



Aya Ram, gaya Ram, phir aaya Ram: SC upholds BRS MLA's disqualification over Congress switch

New Delhi(Agency)

The Supreme Court on Thursday dismissed a plea by BRS MLA Danam Nagender against a Telangana High Court order that disqualified him after his defection to the ruling Congress. The top court said there was no reason to interfere with the high court's decision.

During the hearing, a bench led by Chief Justice Surya Kant, and comprising Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana, referred to the matter as a case of party-switching.

"Your case is 'Aaya Ram, Gaya Ram, phir aaya Ram'?" Justice Bagchi remarked orally, using a phrase commonly associated with politicians who frequently change sides.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi appeared for Nagender. The Telangana High Court had earlier set aside an order of the Assembly Speaker passed in March this year that had dismissed petitions seeking the MLA's disqualification. The high court then declared Nagender, the Khairatabad MLA, disqualified from April 23, 2024, as a member of the Telangana Legislative Assembly, noting that he had contested the 2024 Lok Sabha elections from the Secunderabad constituency on a Congress ticket while continuing as a BRS MLA.

The high court passed its order on petitions filed by BJP floor leader in the Assembly Alleti Maheshwar Reddy and BRS leader P Kaushik Reddy.

14 objections in 10 months, but 6 joint briefings: Tracking the ECI muddle

New Delhi . (Agency)

Even as the two Election Commissioners formally recorded objections to several decisions of the Election Commission over 10 months, the three-member poll panel continued to present a united public face at key election briefings. Between October 28, 2025 and August 14, 2026 - the period during which the Election Commissioners objected 14 times to various decisions, including the SIR exercise - the poll panel held five joint briefings and also hosted the International Conference on Democracy and Election Management (IICDEM).

However, in neither of those briefings did the Election Commissioners - Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi - voice their grievances or let their dissent known. An Indian Express investigation found that Sandhu and Joshi objected to decisions relating to new voters, deletion and restoration of names from electoral rolls, appeals against voter-related orders and access to the ECI software where voter data is maintained. The objections, in most cases, were copied to Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar, who has faced renewed opposition fire and calls for his resignation.

6 JOINT APPEARANCES OVER LAST 10 MONTHS

We found that the three commissioners appeared together at four key election-related briefings - October 27, February 18, March 10, and March 15 - even as objections were being recorded internally.

Rahul Gandhi dials Sahil Wakode's family, assures support in fight for justice

New Delhi(Agency)

Congress leader and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, spoke to the family of IIT Bombay student Sahil Wakode by phone and assured them of his support in their pursuit of justice. The call came nearly a week after 22-year-old Wakode was found hanging in his hostel room.

A controversy erupted following his death after his parents alleged that Wakode had faced caste-based harassment and was in mental distress in the days before his death. IIT Bombay, however, initially denied the allegations and had earlier said that Wakode was caught using a mobile phone during a mid-semester examination. The institute has since apologised for its earlier communication, saying it was inappropriate to characterise events preceding his death before they had been established through an investigation.

During the conversation, Gandhi expressed his support for Wakode's family and assured them that he would extend all

possible help in their pursuit of justice.

Meanwhile, the circumstances surrounding Wakode's death are being investigated by the Mumbai Crime Branch.

CRIME BRANCH RECORDS STATEMENTS OF 6 PEOPLE

The Mumbai Crime Branch has so far recorded the statements of six people in connection with the investigation into Wakode's death.

Among those whose statements have been recorded are three students who were close to Wakode's. Investigators are examining the circumstances surrounding his death and recording statements as part of the ongoing probe. However, the Crime Branch has not yet recorded the statement of Professor Suryanarayana Doolla, who has been accused by Wakode's parents of making

casteist remarks against their son.

Officials said investigators want to first gather digital evidence and record the statements of other witnesses before

Meanwhile, IIT Bombay has re-shared its September 21 statement and apologised for its earlier comments about the circumstances surrounding Wakode's

death. The institute said the details and circumstances surrounding the case remain under investigation. It also acknowledged that it was inappropriate to characterise events preceding Wakode's death before they had been established through the proper investigative process.

The development came amid questions over the institute's earlier account of the circumstances surrounding Wakode's death.

YOUTH CONGRESS TO ANNOUNCE NEXT COURSE OF ACTION

The issue is also set to see further political activity, with the Youth Congress scheduled to hold a press conference on Thursday afternoon.



questioning Doolla.

The investigation is continuing as the Crime Branch examines the circumstances surrounding Wakode's death.

IIT BOMBAY APOLOGISES, RETRACTS EARLIER CLAIMS

Palsana CETP Under Scrutiny Over Alleged Discharge of Untreated Industrial Waste into Mindhola River

Mahanagar Metro Desk

Surat: Serious allegations have emerged from the Palsana industrial belt of Surat over the alleged discharge of highly polluted industrial effluent into open drains connected to the Mindhola River. The allegations have raised concerns over environmental safety, groundwater quality, agricultural land and the health of communities living in surrounding areas. The controversy centres around the Common Effluent Treatment Plant (CETP) operating in the Palsana industrial area, where wastewater generated by industrial units, including dyeing and chemical-related operations, is supposed to undergo treatment before being discharged through an authorised system. However, allegations have been raised that industrial wastewater containing chemicals, dyes and other pollutants is being discharged without adequate treatment into open drainage channels. It is further alleged that the contaminated wastewater eventually reaches the Mindhola River, raising serious questions over the effectiveness of the existing treatment and monitoring mechanism. If verified, such a discharge could have significant environmental consequences because industrial effluent may contain chemical substances capable of affecting water quality, aquatic ecosystems and soil. Concerns over groundwater and



agriculture Residents and environmental activists have also raised concerns over possible contamination of groundwater in villages surrounding the industrial belt. The alleged seepage of polluted wastewater into the ground could potentially affect borewells and other local water sources. The concerns extend to agriculture as well. Farmers in areas dependent on groundwater or river water for irrigation have reportedly faced concerns over the quality of water available for agricultural use. Continued exposure of agricultural land to inadequately treated industrial effluent can adversely affect soil quality and crop productivity, depending on the nature and concentration of pollutants. Another major concern is the impact on aquatic life. If untreated or inadequately treated industrial wastewater enters the river, chemicals and other pollutants can reduce water quality and affect fish and other aquatic organisms. Any reported



deaths of fish or livestock in the affected area, however, would require scientific examination and laboratory testing to establish a direct connection with industrial pollution. Questions over CETP monitoring The allegations have also put the spotlight on the functioning of the CETP and the monitoring mechanism of the Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB). The primary purpose of a Common Effluent Treatment Plant is to ensure that industrial wastewater is treated according to prescribed environmental standards before it is discharged. If untreated or inadequately treated effluent is actually entering a natural water body, questions would arise regarding the plant's operation, compliance monitoring, sampling procedures and enforcement mechanism. The crucial issue is not merely whether a treatment plant exists on paper, but whether it is functioning effectively on the ground. Authorities would need

to examine the quality of incoming and outgoing effluent, treatment efficiency, discharge records, flow measurements, laboratory reports and compliance with applicable environmental standards. Independent sampling of the wastewater and the Mindhola River could also help establish the actual level and nature of contamination. Is enforcement strong enough? The allegations have raised a broader question about industrial pollution control in one of Gujarat's major industrial regions. Industrial development is an important part of the state's economy, but economic activity cannot come at the cost of public health and environmental safety. If any industrial unit is found violating prescribed discharge standards, action should follow strictly according to law. Similarly, if an authorised treatment facility is found failing to perform its required function, accountability must be established through a transparent investigation. At the same time, allegations of collusion between officials, industrialists or CETP operators should not be treated as established facts without evidence. Such claims require an independent inquiry, documentary evidence and, where appropriate, forensic or financial investigation. What needs to happen now? The controversy demands more than statements and routine inspections.

'Cancel This Disastrous Software': Shashi Tharoor To Poll Body On Its ECINet App

While the ECINet website and app is used for disseminating real-time updates on the poll results for the public, the portal is also used by election officials.

New Delhi(Agency).

A day after Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar faced heat for allegedly keeping his two Election Commissioners "in the dark to adding new voters and deleting names", another row has opened up over the poll body's software, ECINet, with Congress MP Shashi Tharoor calling for its cancellation. During the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, which is publicised as a cleaning-up exercise of poll rolls, started by the Election Commission last year, electors submitted forms and documents through ECINet, which was then used by officials to process the same. The poll body had launched the

ECINet app in January this year. A beta version of the same was tested during Bihar polls last November. While the ECINet website and app is used for disseminating real-time



updates on the poll results for the public, the portal is also used by election officials.

A report in on Thursday claimed that what "two Election

Commissioners, Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi, primarily warned against - the centralisation of ECINet and cutting out state ground-level officials - has played out in Goa, and its trail is recorded".

What makes the case even more acute in Goa is that being off the electoral roll here costs more than a vote. Several state schemes in Goa use the electoral roll to establish eligibility. The Goa Mediclaim Scheme, which funds super-speciality treatment not available in government hospitals (dialysis, angioplasty, open-heart surgery, transplants, chemotherapy, cochlear implants) is open only to voters of the state, the report notes.

SC asks Election Commission to set timeline for deciding TMC name, symbol dispute

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Banerjee argued that the EC's decision was flawed as it was taken during the election process, leaving Banerjee without an effective remedy to challenge the freezing order.

New Delhi(Agency).

The Supreme Court on Thursday asked the Election Commission to indicate a timeline for deciding the dispute between two rival factions of the All India Trinamool Congress over the party's name and its "flowers and grass" symbol.

A bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana was hearing a plea by former West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee challenging the EC's decision to freeze the TMC's name and election symbol.

The bench asked senior advocate D S Naidu, appearing for the poll panel, to apprise it of the time required to finally decide the dispute. The matter will be heard next on September 28. Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Banerjee, said he could not seek a stay on the October 6 West Bengal Assembly bypoll as the election process had already begun.

Sibal argued that the EC's decision was flawed as it was taken during the election process, leaving Banerjee without an effective remedy to challenge the freezing order.



"Maybe what is required is to issue a direction to the (Election) Commission that they should start hearing the matter, hear it for some time on a day-to-day basis, whatever evidence or proof you have to lead, and decide it," Chief Justice Surya Kant said. The Supreme Court had on September 21

Father, 3 children killed as truck hits family's bike in Nuh

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A 32-year-old man and his three children were killed while his wife suffered injuries after a speeding truck rammed their motorcycle on Nuh-Tauru Road late Tuesday night. The accident took place around 11 pm when Shakir was travelling towards his village, Padla Shahpuri, with his wife Nasreen and their three children on the motorcycle. Police said the family was near Maria Manzil School when the truck collided with their bike. The impact was severe, and Shakir and his three children died on the spot. The deceased were identified as Shakir (32), his one-month-old daughter Zahra, two-year-old daughter Sajra and seven-year-old daughter Gazala. Nasreen suffered serious injuries in the crash and was rushed to the medical college at Nalhar, where she is undergoing treatment. Police said her condition was being monitored by doctors.

"The accident took place near Maria Manzil School around 11 pm. A truck hit the motorcycle on which the family was travelling. Four people died in the accident, while the woman was seriously injured and has been admitted to the medical college at Nalhar," said a police officer. The truck driver fled the spot after leaving the vehicle behind, police said. On receiving information about the accident, Singh reached the spot along with a police team and inspected the scene.

"The truck involved in the accident has been taken into custody and efforts are being made to trace the driver. The bodies have been shifted to the mortuary at Nalhar medical college," the officer said. Police have initiated action in the case and said the next steps would be taken on the basis of a complaint from the family. The circumstances leading to the collision and the identity of the truck driver are being investigated.

Monsoon retreats, but Gurgaon may see patchy rain

Gurgaon.(Agency)

After a brief dry spell, the city is likely to see rain again from Friday, with the India Meteorological Department forecasting light to moderate showers in parts of the district on Sept 25 and 26 and isolated rainfall on Sept 27. The southwest monsoon further withdrew from most parts of Haryana on Wednesday, with the withdrawal line now passing through Chandigarh and parts of northern India. IMD said weather in the state is likely to remain dry on Sept 23 and 24. For Gurgaon, the district-wise forecast indicates isolated light to moderate rainfall on Sept 25, followed by rain at a few places on Sept 26. Rainfall is again expected at isolated places on Sept 27. The forecast carries no weather warning for the district.

The shift comes as the monsoon has now withdrawn from most of Haryana, though an upper-air cyclonic circulation over northwest Uttar Pradesh and adjoining areas is among the weather systems influencing conditions over the region. The state recorded dry wether during the past 24 hours, with no significant rainfall reported. The highest maximum temperature was 35.9°C at Hisar. In Gurgaon, IMD's observations for Sept 22 show a maximum temperature of around 34°C, while the minimum recorded at Gurgaon KVK station on Wednesday was 23.2°C. The seven-day outlook suggests that rainfall activity will remain limited, with light to moderate rain likely at a few places in Haryana on Sept 25, 26 and 27 and at isolated places on Sept 25, 28 and 29. IMD has issued no weather warning for the next seven days.

'Driver smoking, burning smell, a request to stop': How horror unfolded inside Noida bus that killed 9



Noida.(Agency)

Nine passengers were killed after a private bus travelling from Delhi to Mahoba caught fire on the Yamuna Expressway near Jewar late Wednesday night. Several other passengers sustained burn injuries and were rushed to Kailash Hospital in Jewar, officials said. According to a police complaint, passengers noticed a burning smell coming from the driver's cabin and alerted the driver and conductor. They allegedly asked the two to stop the bus and check the source of the smell, but the driver and conductor did not stop or inspect the cabin. The complaint further alleged that the driver and conductor continued smoking inside the cabin and dismissed the passengers' concerns, saying that such a smell was common in the bus. The incident occurred around 11.30pm near kilometre 33 of the Yamuna Expressway, when the bus, operated by Raj Kalpana Travels, was travelling from Delhi towards Agra. The complainant, Sunil Kumar, a resident of Hamirpur, told police that around 30-35 passengers were travelling in the bus. A short while after passengers raised the alarm about the smell, flames suddenly erupted near the driver's seat and rapidly spread through the vehicle. Passengers repeatedly asked the driver to stop the bus, but he allegedly failed to act immediately, according to the complaint.

As the fire intensified, smoke filled the passenger compartment, leaving several people trapped inside. Sunil and some other passengers managed to escape by jumping out of the bus after it stopped. Several others, however, were unable to get out because of the flames and thick smoke.

CJP flags drugs trail inside Nuh schools, syringes & vials found

Noida.(Agency)

An eight-day inspection of 24 govt schools in Nuh by Cockroach Janta Party has found evidence of drug use inside campuses. Used syringes, foil like the type used for smack, cannabis rolling papers and discarded tobacco products were discovered in about 70% of the schools, CJP national spokesperson Sudhir Sangwan said Wednesday, adding that a vial labelled 'Pheniramine Maleate Injection IP' was among the findings. The outfit said drug paraphernalia and bottles believed to be of cough syrup were also found at a PM Shri School in Ferozepur Namak.

CJP volunteer Mubasshir pointed out that the office of the block education officer was located next to the school. He said better security was necessary to ensure outsiders did not enter the

premises. The village head of Ferozepur Namak said this was of particular concern because around 150 residents were HIV-positive. "When we have so many people living with HIV, finding used syringes and an injectable medicine inside a school is very worrying. The administration needs to find out how such material is reaching the school and whether the campus is being used by outsiders," he said.

