in Delhi's RK Puram; 73-year-old arrested

A three-minute video showed commuters following the car as it dragged the bike, causing sparks on the road.

Delhi. (Agency)

A 73-year-old man was arrested after his car allegedly hit a parked motorcycle in South Delhi's RK Puram on Wednesday night, dragging it for around half a kilometre. Police said its rider fell on the road and escaped without serious injuries. Passersby had chased the car along Africa Avenue and forced the driver to stop. The incident took place around 10 pm when the car was travelling from Bhikaji Cama Place towards R K Puram Metro Station. Police received information about the accident at 10.22 pm and a team from the RK Puram police station reached the spot. According to police, Tanish Tokas, 21, a resident of Munirka

village, was sitting on the motorcycle parked by the roadside when a blue Honda Amaze allegedly driven by Venu Gopal, a resident of Vasant Kunj,



hit him. The impact caused Tokas to fall off the two-wheeler. Police said the motorcycle was subsequently dragged by the car for some distance. A three-minute video recorded by people at the

spot showed commuters following the vehicle as it dragged the bike, causing sparks on the road, and eventually forcing the driver to stop.

The video shows people surrounding the car and asking the driver to step out. Gopal can be seen folding his hands and apologising during the confrontation. Some people allegedly slapped him. Police said Tokas was medically examined and did not sustain any serious injuries. The accused was examined as well and no alcohol was detected in his system.

A case has been registered for rash driving or riding on a public way and rash or negligent act that endangers human life or personal safety and causes simple hurt.

Delhi teen gangraped, stabbed to death, body found eaten by dogs days later

Police said that during the investigation, they scanned more than 50 CCTV footage wherein a tempo was captured moving suspiciously. The vehicle's registration number could not initially be identified because of darkness, but was eventually traced. Interrogation of the driver subsequently led police to the accused.

Delhi. (Agency)

A 17-year-old girl was found dead earlier this week in Delhi after being allegedly gang-raped, stabbed, and thrown in an open field. The incident took place in Northwest Delhi's Swaroop Nagar, with the body decomposed to such an extent that forensic teams struggled to immediately ascertain her gender. Four people have been identified as accused, including three minors aged between 16 and 17, police said on Thursday. The fourth accused has been identified as Shivam alias Sudama. The case came to light on the morning of September 13, when police received information about a body lying in farm fields near Kushak

Road in Swaroop Nagar. According to police, the girl and the accused knew each other, news agency PTI reported. The accused allegedly drank together inside a tempo before the girl was raped and murdered. Furthermore, police said that some parts of the girl's body had been eaten by stray dogs, with one of her hands found lying separated on the field, the report added. The victim was not reported missing by her family, who told police that she would often leave home and return after a few days.

Police said they cracked the case by analysing more than 50 CCTV cameras. They traced a tempo that was captured moving suspiciously. The vehicle's registration number could not initially be identified because of darkness and



poor visibility. The vehicle was subsequently traced and found parked in

Khadda Colony. The tempo driver was detained and questioned at length. His interrogation subsequently led police to the other three suspects, resulting in the arrest of all four accused. Police have also recovered two knives allegedly used in the murder, along with blood-stained clothes that the accused were wearing at the time of the crime.

Police detained and questioned the tempo driver, following which three juveniles and Shivam alias Sudama were taken into custody. Investigators are also probing whether anyone else was involved. A case has been registered under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), along with Section 6 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

Rupee rises 16 paise to 95.73 against US dollar in early trade

MUMBAI. (Agency)

The rupee rebounded from over two-month low levels, gaining 16 paise to 95.73 against the US dollar in early trade on Friday, buoyed by a buying trend in domestic equity markets and easing crude oil prices overseas. Forex analysts said the retreat of crude prices below the 104-per-barrel level from a steep rise earlier this week eased pressure on the Indian currency, even as US bond yields fell from record highs after the US Federal Reserve hiked interest rates by 25 basis point. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 95.75 and gained slightly to trade at 95.73 against the greenback in early deals, up 16 paise from its previous close. The local unit ended 2 paise higher at 95.89 against the American currency on Thursday, after declining 150 paise, or nearly 1.5 per cent, in the preceding eight sessions since the closing level of 94.43 against the greenback recorded on September 4. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.02 per cent lower at 99.97. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading 0.93 per cent lower at USD 103.85 per barrel in futures trade.

In domestic equities, Sensex rose 122.18 points, or 0.16 per cent, to 74,436.77, while the Nifty gained 23.55 points, or 0.10 per cent, to 23,294.15. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 3,208.76 crore on a net basis on Thursday, according to exchange data.

IndiGo raises infant fee, charges for add-on services



Kolkata. (Agency)

India's largest airline IndiGo has increased its infant travel fee and charges for services including priority check-in, excess baggage and travel certificates. The infant travel fee for children below two years has been increased to Rs 3,000 from Rs 2,000, effective from the beginning of September. According to sources, the airline periodically revises its charges based on operating costs. The hike is likely to affect around 10 lakh infant passengers and could generate approximately Rs 90 crore in additional revenue for the airline, sources said. The excess baggage charge has been increased to Rs 800 per kg from Rs 700. IndiGo has also raised its priority check-in and boarding charge to Rs 650 from Rs 450, while the travel certificate fee has been increased to Rs 300 from Rs 200. The fee for unaccompanied minors has been revised to Rs 5,999 from Rs 5,000. Other airlines have also revised charges for add-on services amid a rise in operating costs due to higher jet fuel prices, airspace closures and a weakening rupee. The revisions come amid a sharp increase in airfares. InterGlobe Aviation Ltd, the parent company of IndiGo, reported a standalone net loss of Rs 382 crore for the quarter ended June 30, 2026 (Q1FY27), compared with a net profit of Rs 2,161 crore in the year-ago period (Q1FY26). IndiGo's aircraft fuel expenses stood at Rs 10,830 crore in Q1FY27, an 86% year-on-year increase. Total expenses rose 34.4% to Rs 25,853 crore.

Mutual funds: Know how SIP-SWP combination can pave the way for financial independence

Kolkata. (Agency)

Despite the turmoil in the equity markets, the mutual fund sector in India is expanding. That mutual fund SIP (systematic investment plans) has emerged as the preferred instrument of investment of choice in the country is evident from industry data. AMFI (Association of Mutual Funds in India) data reveal that monthly SIP inflow stood at Rs 32,297 crore in August. In January 2024, SIP inflow stood at a mere Rs 18,838 crore. It marks a near surge of more than 71% in two years eight months. The contributing SIP accounts crossed 10 crore for the first time in August. While investment advisors have been advising on the utility of SIPs as wealth creators, they have also started recommending a combination of SIP and SWP to meet expenditure after several years of building a solid foundation with SIPs. SWP refers to as systematic withdrawal plans. It means regular withdrawal from the kitty that has been build over the years through SIP. This can be an appropriate way of meeting one's expenditure after retirement.

What is SWP?

SWP turns the corpus that you built painstakingly through SIP into a source of passive income. Therefore, it can be very useful when you don't have a steady source of income as in post-retirement years. SWP is designed to allow you to take out a fixed amount from your mutual fund kitty periodically. This period can be determined by you — every month, quarter or year. The point to note is that you are not redeeming all your units in one go. While the mutual fund units keep growing you merely tap into a part of it.

EPFO wage ceiling hiked to Rs 25,000: 5 benefits employees should know

Noel Tata's objection to a public listing of Tata Sons goes beyond ownership or valuation. At the heart of it is a question he says is much bigger. What happens to the Tata Group's way of doing business if its holding company

Kolkata. (Agency)

Noel Tata's objection to a public listing of Tata Sons goes beyond ownership or valuation. At the heart of it is a question he says is much bigger. What happens to the Tata Group's way of doing business if its holding company has to answer to public shareholders? Tata Sons is caught between the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) regulatory framework for upper-layer

NBFCs and a decision it took in 2024 to stay private. The company's attempt to surrender its NBFC registration and move out of that framework has now been rejected by the regulator.