At Primary School Khanpur, the team reported finding foil, rolling papers, and discarded bidis and cigarettes in an abandoned section of the campus. Similar material was found at Govt Senior Secondary School, Kheli, in a part of the building described as condemned. Sangwan said the repeated discoveries pointed to gaps in monitoring, particularly in unused portions of school buildings. "If



damaged blocks are not secured, these spaces can be misused by outsiders," he said. Dr Tushar Tayal, the associate director of internal medicine at CK Birla

Hospital, Gurgaon, said discarded syringes and vials posed a significant public health risk. "Accidental needle-stick injuries can expose people to blood-borne infections such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV. Proper disposal is essential." Regarding pheniramine maleate, he said it was an antihistamine used to relieve allergic symptoms. "It can cause drowsiness, particularly when taken inappropriately or in amounts higher than prescribed. Using it for its sedative effects can lead to serious adverse impact," he said. The inspection also highlighted infrastructure and staffing concerns.

CJP claimed that more than 50% of the classrooms across the 24 schools were severely damaged, abandoned or structurally compromised, adding that functional seating capacity was only around 20% of the requirement.

HVPNL starts utility shifting for metro depot in Gurgaon

Gurgaon.(Agency)

HVPNL has started the process of shifting two 66kV bays at its Sector 33 substation to clear land required for the upcoming metro depot project.

The bays and associated electrical equipment obstruct the planned entry point connecting the proposed metro depot with the Millennium City Centre-Cyber City corridor. HVPNL is shifting the equipment to another part of the substation to make the land available to Gurugram Metro Rail Limited (GMRL) for the depot. The work is estimated to cost around Rs 38 lakh and involves relocating the two 66kV bays and associated equipment, including circuit breakers and current transformers. Although the work has been allotted five

months, officials said efforts would be made to complete it earlier. "We have started the process of engaging an agency to shift the electrical infrastructure, and we are targeting Jan to complete it," said Anil Malik, executive engineer, HVPNL. The shifting is part of the preparatory work to make around 400 square metres of land at the substation available for the metro depot. The depot has been proposed over around 53 acres in Sector 33, with its construction estimated to cost around Rs 409 crore. The agency for the civil construction of the depot is yet to be finalised by GMRL as it awaits the state govt's approval.

The utility work comes amid efforts to clear a 2.2km stretch between Hero Honda Chowk and Umang Bharadwaj Chowk for metro construction. This

section is part of Phase I of the Cyber City metro corridor. Last month, NHA, DHBVNL and HVPNL were directed to fast-track their work and hand over a clear corridor to GMRL. NHA is redeveloping the 2.2km stretch on behalf of GMDA. Several utility-shifting works are still pending. NHA has to shift feeder lines, while a 1,600mm water pipeline and other utilities are yet to be relocated. HVPNL has to shift 66kV overhead lines, while DHBVN has to shift 17 feeders and dismantle existing lines. NHA also has to complete and commission the Sector 10 substation. Meanwhile, construction on Phase I of the metro corridor, from Millennium City Centre to Sector 9, is progressing gradually, with around 15% of the civil work completed so far.

Gurgaon man beats live-in partner to death with rolling pin

GURGAON.(Agency)

A 33-year-old man was arrested for allegedly murdering his live-in partner by assaulting her with a stick, pipe and rolling pin at their rented house in Dharam Colony, police said. The incident took place on Tuesday when police received information that a woman was lying injured inside a rented house in the Palam Vihar area. A police team reached the spot and found the woman seriously injured and covered in blood. She was taken to a hospital in an ambulance, where doctors declared her dead. Police said the landlord told them that he heard a commotion in the street and, on coming outside, saw the accused, identified as Akash, assaulting the woman. According to the landlord's complaint, Akash hit her on the head before fleeing the spot.

A case was registered at Palam Vihar police station on the landlord's complaint. Police subsequently arrested Akash, a native of Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh, from Dharam Colony on Tuesday. During interrogation, police found that the deceased was not



Akash's wife, as initially stated in the complaint. The two had allegedly been living together in a live-in relationship since 2020. Akash works as a bus driver in Gurgaon, police said. According to police, the two had an argument over an issue on Tuesday, following which Akash allegedly

attacked the woman with a stick, pipe and rolling pin, causing fatal injuries. Police said the three objects allegedly used in the assault were recovered from the spot. The accused was to be produced before a court on Wednesday, while further investigation is underway.

Sanitation strike over, but garbage still piles up across Noida sectors

Noida.(Agency)

Almost a week after the sanitation workers' strike ended, residents of sectors 122 and 99 have said the garbage collection system is still not back to normal. Since Friday, the workers have discharged their duty on one day, they said. As a result, waste has been piling up on street corners, with a foul smell pervading nearby areas.

President of the residents' welfare association in Sector 122 Shiv Kumar Tiwari said he has written a letter to Noida Authority regarding the situation. He addressed the general manager of the public health department and said the waste collection system has "virtually collapsed" and could lead to a health crisis soon. According to Tiwari, when asked why they have been irregular with waste collection, the sanitation workers said they had not been receiving their wages on time. He urged immediate redressal of the problem. "The accumulating waste poses risks not only to public health but also raises the potential for disease transmission, a



growing concern among the community," he said. RWA general secretary of Sector 122 Nitin Chauhan echoed the concerns and emphasised the urgent need for accountability. "Cleanliness is a basic necessity for us,"

he added. He called on officials to take immediate action and restore regular sanitation services. Apart from untended waste, residents of Sector 99 said irregular weeding has led to overgrown bushes in the area. General secretary of

the RWA Vinod Choudhary expressed concern over the unsanitary conditions of overgrown trees and shrubs in the sector. "Why are we being punished by having to live in this jungle? Snakes, mongooses and other wild animals have been spotted in these shrubberies. They are often coming out to the roads and posing a threat to residents," he said. Meanwhile, Noida Authority officials have assured that both the issues — of waste-picking and untended horticulture — would be addressed soon. The strike that ended on Friday was the third one in the last seven months. Protesting workers have raised concerns over job security, wage increments, uniforms, supervisory hierarchy and other essential needs. There are about 5,000 sanitation workers in Noida. While contractors change every year, the workers stay on. They are not on the Authority's direct payroll but are paid through the contractors. The strike was called off after the workers' demands were placed before Noida Authority CEO for consideration.

Gujarat AAP MLA in jail, his two wives take up his political agenda

Dediapada MLA Chaitar Vasava's wives Shakuntala and Varsha visit villages and communities in Gujarat's tribal heartland; promise to stay with them in legal, administrative battle.

Chandigarh (Agency).

With the influential tribal leader and the Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP's) MLA from Dediapada Chaitar Vasava behind bars, the political baton in the tribal belt of South Gujarat is being carried by his two wives, Shakuntala and Varsha. The two women have stepped into the



field to take up a range of issues, from land rights to alleged encroachment. The organisational changes announced by the BJP on September 22 in the tribal dominated Narmada district (and in the adjoining Bharuch district) were to a large extent a response to the AAP's strong showing in the Narmada local body elections in April. The AAP's campaign was powered by Chaitar Vasava, who repeatedly raised the issues of land acquisition, rehabilitation and employment that resonated strongly

among tribal voters. Chaitar was sent to jail in June after a sessions court in Narmada sentenced him to seven years' imprisonment in a 2023 case arising out of the alleged assault and intimidation of forest officials. Although the sentence removed him from day-to-day political activity, his influence in the area remains largely undiminished, which his wives are currently seeking to amplify. On Tuesday (September 22), Shakuntala and Varsha showed up at Kodvav village in the Netrang taluka of Bharuch to meet farmers who have alleged they have been assaulted by unidentified individuals, and had their land encroached upon following a dispute.

The women and other AAP leaders met with the aggrieved families, heard their accounts, and assured them of the party's support in pursuing the matter through legal and administrative channels. Varsha Vasava said the AAP delegation had visited a family whose standing crop had been allegedly cut, and whose land was allegedly encroached upon. She said AAP would stand by the family through the legal battle and provide the required support.

3 years on the run, dismissed Punjab cop Raj Jit Singh Hundal arrested

Hundal's arrest follows years of legal proceedings, including the Punjab and Haryana High Court's rejection of anticipatory bail.

Chandigarh (Agency).

The Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF) arrested dismissed Punjab Police AIG Raj Jit Singh Hundal at a house in Patiala Thursday morning in connection with pending cases arising from the probe into the alleged police-drug nexus involving a dismissed inspector, days after the Supreme Court directed him to surrender. According to police sources, Hundal is likely to be produced before a court, where the investigating agency is expected to seek his custodial remand for questioning. The case against the former assistant inspector general dates back to the 2017 arrest of dismissed Inspector Inderjit Singh by the Punjab Police's Special Task Force (STF) in connection with drug-related cases.

SIT reports

After the arrest, the Punjab and Haryana High Court ordered a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to examine allegations about the role of senior police officers, including Hundal, then SSP Moga, and his alleged association with

Inderjit Singh. The SIT submitted three reports in 2018. According to the high court's subsequent assessment, the reports contained material on Hundal's alleged association with Inderjit Singh. Among the issues examined

forensic reports and planting of drugs to extort money. These allegations formed part of the investigation and do not, by themselves, constitute a judicial finding of guilt against Hundal.

Dismissal from service

The SIT reports remained sealed for several years, and the high court opened them in March 2023. Following examination of the reports, the Punjab Government took disciplinary action against Hundal, who was dismissed from service. The high court record subsequently dealt with allegations of his alleged complicity with Inderjit Singh and misuse of his official position.

Hundal was subsequently made an accused in the STF case. The case includes provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act and Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections relating to criminal conspiracy, fabrication and use of false documents, and manipulation of official records.



was his role in bringing Inderjit Singh to Tarn Taran in 2013 and posting him as Crime Investigation Agency (CIA) in-charge despite records showing criminal cases against him. The SIT also examined allegations of manipulation of NDPS cases, including alleged tampering with or delay in

'No non-academic duty for teachers': Punjab education secretary's stern order to Dcs

For almost a year now, government teachers in Punjab have mostly remained out of schools, for several non-academic duties.

Ludhiana (Agency).

With the issue of government teachers' deployment for non-academic duties in Punjab snowballing into a major issue ahead of 2027 Punjab assembly polls, the state education secretary Sonali Giri in a stern letter has directed the deputy commissioners across the state to ensure that no teacher is burdened with any non-academic work, and they should just teach.

For almost a year now, government teachers in Punjab have mostly remained out of schools, for several non-academic duties. Apart from the Election Commission's SIR and BLO duty and Centre's Census 2027, the state government also deployed them for conducting Drug Census.

Teachers were also deputed on duties related to AAP government's populist schemes such as registering women for Maavan Dheeyan Satkaar Yojana, making health insurance cards, taking children to religious programmes organized by the government, etc. The latest nail in the coffin for AAP government was the outburst of teachers when they were put on duty to make new ration cards in some districts. Teachers announced that they will boycott ration card duties, and from now one "they will only teach and do nothing else."

Giri, in the letter to the deputy commissioners, wrote that teachers being deployed for non-academic work was now having serious implications on education, and from now on, they won't be given any such duties. "It has been observed that



teachers of the School Education Department are being requisitioned at the district/sub-divisional level for various administrative and other non-teaching duties even for unjustified longer periods. The matter requires immediate attention," wrote Giri, adding that a large number of teachers have already been deployed for the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

"...SIR exercise is scheduled to conclude on 30.09.2026. Accordingly, with the exercise now nearing completion, continued deployment of teachers beyond the requirement of

SIR may be curtailed so that they can resume their primary academic responsibilities in schools," she wrote. "However, continued deployment of teachers for multiple assignments outside schools is now seriously affecting classroom teaching, academic continuity and learning outcomes of students. The primary responsibility of a teacher is towards his/her students and repeated withdrawal of teachers from schools inevitably results in loss of instructional time which cannot be adequately compensated later," wrote the secretary to DCs. Referring to Section 27 of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 and the relevant judicial directions, she wrote: "...Teachers are not to be deployed for non-educational purposes except for duties relating to elections, decennial census and disaster management."

"It is, therefore, directed that henceforth no teacher of the School Education Department shall be requisitioned or deployed for any non-teaching or administrative duty other than duties specifically permissible under law, namely election-related duties, census duties or disaster-management duties," she added.

Punjab minister Sanjeev Arora may contest 2027 Assembly polls from jail

Ludhiana (Agency).

Even though appointments have been made for several other constituencies across Punjab ahead of the 2027 polls, the AAP has not appointed any new faces as the halka (assembly constituency) in-charge for Ludhiana West — the constituency of jailed cabinet minister Sanjeev Arora. His office staff and family members are keeping track of the development projects in his constituency.

Jatinder Khangura, AAP district president for Ludhiana (urban), told The Indian Express that "the party is backing Arora through thick and thin" "as he has done no wrong and has been arrested due to vendetta politics". "He and his family and staff are keeping a tab on the development works, and councillors are also coordinating. We are not looking for any new face for Ludhiana West." The Enforcement Directorate (ED) arrested Arora in May this year in an alleged multi-crore money laundering case. He is lodged in Bhondsi jail, Gurugram.

The AAP has termed Arora's arrest as a "vendetta" by the BJP-led Centre. At the time of his arrest, Arora held the key portfolios of power and industries in the Punjab cabinet. He continues to be a cabinet minister but without any portfolios. The AAP Punjab general secretary and media in-charge, Baltej Pannu, said: "We are not looking to replace Arora with any other face from Ludhiana West. It will be entirely his decision if he contests or if someone from his family contests; we will back the Arora family's candidature from Ludhiana West. We are hopeful he will be bailed out

His office staff and family members are keeping track of the development projects in his constituency.

by then." Arora's son Kavya Arora, a businessman, and daughter Ketki Arora have not expressed any interest in entering politics and contesting from his



constituency, the party told The Indian Express. Kavya, who handles the family business, said he and his sister are not inclined towards politics as of now. "Our office staff are handling all the work in my father's constituency... My mother and sister-in-law keep meeting people... He can contest even from custody if the party says so..."

BJP nominates 14 to Surat Municipal School Board

The verification of forms will be done on October 1 and election are slated for October 9, officials said

Surat (Agency).

FOUR PERSONS from Surat are among 14 names nominated by the state BJP on Wednesday as potential contenders to run the Municipal School Board, Surat (MSBS). These include a co-convenor of the Patidar Anamat Andolan Samithi and other party functionaries; some who run schools and medical stores; former syndicate members of the Veer Narmad South Gujarat University (VNSGU), including a former president of its women's wing. Earlier, over 300 BJP

the 2024 parliamentary election from Surat seat. In April, the election to 120 seats of the Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) were conducted and results declared. BJP candidates (the party had 93 councillors after the 2021 election) won 115 seats, while four seats went to AAP (down from 27 seats in the previous elections), and a single Congress candidate won (Congress scored zero in the previous election).

After the municipal election, a new board is set up in the MSB, Surat, which has also simultaneously completed its term. On September 9, notification for the MSBS poll was issued, with the last date for submission of forms being September 23. The verification of forms will be done on October 1 and the election will be held on October 9. There are a total of 15 members (including the Surat district education officer) to run the MSB, of whom 12 are elected and three are nominated by the state government.