In March 2024, under the guidance of the late Ratan Tata, the Tata Sons board unanimously decided that the company should remain unlisted and sought to surrender its certificate of registration as an NBFC with the RBI. Tata Sons subsequently repaid borrowings and prematurely redeemed preference shares worth about Rs 20,000 crore. The immediate issue was regulatory. Tata Sons had been classified as an upper-layer non-banking financial company under the RBI's scale-based regulatory framework. While the framework provides for listing of upper-layer NBFCs, it also contains provisions for an upper-layer NBFC to move out of the enhanced framework through a

voluntary strategic move to readjust its operations. Tata Sons had pursued the latter route. On September 11, 2026, the RBI rejected it and asked Tata Sons to



take necessary steps to comply with the guidelines and instructions applicable to an upper-layer NBFC. The communication does not itself mention listing, prescribe a particular course of action, or say that Tata Sons is in breach, according to Noel Tata's reading of the letter.

t the September 17 board meeting, Noel Tata argued that Tata Sons should explore other options, including restructuring and legal remedies, before considering a listing.

THE OWNERSHIP PUZZLE
Philanthropic trusts under the Tata Trusts umbrella collectively hold approximately 66% of Tata Sons, making them its majority shareholders. Dividends from Tata Group companies flow through the Trusts into philanthropic work, including hospitals, universities, research and other charitable work.

For Noel Tata, that makes Tata Sons different from a conventional holding company. The ownership structure connects the group's commercial operations to its philanthropic activities. The commercial enterprise and the philanthropy are not adjacent to one another; they are one structure seen from two ends.

Indians want to retire by 50. Their bank balance says not so fast

New Delhi. (Agency)

Imagine being 50 and having the freedom to walk away from work for good. For many urban Indians, retiring early is the dream, but their savings are telling them to wait a little longer.

For seven in 10 urban Indians, retiring before the traditional age of 58-60 is an attractive prospect, provided they have enough money to support themselves, according to the Axis Max Life Bharosa Talks India Retirement Index Study (IRIS 6.0), conducted with Kantar. For half of those who want to retire early, the ambition is even bigger. They want to achieve Financial Independence and Retire Early, or FIRE, before turning 50. But there is a catch. The

average urban Indian has accumulated only 28% of the retirement corpus they say they



need. That is the gap between wanting financial freedom and being able to afford it.

THE RETIREMENT DREAM IS MOVING EARLIER

The study suggests retirement planning is starting much earlier than the traditional idea of waiting until the later stages of a career. The

question is no longer simply, "How long do I need to work?" For many, it is becoming, "How much do I need to save before I can stop?"

One in two urban Indians said retirement planning should begin with their first salary. On average, respondents said they should start saving for retirement at 31. And younger Indians are already putting some money towards that goal. Around 62% of Gen Z respondents said they have started investing for retirement, compared with 70% of Millennials and 75% of Gen X+.

The numbers suggest that retirement is increasingly being treated as something to plan for from the beginning of a career rather than something to worry about in the final working years.

Buying digital gold RBI, Sebi may soon tighten rules around your investment

MUMBAI. (Agency)

The government is looking at tighter rules for digital gold, with a proposal to make sure every unit sold to investors is backed by physical gold. The move could also bring the sector under the joint oversight of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Securities and



Exchange Board of India (Sebi), reported The Economic Times. People familiar with the matter said the finance ministry has sought views from regulators, banks and other stakeholders on how digital gold should be regulated. There is broad consensus among stakeholders that digital gold should be recognised as a security under

the Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act, 1956, they said.

SEBI HAD FLAGGED RISKS AROUND DIGITAL GOLD

The move comes after Sebi raised concerns about digital gold in 2025 and warned investors about dealing in such products. The market regulator had said digital gold products were different from gold products regulated by Sebi. They were neither notified as securities nor regulated as commodity derivatives. Sebi said digital gold products operated entirely outside its regulatory purview. The digital gold industry manages around \$3 billion in assets, according to industry estimates. The average investment or purchase size is around Rs 100, highlighting the product's popularity among retail investors. A bank executive said stakeholders broadly agreed that digital gold had gained acceptance among investors but remained an unregulated segment that should come under regulatory supervision. The executive added that recommendations had been submitted to the government.

CONCERNS OVER INVESTOR PROTECTION

The lack of formal regulatory oversight has also raised concerns about the entry of smaller and less-established players into the sector. Another executive said some fly-by-night operators had entered the market in the absence of regulatory supervision.

Tata Sons listing is a social and moral imperative: SP Group Chairman

New Delhi. (Agency)

Shapoorji Pallonji Group Chairman Shapoorji Pallonji Mistry has welcomed the Reserve Bank of India's decision on Tata Sons, saying the regulator's action provides "full clarity" and establishes a clear path towards the listing of the Tata Group's holding company. In a statement on the RBI's decision regarding Tata Sons, Mistry said Tata Sons had been classified as an upper-layer NBFC under the central bank's Scale-Based Regulatory Framework and that the prescribed listing route followed from that regulatory framework. "With the RBI having rejected the application to surrender its registration and directing Tata Sons towards the necessary compliance at the earliest, the path forward is clear," Mistry said. He said he welcomed the RBI's decision and viewed it as an important moment for principles such as transparency, accountability and fairness in institutions of national importance. Mistry said he has



repeatedly maintained that a public listing of Tata Sons should not be viewed only as a financial or regulatory issue. "I have repeatedly said that the public listing of Tata Sons is not merely a financial or regulatory matter. It is a social and moral imperative," he said. According to Mistry, a listing would strengthen transparency and public accountability in Tata Sons while also preserving and advancing the philanthropic purpose associated with it. He said the decision should not be seen as a victory for one stakeholder over another.

Instead, Mistry said a Tata Sons listing could act as a bridge between shareholders and the Tata Trusts, between private ownership and public accountability, and between different generations of stewardship, led by the Tata legacy.

Sensex opens 170 points higher, Nifty above 23,300; TCS down 3%

New Delhi

Benchmark indices opened higher on Friday, helped by a decline in crude oil prices and bargain buying after the recent sell-off. However, gains remained limited as Middle East tensions continued and strong demand for domestic IPOs kept liquidity concerns in focus. The BSE Sensex opened at 74,575.24 and was trading at 74,430.03 at 9:27 am, up 115.44 points or 0.16% from the previous close. The Nifty 50 opened at 23,334.70 and was at 23,294.45, up 23.85 points or 0.10%.

The opening comes after the Nifty gained for two consecutive sessions following a sharp correction over the previous five weeks.

TATA STOCKS IN FOCUS

Tata group stocks were under pressure at the start of Friday's session, reversing some of the gains seen in the previous session after Tata Sons reappointed N Chandrasekaran as executive chairman and said it would consider a public listing. TCS was the biggest Sensex laggard, falling 3.12%. Tata Steel

declined 1.12%. Other technology stocks were also under pressure, with Infosys down 0.82%, HCLTech falling 1.11% and Tech Mahindra declining 1.22%.

At the same time, some Tata-linked counters traded higher. Trent gained 0.29%, while Tata Motors was not among the stocks shown in the Sensex snapshot at the time of the latest update.

The Tata group remains in focus after Tata Sons approved a fresh five-year term for Chandrasekaran as executive chairman. Shareholder Shapoorji Pallonji Group has also proposed selling part of its stake.

CRUDE OIL PRICES EASE

Oil prices provided some relief to the domestic market. Brent crude was trading at \$103.79 a barrel, down 0.98%, while WTI crude was at \$101.01, down 0.88%. Brent prices eased as hopes that alternative routes could keep Middle Eastern oil flowing to global markets outweighed concerns over renewed

strikes involving Saudi Arabia and Yemen's Houthi forces. However, the oil market remains sensitive to developments around the Middle East,



particularly given continuing concerns around supply disruptions.

IPO SQUEEZE CONTINUES

The primary market remains another key factor for Indian equities. Five IPOs are currently open for subscription, including the National Stock Exchange's issue. The NSE IPO was subscribed 0.43 times on the first day of bidding, according to the information

provided. The heavy IPO activity comes after the domestic market has already seen a sharp correction, with investors increasingly directing money towards

new issues and listing gains. Dr V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Limited, said the strength of the US market despite elevated bond yields is helping support global equities. "Under normal circumstances rising bond yields pull the market down. But now, despite the 10-year yield breaching the psychological 5% mark, the market exhibited surprising resilience," Vijayakumar said. He said strong US corporate earnings and a robust economy were helping offset the impact of high bond yields. **BROADER MARKET OUTPERFORMS**

The broader market was stronger than the benchmark indices at the open. Nifty 100 gained 0.26%, Nifty 200 rose 0.32% and Nifty 500 advanced 0.39%.

NEWS BOX

2,500 of 5,000 PG facilities in Bengaluru East operating illegally, GBA tells Karnataka HC

BENGALURU (Agency). Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) informed the Karnataka High Court that 2,500 paying guest facilities, of a total of 5,000 in Bengaluru East, are illegal and being run without a proper licence, plan sanction, fire safety, and also fail to comply with many statutory requirements. Taking it on record and considering the seriousness of the number of persons who would be affected adversely if any untoward incident were to occur in paying guest (PG) facilities in Bengaluru city, Justice Suraj Govindaraj issued guidelines to be followed strictly by the authorities, as the existing guidelines do not cover all aspects, while hearing petitions filed by PGs challenging notices issued by the GBA. "It would be required for all authorities, including GBA, corporations, fire department, health department, food safety department, as well as police, to take necessary action as regards these directions," the court said, making it clear that if there are any violations by the PG owner or operator, and no action is taken by the officers concerned, they would be personally liable for any untoward incident.

'Digital arrest' leaves Hyderabad's 79-year-old retiree poorer by Rs 15.7 lakh

HYDERABAD (Agency). A 79-year-old retired government employee from Miyapur allegedly lost Rs 15.7 lakh to a digital arrest scam. According to police, the victim received a call from an unknown person on August 31, who told him that he was involved in a money-laundering case. The following day, he received another call from the same number and was instructed to speak to a 'higher official'. During a video call, the fraudsters allegedly accused him of involvement in money laundering and terror-funding cases. They claimed that CBI officials had seized 247 debit cards during a raid on a person named Abdul Saleem and alleged that one of the cards belonged to the victim and had Rs 2 crore linked to illegal activities. Though the victim denied having any connection with the card, the callers allegedly continued to threaten him with arrest. They then introduced a purported 'digital verification' process and instructed him to transfer money to prove his innocence. Under sustained pressure and threats, the victim transferred money on two occasions on various pretexts, including security deposit, GST, verification charges, court fees and late-payment penalties. The fraudsters allegedly promised to refund the money after the verification process. Believing them, he transferred Rs 15.7 lakh. The fraudsters allegedly maintained constant contact, checking his location and status every two hours and instructing him not to disclose the matter to anyone, including his family.

Hyderabad's Gowliguda gurudwara gears up for centenary fete

HYDERABAD (Agency). The historic Central Gurudwara Sahib Gowliguda will celebrate its centenary with a series of religious programmes on September 19 and 20. The celebrations, organised by the Prabhandak Committee of Central Gurudwara Sahib Gowliguda in association with Sikh gurudwaras across Telangana, are expected to draw devotees and members of the Sikh community from across Hyderabad and the state. A 'Vishesh Kirtan Darbar' will be held at Central Gurudwara Sahib Gowliguda from 8 pm to



11.30 pm on September 19, with leading Ragi Jathas taking part. An Amrit Sanchar (holy baptism) will also be held at 9 am that day. Committee president S Trilok Singh said the main centenary programme, Vishaal Diwan, a mass religious congregation, will be held at the Exhibition Grounds on Nampally Road from 11 am to 5 pm on September 20. Renowned Ragi Jathas and preachers, including Bhaji Jagjeet Singh Babiha of Delhi, Bhaji Balpreet Singh of Ludhiana, Bhaji Jagpreet Singh Khanewale and Bhaji Ravinder Singh, will render Shabad Kirtan.

IIT Bombay locks lecture hall for overnight use, students scramble for study spaces

This semester, however, the administration decided to close the LHC at night, citing concerns over cleanliness and security, citing the issue of littering.

Mumbai (Agency). With mid-semester examinations underway, IIT Bombay students have raised concerns over inadequate late-night study spaces after the institute discontinued its practice of keeping rooms in the Lecture Hall Complex (LHC) open overnight during exams. Following demands from students, the administration has opened four rooms in the Department of Energy Science and Engineering as an alternative. Students, however, say the space is inadequate and lacks sufficient charging points, which are increasingly important as study material is accessed on laptops and tablets. The issue was highlighted by Insight, IIT Bombay's student media body, which said the LHC had traditionally remained open late into the night and early morning during examinations. The facility was particularly useful for students living in hostels with limited study space and poor or no Wi-Fi connectivity. This semester, however, the administration decided to close the LHC at night, citing concerns over cleanliness and security, citing the issue of littering. Following discussions with student representatives, four rooms in the Energy department building were opened. Students were informed about the arrangement through



an email on September 5, which said additional rooms could be opened depending on demand. Students said the alternative remains inadequate. "More than inadequacy of space, the reason is a lack of sufficient charging ports," said a student. Another student said the growing dependence on digital academic material made charging facilities essential. "Lecture notes, coding assignments, book PDFs, everything is on

devices, online explanations, even AI is more convenient on tabs and laptops," the student said. The institute said the arrangement was temporary and aimed at ensuring smooth conduct for preparations of examinations. "These temporary measures are being taken for proper coordination and smooth conduct of exams. This arrangement is only for the exam session," the administration said.

FIR against ex-BJP MLA, dismissed cop for allegedly gangraping woman at gunpoint

Lucknow (Agency). The Thane (rural) Police on Thursday registered an FIR against a former Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA and a dismissed constable for allegedly raping a 22-year-old woman at gunpoint after forcing her to consume alcohol. The local police have registered an FIR in connection with the charges of gangrape and launched a manhunt for the two accused, who remain on the run. They have been identified as Narendra Pawar, former BJP MLA from Kalyan West constituency, and Shailesh Patil, a dismissed police constable. Meanwhile, Narendra Pawar has resigned from all party positions after the FIR was registered against him. In his letter, he denied the allegations, saying the FIR was a



conspiracy to defame him. He said he was resigning because the case could adversely impact the party's image.

The case

In her complaint, the victim said that she was facing a marital dispute and Pawar offered to help resolve it, an officer said. Under the pretext of helping her, Pawar, along with Patil, allegedly took the victim to Patil's farmhouse at Kusgaon in Bhiwandi on Sunday. The victim alleged that once they arrived at the farmhouse, she was coaxed into consuming alcohol, threatened with a firearm, and sexually assaulted. The woman said Patil also sexually assaulted her after Pawar left the farmhouse, and she was later dropped off at her home, the official said. A source said the girl initially went to the Thane City police because she was unsure about jurisdiction, but they did not take her FIR.