The nominated candidates have to go through the election process, and the voters are elected councillors of the SMC. A candidate needs seven votes to win, sources in the MSBS said. There are only four AAP councillors and a single Congress councillor. The state parliamentary body had on Wednesday evening declared names of 14 candidates out of 300 profiles. Now these nominated leaders will have to submit their forms to MSBS by Thursday. The forms will be verified on 1st October, and if AAP or Congress put up candidates, the election will be held on 9th October.



functionaries had expressed interest to the party brass in connection with a place on the MSB, Surat.

The BJP list includes the name of advocate and notary Kiran Ghoghari, who notarised the affidavits of three proposers for Congress leader Niles Kumbhani for the parliamentary election of the Surat seat with the district election office in 2024. The three proposers of Kumbhani had notarised affidavits, claiming that the signatures on the nomination form of Kumbhani were not theirs and were "forged". On such notarised affidavits of Ghoghari, the BJP candidate Mukesh Dalal was declared winner uncontested in

No milk for 5,500 Gujarat children amid Amul payments row

Milk pouches stopped on Sept 17, ICDS officer says delayed bills from Amul have led to late payments; civic body says bills are cleared whenever they are received

Vadodara (Agency).

For a week now, 5,500 children at 400 anganwadis of the Vadodara Municipal Corporation (VMC) have gone without their daily glass of milk. The Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation, which owns the Amul brand, allegedly stopped supplying the milk pouches to the anganwadis across Vadodara city on September 17 following a dispute over payments.

Hiral Thakore, the District Programme Officer of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), told The Indian Express the disruption is a result of the "exhausted credit balance" with Amul due to the rising prices of milk. She blamed the

Amul coordinators for delaying the submission of bills, which left the ICDS 'no time' to process quick payments. ICDS —



which was renamed as Anganwadi Services in 2017, and later revised and subsumed into Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0

— includes, among other things, nutritional support for children below the age of six years. According to the Government of India, it is one of the world's largest programs for nutrition and early childhood care and development, and the 'foremost symbol of the country's commitment to the well being of its children'. Under the milk distribution program, anganwadi children of ages six months to six years receive 100 ml of milk five days a week. Thakore said 5,500 milk pouches are needed every day for the 400 anganwadis under the VMC. An Amul official said the cooperative supplies milk to individual civic bodies under the modalities of Doodh Sanjeevani Yojana, the Gujarat government's milk distribution program.

Uber driver accused of kissing sleeping 18-year-old passenger in Bengaluru

Mumbai (Agency). BENGALURU: An 18-year-old woman has accused an Uber driver of hugging and kissing her on the lips after she fell asleep during the journey. The victim, a student, was travelling to her grandmother's house when the incident happened. The incident occurred at around 1.45 am on Sunday near Konanakunte Cross in Doddakallasandra. The victim woke up after sensing that the vehicle had stopped and found the driver hugging and kissing her. When he allegedly attempted to kiss her again, she questioned him, asking, "Did you do something?" The driver

initially denied it but later allegedly apologised, saying, "Yes, I am sorry." The victim has told the police that she sat in the front passenger seat as she had kept her luggage on the rear seat. The victim had booked the cab through her friend's mobile phone around 1.25 am. She had gone to Deepanjali Nagar to meet the friend and was returning to her grandmother's house. The victim, in her complaint, has stated that when she attempted to get out of the cab, the driver allegedly locked the doors and continued driving. When she screamed and banged on the window, the driver is said to

have stopped the vehicle. After she got out, the driver allegedly drove away with her luggage. She then took another auto-rickshaw to her grandmother's house and complained to Uber about the incident. The driver's friends are said to have returned her luggage. The victim filed the complaint on Monday. "The driver has been identified as Mohammed Waseem, aged about 28 years and is a native of Kerala. We are yet to detain him," said an officer. The Konanakunte police have registered a case of sexual harassment along with other sections of the BNS.

Why public debt is threatening private pockets

The interest rates on 10-year bonds in the US, Japan, the UK, Europe and Australia have risen 0.6-0.9 percent since the start of 2026. The rises are modest and, in absolute terms, the rates are still lower than those touched pre-2007. Yet this represents a significant shift from the ultra-low rates of recent decades and exacerbates the problems of global public debt, which is at 94 percent of world GDP—more than 10 percent higher than before the pandemic—and is expected to reach 100 percent by 2030. There are several reasons behind the rise in rates. First, inflation remains around 3-4 percent, mostly above central bank targets. It is being fed by the higher energy prices driven by the intractable West Asia conflict. Higher costs of fertilisers, industrial chemicals, plastics and materials may take till 2027 to flow through into final prices. Conflict and climate-driven disruption to food supplies and transportation costs, due to lower water levels in key transit routes, are additional factors. Continuing economic wars will also keep prices high. Since 2016, the US has implemented tariffs, export or import bans, sanctions and asset seizures that interrupt crossborder investment and trade of goods and services. The higher costs of tariffs and countermeasures are borne by consumers, about 96 percent in the case of the US. Emphasis on sovereignty, independence, industrial capability and employment encourages de-globalisation. The relocation of production onshore increases costs due to the loss of economies of scale and comparative advantages, increasing price pressures. The AI boom has increased the cost of processors and memory, in some cases sixfold—christened ‘RAMageddon’ or ‘RAMpocalypse’—pushing up electronic product prices further, feeding inflation. Second, continued high issuance of government debt affects rates. The average fiscal deficit across the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries is 4.6 percent of GDP, reflecting increased defence spending, demographic pressures, tax cuts and addition to expansionary fiscal settings. The US has persistent budget deficits (6 percent of GDP currently), which may be worsened by measures such as the ‘Trump dividend’ entitling all American adults to \$5,000 (costing \$1 trillion) if the Republican party retains control of the congress and senate. Europe also faces a new debt crisis centred around BIF (Britain, Italy, France) rather than the 2011 PIIGS (Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Spain), all heavily indebted countries with stagnant economies, structural problems and growing political instability. Third, capital flows are shifting. Japan largely finances domestically with 90 percent of its government bonds held by local investors. Others like the US and the UK are reliant on foreign capital, with overseas investors holding roughly 24 and 30 percent of government debt, respectively. But the amount of capital available may be diminishing. Gulf petro-States, affected by the Iran war, have reduced investible funds and may need to liquidate some of their holdings. Japan’s share of the US Treasury market is 4 percent, down from 18 percent in 2004, due to slowing reserve accumulation. Chinese, Brazilian, Indian, Australian, Norwegian and Japanese investors have reduced holdings of government debt, especially their US Treasury bond exposure, reflecting lower surpluses or growing concerns about the security of their investments. America is now increasingly dependent on volatile demand from extremely price and volatility sensitive leveraged speculators, in the form of basis trades, to purchase government issues. Finally, confidence in policymakers’ willingness to act appropriately is low. US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, a former hedge fund manager, dared markets: “I have asymmetric information.

When hospitals breach trust

India needs a targeted regulatory strategy rather than sweeping price controls

WHEN a patient enters a hospital, the standard rules of commerce break down completely. Lying on a stretcher, an anxious patient has neither the time to price-shop nor the bargaining power to negotiate. They accept an extraordinary degree of uncertainty, trusting that the care recommended is necessary and that the prices charged are fair. It is a profound breach of that trust when hospitals exploit this vulnerability for extortionate margins.

A recent survey by the Maharashtra Food and Drugs Administration exposed the scale of this problem. Researchers found that an intravenous (IV) infusion set procured by a hospital for Rs 11.05 was billed to a patient at Rs 325—a 2,841% mark-up. A catheter bought for Rs 29.41 carried a Maximum Retail Price (MRP) of Rs 310, representing a 954% mark-up. Across a wide range of basic medical consumables, mark-ups routinely reached as high as 2,841%. FDA Commissioner Tukaram Mundhe wrote to the Department of Pharmaceuticals and the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority, seeking a central review and clearer rules on how large the gap between procurement price and declared MRP is allowed to be. Hospitals are legitimate commercial entities. They must recover costs for procurement, sterile storage, inventory holding and wastage, and they are entitled to earn a reasonable profit. But there is a clear line between a sustainable commercial margin and predatory pricing aimed at a captive consumer. In any other industry, this would trigger immediate anti-trust penalties. In healthcare, where the consumer is sick, frightened and unable to walk away, it is indefensible. Where overcharging is systemic, regulatory advisories are not enough. Hospitals engaging in wilful overcharging should face mandatory patient refunds, steep financial penalties and, for repeat offenders, temporary suspension or permanent blacklisting from government insurance panels and private payer networks. However, we must avoid mistaking abusive mark-ups on standard supplies for an excuse to impose sweeping price controls across all clinical care. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare recently recommended establishing a statutory body to enforce a “rigid cap” on essential procedures, fix package rates across all standard medical operations and even peg metropolitan hospital room charges to the tariffs of nearby three-star hotels. While the Committee rightly diagnoses patient distress, its prescription risks severely damaging the health system. An IV set is a standardised factory commodity; clinical care is not. Two patients with the same diagnosis

can require vastly different levels of intervention based on age, cardiac history or surgical complexity. A complex, multi-hour cancer surgery at a specialised tertiary care hospital cannot be price-capped using the same logic as a plastic catheter.

When governments set rigid, administered prices, two things happen: if capped too high, patients save nothing; if capped too low, quality disappears. Providers begin cutting corners, turning away high-risk or complex cases, adding hidden charges or halting investment in modern technology. Having spent years designing the purchasing architecture for Ayushman Bharat (PM-JAY), I have seen this dynamic firsthand. Setting a price cap on paper is simple. Ensuring that a patient actually receives high-



quality, safe and appropriate care at that price is far more complex. Rather than blanket price controls, India needs a targeted five-point regulatory strategy.

First, make hospital pricing genuinely transparent. Every hospital should publish a schedule of charges in a comparable digital format. For planned admissions, patients should receive an estimate covering professional fees, diagnostics, procedures, medicines, devices, consumables and room charges. If the final bill materially exceeds the estimate, the hospital should be required to explain why, except where unforeseen clinical circumstances arise. Transparency should extend particularly to high-value medicines, implants and consumables. Disclosure of procurement price, MRP and the price charged to the patient would itself exert considerable pressure on unreasonable margins. Second, act firmly where margins become indefensible. For standardised medicines, devices and consumables,

regulators should monitor persistent outliers. Trade-margin rationalisation, reference pricing and structured price monitoring are more appropriate tools than automatically fixing the final price of every product.

But regulation must have teeth. Where hospitals repeatedly impose unjustifiable charges, penalties should be substantial enough to alter behaviour. Empanelment under publicly funded schemes or insurer networks is valuable. Persistent abuse should put that privilege at risk. Third, government and insurers should use their purchasing power far more effectively. Much of the debate focuses on what hospitals charge patients. We pay far less attention to what hospitals and government purchasers themselves pay for medicines, devices and implants. The experience of pooled procurement, including that of the Tata Memorial Centre for oncology medicines, shows the enormous scope for savings. Government schemes collectively finance healthcare for tens of crores of people. That purchasing power should be used to negotiate better prices upstream. We should not simply finance the manufacturer’s or supplier’s opening price and then attempt to control the hospital’s final bill. Fourth, regulate utilisation, not just price. Fee-for-service creates an incentive to do more. More investigations, longer hospital stays and additional procedures generate more revenue, whether or not they improve outcomes. A CT scan that costs 20% less is still wasteful if the patient did not need it. Government purchasers and insurers need to use clinical pathways, medical audits and claims analytics to identify outliers: unusually high rates of caesarean sections, prolonged ICU admissions, excessive diagnostic testing or repeated use of particular procedures. Unnecessary care is as important a source of inflated healthcare expenditure as excessive unit prices. Fifth, make quality as visible as price. Patients today know remarkably little about the outcomes of the hospitals they choose. Over time, hospitals should disclose standardised indicators such as hospital-acquired infections, readmissions, outcomes for selected procedures and patient experience. Price regulation in isolation carries a danger. If providers are squeezed only on price while quality remains invisible, the incentive may simply shift towards reducing quality. There is also a larger issue. India cannot solve the problem of private healthcare pricing without strengthening its public health system. A credible public alternative disciplines the private market and provides an essential benchmark for what efficient care actually costs.

Put plastic challenge at the top of India's sustainability battle

The enormity of the challenge before India is that plastic has entered every aspect of life and its cost is huge

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s assertion that India’s development is ‘speedy as well as sustainable’ is aligned with the country’s outlook based on its nationally determined contributions (NDC) for 2031-35. It explains why he pointed out the inequality meted out to developing countries at the climate negotiations table. The PM flagged the historical narrative that developed countries get away with six times higher emissions, but developing nations take the blame for their carbon footprints. Listing out achievements in renewable energy, electric mobility, water conservation and natural farming, Modi said the country, having achieved its Paris Agreement commitments made in 2015, enjoys a unique position within the G20 on non-fossil fuels and solar capacity benchmarks.

When the government approved the NDC for submission to the UN Framework Convention for Climate Change in March, it carefully designed its targets amid the West Asia crisis. India has achieved its goals on emission intensity



and energy transition. But if it truly wants to demonstrate that rapid growth can coexist with environmental responsibility, it must take plastic pollution seriously. Government data put India’s plastic waste generation at 1.76 million tonne in 2024-25, down from 4.1 million tonne in 2022-23. However, the estimate is conservative given it mostly counted urban areas. A Central Pollution Control Board assessment in 2018 had measured plastic

waste generation at 25,940 tonne a day, almost 9.5 million tonne annually. That’s the kind of level a study published in Nature echoed in 2024 when it placed India as the top plastic polluter far ahead of China, holding it accountable for nearly a fifth of global plastic emissions. The enormity of the challenge before India is that plastic has entered every aspect of life and its cost is huge. Some progress has been reported. Under the extended producer responsibility, the government claims 19.6 million tonnes of plastic waste was recycled through registered processors by March 2026. But it is a cumulative figure and recycling alone cannot solve the Himalayan problem at hand. The Prime Minister is right that development and sustainability can go hand in hand. But plastic will be a real test of that proposition. A sustainable India cannot merely recycle. It must produce far less, design packaging for reuse and recovery, improve waste collection and make producers accountable for the entire lifecycle of what they sell.

At arm's length from regulators

➤ The logic of reducing ministerial influence over tribunals should extend to economic regulators. Regulatory independence should be a matter of institutional design, not Executive preference. A commission on the lines of the recently-cleared National Tribunal Commission can help on that count

The Tribunals Reforms Act, which came into force on August 25, recalibrates the institutional relationship between the Executive and tribunals. It retains the Centre’s role in appointments and overall tribunal governance, while entrusting a National Tribunals Commission with the selection of chairpersons and members along with performance oversight. The TRA provides for a five-year term for chairpersons and members, with eligibility for reappointment. It, however, enables the government to prescribe their qualifications, manner of selection, appointment, salaries and allowances, resignation, removal, and other conditions of service. Thus, the TRA makes an important institutional distinction: the government prescribes the framework; the NTC undertakes selection and performance oversight. This replaces the earlier approach of separate frameworks administered by respective ministries.