Almost every day of monsoon: How human activity altered Mumbai climate

Mumbai (Agency). A recent study found that on 86 out of 92 days between June 1 and August 31, human activity, such as vehicle and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, influenced local weather patterns in Mumbai and Navi Mumbai, contributing to climate change. The study indicates that during the specified period, the cities recorded extreme heat and rainfall that were directly influenced by man-made factors that contribute to climate change. The report also shows that after Mumbai and Navi Mumbai, districts in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), including Dombivli and Thane, had as many as 81 days affected by human activity, followed by 79 in Kalyan and 76 days each in Pimpri, Pune and Shivaji Nagar. Furthermore, the study stated that out of the 86 days, Mumbai and Navi Mumbai recorded extreme heat days on 28 days. Of the 59 analysed cities, the top nine cities featuring in the list were from Maharashtra, with the MMR region recording the most days where significant

weather patterns, such as temperature and rainfall, were driven by human activity. The report, published by Climate Central, a US-based climate research organisation, comes weeks after the United Nations published a study highlighting Mumbai's growing vulnerability to rising sea levels. Notably, the months coincide with Mumbai's monsoon season, when the region usually cools down due to incessant rains. However, in 2026, Mumbai recorded deficit rainfall in June and August, but surpassed its average quota in July. In the latest report, scientists used a climate shift index (CSI) to identify the impact of climate change on daily temperatures. By analysing temperatures and weather patterns, the scientists placed cities between a CSI level of zero-5 – zero being the lowest impact and 4 and 5 showing a severe impact. For Mumbai, the average markings ranged between 4 and 5 throughout this period.

During the period, Indian cities recorded an average increase of 0.7 degrees in day temperatures. Speaking to The Indian Express, Mahesh Palawat, climate scientist and meteorologist, said that the warmer



temperatures during monsoon months were caused directly by El-Niño – a climate pattern that warms the surface waters of the central and eastern Pacific Ocean.

However, man-made climate change has played a major role in altering the current rainfall pattern. "The El Niño effect was very strong in India this year. Due to this factor, every state in the country has recorded uneven rainfall distribution, which has led to a rise in temperature between June and August. This factor was further aggravated by man-made issues like vehicular emissions and industrial practices, which contribute to the increase in local temperatures," Palawat told. Another concern for Indian subcontinent Palawat said there is another case of concern for the Indian subcontinent. Earlier, during the monsoon, there was an even distribution of rainfall. Data now shows that in the last 4-5 years, Mumbai has recorded heavy downpours where a single day's rainfall totals 100-200 mm.

Man stabs, throws acid on estranged wife at Bengaluru hospital; accused held

The accused rode 400km from Madurai and attacked his estranged wife, a nurse at Narayana Hrudayalaya, in the hospital's basement parking area.

Mumbai (Agency). BENGALURU: A 26-year-old nurse was critically injured after her estranged husband allegedly attacked her with weapons and threw an acid-like chemical at her in the basement parking area of a private hospital, in JP Nagar police station limits, on Thursday morning.

Police have taken the accused into custody.

The victim, Madhumitha, from West Bengal, works as a nurse at Narayana Hospital in JP Nagar. The accused, Venkatesan, is a resident of Madurai, Tamil Nadu, and works for an oil and gas company based in Chennai. The couple married in 2024 in Madurai after meeting through a dating app. Following marital disputes, they had been living separately for the past year.

DCP (South) K Vamsi Krishna told reporters that Venkatesan had travelled more than 400km from Madurai to Bengaluru on a motorcycle on Wednesday night. The incident occurred between 9am



and 9.15am on Thursday, when Madhumitha stepped out of the hospital for breakfast.

Venkatesan allegedly confronted her in the hospital's basement parking area and attacked her with two weapons -- a machete and a smaller knife. He allegedly threw some liquid at her, which is suspected to be an acid-like substance or floor cleaning chemical. The Scene of Crime Officer (SOCO) team visited the spot and collected evidence. Police are verifying the nature of the substance and whether it was meant for industrial or domestic use.

DCP Krishna said preliminary investigation revealed that marital discord was suspected to be the reason behind the attack. Bystanders who witnessed the incident attempted to intervene.

A traffic police sub-inspector and his staff, who were on duty near the hospital, nabbed the accused with the help of the public and handed him over to jurisdictional police. Madhumitha remains in critical condition and is undergoing treatment at the hospital. Investigation is under way.

Video: Activist Swatantra Bhardwaj walks out of Tihar on bail, seen rushing into car

New Delhi (Agency).

Right-wing activist and influencer Swatantra Bhardwaj, who was jailed in connection with the assault of the father of a student during a protest at Jantar Mantar, was released on bail from Tihar Jail late Thursday night.

Immediately after stepping out of the jail, Bhardwaj was whisked away from the premises within seconds. He rushed into a car surrounded by people who had come to receive him and sped away, with the vehicle's number plate covered. The unusual manner of his exit from jail has sparked a debate on social media, with some defending the move as the right thing to do while others questioning why he was hurried away from the premises.

"He was not allowed to speak to the media. I believe this was the right thing to do...!!," a user wrote on X. Another user asked, "Why are they running as if they have escaped from the jail?"

People also questioned why the car's number plate was covered and why the police officers present allowed it. People on the internet also questioned what they described as his early release on bail, though the central question for many remained why the vehicle's number plate was covered. "Look at him, how he is running. He got bail so early. Pathetic justice system," a user wrote on Facebook. Bhardwaj's release came three days after a Delhi court granted him three weeks of interim bail, while stating that his plea for regular bail would be considered after assessing his conduct during the interim period. The sessions court imposed several conditions while granting bail. He was barred from posting, publishing or discussing the case, his defence or the complainant's family on social media or any other media platform. The court also restrained him from contacting the complainant, his daughter or any witness, and from tampering with evidence.

NEWS BOX

Learnt Hindi from Bachchan, now Afghanistan's Sharafuddin is commentating in India



New Delhi. (Agency)

Sharafuddin Shakir had begun his Hindi commentary on Sony Sports, the official broadcaster of Afghanistan's 'home series' against India, aware that the voice coming out of the microphone was being heard by an audience far larger than the one he was used to back home in Afghanistan. The legendary Gavaskar, seated next to him in the commentary box at Arun Jaiti Then came the thumbs-up. It was a small gesture, but Shakir noticed it. "He gave me a thumbs-up gesture, signaling 'You speak Hindi so well!' You could see the appreciation on his face," Shakir recalled in his chat with IndiaToday.in.ey Stadium, was observing him closely. There is something almost circular about the moment. Shakir grew up in Afghanistan watching Indian cricket on television. Now, sitting in an Indian commentary box, he was speaking the language he had picked up largely from watching Indian films as a boy, while Gavaskar listened. For an Afghan commentator, it was quite a journey to make. If you heard an unfamiliar voice on the Hindi commentary during the Afghanistan-India Friendship Cup in Delhi, it belonged to Shakir, who travelled to India for the series. He has been commentating in Pashto for around 15 years, but this assignment offered something he had long wanted to experience: doing Hindi commentary in India, for Indian viewers. He was making his second trip to the country. His first came in 2017, when he worked on Hindi commentary for Afghanistan's series against Ireland for Doordarshan. This time, the setting was different. So were the names around him. Sanjay Manjrekar, Sunil Gavaskar and Ajay Jadeja were among those sharing the commentary box. "I was in the commentary box with Jadeja as well," Shakir said. "I told him that there was a time when we only wished to see you."