It creates a clearer separation between the government’s role in institutional governance and sectoral interests of the ministries. It reflects a sound principle of public institutional design: where an institution must exercise independent judgement, an Executive department should not control its institutional governance. That principle has equal, if not greater, relevance to economic regulators. The government provides services, owns assets, grants licences and authorisations, and participates in markets. Regulators make regulations; supervise markets; investigate, conduct and, in several cases, adjudicate violations; and impose sanctions. Their decisions can affect the government’s economic interests. Regulators such as SEBI, TRAI, IRDAI, and the electricity regulators are, therefore, expected to operate with a degree of

independence. Ministerial influence can operate through several channels. The administrative ministry may substantially influence appointments, removal, tenure and service conditions. In some cases, regulations made by a regulator require prior government approval. In others, the regulator’s human resources and service conditions are governed by rules made by the government. Most regulatory statutes bind regulators to directions issued by the government on policy and empower it to supersede regulatory boards. Each arrangement may have a historical justification. Taken together, however, they produce a fragmented oversight architecture. The case for insulation is, if anything, stronger for regulators than for tribunals. A tribunal deals with a dispute occasionally; a regulator interacts with the government and the regulated sector every day. Its relationship with the concerned ministry is continuous, not episodic. The possibility that an unpleasant interaction could affect a chairperson’s appointment, tenure or service conditions is an avoidable institutional vulnerability. The answer is not to make regulators unaccountable, nor to sever the legitimate relationship with the government. The government must continue to determine policy through legislation, provide democratic accountability and, where appropriate, oversee the broad regulatory architecture. What should change is who controls the institutional machinery through which independent regulation is delivered. A National Regulatory Commission (NRC), modelled on the NTC, could undertake the selection of chairpersons and members of regulators through a transparent and consistent process and periodically review their

performance. The government would continue to prescribe the common framework governing qualifications, manner of selection, appointment, salaries and allowances, resignation, removal, and other



conditions of service. The key change would be that these matters would not be left to the varying preferences and practices of sectoral ministries. This would not merely protect regulators from government influence; it would also protect the government from allegations of favouritism, avoidable litigation and the recurring cycle of Executive-dominated arrangements being challenged and reconstructed. The NRC could develop common standards and best practices for regulatory institutions, including standards relating to rule-making, enforcement, staffing and institutional support. It could also periodically assess regulatory performance against transparent parameters such as timeliness, quality and consistency of decisions, effectiveness of enforcement,

regulatory burden, stakeholder service, and achievement of statutory objectives. Such assessments could be placed in the public domain and reported to Parliament. Independence would, thereby, be accompanied by measurable accountability.

The NRC could be administratively located within a ministry that has no direct stake in the sectors being regulated. Alternatively, the government could create a new department of regulatory affairs, within which both the NTC and NRC could be located. Its mandate should be strictly institutional: prescribing the common framework, supporting selection and appointment, tenure, removal, service conditions, institutional administration and performance assessment, without any role in substantive regulatory decisions. The objective would be a common institutional architecture without compromising the substantive autonomy of individual regulators. Indeed, one may ask whether this reform should not have preceded tribunal reform. Regulators emerged earlier than regulatory tribunals, and their work is much more closely connected with the respective administrative ministries. If an arm’s-length institutional arrangement is considered important for tribunals, it is difficult to justify a weaker arrangement for the regulator, with the degree of independence varying from ministry to ministry. There is, however, an important caveat. Simply transferring powers from a sectoral ministry to another ministry does not by itself guarantee independence. The institutional design must ensure that Executive control does not merely move one level upwards. Appointment and removal mechanisms, in particular, must contain adequate safeguards against Executive capture.

5 Decor secrets of happy Couples

Married couples and live-in partners can increase their togetherness quotient with the way they decorate their living space.

softer, and creates a cosy ambience. White light is too harsh and unromantic, so go for dim yellow lights in your bedroom." Says interior designer Raseel Gujral, "Do fun things with your bedroom that raises the romance quotient."

A fun corner to play

Delhi-based couple Rakesh and Tanya Sehgal play table tennis on their dining table. "It's a great way to let out stress. Every couple needs to have a game corner. It's a great way to laugh and bust stress in your relationship." Says marriage counsellor Gitanjali Sharma, "You could be doing anything... practising yoga as a couple, playing chess or cards; these activities are a great way to spend time together."

Be creative with space

Whether decorative or functional, be specific with the utilisation of space in your house. Place ashtrays close to where your spouse likes to unwind, keep the keys on a table at the entrance, for instance. Try to keep the objects that you like within eye view. Says Sharma, "Most couples fight over small things in the kitchen or in the wardrobe; try to systematically place objects of everyday use."

Have a garden spot



A great outdoor spot with flowers and greenery is pure therapy. Says interior design expert Sanvari Alagh Nair, "Floral plants bring freshness to your home." Meera Patel, 35, marketing professional, says, "I think it's essential for a couple to surround themselves with herbs and vibrant flowers around the house. If they spend time in a mini garden together, they will bond deeply."

This season is perfect for growing phlox, helichrysum, gazania, salvia, cineraria and verbenas. These winter flowers will come to full bloom in your homes. You can also have small chairs where you can relax after a hectic day."

Don'ts

Don't fight over that lamp, mug or rug Don't remove or move any furniture without asking your partner Ask your partner specifically what colours or prints they like before doing anything drastic Try to keep away from bronze sculptures of leopards, cheetahs or anything too flashy and over the top Don't over-decorate your room, it's distracting and unnerving Your home is not a museum, try not to keep anything you can't touch



He likes clutter. She wants simplicity combined with luxury. So, how does a modern couple create a space for a happy marriage?

After the wedding, a couple should do up the decor of their home reflecting their combined tastes. For instance, they should display small takeaways from their travels in their living room. Don't let your

home have furniture that's designated as 'his' or 'hers' or 'yours' or 'mine'. In her book, Luxurious Minimalism, author Karen Howes writes, newlyweds can find ways to combine their two styles. "Strong-willed couples should learn to make room for the other's visual style." Here are some home decor solutions for couples:

Get a cosy coffee table for two

It's a place where you begin your day, discuss your goals and dreams. And it's a place where you come to have your evening coffee after a tiring day. Make sure the coffee table is big

enough for both of you to put your feet up. Says Jonathan Adler, home furnishings designer and author of the book, 100 Ways to Happy Chic Your Life, "A coffee table is more than just a piece of furniture, it's a place where intimate, everyday emotional bonding takes place." Furniture designer Chandini Nath Israni agrees, "A coffee table has emotional appeal for a couple, it can be the centrepiece of their lives."

Dim that light

Get a romantic look by using lighting that gives a soft glow to the bedroom through overhead lights and table lamps. Adds Israni, "Warm lighting makes the other person look

Add magic to your home decor



Bring in the change in your decor.

Proper lighting: Lighting can make or break a room: Mood lighting is very essential part of decor. Invest in a nice table lamp. Even hanging lamps will add much magic to your room.

A little bit of greenery: The sure shot way to add life to your room is to have an element of greenery in the room. Having plants in a room also has a soothing effect on one's mind. You can also have fresh flowers in the

vase. The fragrance of jasmine in a room really uplifts the soul. In your kitchen, add a small herb garden to your windowsill to add life to the room. Plus, they taste great!

Framed memories: Photographs are wonderful ways to add warmth and a sense of vibrancy to your home decor. Photographs that recall fond memories also can give a personal touch to your home. It brings in loads of happy memories. If you have old family photographs, then have these framed and hang them on the wall. Choose your frames carefully. A frame adds much life to photographs.

Fabric magic: Fabric is an easy and inexpensive way to combine all the elements of your room. Break in the monotony and play with your imagination. Think beyond only the ready-made fabric. Have fun by combining patterns, styles and different textures of fabric in accessories and furniture.

Bring a glow to your life with LEDs

People are also installing the power-saving lamp in their homes. Let's take a look at a few other stylish and interesting ways in which one can use the LEDs...

LIGHT UP STAIRWAYS

Using stairways as an optimal storage space is the in thing now. The latest trend is to install in-built racks under each stair in the house. How about lighting up the stairways in LEDs to throw some bright light? 3LED spotlights can light up the storage space enough to help you find whatever you are looking for.

JEWELLERY LED

Bracelets, neckpieces, rings and anklets are some options that you can gift your girl friend.

CLOCKS

Watches with radium dials and fluorescent watches have always been available. Now, time pieces that have LEDs to emit light are also flooding the market.

DRESSES

Katy Perry impressed everyone with her lights-embedded dress a few years ago. Now, you can flaunt LED dresses in style, too.

PARTY SUPPLIES LED

sticks, showlights and other party supplies like sunglasses, hats and magic wand can up the fun quotient in your bash.

ACCESSORIES

Having LEDs embossed in bags, clutches and purses can be a good option. Especially if you are out late in the night and need to desperately fish into your bag for cash and

The civic authorities across the country have taken PM Narendra Modi's 'Prakash Path' campaign seriously and are replacing High Pressure Sodium Vapour Lamps on the streets with LED ones.



converts electricity into light. These are extremely efficient and use almost 80% less energy than other forms of light sources, like halogen, sodium vapour or incandescent bulb.

BENEFITS OF LED

Lamps consume less power and energy compared to other conventional forms of lighting. Since the power conception is less, it translates to lesser amounts in electricity page. These can significantly reduce global warming because reportedly, only less than 70% of power consumed converts into heat and escapes into the atmosphere, unlike a sodium vapour lamp that emits more than 80%. These are resistant to

vibrations and temperatures, are free of hazardous materials like mercury and can operate in low DC voltage as well. LED bulbs can reportedly last for up to 100,000 hours. These can be made in any shape and colour.

DRAWBACKS

LEDs are costlier than conventional forms of lighting. These emit only about 80% of luminescence as compared to other forms of lighting. However, that can be altered by adding extra diodes.

cards!

FLASHY INTERIORS

Feel like throwing a house party and want to give a makeover to your home? A line of colourful LEDs will do the trick.

CUSHIONS AND PILLOWS

Glow-in-the-night pillows and cushions in various colours and shapes can add a zing to your bedroom.

WHAT IS LED

A Light Emitting Diode (LED) is a semi conductor device that

6 post dinner family Activities

To get your family bond better, here are a few activities you can do at home after dinner

Dinner is probably one meal throughout the day that you eat at home with your entire family. And there's no better way than do some activities post dinner time to enhance your bond with your loved ones. Here are a few...

Appreciation time

You can call it the appreciation time or the acknowledgement time. This is when you sit down with everyone and recognise the work done by each person, be it your husband, wife, children, parents etc. You make each member of the family say something about the other person that they acknowledge and would like the person to know.

Family movie night

How many times have you sat down with your whole

family and watched your favourite movie? Here's your chance to do that. You can save this activity for the weekends when you have more time to spend with your loved ones. On weekdays, you can sit down and watch your favourite sitcom.

Indoor play time

There's nothing better than playing a game of cards or chess with your kids or your husband before going off to bed. Not only will it help you bond better but also ensure that you stay active enough. Playing games is also the best way to relax after a long, tiring day at work and relieve your stress.

Fun craft time

Encourage your kid to do his or her craft work post dinner, so that you and your husband can help your child with it. Sitting around the table cutting, rolling craft paper and artwork is a fun way of spending time with your family.



Is home-schooling good for your Child?



Chennaiites say that home-schooling is definitely catching up in the city as many homes are turning into learning spaces. TOI catches up with a few parents and academicians to know more about the trend.

Padmashree Tadepalli, an education consultant, has decided to home-school her kids after she realized that every child is unique and therefore, comprehends things differently. "There are three different types of learning — visual, oratory and kinesthetic learning. While visual and oratory takes place by watching demonstrations and listening to lectures, a student carries out a physical activity in kinesthetic learning to understand things," states Padmashree.

So, doesn't our school education cater to the needs of every child? Padmashree responds, "For instance, in a class of 30 students, a teacher can't be expected to teach according to the need of each one of them. She can only follow a single method of teaching within the stipulated time given to her. So, it's obvious that

While quite a few schools in Chennai rank among the best ones in the country, it comes as a bit of a surprise that many urban parents are doubling up as teachers of their own kids.

every child doesn't get individual attention."

According to Priya Desikan, a former special educator and a homemaker, her eight-year-old son is more of a self-learner and therefore likes to explore things by himself. "I just facilitate him in whatever he does, and he learns all by himself. And, I don't set benchmarks for him. Now, he explores more on space, astronomy and cars. Since he does it by himself and out of his own interest, he internalizes it well. Though homeschooling students can either take NIOS (National Institute of Open Schooling) or IGCSE (International General Certificate of Secondary Education), which is equivalent to board exams, I am not planning to make him sit for any exams as of now," she says.

Home-schooling also allows blossoming of a child's creative side, say many parents. On

If you've decided to have one child or more than one, you'll find a lot of people giving you advice on various things. At the end of it all, it should be solely your decision. We give you a few pros and cons of having a single child.

You may see many people coming and asking your child whether he/she wants a brother or a sister regardless of whether you and your partner want another child.

Having one or two kids is solely a couple's



decision based on a lot of aspects. We tell you a few challenges and benefits of having one child.

Challenges

One of the major challenges most parents face is that the society pressurises them to have another child. The people who are trying to convince or pressurise the couple may not even know the financial

condition as well as other personal things about the couple. Their pressure tends to make the couple completely uncomfortable.

Another challenge you may face is that your child may feel lonely but even this isn't necessary. It actually depends on the way your child is brought up. If you can maintain a friendly relation with your kids, you can be their best friend, sibling and mean the world to

them.

Benefits

Rewards of having just one child are also immeasurable. You will have more money and more time and energy to devote to your kid. Your child will be well taken care of as all your attention will be on just one child and his upbringing.

What you as 'parent' should know

If you are planning to have just one child, make sure you give him/her the best you can. Also, while you do not like other giving you advice, even you should refrain from interfering in other people's family planning related issues. It is something very personal to the couple and no one has the right to intrude in one's personal matter.

Pros and cons of having just one Child

If you've decided to have one child or more than one, you'll find a lot of people giving you advice on various things. At the end of it all, it should be solely your decision. We give you a few pros and cons of having a single child.

5 point guide to get noticed at work

A step-by-step to cut promotion lines and be noticed at work



3 Jot it down

It's a boring job, but the rewards make up for it. The reputation for being reliable is slowly built and start with small steps. Keeping all the visiting cards you collect handy, phone numbers in a file, pens in a stand, a calendar on your desk — and you become the goto guy for everything. Jot down every little deliverable, task, errand so that you can remember or bring it up when everyone else has forgotten.

4 Keep books around

Sure, you can find everything on the Internet, but books give you an air of intellect. They also indicate that you keep yourself updated, cross-check your knowledge and believe in reference. Keep reference books, dictionary, thesaurus and journals pertaining to your profession at hand in your cubicle or desk. People may laugh at first, but then they'll

Forget spouting the 'right phrases' and walking the boss's dog. There are more solid ways to be noticed at work. And no, you don't have to stoop to sycophancy and late hours. If you really want to stand out at work, here are the things you should do:

1 Don't wait to be asked

Take the initiative and do little things that impact the team, without being asked. Preparing progress reports, putting back-ups in place or setting up reminders — it's a sure way to be noticed in a hurry. Very often, we only do as we are told and this turns the boss into a task-master. If you can see the logical conclusion of steps A and B, go ahead and do before being told to. You are acting like an

adult, paying attention and displaying foresight. All good things.

2 Don't shut up

Meetings are black holes that gulp time, attention and energy. Very little gets done in them and the average drone is dozing off or checking up on Twitter during them. First off, don't sit in a corner or near the door which indicates you are anxious to buzz off or remain unseen. Sit up front and pay attention. Ask questions and voice opinions — but not too much. You don't want to be the person that extends meetings pointlessly and makes everyone groan. Don't be afraid to disagree, just do it in a way that address the issue and does not make it personal. And keep it short. You don't want to get into an argument.

Be kind and respectful to the staff you don't have to 'work' with — janitors, liftman, peons and watchmen. But don't be condescending. Know their names like you would your colleagues' and address them by it. Don't forget 'please' and 'thank you's' and never raise your voice at them. Treating people, from whom you have nothing to gain materialistically, with respect immediately gives you exemplary character traits. While you are at it, also know the names and a little information about your colleagues' spouses and children.

5 Know the staff

Be kind and respectful to the staff you don't have to 'work' with — janitors, liftman, peons and watchmen. But don't be condescending. Know their names like you would your colleagues' and address them by it. Don't forget 'please' and 'thank you's' and never raise your voice at them. Treating people, from whom you have nothing to gain materialistically, with respect immediately gives you exemplary character traits. While you are at it, also know the names and a little information about your colleagues' spouses and children.

SC pauses Rs 5 lakh penalty, upholds student's detention relief in Noida DM case

The Supreme Court revised its interim order in the Noida DM case, staying the Rs 5 lakh compensation and strictures against DM Medha Roopam.

Delhi. (Agency)
The Supreme Court has revised its interim order in the plea filed by Gautam Buddh Nagar District Magistrate Medha Roopam, clarifying that its stay applies only to the adverse observations made by the Allahabad High Court against the officer and its direction to pay Rs 5 lakh compensation to student Akriti Chaudhary. The revised order makes it clear that the Supreme Court has not halted the Allahabad High Court's judgment quashing Chaudhary's detention under the National Security Act (NSA) in connection with the Noida workers' protest. The clarification came after the Supreme Court's order, uploaded on Wednesday, had initially stated that "till the matter is heard on merits, the operation of the impugned judgment, particularly, para Nos. 27 to 33 shall remain stayed." The subsequently revised order specifies that

"till the matter is heard on merits, the operation of paras nos. 27 to 33 of the impugned judgment including award of costs and strictures against the petitioner shall remain stayed." Paragraphs 27 to 33 of the Allahabad High Court judgment contained the strictures against Roopam and the direction to pay Rs 5 lakh compensation to Chaudhary. The High Court had directed that the amount be recovered from the salary of Roopam, who passed the detention order, as well as other officers responsible right down to the SHO. A bench comprising Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Justice N Kotiswar Singh heard the petitions filed by Roopam and the Uttar Pradesh government against the High Court's judgment. The Supreme Court's interim order came after the Allahabad High Court on September 2 quashed the detention of Chaudhary, a 25-year-old Delhi University history graduate, who was

taken into custody under the NSA in connection with the Noida workers' protest in April. Allowing Chaudhary's habeas corpus petition challenging her arrest, the High Court found



that the detention was based on a story "concocted" by the state and directed her immediate release if her arrest was not warranted in any other case.

The High Court strongly criticised the manner in which the detention order was passed by Roopam and warned that continued "despotic" conduct by "errant" bureaucracy could reduce Uttar Pradesh to an "Orwellian dystopia".

It also awarded Rs 5 lakh compensation to Chaudhary and directed that the amount be recovered from Roopam's salary, along with the salaries of other officers responsible, right down to the SHO.

The High Court further directed that its displeasure against the DM and police officers involved in preparing the dossier be recorded in their service records.

In its order, the High Court made several significant observations on the role of the bureaucracy and police. It said officers are entrusted with immense powers because they bear responsibility for upholding the constitutional and legal rights, dignity, honour and welfare of citizens.

Inspection flags repair needs in schools

Delhi. (Agency)
A comprehensive inspection of Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) schools has flagged major repair requirements in 254 schools and minor repair needs in another 667, with toilets emerging as one of the biggest infrastructure concerns across the civic body's schools. According to data accessed by this newspaper and officials aware of the matter, 1,460 of the corporation's 1,488 schools were covered during an external inspection conducted in the last week of August and the first week of September. Of these, around 921 schools were identified as requiring either major or minor repairs. Toilet infrastructure accounted for a substantial share of the identified deficiencies. Around 112 schools were found to require major toilet repairs, while another 466 required minor repairs. The condition of main gates was also flagged, with 50 schools requiring major repairs and 318 requiring minor repairs. According to officials, repair work has already been initiated for several infrastructure issues, including building repairs, toilets, main gates and boundary walls. For minor repairs, heads of schools receive funds annually, and the corporation is currently in the process of releasing funds for the current academic year. For major repairs, files have already been prepared and sent to the Engineering Department for necessary action. The inspection also assessed other basic facilities and safety-related aspects, including boundary walls, drinking water, cleanliness and sanitation, furniture, electrical and fire safety, first aid, fans and lighting. The external inspection was carried out through a cross-zone mechanism, with principals and heads of schools from different zones designated as inspecting officers and supported by mentors. The exercise also covered teaching-learning practices, student attendance and learning outcomes, implementation of foundational literacy and numeracy programmes, co-curricular activities and school-community participation.

Study flags cancer risk from Yamuna vegetables

Delhi. (Agency)
A new study published in Energy Nexus has raised public health concerns over vegetables cultivated along the Yamuna floodplains in Delhi, flagging high levels of heavy metal contamination and associated cancer risks for consumers. The research, led by Professor Dinabandhu Sahoo of the Department of Botany, examined commonly



consumed vegetables grown using untreated Yamuna wastewater. The study noted that Delhi contributes nearly 70-80 per cent of the river's pollution load, while peri-urban farmers rely on contaminated water for irrigation. The study found toxic metals, including nickel, chromium, cadmium and lead, accumulating in vegetables at levels exceeding safety limits prescribed by the FAO. Spinach and onions recorded nickel concentrations up to 97 and 65 times higher than permissible levels, respectively, while chromium levels were 22 times higher in mustard. The researchers called for regular monitoring of soil and crops, stricter pollution control and cultivation of crops that absorb fewer heavy metals.

Opposition's fresh attack on EC over report of valid Goa voters left out of electoral roll

The Opposition alleged that the Goa case shows how centralised control of the EC's voter-roll software can override ground-level decisions and leave eligible voters off the electoral roll.

Delhi. (Agency)
The Opposition on Thursday launched a fresh round of attacks on the Election Commission after a report claimed 97 voters in Goa, who were found eligible by ground-level officers, were nevertheless left out of the final electoral roll following the Special Intensive Revision (SIR). Directly attacking Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the report, the Congress alleged that Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar had "hijacked the entire system" at the behest of the Prime Minister and was "carrying out anti-national acts". Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said it proves that the "election process has been thoroughly compromised and vitiated" and

reiterated the party's demand for Kumar's resignation. An Indian Express report alleged that 97 Goa voters who were found eligible



for inclusion in the 2026 final electoral roll by local Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) were left out because the Election Commission's centralised ECINet system, controlled by its IT division in Delhi, did not allow the

EROs to reverse earlier deletion decisions.

Despite the Goa Chief Electoral Officer, Sanjay Goel, sending eight emails in seven days seeking a rollback facility, and the Commission's Deputy Election Commissioner directing the IT division to enable the correction, the facility was allegedly not provided before the final roll was published.

However, CEO Goel refused to comment on India Today TV's questions about the deleted voters, saying he had no information about the matter. "I have no information about the matter. I will check my report and get back," he said. The development comes amid a massive row over another report that the two Election Commissioners.

You must be impartial: Court pulls up EC over symbol clearance to Team Ritabrata

Delhi. (Agency)
The Calcutta High Court on Thursday hit out at the Election Commission over its decision to allot the envelope symbol, previously used by the Indian Secular Front (ISF), to the Ritabrata Banerjee-led faction of the Trinamool Congress for the upcoming West Bengal bypolls. The court said that the poll body should act impartially and questioned why it chose the envelope symbol for the Ritabrata camp when 183 others were available. "Authority should act impartially and fairly. Once there was an objection just months ago, it was used by another party and you have 183 symbols? Why involve that? And you are producing rules instead of being

impartial," the court observed, according to legal website LiveLaw.

The observations came while the court was hearing a petition filed by the ISF,



an opposition party in West Bengal, challenging the Election Commission's decision to allot the envelope symbol to Ritabrata Banerjee's Democratic Trinamool

Congress for the October 6 Assembly bypolls.

The Election Commission told the court that the ISF had been allotted the envelope symbol earlier but that it remained a free symbol rather than one reserved for the party. The poll body argued that the ISF was an unrecognised political party and therefore could not claim a reserved symbol, LiveLaw reported.

"Why are your authorities doing like this? Why entering into these disputing things? How many symbols they have? 183? Why are you putting envelopes?" the court said. The High Court questioned whether the poll body's actions were unnecessarily forcing political parties into litigation.

In Another Bihar Horror, Teen Sexually Assaulted By Group Of Men On Camera

Delhi. (Agency)
After the sexual harassment incident on camera in Bihar's Jamui, another video of a similar horror has surfaced from Samastipur, 131 km away. In the second incident from Bihar, a group of men on motorcycles surrounded the girl and a boy who was travelling with her on a village road. They abused her verbally and pushed her around the road. Four accused have been arrested and a first information report has been filed, a senior police officer said. The video surfaced on Wednesday and the incident is said to have happened in Samastipur's Jagatsinghpur village. The police said they immediately set out to take action the moment they saw the video of the incident. According to local reports, the girl and the boy had stopped on the road to take photographs. Suddenly, some local men came and surrounded them. They called her names and molested her. The men seen in the viral video were from Jagatsinghpur village itself, locals said. "Based on a viral video showing a group of men harassing a girl in broad daylight in the Jagatsinghpur area, four accused have been arrested and an FIR has been filed," the police officer said. Janata Dal (United) leader Rajeev Ranjan strongly condemned the incident. "If the criminals involved in such crimes don't take a warning from what action was taken in the Jamui incident, then they will end up behind bars," he said. Just days ago, three people were arrested in Bihar's Jamui after a video showing them harassing two Class 10 students - a boy and a girl - surfaced online. Many on social media had tagged the Bihar Police, urging action against those involved in the disturbing clip. The video showed the couple surrounded by a group of men with one of them holding the collar of the boy's shirt, pulling him away from her. As she tried to run, a masked man caught her from behind. The two had gone out on a scooter after attending coaching classes on Saturday evening.

Lady Shri Ram College students take to streets, demand right be roam safely

Delhi. (Agency)
Two days after a 17-year-old girl was gangraped near Aastha Kunj on Monday, over 200 students of Lady Shri Ram College for Women took to the streets in protest on Wednesday. The girls, most of them with their covered faces, gathered near the college's back gate, close to where one of the accused was apprehended following a police encounter. Carrying posters with bold messages like "Raaton pe bhi haq hai hamara" and "Women hold up half the sky," they marched through the adjoining area raising slogans on women's right to safety. "It's not my fault I crave the night air, it's your fault you crave taking it away from me," read another poster. The



march flagged long-standing concerns over inadequate CCTV coverage and limited patrolling around the premises of the college. Students further noted

that cases of stalking and harassment were fairly common near the back gate area. Several even claimed that complaints of stalking and harassment

near the back gate had been repeatedly raised earlier as well.

The protesters also alleged inaction on the part of the college authorities, claiming that the principal had not met them even once since they had started protesting.

The college's sociology department issued a strongly worded note condemning the assault and expressing solidarity with the survivor.

Physical classes at the college—suspended on Tuesday and Wednesday following the incident and the police encounter barely 50 metres from the gate—are set to resume on Thursday. Principal Kanika Ahuja, however, said faculty mentors and counsellors had been asked to remain available, reiterating that student safety was paramount.

Rupee falls 11 paise to 95.84 against US dollar in early trade

MUMBAI. (Agency)

The rupee stayed weak, sliding 11 paise to 95.84 against the US dollar in early trade on Thursday, as geopolitical uncertainties led to a sharp surge in crude oil prices and pushed US bond yields as well as the greenback higher. Forex traders said the inflow of foreign capital failed to support the local currency due to the selling pressure in the domestic equity market and a strengthening American currency. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 95.84 against the American currency and stayed under pressure, registering a loss of 11 paise from its previous closing level. The rupee ended Wednesday's session 11 paise lower at 95.73 against the US dollar, a day after appreciating 16 paise. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, traded at 100.87, up 0.06 per cent. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, were trading lower by 0.97 per cent but remained elevated at USD 102.08 per barrel compared to the roughly USD 72 per barrel level from late February before the Iran war. According to analysts, oil prices that began stabilising in the last few sessions rose again past USD 100 a barrel due to a lack of diplomatic progress over the West Asia peace after the US and Iranian officials met on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York. President Donald Trump, during an address to the annual gathering, threatened that the US might "annihilate" the Islamic Republic if a deal couldn't be made. On the domestic equity market front, Sensex declined 506.43 points or 0.68 per cent to 74,321.82, while the Nifty fell 181.00 points or 0.77 per cent to 23,266.15. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) purchased equities worth Rs 1,617.45 crore on a net basis on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

Centre cuts edible oil import duties; zero duty on crude sunflower oil

New Delhi. (Agency)

The Ministry of Finance on Wednesday notified a reduction in import duties on crude and refined soybean, palm and sunflower oils. The government also scrapped the basic customs duty (BCD) on crude sunflower oil. The reductions, notified by the Department of Revenue, will be effective from September 24. The duty on sunflower oil has been removed completely, allowing the import to happen at zero duty from 10% previously, while the BCD on refined sunflower oil has been reduced from 32.5% to 22.5%. The central government has reduced the basic customs BCD on crude soybean oil and crude palm oil from 10% to 5%, while the duty on their refined variants like refined soybean oil and refined palm oil has been cut from 32.5% to 27.5%. The duty cuts come against the backdrop of India's dependence on imported edible oils to meet domestic consumption. Changes in import duties can help reduce the landed cost of oils and, depending on global prices, currency movements and the extent to which the reduction is passed down to the domestic prices. With the duty cuts on edible oil, the prices of edible oil are likely to soften, depending on how the reduction trickles down through the supply chain and eases the price pressure on retail consumers. The announcement by the Ministry came at a time when India's edible oil companies planned to raise prices by around 7-8% ahead of the festive season. Previously, media reported that due to higher import costs, the companies' margins were being squeezed.

Sukhoi-30, Porsche and Tesla: Two bearing company stocks are serving giants; check vitals

HONG KONG. (Agency)

The Indian bearing industry is no longer limited to the automotive sector. With the growth in defense and aerospace manufacturing, new opportunities for precision bearings are emerging. According to reports, two bearing stocks have seen a surge of up to 170% in 2026. Bearings are used in fighter jets, helicopters, missiles, radars, and defense systems, as well as in automotive and industrial applications. Bearings are an essential part of machinery where parts move to reduce friction between moving parts and support loads. The rise of domestic manufacturing in the defense and aerospace sectors is now creating a new market for them. Precision bearings are utilised in aircraft engines, helicopter rotors, landing systems and defense equipment.