Chelsea get new owners as Todd Boehly sells stake after four years



New Delhi. (Agency)

England wrapped up the T20I series against Sri Lanka with a game to spare after cruising to a six-wicket win in Cardiff. Tom Banton's unbeaten 52 off 24 balls finished the chase in style as England followed their 119-run win in Southampton with another thoroughly one-sided result. Sri Lanka had made a promising start after being asked to bat, racing to 55 without loss inside five overs. However, Liam Dawson and Jamie Overton helped England pull the innings apart in the middle overs, with Sri Lanka eventually managing only 145 for Pathum Nissanka provided most of the early spark, scoring 37 from 21 balls in his first substantial innings since returning from wrist surgery. But once Dawson struck twice in the final Powerplay, Sri Lanka struggled to maintain the tempo and lost wickets regularly. Dawson finished with 3 for 32, while Overton claimed 2 for 23 as Sri Lanka lost four wickets for just seven runs across the final three overs. Charith Asalanka's 31 and Wanindu Hasaranga's 27 offered some resistance, but England were always in control. England's chase briefly looked interesting when Jos Buttler and Harry Brook fell inside the Powerplay, leaving them 79 for 3. Banton, however, took charge alongside the middle order and reached his fifth T20 half-century from just 24 balls to complete another comfortable chase.

Kylian Mbappe avoids boastful Ballon d'Or battle with classy response to Lamine

Mbappe praised Yamal after the teenager named him as his main Ballon d'Or rival. Their exchange has sharpened focus on a race now in its final voting phase.

PARIS. (Agency)

Kylian Mbappe has responded to Lamine Yamal's bold Ballon d'Or claim with praise for the Barcelona teenager, while making it clear that he would rather let his performances make the case for him. Yamal recently backed himself to win the 2026 award, naming Mbappe as his main rival. Speaking to AS, Mbappe was asked about the teenager and his own chances of winning the prestigious individual prize. "I

think he is a very talented player and I have the feeling that he is going to have a great career. I wish him all the best," Mbappe said. Rather than engaging in a direct exchange with Yamal, Mbappe kept his response measured and turned the focus towards his own performances. "My opinion is that this is a good year to win it. My best lawyer is my feet. No matter how much I talk," Mbappe said. He also said he wants the award to return to Real Madrid and the Bernabeu. The response comes with the Ballon d'Or debate entering its final stage, with the 30-man shortlist already confirmed and voting underway.

MBAPPE'S NUMBERS MAKE CASE

Mbappe's individual numbers provide a strong foundation for his claim. He scored 42 goals and provided seven assists for Real Madrid in 2025-26, including 25 goals in La Liga and 15 in the Champions League. He then scored 10 times at the 2026 World Cup, winning the Golden Boot. His biggest drawback is the lack of major team

silverware. Real Madrid did not win a major trophy last season, while France were eliminated by Spain in the World Cup semi-finals. Yamal, meanwhile, helped Barcelona retain La Liga and Spain win the World Cup. Yamal finished the club season



with 24 goals and 17 assists, producing 41 goal involvements for Barcelona. He also led La Liga players for assists and chances created across all competitions. Crucially, the Ballon d'Or does not consider their impressive starts to 2026-27. The official

assessment period ran from August 3, 2025 to July 19, 2026, covering the entire 2025-26 season and the World Cup. Individual performance is the first criterion, followed by team achievements and fair play. KANE, DEMBELE ALSO IN MIX

The race is wider than the Mbappe-Yamal conversation. Harry Kane, defending champion Ousmane Dembele, Erling Haaland, Rodri, Achraf Hakimi, Jude Bellingham, Vinicius Junior, Lautaro Martinez and Lionel Messi are among the other 30 nominees.

Kane's individual numbers stand out, with the Bayern Munich striker scoring 61 goals in 51 appearances across all competitions in 2025-26.

Dembele, meanwhile, returns as the defending Ballon d'Or winner after his 2025 triumph. With the voting based on performances already completed, neither Mbappe nor Yamal can alter their 2026 cases now.

Asian Games 2026: Manu Bhaker, Tajinderpal Singh Toor named India flag-bearers

New Delhi. (Agency)

Two-time Olympic medallist Manu Bhaker and defending Asian Games champion Tajinderpal Singh Toor will carry the Indian flag at the opening ceremony of the 2026 Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, on September 19. Their appointments were confirmed on Friday, with India's Chef de Mission Sahdev Yadav announcing Bhaker's selection and the Athletics Federation of India confirming Toor as the second flag-bearer. Bhaker made history at the Paris 2024 Olympics by becoming the first Indian female athlete to win two medals at a single edition of the Games. She won bronze in the women's 10m air pistol before teaming up with Sarabjot Singh to claim another bronze in the mixed team 10m air pistol event. Toor, meanwhile, has won gold at the last two editions of the Asian Games. He clinched the shot put title at Jakarta 2018 before successfully



defending his crown at Hangzhou 2023, where he produced a best throw of 20.36m. Both are among India's leading medal hopes at the Aichi-Nagoya Games, which officially begin on September 19.

India will have a 492-athlete contingent at the Games and will look to build on its record 107-medal haul from Hangzhou. TWO CHAMPIONS LEAD INDIA

For Bhaker, the flag-bearing honour adds another milestone to a career that changed dramatically at the Paris Olympics. Her two bronze medals made her the first Indian female athlete to win multiple medals at one Olympics, putting her among the country's most recognisable sporting figures. Toor will head into the Games with the chance to extend an impressive Asian Games record. The 31-year-old has won the men's shot put gold at the last two editions and will be chasing a third consecutive title in Aichi-Nagoya. Their selection comes after India lost one of its biggest medal hopes before the Games. Neeraj Chopra withdrew from the Asian Games after suffering an ankle ligament tear in training, bringing his 2026 season to an early end.

Asian Games: Sumit Nagal key as Yuki Bhambri injury clouds India's tennis campaign

New York. (Agency)

India's tennis campaign at the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games will look different from the one that produced two medals in Hangzhou. The seven-member contingent features experience in men's singles and doubles, but India will have no women's singles entry after five players were left out of the final squad following a selection row. The campaign has also been clouded by uncertainty over Yuki Bhambri. India's top-ranked doubles player has been ruled out of the Davis Cup tie against



South Korea after suffering a thigh injury around the US Open. He had been hopeful of recovering in time for the Asian Games, but his latest setback has put his participation in Japan in doubt. The 2026 Asian Games will be held from September 19 to October 4, with Sumit Nagal leading India's singles challenge alongside Dhakshinewar Suresh. Bhambri, Sriram Balaji, Anirudh Chandrasekar, Ankita Raina and Rutuja Bhosale make up the doubles contingent.

SUMIT NAGAL LEADS INDIA'S CHALLENGE

Nagal is India's sole entry in men's singles and remains the country's highest-ranked player in the event. The 29-year-old reached a career-high No. 68 in July 2024 and has represented India regularly in the Davis Cup since 2018. Dhakshinewar Suresh is the other singles player in the squad. He has career-high ATP rankings of No. 462 in singles and No. 352 in doubles, and impressed in the 2026 Davis Cup by winning both his singles matches against the Netherlands. Bhambri is the most accomplished doubles player in the squad, having reached a career-high No. 18 in February 2026.

Lionel Messi leads Inter Miami to Campeones Cup win, takes trophy tally to 49

New Delhi. (Agency)

Lionel Messi added another trophy to his remarkable collection as Inter Miami defeated Cruz Azul 2-0 to win the 2026 Campeones Cup. The Argentine scored his 100th goal for the club and then turned provider, putting his fingerprints all over another Inter Miami trophy. Inter Miami made the breakthrough in the 24th minute through a rather unexpected Suarez-Messi combination. Luis Suarez found himself out on the right and sent a cross into the box, with Messi rising brilliantly to beat his marker and head the ball into the net. GOOOOAL! Messi's 100th comes in a final. pic.twitter. The goal was Messi's 100th for Inter Miami in 115 appearances since arriving in 2023. There was something fitting about the milestone too, as the Argentine once again found a way to make himself the centre of attention when a trophy was up for grabs.

Messi was not finished after getting on the scoresheet. In the 81st minute, he whipped in a corner that found Casemiro in space, with the Brazilian making no mistake with



his header to double Inter Miami's advantage and put the result beyond doubt. The victory means Inter Miami have now picked up four trophies since Messi's arrival in South Florida. The Leagues Cup came first in 2023, followed by the Supporters' Shield in 2024 and

MLS Cup in 2025, before Messi added another winner's medal to the collection with the Campeones Cup.