NRB Bearings and Sukhoi-30 connection

NRB Bearings is a key company poised to benefit from this shift. It manufactures high-precision ball and roller bearings alongside customised friction management solutions, boasting a portfolio of over 4,000 product part numbers. The company has prioritized aerospace and defense within its strategic growth initiatives.

In January 2026, NRB acquired the Bengaluru-based Mahant Tool Room, a company specializing in aerospace precision machining. NRB has proposed an investment of Rs 37.5 crore in the entity to expand capacity for defense, aviation, and aerospace components.

Production order for Sukhoi-30

NRB Bearings supplies components for defense vehicles, tanks, and other defense equipment. The company has secured a production order to manufacture plain spherical bearings for the Sukhoi-30 fighter jet.

NSE shares jump 5% after listing at Rs 1,800

NSE listed at Rs 1,800 on the BSE and climbed to Rs 1,878 in debut trade. The listing followed a 5.71-times-subscribed IPO and put investor focus on valuation and trading-driven earnings.

New Delhi. (Agency)

Shares of the National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) made their market debut on Thursday, listing at Rs 1,800 on the BSE, a premium of 0.84% over the IPO issue price of Rs 1,785. The stock then gained further ground, rising as much as 5.2% from its issue price to hit a day's high of Rs 1,878. At the latest update, NSE shares were trading at Rs 1,861.50, up Rs 61.50, or 3.42%, from the listing price of Rs 1,800. The stock was up Rs 76.50, or 4.29%, compared with its IPO issue price of Rs 1,785. The stock opened at Rs 1,800 and has so far traded between Rs 1,800 and Rs 1,878. Its volume stood at 343.80 lakh shares, while turnover was Rs

6,327.48 crore. The stock's VWP, or volume-weighted average price, stood at Rs 1,840.46. The NSE IPO was a Rs 22,561.57 crore offer for sale of 12.64 crore shares. The issue opened for subscription on September 17 and closed on September 21. The IPO was priced in the range of Rs 1,700 to Rs 1,785 per share, with a lot size of eight shares. The minimum investment for a retail investor at the upper end of the price band was Rs 14,280. The issue was subscribed 5.71 times overall, with the retail portion subscribed 1.39 times, the QIB (Ex Anchor) category 12.68 times and the NII category 6.55 times. NSE MARKET CAPITALISATION

At the current share price of Rs 1,861.50, NSE's market capitalisation stood at around Rs 4,60,535.63 crore, according to the market data. The stock has a 52-week high of Rs 1,878, which is also its current day's high, while its 52-week low is Rs 1,800. The stock's upper price band is Rs 2,160 and lower

price band is Rs 1,440, with a 20% price band.

Shivani Nyati, Head of Wealth at Swastika Investmart Ltd, said the NSE's debut at Rs 1,800 represented a modest premium over the issue price and reflected realistic market expectations



rather than an aggressive listing-day spike. She said NSE's position in India's capital markets, along with its strong presence in the cash and equity futures segments, gives it a significant

competitive position.

However, Nyati also pointed to the company's dependence on market trading activity, with nearly 79% of its revenue tied to trading volumes. She said this makes near-term earnings sensitive to market activity cycles and regulatory changes. "The stock trades at a notable discount to its primary listed peer, BSE, leaving strategic head-room for long-term re-rating as India's financialisation deepens," Nyati said. She added that short-term and listing-gain investors could use a stop-loss at Rs 1,740, while long-term investors could hold through volume-driven volatility. The NSE share price has moved above its issue price after a modest debut, with the stock touching Rs 1,878 during the session. At the current price of Rs 1,861.50, it is 4.29% above the IPO price of Rs 1,785.

Govt cuts import duty on crude, refined edible oils amid rise in retail prices

New Delhi. (Agency)

The government has cut import duties on crude and refined edible oils, including palm oil, soybean oil and sunflower oil, in a move aimed at keeping cooking oil prices in check ahead of the festival season. The basic customs duty (BCD) on crude soybean oil and crude palm oil has been reduced to 5% from 10%, while the duty on crude sunflower oil has been cut to zero from 10%. For refined edible oils, the import duty on refined soybean oil and refined palm oil has been reduced to 27.5% from 32.5%. The duty on refined sunflower oil has been cut to 22.5% from 32.5%. The new duty rates will come into effect from midnight tonight. The



duty cuts are expected to lower the import cost of edible oils, which could help ease prices for consumers if the reduction is passed through the supply chain. India relies heavily on imports to meet its domestic cooking

oil requirements, making global edible oil prices and import duties important factors for retail prices.

The duty reduction comes ahead of the festival season, when demand for edible oils typically rises.

Insurance shares fall as IRDAI proposes caps on commissions to encourage policy payment continuation

New Delhi. (Agency)

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has proposed a new ceiling for commissions on individual life insurance policies, aiming to curb upfront sales incentives and encourage policyholders to persist with multiyear payment plans.

Insurance and insurance-linked stocks fell between 10 per cent to 20 per cent on Thursday in reaction to the draft paper on these distribution reforms. Commission structure for life insurance policies should incentivise distribution persons and entities to nudge policyholders to persist with the multi-year payment plans instead of incentivising first year payment," the regulator said in a consultation paper. IRDAI proposed maximum commission limits for individual non-linked and linked life insurance policies based on the premium payment term (PPT). For PPTs of less than five years, the proposed cap is 5 per cent for distribution entities and

6.25 per cent for agents. In policies with five-year PPT, the caps rise to 10 per cent and 12.5 per cent, respectively. For PPTs of six to eight years the limits would be 14 per cent and 17.5 per cent, respectively. These rise to 18 per cent and 22.5 per cent for nine-year



payment terms, and 20 per cent and 25 per cent for PPTs of 10 years or more. The regulator also proposed lower commissions for single premium products and products with tax incentives. For example, first year commission for individual savings policies with a single premium would be capped at 1 per cent for distribution entities and 2 per cent for agents, while single premium pure term policies would see 7.5 per cent and 10 per cent caps. Commissions should be comprehensive, covering incentives, awards, selling expense reimbursements and non-cash benefits, the paper said. The first-year commission could be up to 7.5 per cent for distribution entities and 10 percent for agents in single-premium term policy.

Sensex, Nifty below 23,250 as financial stocks and rising crude drag market

New Delhi. (Agency)

Benchmark indices opened sharply lower on Thursday as a spike in crude oil prices above \$100 a barrel and selling in financial stocks weighed on investor sentiment. Concerns around the Middle East conflict and a proposed overhaul of insurance commission rules also added pressure on the market.

At 9:41 am, the Sensex was trading at 74,192.25, down 636 points, or 0.85%, from its previous close of 74,828.25. The index opened at 74,272.40. The Nifty 50 was at 23,237.45, down 209.35 points, or 0.89%, after opening at 23,221.80. The sell-off was broad-based, with 14 of the 16 major sectoral indices trading lower. The broader market also came under pressure, with the Nifty Midcap 50 down 1.41%, the Nifty Midcap 100 falling 1.19% and the Nifty Smallcap 100 declining 0.76%. India VIX jumped 9.90% to 11.37.

FINANCIAL STOCKS DRAG MARKET

Financial stocks were among the biggest drags on the benchmarks. The Nifty Financial Services 25/50 index fell 1.56%, while the Nifty Private Bank index declined 1.76%. Financial Services Ex-Bank dropped 2.62% and the MidSmall Financial Services index fell 2.61%. Among the major Sensex stocks, Bajaj Finance was the biggest loser, down 3.89%, while Axis Bank fell 3.66% and Bajaj Finserv declined 2.98%. Kotak Mahindra Bank dropped 1.82%, HDFC Bank fell 1.39% and ICICI Bank declined 0.64%. SBI was down 0.75%. The weakness in financial stocks came after the insurance regulator proposed changes to commission rules, including a cap on payouts, linking commissions to product complexity and spreading life insurers' commissions beyond the first year.

CRUDE OIL, MIDDLE EAST TENSIONS IN FOCUS

Crude oil remained another major concern for investors. Brent crude was trading at \$102.24 a barrel, down 0.81% in the latest market data, while WTI crude was at \$91.43, down 0.79%.

However, Brent had risen above the \$100 mark in the previous session after Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said at the UN General Assembly that Tehran would not surrender to US pressure. The rise in oil prices has renewed concerns around inflation, India's import bill and corporate earnings.

Dr V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Limited, said, "The sharp spike in Brent crude above \$102 and the US 10-year bond yield rising to 5.11% will weigh on the market today. So long as these two global headwinds remain, the prospects of a smart recovery in the market appear remote."

Tata Sons listing: 'Trusts not adequately briefed on RBI talks

Tata Trusts have opposed the listing of Tata Sons and have urged the company to examine alternatives.

Mumbai. (Agency)

Tata Sons' extended engagement with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) over its regulatory status has raised concerns within the Tata group over whether the Tata Trusts — the company's controlling shareholder — were adequately kept informed of the discussions with the regulator and options considered during the process. Sources familiar with the developments say the Tata Trusts were not given adequate updates on the submissions made to the RBI, hearings held with the regulator or the course that the regulatory process was taking. The question being raised is whether the Trusts, which hold about 66 per cent of Tata Sons, were kept informed of the representations being made on the company's behalf and of the alternatives being discussed with the regulator. Tata Sons and Tata Trusts did not respond to a



mail from Tata Sons had sought to surrender its registration as a Core Investment Company (CIC), a move that would have allowed the group's principal holding company to remain unlisted. The RBI had classified Tata Sons as an upper-layer non-banking financial company (NBFC-UL) in September 2022, a classification that carries a requirement to list within the prescribed timeframe. Tata Sons subsequently pursued deregistration as a CIC as a route to avoiding a public listing. In August this year, the RBI said the deregistration application was still under examination. That effort, however,

ended on September 12 when the RBI rejected Tata Sons' application to surrender its registration and directed the company to take the necessary steps to ensure full compliance with the applicable regulatory requirements. The decision effectively put the company back on the path towards a stock market listing. The issue now is not merely what decision the RBI ultimately took, but what transpired during the several years that Tata Sons was engaged with the regulator. "It appears the Trusts did not have a clue about the talks with the RBI," said a source. The concern, according to people aware of the matter, is

fundamentally one of process. The Trusts apparently wanted Tata Sons to explore all possible regulatory and legal avenues that could reconcile compliance with the RBI's requirements while preserving the company's existing ownership and structure. That position did not necessarily amount to a refusal to engage with the regulator. Tata Trusts have opposed the listing of Tata Sons and have urged the company to examine alternatives. The Trusts had not agreed to a stock-market listing and wanted other options to be explored following the RBI communication. The RBI's decision has nevertheless changed the immediate regulatory landscape. Following the rejection of the deregistration request, the Tata Sons board on September 17 decided to proceed with a listing of the holding company in line with the RBI's directive. The board's decision was taken alongside a separate resolution extending N Chandrasekaran's tenure as executive chairman for another five years. The September 17 board meeting also brought the differences between Tata Sons and the Tata Trusts into the open. Tata Trusts chairman Noel Tata opposed Chandrasekaran's reappointment.

NEWS BOX

Car lifters' racket busted:
Three arrested in Bengaluru,
cops recover 10 stolen
vehicles

BENGALURU(Agency).

Bengaluru police have arrested three persons for allegedly forging vehicle registration certificates (RCs), bank no-objection certificates (NOCs) and seals of government offices/officials and using them to sell stolen cars.

Ten high-end cars and a two-wheeler worth around Rs 2 crore have been seized. The accused N Somesh, 46, of Kengeri; S Santosh alias Appu, 37, of Jnanabharathi; and C Prabhakar, 43, of Soladevanahalli. This racket came to light after a resident of Mehboob Layout in Wilson Garden filed a police complaint on September 3.

Prabhakar, a car dealer known to the complainant, claimed that he had an SUV for sale and sent photographs of the vehicle to him through WhatsApp. The dealer asked the complainant to pay an advance of Rs 20,000 through UPI to one of his associates, promising to show the vehicle the same day. Later, the complainant met the dealer near a park in Wilson Garden, where the vehicle was handed over to him along with its RC. Later, it was found that the RC was fake.

Prabhakar allegedly confessed that he and his associates forged RCs, bank NOCs and seals of government offices and officials and supplied them to dealers, who used them to sell stolen vehicles to unsuspecting customers.

Shawls set off war of
words in Karnataka
Legislative Council

BENGALURU (Agency).

A discussion on drought in the Legislative Council took an unexpected turn on Wednesday, with "shawl politics" taking centre stage after a green shawl worn by an MLC triggered a war of words between the ruling party and opposition. The exchange soon moved to Chief Minister DK Shivakumar's shawl and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's coat.

The exchange began after BJP MLC Naveen Kottige threw on a green shawl as he rose to speak on drought and farmers' issues. Congress MLC S Ravi remarked that Naveen had put on the shawl only when his name was called to speak, and said it would have got more "respect" had he worn it earlier. He suggested that the gesture appeared to be a show and that green shawls, farmers and the soil should be "in the heart". Naveen hit back, saying Ravi should instead look at the shawl worn by CM Shivakumar during the drought. He said the session had been convened to discuss problems faced by farmers. Ravi said the issue appeared to be aimed at getting publicity on YouTube and scoring brownie points. He said CM had his own style of dressing and clarified that he was questioning Naveen's "showoff attitude" and not his capability.

219 flood-prone areas
identified in Chennai; 1K
pumps to be deployed

CHENNAI(Agency).

Based on the flooding during 2015, 2021 and 2023 monsoon, the corporation has identified 219 flood-prone locations across Chennai, including areas along the ECR and OMR.

Speaking at a press meet, Corporation Commissioner G S Sameeran said the vulnerable locations include low-lying areas as well as sites where metro rail construction is under way. Pumping arrangements have been made available at these locations.

"We have instructed metro officials that excavation areas at construction sites, particularly those involving underground metro works, can be used as temporary underground sumps during heavy rain. The accumulated water can then be released gradually after the rain subsides, instead of being pumped into the drains immediately," he said.

Large institutions and campuses, including IIT Madras, Anna University and IT campuses along the OMR, have also been instructed not to immediately discharge rainwater from their premises onto the OMR or ECR. "They have been asked to make arrangements for pumps and sumps and release the water in a staggered manner after some time," he said. A total of 1,320 motor pumps have been arranged at vulnerable and low-lying areas.

In addition, 36 inflatable boats and 36 fiberglass reinforced plastic boats have been kept ready. 215 relief centres have been readied, ahead of monsoon. Nearly 3,500 volunteers have registered with GCC to assist during flood-like situations and for preparedness measures.

The commissioner, on Wednesday, inspected the Adyar estuary and said precautionary measures are being taken in view of the El Nino conditions and the possibility of backflow into the stormwater drains connected to the Adyar estuary.

All cases against Bhujbal over: Minister
discharged in State Central library case

With this order, Chhagan Bhujbal is discharged from all pending corruption cases filed by the ACB when he served as a Public Works Department Minister from 2004 to 2014

Mumbai (Agency).

Maharashtra state minister and NCP leader Chhagan Bhujbal has been discharged by a special court in a case filed by the state Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), linked to alleged irregularities in the construction project for a State Central library at Mumbai University. With this order, Chhagan Bhujbal has been discharged from all pending corruption cases filed by the ACB when he served as a Public Works Department Minister from 2004 to 2014.

State Central Library case

The ACB had booked Chhagan Bhujbal and others for allegedly causing a loss of over Rs 75 crore to the state and benefiting a private firm. The others have also been discharged. The agency had alleged that Chhagan Bhujbal, who was then the Public Works Department Minister, ignored the objections raised in the proposal and the feasibility report. It also alleged that Bujhbal received kickbacks for favouring a particular developer for the construction of the library near the Mumbai University. The

case also involved allegations of leasing out of prime government land at a throwaway price. According to the ACB, in 1986, the Mumbai University gave a part of its Kalina campus land to the state government, on a condition that a central library would be



built there. Bhujbal, through his lawyer Sudarshan Khawase, had submitted that there was no evidence about any irregularities in the Mumbai University corruption case. The discharge plea said

there was no pecuniary advantage to Bhujbal or the private firm, as was alleged, and that transactions were part of funds for awareness of another government project. The court was told that audits related to these transactions also showed no proven irregularity.

Chhagan Bhujbal spent over two years in jail in a separate case filed by the ED in 2016 and was discharged in January 2026. In 2021, he was discharged in a corresponding case filed by the ACB, related to the construction of Maharashtra Sadan in Delhi. The ACB had filed a case against Bhujbal and others in 2015 after a PIL filed in the Bombay High Court sought an inquiry into alleged irregularities in awarding contracts worth over Rs 100 crore for three projects in 2006 when Bhujbal was the PWD minister.

The contracts in question were given to Chamankar Developers for the construction of Maharashtra Sadan in Delhi, a new Regional Transport Office building in Andheri and a state guest house in Malabar Hill.

'DNA tests exceptional': Bombay HC sets aside relief for 'illegitimate' son

Mumbai (Agency).

Observing that DNA tests cannot be directed as a "matter of routine" or used for a "fishing inquiry" without parties first leading sufficient evidence, the Bombay High Court on Tuesday (September 22) set aside a Nashik trial court order to conduct a DNA test on the legal heirs of a deceased man in a suit seeking partition of his properties.

The DNA test by forensic laboratory was ordered on a plea by the "illegitimate" son of the deceased person filed through his mother. The HC said DNA tests can be conducted in "exceptional and deserving cases" with insufficient factual evidence. A single-judge bench of Justice Sandeep V Marne passed the verdict on a writ plea by the legal heirs of the deceased man challenging a September 2018 order by the Nashik court, which had allowed an application for a DNA examination.

The then-minor boy, who is now nearly 19 years old, had filed a partition suit through his

mother in 2016 seeking a one-fifth share of the deceased's self-acquired properties, claiming he was born out of an extra-marital relationship between the deceased and his mother, a claim denied by the defendant legal



heirs. The minor boy then moved an application for his DNA test with the defendant legal heirs to establish his biological paternity, which the local court allowed in 2018, prompting the legal heirs to approach

the HC. Justice Marne, setting aside the Nashik court order, referred to settled legal principles and observed, "DNA test is not to be directed as a matter of routine" and "courts must first consider the existing evidence to assess the presumption of legitimacy."

"Only if evidence on record is not sufficient to come to a finding of legitimacy, then the Court can consider ordering a DNA test," the judge noted. The bench stressed that even if "insufficiency of evidence" is established, before ordering DNA tests, the court must ensure it "does not cause harm to the parties." "Mere dispute created by either of the parties about factum of paternity is not a ground to direct the DNA test as a matter of course... The DNA test can be directed to be conducted only in exceptional and deserving cases where the evidence is insufficient. The court must also not permit a DNA test to be used as a means of fishing or roving enquiry in absence of a sufficient factual foundation," the HC held and allowed the plea.

Dalit youth found dead inside police station in UP,
family says he was tortured, hanging staged

Youth was facing abduction case after eloping with minor girl; SHO, IO suspended for alleged negligence; DM recommends magisterial probe

Lucknow(Agency).

Policemen and family members of a minor girl were booked for murder and under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act after a Dalit youth was found hanging inside a room of Patti police station in Pratapgarh district of Uttar Pradesh on Monday.

The youth was facing an abduction case filed by the girl's father after two had allegedly eloped. Pratapgarh Superintendent of Police Deepak Bhukar suspended Patti SHO Anand Pal Singh and investigating officer Omkar Singh for alleged negligence in the discharge of their duties. According to Patti Circle Officer Pradeep Singh, the girl's father had lodged a case alleging that the youth had abducted his 17-year-old daughter with the intention of marrying her. The two belong to the same village. The girl was recovered from

Ghaziabad and her statements were recorded before the police and a magistrate. "She stated that she had gone with the youth on her own volition and wanted to live with him. Since she is a minor, the law does not allow her to take this decision until she is a major," Singh told. The youth had not been arrested and walked into the police station on Monday, the CO said. He was not kept in the lock-up but was sitting in a room where the investigation officer was questioning him about the abduction case. The officer left the room for some work and, on returning, found the youth hanging from an iron rod attached to a bathroom ventilator, Singh said. According to police, the youth used a strip apparently torn from a blanket in the room. He was taken to a hospital, where he was declared brought dead. Singh said the SHO and the sub-inspector were

suspended as they were responsible for keeping watch on the accused while he was at the police station. The CO said that this was the second time the youth and the girl



had allegedly eloped. On the earlier occasion too, the girl was recovered and had said that she had left on her own and wanted to live with the youth. She was handed over to her parents as she was a minor. This time, after the girl was recovered, the

youth went to the police station and claimed that they had married and were living as a married couple, Singh said. The youth's family, however, alleged that he had been tortured by the police at the instance of the girl's father and that the hanging was staged to conceal his death. On the basis of the family's complaint, the policemen and members of the girl's family were booked, the CO said. "The investigation will establish the allegations against them," he added. The case has been registered under BNS sections 103(1) (murder) and 351(3) (criminal intimidation), along with provisions of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. The Pratapgarh Police said CCTV footage and other evidence had been secured. The District Magistrate has recommended a magisterial inquiry into the death.

Rs 493 crore spent, but Mumbai still can't buy clean air

BMC spent 92% of its Rs 620.11-crore air-quality grant received from the Centre to improve the city's air quality, 87 per cent of this money was spent on procuring BEST buses half of which never got delivered

Mumbai(Agency).

Mumbai's clean-air ranking has slipped again even as the BMC has spent Rs 573.88 crore, or 92.54 per cent of the Rs 620.11 crore it received under the 15th Finance Commission's air-quality grant. Nearly Rs 500 crore of the grant went towards procuring electric buses for BEST, but the transport undertaking's overall fleet has shrunk by nearly 29 per cent since 2021-22 and around half of the 2,100 buses ordered under the scheme are yet to be delivered.

Mumbai ranked 28th among 48 major metropolitan cities in the 2026 national clean air survey whose findings were announced earlier this month, down from 25th in 2025. The city had ranked 28th in 2024 and 10th in 2023. The latest figures, accessed by The Indian Express through documents obtained under the Right to

Information Act, provide an update on the utilisation of the funds first reported by this newspaper in 2024. The FFC is a grant allotted by the Department of Expenditure (DOE) of the Union finance ministry to the Urban Local Bodies (ULB) across states for better air quality management. The FFC funds are disbursed to the ULBs on recommendations made by the union ministry of environment, forest and climate change (MoEFCC). At the time, the BMC had earmarked nearly 80 per cent of the grant for electric buses despite its own Mumbai Air Pollution Mitigation Plan, identifying construction and demolition dust, road dust and open burning of solid waste as the top three contributors to air pollution. Of the Rs

620.11 crore received between 2020-21 and 2022-23, Rs 493.37 crore, or 79.56 per cent, was allocated to BEST for



acquiring electric buses under a wet lease arrangement. By January this year, Rs 573.88 crore had been utilised, leaving Rs 46.23 crore with the civic body with Rs

21.47 crore earmarked for a waste processing plant, Rs 9.27 crore for scaling up green spaces and Rs 8.47 crore for installing piped natural gas lines at crematoriums.

However, relatively small amounts were spent on research and identifying pollution sources. The BMC earmarked Rs 50 lakh for expert and research services from IIT Bombay and spent Rs 36 lakh on identifying air pollution hotspots. The BEST fleet, meanwhile, declined from 3,546 buses in 2021-22 to 2,532 in 2026-27. In March 2022, BEST had awarded a tender for 2,100 electric buses, with delivery scheduled to be completed by August 2023. According to BEST officials, around half of the consignment is yet to be delivered.

NEWS BOX

India does not have a football culture: Brazil coach Carlo Ancelotti



New Delhi. (Agency)

Brazil football head coach Carlo Ancelotti has said that India does not have a football culture. The former Real Madrid manager did not mince words in his analysis of the Indian football scene, stating that it is yet to build a grassroots programme that allows them to build a pool of young players.

Speaking ahead of India's friendly with Brazil, set to be played in Kolkata on October 3, Ancelotti said that he is excited to visit Kolkata. The Indian team are set to play three international friendlies against top quality teams, starting September 25. India will play Panama, Brazil, and Uruguay, with the last two matches set to be playing in the Bengal capital. Speaking from Brisbane, Ancelotti said that it was important for Brazil to know about other footballing cultures. He added that India do not have much experience in playing world class opponents and that it would be a good opportunity for both teams to see each other.

"We have to see other nations, other cultures. We are used to playing friendlies with different styles. India will be exciting. It's true that India does not have a good experience (of playing world class opponents), but it's important for us to know how they play. I've never been to India. I am very excited to come to Kolkata," Ancelotti told Times of India in an interview. "I think it's a problem of culture. India does not have a culture of football, but they are good in other sports. You have to work on this to build a new generation of players," he added.

WHY DO INDIA STRUGGLE IN FOOTBALL?

India's struggles in international football have become increasingly difficult to ignore. The national team was knocked out of the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifying race in June 2024 after a 2-1 defeat to Qatar ended their hopes of reaching the third round.

They then suffered another setback in the following Asian Cup qualification cycle, failing to make the 2027 AFC Asian Cup after finishing Group C with five points from six matches.

Asian Games: No Neeraj Chopra but all eyes on TJ, Gulveer as athletics takes centre stage



KOZHIKODE. (Agency)

In India's record-breaking 107-medal tally at the 2022 Asian Games (held in 2023), 29 came from athletics. Led by Neeraj Chopra, Indian athletes put together a remarkable campaign in Hangzhou, winning six gold medals, 14 silver and nine bronze, the biggest medal haul by any Indian sport at the Games.

Hangzhou was a complicated competition for the Indian athletics contingent. The athletes had to deal with the opposition, but there were also moments when they had to fight their own circumstances. Chopra, who rarely loses his cool during competition, found himself arguing with officials after one of his throws was chalked off following an equipment issue. Jyothi Yarraji had to gather herself after being disqualified from the 100m hurdles final before being reinstated, and eventually came away with a silver medal. Three years on, India have another sizeable athletics contingent in Aichi-Nagoya, but this time the most obvious name in the group is missing.

The Athletics Federation of India initially named 77 athletes before trimming the squad to 74 after its final assessment. Among those left out was defending women's javelin champion Annu Rani, while sprinter Nithya Gandhe and long jumper Shahnavaz Khan were also removed from the final contingent. The selection process had been deliberately demanding, with the AFI setting stringent qualification standards for athletes hoping to make the Asian Games team. The result is a squad that contains established Asian Games champions, Commonwealth Games medallists, national record holders and a group of younger athletes who have spent the season pushing themselves closer to the continental level.

Drove an Uber in Delhi, rower Salman Khan now has an Asian Games medal

New Delhi. (Agency)

Indian rowers Satnam Singh and Salman Khan won bronze in the men's double sculls at the Asian Games 2026 in Aichi-Nagoya on Thursday, September 24, securing India's first-ever medal in the event. The Indian pair clocked 6:13.25 in the final to finish behind China's Yi Xudi and Yide Nie, who won gold, and Uzbekistan's Pavel Sorin and Mekhrojbek Mamatkulov, who took silver. Satnam and Salman were firmly in medal contention for much of the race, staying second at the 500m, 1000m and 1500m marks. They were eventually overtaken in the closing stages, slipping to third in the final 500m, but held on to secure the bronze.

Asian Games 2026 Live: September 24 updates

For Salman, the medal marks his first podium finish at the Asian Games and another major step in a rowing career that began only after he joined the Indian Army. Before he found his way into the sport, Salman was driving an Uber in Delhi to

support his family.

WHO IS SALMAN KHAN?

Salman Khan was born in Pure Dhangai in Uttar Pradesh's Amethi district and grew up as the eldest of four brothers and two sisters. His father, Mohd Kasim Khan, worked in truck-body construction in Tauru, Haryana, where Salman completed his schooling. His life changed when his father died of dengue when Salman was 18.

With the responsibility of supporting his younger siblings falling on him, his plans of joining the Indian Army were put on hold. Salman instead moved towards earning a living, driving an Uber cab in Delhi and working day and night to help support his family.

His Army dream eventually returned.

A friend pointed out that Salman's height and physical build could make him suitable for the armed forces. He handed the cab over to another driver and spent four months preparing for recruitment before clearing the recruitment rally, medical and written examinations. Salman joined the



Bombay Engineer Group in Pune on September 25, 2018. It was after joining the Army that he was introduced to rowing. Coaches Satywan, Satish Siraat and Prabhat Mishra noticed his physical attributes and encouraged him to try the sport. Salman was initially reluctant, as rowing was not something he had planned to pursue. But his coaches persisted and eventually put him into the boat. His first

inter-centre regatta brought a silver medal, giving him confidence to continue. He went on to win medals at battalion and inter-centre competitions before clearing the ergometer benchmarks in 2021 and earning selection for the Army Rowing Node at CME Pune. Training alongside some of India's leading rowers helped Salman see rowing as more than something he had been encouraged to try. He twice came close to quitting the sport, but his coaches convinced him to continue. Senior coach Kudrat Ali and Training Officer Major Nagendra Hooda were among those who guided the next stage of his development.

The results soon began to reflect that progress.

Salman won gold at the 36th National Games in Gujarat in 2022 and also claimed gold at the 5th Indoor National Championship that year. In 2023, he won silver at the Senior National Championships and gold at the Open Sprint National Championships.

Called-up for Wushu team in 11th hour, Roshibina Devi wins silver at Asian Games

New Delhi. (Agency)

Named in the Wushu team in the 11th hour, India's Roshibina Devi won silver in the Asian Games 2026 on Thursday, September 24. Roshibina lost 0-2 to China's Zhang Xiaoyu in the women's 60kg Sanda final, with the Chinese fighter winning both rounds 5-0. Zhang produced a dominant performance in the gold-medal bout and never allowed Roshibina to settle into her rhythm. The Chinese fighter maintained control through both rounds to claim the gold, while Roshibina had to settle for her second successive Asian Games silver. The medal nevertheless extends Roshibina's remarkable run at the continental Games. She had won bronze on her Asian Games debut in Jakarta in 2018 before going one better with a silver at the Hangzhou

Games in 2023. Her silver in Aichi-Nagoya means she has now won medals at three successive editions of the Asian Games, making her the first Indian wushu



athlete to achieve the feat.

WHO IS ROSHIBINA DEVI?