MESSI'S TROPHY COUNT KEEPS GROWING

Messi's latest piece of silverware takes his career tally to 49, adding yet another trophy to a collection that has become almost impossible to keep up with. The Campeones Cup may not carry the same weight as a World Cup or Champions League, but it is still another winner's medal for the Argentine. The trophy came from a competition between the reigning MLS Cup champions and the Liga MX Campeón de Campeones winners. Inter Miami came out on top against Cruz Azul, giving Messi another reason to celebrate in what has already been a trophy-filled spell in South Florida.

India among six bidders for 2038 Asian Games, OCA decision by 2028

New Delhi. (Agency)

India will have to wait until at least 2028 to know whether its bid to host the 2038 Asian Games has been successful, with the Olympic Council Asia (OCA) confirming that six countries have expressed interest in staging the event. India submitted its Expression of Interest in April as part of its wider push to host major international sporting events. The country is also bidding for the 2036 Olympics and will host the 2030 Commonwealth Games in Ahmedabad. Speaking at a press conference ahead of the opening of the 2026 Asian Games, OCA Director General Husain Al-Musallam said the process would involve multiple rounds of evaluation before a final host is recommended. "We have received

interest from India, from Philippines and from other four countries to host the Asian Games in 2038. This shows the popularity of the Asian Games," Al-Musallam said. "There are 12 more years to go. The calendar is well-established. The executive board has taken a decision to create an evaluation committee to visit all those (bidding) countries next year and then submit initial report," he added. The OCA had discussed India's EOI at its executive board meeting in Sanya, China, in April. The organisation now plans to begin physical evaluations of the interested nations before narrowing down the field.

INDIA FACES LONG ROAD

Al-Musallam said the first round of visits will be followed by a shortlist, before another evaluation takes place closer to the

2038 Games. "Based on the initial report, we will have a short list and then go for another visit nine or 10 years before 2038 and then



submit the final report (recommending the host)," he said. The Philippines is among the countries confirmed to have expressed interest, while South Korea had first indicated its intention to host the 2038

edition in 2021, with Gwangju and Daegu proposed as venues. Mongolia has also reportedly shown interest, although its formal EOI status is unclear. India has considerable Asian Games history. New Delhi hosted the event in 1951, when the inaugural edition was held, before returning as host in 1982.

2038 BID IN BIGGER PUSH

The 2038 bid forms part of India's broader ambition to host more major sporting events. Doha is scheduled to host the 2030 Asian Games, followed by Riyadh in 2034, with both editions awarded together by the OCA in 2020. The 2026 Asian Games will be held from September 19 to October 4, with around 11,000 athletes expected to participate alongside approximately 6,000 support staff.



Sonakshi Sinha

Zaheer Iqbal Perform Ganesh Aarti At Arpita Khan's Home, Turn Off Comments On Celebration Clip

Sonakshi Sinha and Zaheer Iqbal have become a much-loved couple among fans, often winning the internet over with their playful chemistry and relatable moments. The couple recently stepped out together in the city, arriving at Arpita Khan's residence to seek Lord Ganesha's blessings during Ganesh Chaturthi. A while ago, Sonakshi and Zaheer gave fans a glimpse of the festivities by sharing a video from the celebration. The couple was seen participating in the Ganesh aarti before joining everyone in bidding an emotional farewell to Bappa.

Sonakshi Sinha and Zaheer Iqbal perform Ganesh Aarti

In the Instagram video, Sonakshi Sinha was dressed in a traditional blue ensemble, while Zaheer Iqbal opted for a casual white T-shirt paired with black trousers. The couple was seen performing the aarti before leaving for the visarjan. Sonakshi, however, turned off comments on the post. She simply captioned the video, "Ganpati Bappa Morya." Have a look:

Meanwhile, as they arrived for the celebration, Zaheer was spotted walking with a stick after suffering a leg injury. The couple's playful chemistry was on display when photographers asked him about his injured leg. Sonakshi quickly turned the moment into a joke with her witty response, leaving Zaheer and those around them laughing. Before Zaheer could answer, she joked, "Maine Nahi Kiya Hai Ye (I didn't do this)."

Sonakshi Sinha and Zaheer have often celebrated festivals from each other's traditions, even as their interfaith marriage has faced public scrutiny. In 2025, Sonakshi opened up about the mutual respect for each other's cultures that forms an important part of their relationship. She earlier told Hauterrfly, "We appreciate each other's cultures. They follow certain traditions at their house; I follow certain traditions at my house. He comes and sits in my Diwali puja. I go and sit in their niyaaz, and that's all that matters. I respect them and their culture, and they respect me and mine. That's how it should be. Under the best circumstances, what was the best way to get married was a special marriage act where I, as a Hindu woman, do not need to change my religion and he, as a Muslim man, can remain a Muslim man, and two people in love share a beautiful bond of marriage. So it was as simple as that. There was never a question asked like, Are you going to convert? We love each other; we are getting married."



Aditya Chopra Was 'Chasing Drones' At His Secret 13-Guest Wedding With

Rani Mukerji

Reveals Sabyasachi

Rani Mukerji and filmmaker Aditya Chopra have managed to keep their marriage remarkably private, despite both being prominent names in the Hindi film industry. The couple, who had largely kept their relationship away from the public eye, got



married in an intimate ceremony in Italy on April 21, 2014. Yash Raj Films confirmed the wedding at the time, describing it as a small affair attended only by close family members and friends.

One of the most talked-about details of Rani Mukerji and Aditya Chopra's intimate wedding was the actor's bridal look. Rani became the first official Sabyasachi bride, with designer Sabyasachi Mukherjee creating her

wedding ensemble. He has now opened up about the experience of designing Rani's lehenga for her private wedding in Italy. He told Diet Sabya, "When she did a secret wedding with 15 people, I think only 13 people were allowed, and Adi was chasing drones."

Sabyasachi has often made exceptions for Rani Mukerji, including continuing to create custom outfits for her when he largely no longer takes on such bespoke requests for other Indian actors. He added, "I don't do custom for Bollywood. But I did a custom sari for her. Because I don't think Rani is Bollywood. She's family."

Only a select group of close friends and family members attended Rani Mukerji and Aditya Chopra's intimate wedding, with Karan Johar among the guests. The actress has continued to keep her wedding pictures private even 12 years after tying the knot with Aditya Chopra. The couple welcomed their daughter, Adira, in 2015. Rani had previously joked that making the photographs public on their 25th wedding anniversary would be a "very good idea", but admitted that she doubts Aditya would ever agree to release them.



'Didn't Feel Any Vulgarity': Mandakini Backs Raj Kapoor's Ram Teri Ganga Maili Waterfall, Breastfeeding Scenes



Veteran actor Mandakini, who became one of the most popular faces of Hindi cinema in the 1980s, has recalled shooting the most-talked-about waterfall scene from Raj Kapoor's 'Ram Teri Ganga Maili', saying she did not find anything vulgar or uncomfortable about the sequence. Mandakini was just 16 when she stepped in front of the camera for the film, which was Raj Kapoor's last directorial venture.

Despite being a newcomer to the industry in the 1980s, Mandakini's portrayal of Ganga left a lasting impact on audiences and established her as one of the prominent actresses of her era. However, her rise to fame also brought intense public attention, with several sequences from 'Ram Teri Ganga Maili' becoming the subject of discussion and controversy over the years.

Revisiting those moments, Mandakini opened up about the most-talked-about waterfall sequence in the song 'Tujhe Bulayen Yeh Meri Bahen', in which she appeared wearing a white saree. She also spoke about the much-debated breastfeeding sequence, saying the scenes were rooted in the film's larger message of innocence and purity rather than the way they were later perceived.

In an exclusive interview with ANI, she revealed that she was just 16 when she started shooting for the film and did not fully understand how the scenes would be perceived later.

Speaking about the waterfall scene in the movie, Mandakini said Raj Kapoor had explained the sequence to her and rejected the perception that the scene was intended to be vulgar. She said the film's central idea was about purity and the character of Ganga.

"Unka tarika aesa tha ki aap unse koi sawaal hi nahi karte the...itna pyar se itna gentle jaise aapka family member aapse karva raha ho... (He had such a gentle and affectionate way of doing things that you would not even question him, as if a family member was guiding you through it.) I didn't feel any vulgarity from anywhere. There was no disgusting feeling at all."

Mandakini Reacts To Infamous Photo With Dawood Ibrahim, Says He Didn't Invite Her To Dubai: 'Show Ke Liye...'



Veteran actress Mandakini has clarified that she was not invited by underworld don Dawood Ibrahim after a controversial photograph of them together resurfaced years ago. She said she had travelled to Dubai for a show and later attended a cricket match, where the photograph was taken.

Speaking to ANI in an exclusive interview, Mandakini said she had no control over the reports and speculation that followed. She also revealed that the controversy had a damaging effect on her film career.

Mandakini denies being invited by Dawood Ibrahim

Mandakini explained that she was in Dubai for a professional commitment when she attended the cricket match. She said several people were present and that, as an artist, she did not choose whom to interact with based on their background.

"Jo bhi log likhna chahe, jo bhi bolna chahe, we don't have control over it. Ek artist ko hazaron log milte hain aur hum sabke liye barabar hai. Bahut saare log saath mein the...kiske liye choose karein, kiske liye choose na karein... Hum waha kisi show ke liye gaye the. No, I was not invited by Dawood. (Whatever people want to write or say, we don't have control over it. An artist has to meet many people, and we are equal to everyone.)"

There were so many people with us; whom do we choose, and whom do we not? I was in Dubai for a show and then went for the match. I was not invited by Dawood. I didn't realise it at the moment", she said.

The actress added that she did not realise the impact of the photograph at the time. However, once it surfaced, it became the subject of reports and speculation.

NEWS BOX

At least 37 illegal mining suspects found dead in Nigerian custody with officials blaming disease

ABUJA, Nigeria.(Agency)

At least 37 suspects arrested for alleged illegal mining were found dead in Nigerian security custody on Thursday, officials said, claiming a suspected disease outbreak was to blame. But Dauda Shehu, a survivor of the incident, told The Associated Press that 65 detainees were packed into a poorly ventilated cell, suggesting the dead may have suffocated. Niger State Gov. Farmer Mohammed Umaru Bago said the 37 detainees died in the custody of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps, or NSCDC, in north-central Niger state. He announced three days of mourning for the victims, his press secretary Bologi Ibrahim said in a statement. They had been in detention since the security agency carried out arrests on Tuesday and Wednesday over suspicion of illegal mining in the state, head of the NSCDC in Niger Suberu Siyaka Aniviye said in a statement Thursday.

Aniviye said while the agency suspects a disease, the detainees' bodies have been sent to a local hospital for "further medical examination to establish the actual cause of death." He did not elaborate on the type of disease. "We were jumpacked and there was no ventilation for us to breathe well," said Shehu, the survivor. "All of a sudden, we realized that we could not breathe and we started scrambling to get fresh air."

Shehu, who spoke to The AP at the Minna General Hospital where the bodies were sent for examination, said the detainees tried to get the attention of the security agency's guards by banging on the cell door. Shafatu Sulaiman lost her two sons in the incident. Speaking to the AP at the Minna Hospital over their bodies, she pleaded for the government to intervene.

Indian-origin Sikh truck driver stabbed 17 times at Wyoming rest area in US

world.(Agency)

A 28-year-old Indian-origin Punjabi Sikh truck driver from Sacramento was stabbed 17 times at a rest area in Wyoming, United States, leaving him hospitalized with injuries to his neck, chest, arms and ribs. A 45-year-old American national has been arrested in connection with the stabbing and charged with attempted first-degree murder.

Gurvinder Singh was attacked after another man followed him into a washroom at the Bitter Creek Rest Area along Interstate 80 on Sunday morning. The driver, who identified himself only by his surname, Singh, said the attack took place after the man followed him into the bathroom and suddenly attacked him with a knife. Singh told NPR that he was travelling towards Pennsylvania when he stopped at the rest area to use the washroom. He said another man followed him inside and suddenly attacked him with a knife. Singh suffered multiple stab wounds to his neck, chest, arms and ribs before managing to escape the restroom. He then collapsed outside and called for help. As the truck driver cried for help, a Hispanic family at the rest stop heard the commotion and came to his aid, trying to attend to his wounds and provide medical assistance. The family also gave police information about the suspect's truck.

After learning about the incident, the Wyoming Highway Patrol stopped the vehicle near Rawlins, about 113 kilometres from the rest area, and arrested the suspect, identified as Andrew Kris Bzdak. He has been charged with attempted first-degree murder. Authorities have not established a motive for the attack. Singh, who has been driving trucks commercially for around three years, said the attack has left him worried about the safety of other Punjabi Sikh truck drivers travelling across the United States. He remained in hospital as of Wednesday.

A sweeping US sanctions bill offers Ukraine new leverage on Russia, but enforcement looms

KYIV, Ukraine.(Agency)

Ukraine has long argued that Russia will only negotiate seriously if the cost of continuing the war becomes too high. For Kyiv, punitive sanctions that impose real economic costs on Moscow are a key part of that strategy. This week's passage of a long-sought, sweeping package of U.S. sanctions aimed at cutting off some of the financial resources President Vladimir Putin relies on to fund the war gives Ukraine another potential source of leverage, but its impact may depend on whether and how aggressively the measures are implemented by the United States. The House on Wednesday approved the sanctions package targeting Russian officials and key sectors of the economy. On Thursday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called the vote "symbolic," adding that the House passed the bill on the same night

Russia launched another large-scale attack across Ukraine, capabilities the full implementation of the deal would derail. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Thursday that if the United States imposes additional sanctions on Russia, it would hinder the Washington-led effort to end the war in Ukraine.

"We are, of course, monitoring the passing of this document. This falls into the category of unfriendly actions. And, of course, the U.S. imposing some additional sanctions would definitely complicate the efforts to find a peace settlement in Ukraine," Peskov told reporters during his daily conference call. "For Ukraine, the immediate benefit is political, not economic. Congress signaling political solidarity with Ukraine

via its legislative support sends a valuable message to the Kremlin," said Tom Keatinge, director of the Centre for

package offers another, powerful, way to increase economic pressure on Moscow.

Existing Western sanctions have imposed significant costs on Russia, but Kyiv has argued that they have not delivered the swift, severe economic impact needed to force a change in Moscow's calculations.

"The U.S. House of Representatives' passage of the Graham bill last night marks an important step toward further pressuring Russia, raising the cost of its continued aggression, and depriving the Russian war machine of resources," said Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha in comments to the press on Thursday. "It is crucial not to stop there. We

very much hope that this decisive move will...signal the start of a new round of intensified pressure from other partners as well."



Finance and Security at RUSI. The bill could give Kyiv a powerful economic tool to pressure Russia or Kyiv, the sanctions

What to know after a week of Houthi attacks that threaten Saudi oil and have rattled world markets

CAIRO.(Agency)

It's been a week since Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels stormed down the Red Sea coast, extending their reach to a key maritime chokepoint and threatening Saudi Arabia's oil exports. The Houthis' biggest land grab in years reignited Yemen's 12-year civil war and pushed up global fuel prices. It also gave Iran another potential source of leverage as the United States has started to loosen Tehran's grip on the Strait of Hormuz, on the other side of the Arabian Peninsula. The Houthis are also firing at Saudi oil facilities and tankers. An attack on Saudi

Arabia's east-west pipeline, blamed on Iran-backed militias in Iraq, added to an unfolding nightmare for the



kingdom and rattled world markets. The rebel blitz has forced some 125,000 Yemenis to flee their homes. The civil war has killed over 150,000 people and at times pushed the country to the brink of famine.

Now the rebels appear to be eyeing Yemen's oil-rich east. So far, the only thing standing in their way is Yemen's

Saudi-backed government and an array of forces that have fought each other as recently as January. Saudi Arabia's most important ally, the U.S., appears to be sitting this one out. The Houthis are fighting on several fronts. The Houthis captured the important Red Sea port city of Mokha before taking several islands near

the narrow Bab el-Mandeb strait, through which some 12% of world trade passes in peacetime. They are also just 32 kilometers (20 miles) from Djibouti, a small African nation hosting U.S. and other military bases.

Killing endangered wildlife is legal if they aren't the target, new Trump rule says

BILLINGS, Mont.(Agency)

Killing endangered animals while logging a forest or building a dam would not be considered illegal unless the animals were specifically targeted, under a new interpretation of the Endangered Species Act by President Donald Trump's administration that marks a sea change in how the landmark environmental law is enforced.

A directive sent to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees this week says imperiled animals or plants must be intentionally targeted for their killing to be considered illegal. That's a sharp turnaround from past practice at the wildlife service, which historically held people liable even for accidentally harming protected species such as grizzly bears, manatees and spotted owls. Former Fish and Wildlife director says the change "creates a huge loophole." Experts said the change would allow timber companies to log forests in the Pacific Northwest even if they knew that doing so could kill imperiled birds

nesting in the trees, or for developers to build a dam knowing it would kill salmon. "This cuts against the entire history of the Endangered Species Act," said Dan Ashe, who led the Fish and Wildlife Service under former



President Barack Obama.

"It just creates a huge loophole," added Ashe, who is now president of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. "It completely relieves people of any responsibility for their actions, even consequences that can be easily predicted." Encouraged by Republican lawmakers and industry lobbyists, officials under Trump have moved to dismantle key parts of the endangered species law and make companies exempt from its

regulations. Administration officials have said they are returning the law to its original intent, following a 2024 Supreme Court decision that limited the authority of federal agencies to interpret environmental statutes passed by Congress. States and conservation groups have filed numerous lawsuits seeking to turn back the changes. The directive follows a rule change defining "harm" under Endangered Species Act.

The new interpretation of what it means to harm — or "take" — a species was detailed in a Sept. 14 directive from Fish and Wildlife Service Director Brian Nesvik.

"Felling a tree is not a take of the bats roosting in it unless the tree is felled for the purpose of killing or capturing them," Nesvik wrote, adding that the bats would only be impacted "indirectly and accidentally." The directive, reported earlier by The New York Times, leans heavily on a dissenting opinion from former Justice Antonin Scalia in a 1995 Supreme Court case. The definition of "harm" under the Endangered Species Act, or ESA.

Middle East turmoil, AI set to dominate UN gathering of world leaders

world.(Agency)

As wars rage in the Middle East, Ukraine and Sudan, and fears mount over rapidly advancing AI, world leaders descend on the UN in New York from Tuesday for the world's signature diplomatic event. US President Donald Trump's war against Iran and its worldwide fallout are expected to dominate this year's United Nations General Assembly High-level Week. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will meanwhile urge allies not to lose focus on his country's defence needs, as Russia retaliates for long-range drone strikes against its energy infrastructure.

"When we see the Russia-Ukraine war, and when we see the whole Middle East, every day things get a little bit worse," said UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres ahead of the gathering. "There is no improvement anywhere, and when things evolve in a way that every day things get a little bit worse, we are at a serious risk of an explosion."

Artificial intelligence will also be a key topic in talks and speeches, with its potential threats to humanity dominating global headlines after tech leaders sounded the alarm. An emergency Security Council meeting is set to be held on the issue.

"This year's UNGA could be where a plan starts to take shape to define what the world wants from industry's pledge on safety and who is responsible for monitoring it," said Nicolas Mialhe, an AI governance expert and co-founder of AI Safety Connect. "The harder part will be agreeing on what that plan looks like and moving it into reality."

Amid fierce competition between the United States and China on AI, Guterres urged more global coordination. "The world cannot afford a race to the bottom on AI safety," he said. Behind the scenes, the world's power brokers will also be wrangling over the UN's future, seeking to thrash out a deal on a candidate to lead the organization riven with divisions and budget black holes. No breakthrough is expected, but the global powers wielding vetoes over the process -- Britain, France, Russia, China and the United States -- could well use the gathering to seal a deal. Guterres' second five-year term ends on December 31, 2026 after a tenure marked by surging global conflict, the coronavirus pandemic, mounting inequality and rampant polarization. One European diplomat said the selection process was "not very successful so far."

Iran struck an oil tanker in the Strait of Hormuz: Report

➔ **Tehran has imposed an effective blockade of the strait since the United States and Israel struck Iran in late February.**



world.(Agency)

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said Friday they struck an oil tanker sailing under the

Togolese flag in the Strait of Hormuz, state news agency IRNA reported.

Tehran has imposed an effective blockade of the strait since the United States and Israel struck Iran in late February.

The Islamic republic wants to charge tolls for passage, attacking ships it accuses of attempting to circumvent its preferred route. "The Togo-flagged oil tanker 'Trend' had been targeted and detained after a fire broke out on board," the statement said, referring to an attempted "illegal passage" through the vital waterway.

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) announced Thursday a "security incident in the Strait of Hormuz, 16 nautical miles (29.6 km) northeast of Khasab, Oman". UKMTO did not provide

details about the vessel involved, and it is unclear whether it is the same mentioned by the Revolutionary Guards..

DETROIT.(Agency)

An F-16 pilot safely ejected before the fighter jet crashed Thursday in rural Michigan, sending plumes of smoke into the sky and triggering temporary evacuations for nearby residents after police said hazardous chemicals spilled from the wreckage.

Sgt. Derek Gutierrez, a public affairs specialist with the 149th Fighter Wing at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, said the pilot was receiving medical treatment at a local hospital. Gutierrez declined to release details about the pilot's identity or any injuries, citing military policy. The pilot was conscious and speaking to law enforcement at the hospital, Grand Traverse County Sheriff Michael D. Shea said in a press briefing. The plane was participating in training exercises at a National Guard base in Alpena, about 190 miles (305 kilometers) north of Detroit. Another pilot told air traffic controllers that he believes his wingman hit a

bird and crashed, according to audio posted by www.liveatc.net.

"We have a possible Mayday. My wingman I



believe may have taken a bird," the pilot reported. The controller offered to direct him to a nearby airport in Frankfort or Traverse City, but the pilot said his wingman had already crashed. Gutierrez said he hadn't heard anything about a possible bird strike, and said the crash is under investigation. "Once we get some more

information and it's approved, we can release it to you," he said. Nathan Smith was working at a construction site about a mile from the crash. He said he started recording the passing fighter jet because something about its flight path struck him as odd.

"It was strange to see a jet flying that low and slow," Smith said. "A few seconds after the video cuts, I heard a loud 'bang,' which I believe now to be the pilot ejecting, but I didn't think of that at the time." Wendy Sobock said she and her husband heard a "very loud crash" down the road, minutes from their rural home. "We thought there was a car accident outside our house. We saw big billowing black smoke. We couldn't tell what it was, so my husband got into his pickup truck and saw what happened," Sobock said. "You could see the plane debris in the field. Explosions kept happening." Fred Sobock, 65, said he drove down the road and saw a "big fireball in the field" near a house and a camper, which were not hit.