Born on December 30, 2000, in Kwasiphai Mayai Leikai in Manipur's Bishnupur district, Roshibina Devi is one of India's

leading wushu athletes. She competes in Sanda, the combat discipline of wushu that combines striking, kicking and throwing techniques. Roshibina developed an interest in wushu as a child after watching a district-level competition in Manipur. She had also tried boxing, but eventually chose wushu and began training seriously under local coaches before joining the Sports Authority of India centre in Imphal, where she trained under coach Maibam Premkumar Singh.

Her first major international breakthrough came at the 2016 Junior World Wushu Championships in Burgas, Bulgaria, where she won bronze in the 48kg category. The following year, she moved up to 60kg and won gold at the Asian Junior Wushu Championships in Gumi, South Korea.

Gautam Gambhir hits back at critics: 'Didn't take 17 years to win 2nd World Cup'

India head coach Gautam Gambhir hit back at the critics amid questions over the team's recent performances in T20Is. Gambhir said unlike in the past, his team didn't take 17 years to win a 2nd T20 World Cup title.

MUMBAI. (Agency)

India head coach Gautam Gambhir hit back at critics and backed his players to bounce back after the team's recent poor results in T20Is, insisting a few bad performances do not undermine the ability of a double-T20 World Cup-winning team. Gambhir's comments came ahead of India's upcoming ODI series against West Indies at home, which gets underway on September 27. Asked about the dip in India's recent performances in

T20Is, Gambhir said one bad series or a few bad games don't make his team a bad side. India suffered back-to-back T20I series defeats against Ireland and England earlier this year after winning the 2026 T20 World Cup. The Ireland series defeat



was India's first since their T20I series loss against West Indies in 2023 and the first under Gambhir.

India have since recovered to win T20I series against Zimbabwe and Afghanistan, however, questions remain

regarding the team's consistency after the visitors survived a major scare to beat minnows Japan by 2 runs in the rain-affected one-off T20I earlier this week. Nonetheless, Gambhir is not worried as he fired back at his critics. "Which team in the history of sport has gone undefeated from one World Cup to the next and gone on to win the World Cup?" Gambhir said on Jio Star. "It didn't take these guys 17 years to win a second World Cup. It took them only 17 months to win a third World Cup. Suddenly, one bad series or three bad games here and there do not make them bad players or make us a bad side," he added. Gambhir mentioned 17 years, which is exactly what it took India to win their second T20 World Cup title in 2024 after their maiden triumph in the inaugural edition of the tournament in 2007. Gambhir was part of India's T20 World Cup-winning squad under MS Dhoni in 2007.

Pune to host 2032 UCI cycling Road World Championships

New Delhi. (Agency)

After successfully hosting the most basic Level UCI road cycling event successfully earlier in the year, where Pune crowds lined the route in thousands, the Indian city has been awarded the right to host the UCI Road World Championships 2032, after a hosting bid came through for the prestigious global cycling event. Pune pipped Groningen/Drenthe of Netherlands, in the bid as the decision was announced at the UCI Congress in Montréal where Pune presented its final candidature presentation to the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI). A three-member UCI inspection team visited from September 4 to 6 assessing key venues and proposed race infrastructure, including Balewadi Stadium



and the Pune University circuit. This was before roads were dug up for Sarvajani Ganapati mandal celebrations which have still not figured a way to erect poles without randomly digging roads. The UCI delegation, accompanied by senior representatives of the Cycling Federation of India, assessed proposed race infrastructure, venues, accommodation, start and finish locations, race routes and operational arrangements, including the Balewadi Sports Complex, Savitribai Phule Pune University and proposed official hotels and event venues. The delegation was also presented with the race routes developed and successfully implemented for the Bajaj Pune Grand Tour. The routes were demonstrated using the actual race convoy and operational setup, showcasing the experience as a foundation for the World Championships.

The world's leading riders compete for the coveted rainbow jerseys and the 2025 UCI Road World Championships in Kigali brought together 734 riders representing 113 countries, attracting around two million spectators and generating a cumulative television audience of nearly 300 million viewers worldwide.

Chess Olympiad Round 7: India's chances of gold get bleaker despite win in open; women still in hunt

New Delhi. (Agency)

India will look back at Nihal Sarin's loss before the rest day and wonder what might have happened had he taken a few more minutes — he had plenty of time on the clock, more than enough to have avoided the queen blunder that cost India their Round 6 match against Uzbekistan on Monday. When the players returned to the board for Round 7 in Samarkand on Wednesday, following Tuesday's rest day, the overall picture in the race for gold remained largely unchanged. Another hope of an Uzbek slip-up, this time at the hands of an in-form Chinese team, evaporated as the hosts won 3-1, moving a step closer to another coveted Chess Olympiad title. India's open team also won on the day, though not as comfortably as the Uzbeks. India's opponents were England, and with Dommaraju Gukesh and Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa having already wrapped up wins on their boards, the

team's fate no longer rested on Nihal, which was just as well, because he lost again on Board 3, this time in a marathon 88-move battle against Luke McShane. McShane, playing white, produced a stubborn, fighting performance against the higher-rated Nihal.

The Englishman took the initiative early, pushing pawns on both the queenside and kingside, while Nihal hit back with active piece play and a dangerous-looking attack on White's king. The position stayed unresolved for a long time, and by the time both players were down to their final seconds on the clock, the game had turned into a test of nerve as much as calculation.

McShane held firm, found the right defensive moves under pressure, and gradually turned his rooks into the more active pieces on the board. The turning point came with 66.Re8, forcing off a pair of rooks and steering the game into a simplified

endgame. This was exactly the kind of position where McShane's advanced f-pawn and increasingly active king took over. From there, he picked off Nihal's pawns one by one, and after nearly seven hours of play,



Nihal resigned on move 88.

It left Nihal with back-to-back individual losses at a tournament where he had otherwise been one of India's most reliable performers. India closed out the England

match 2.5-1.5, with wins from Praggnanandhaa and Gukesh outweighing Nihal's loss and Arjun Erigaisi's draw. It keeps India firmly in the group chasing Uzbekistan, who remain the only team with

a perfect record after seven rounds, a gap that will be hard to close with just four rounds left. Savitha Shri, a potent force for India at 2026 Chess Olympiad. If the open section's gold hopes are fading, India's women's team gave every reason to believe theirs are still very much alive, and 19-year-old Savitha Shri has been a big part of why. The Chennai-born player has now played six games at this Olympiad and won every single one, and Wednesday's win over Germany's Lara Schulze followed the same pattern. After a fairly balanced opening, Savitha, with the Whites, gradually seized control with active piece play and mounting pressure on the kingside.

Parineeti Chopra

Slams Trolls Targeting Katrina Kaif's Postpartum Body: 'Absolutely Uneducated'

Bollywood actress Katrina Kaif was recently subjected to intense trolling over her postpartum appearance after she attended the Ambani family's Ganpati celebrations with husband Vicky Kaushal. Recently on Bigg Boss 20, Salman Khan seemingly slammed the body-shaming trolls for targeting the actress. Now, Parineeti Chopra has also called out those trolling Katrina for her postpartum appearance. She called out the severe scrutiny female actors face regarding their physical appearance.

Parineeti Chopra Defends Katrina Kaif

In a conversation with PTI, Parineeti was asked about those trolling Katrina for her appearance, and how Salman Khan seemingly stepped in to defend her. Opening up about the unfair expectations placed on women in the public eye, Parineeti didn't hold back, labeling the trolls as completely 'uneducated.'

"When someone comments on a postpartum body, I find it uneducated," Parineeti shared. "You get a haircut, your hair's going to be shorter. You go for a vacation, you're going to come back with a tan. There's going to be evidence of what you did on your body, and all that is celebrated. But making a human life, a baby, that evidence on the body is not celebrated. How is it negative?"

"I would look at a woman and say, 'Oh my God, I see a stretch mark. Did you grow a baby? That's so amazing. How's your baby?' That's how I would look at it. I would look at your haircut and say, Oh, did you get a new haircut? Your hair looks really cool.' How can I make that evidence on a woman's body negative? I find it uneducated," she said.

Parineeti Chopra On Tuning Out The Noise

Parineeti admitted that she deliberately keeps her distance from social media to protect her peace, calling online negativity an absolute waste of time and energy.

"And who are these people who are commenting? I mean, why are we talking about it? It's such a stupid waste of time to even speak about it," she said. She further added, "So a woman produces a baby, her body may have changed. If it doesn't change, I'd be worried. Every pregnancy will give you some evidence that you have grown a whole entire human being"

"I don't even know the trolling that is happening around me, around people... because that's how insignificant I feel it is," she said. Questioning the motives behind internet bullies, she added, "Are they trying to make a career on social media? Are they trying to get attention? Are they trying to get followers? What is the problem?"



After Salman Khan Seemingly Defended Katrina Kaif, Sameera Reddy Pens Moving Note: 'A New Mama...'



Actress Sameera Reddy has shared a strong body positivity post, encouraging people to embrace their bodies and not let others' opinions define how they feel about themselves. Taking to Instagram, the 'Maine Dil Tujhko Diya' actress shared a video featuring words such as "plumpy", "thicc", "curvy", "chubby", "healthy", "chunky" and "golu", celebrating the different ways in which bodies are described. Alongside the video, Sameera wrote, "Whether you are a well-known personality, a young teen finding her way, a new mama, a woman seen year of judgement... or just a person who needs to hear this – Your body listens and needs you to love it back irrespective of anything anyone has to say. Curvy – Beautiful- luscious You #bodypositivity #imperfectlyperfect She posted her video with words written, "Words I love being called plumpy thicc curvy chubby healthy chunky golu."

In the video, the actress is seen confidently flaunting her curves in a variety of outfits, embracing her body and celebrating her appearance.

Meanwhile, Salman Khan recently raised concerns over online trolling and paparazzi culture during the "Bigg Boss 20 Weekend Ka Vaar" episode. He criticised the practice of targeting people over their age, weight, appearance, family background, professional setbacks or experiences of motherhood. The actor also urged paparazzi to avoid capturing actresses in inappropriate or objectionable ways.

The 'Sultan' actor said, "Suddenly, everyone starts talking about age, saying someone has gotten old. What do you want to troll someone for? Their weight, their looks, their family, their smile, a career flop or becoming a mother? You are merely revealing your own upbringing."

"Yes, I have turned 60, man. Why do you troll a woman who is pregnant? Everyone gains weight during pregnancy... she gained weight because she was pregnant; she will get fit again when she returns to films. She simply wanted to spend time with her family. Don't troll," he added.

Sunita Ahuja Does Not 'Regret' Marrying Govinda: 'I Was Very Nice, Very Honest'



Sunita Ahuja does not regret marrying Govinda. The two have been married for 40 years. However, for the last few months, their divorce rumours and Govinda's link-up reports have been making headlines. Despite this, in a recent interview, Sunita Ahuja clarified that she does not regret marrying Govinda because he was a 'very nice' and 'very honest' person. "I have no regrets. When I met Govinda, he was a very nice person. He was very honest. I am a very emotional person. People think I am very hard and strict but whatever I speak I say it from my heart. There are very few people who can understand me," Sunita said, while speaking to Balaji Telefilms.

"I don't have any regrets for marrying him. I want people to live their life and let others also live," she continued and then added, "He is living his life. I have started living my life."

What's Happening Between Sunita And Govinda? Reports of trouble in Sunita's marriage with Govinda have been making headlines for a long time now. It all started after rumours of Govinda dating his upcoming co-star Komal Rani surfaced online. The two were spotted together at the Mumbai airport, which raised eyebrows and left everyone wondering if there's something between them.

Later, Sunita also reacted to the speculation surrounding Govinda and Komal. When asked about the actor's appearance with the actress, she told paparazzi, "Vinash Kale Viprit Buddhi," suggesting that she was unhappy with the situation. Govinda also hit back at Sunita and issued a video statement asking her not to drag family matters in the media.

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

Kareena Kapoor's

46th Birthday Cake Has A Special 'Amma' Message, Actress Thanks Fans For Their Love

Bollywood star Kareena Kapoor, who turned 46 on September 21, shared a glimpse of her birthday celebrations on Tuesday. The actress gave her fans a look at the special cake prepared for the occasion and thanked everyone for their love and wishes.

Kareena took to her social media account and shared a picture of a chocolate cake decorated with 46 candles and a large golden number "46" on top.

The cake was tied with a red ribbon and featured a message reading, "Happy Birthday Amma!". Sharing the picture, Kareena wrote, "Thank you, everyone. I have felt the love in each and every message you've sent my way... I'm forever grateful, and I will only and always continue to be myself... To make the best choices I can, with all your love and positivity by my side... Onwards and upwards, peeps! Love you all, always and forever."

Kareena received many wishes from members of her family, including her elder sister Karisma Kapoor. Karisma shared a childhood throwback featuring the two sisters and wrote, "Happy birthday to the best sister ever. Always side by side, always twinning and winning. Love you mostest."

Her sisters-in-law Soha Ali Khan and Saba Pataudi also shared heartfelt birthday posts for Kareena. Saba Pataudi had looked back at her relationship with Kareena and recalled meeting her and Saif during a shoot. She also remembered being

present when Kareena first met her father, late cricketer Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi.

Kareena's close friend Amrita Arora also penned a playful birthday poem for her. Kareena responded by calling Amrita a "poet bro." Priyanka Chopra Jonas also wished Kareena on her special day, sharing a picture of the actress in a saree and writing, "Happy Birthday Kareena. There will never be anyone like you."



The two actresses have previously worked together in Aitraaz. Born on September 21, 1980, in Mumbai, Kareena comes from the illustrious Kapoor film family. She is the daughter of actors Randhir Kapoor and Babita and the younger sister of actress Karisma Kapoor.

Kareena made her acting debut with J.P. Dutta's Refugee in 2000, opposite Abhishek Bachchan. Her first commercial success came with Mujhe Kuch Kehna Hai in 2001. It was her role as Poo in Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham that same year made her a household name.



NEWS BOX

Venezuela's acting leader, at UN for first address, promises elections at the 'right moment'

JERUSALEM.(Agency)

Venezuela's acting president, delivering her first address to the U.N. General Assembly since coming to power, promised elections Wednesday and said the nation's people will determine the "right moment." "I wish to state this very clearly before this General Assembly: Elections will be held in Venezuela," Delcy Rodríguez said, adding that her government has started a "political dialogue with opposition sectors" to secure a "process based on equal conditions for all." Rodríguez said the Venezuelan people will determine the best time to get elections moving and assured the United Nations that, when the time comes, the country's institutions "will be prepared to guarantee an inclusive and transparent process." Rodríguez took over in Venezuela after a surprise U.S. military raid in January that captured then-leader Nicolás Maduro and brought him to the United States to face drug trafficking charges. This is the first trip to the United States by a Venezuelan head of state since 2018, when Maduro traveled to New York to participate in the U.N. General Assembly himself. He is currently being held only a few miles from the organization's headquarters as he awaits trial.

She says Venezuela is coming back

Rodríguez's participation in the international forum also marks a milestone in Venezuela's reintegration into global diplomacy. Addressing global leaders, she said that "the last time that two presidents of Venezuela and the United States met was in 2009." She added that her country is coming back strong after "setbacks" suffered this year and thanked President Donald Trump for being willing to resume relations after the US military spirited her predecessor out of the country.

China, US should be 'partners rather than rivals', says Xi Jinping

BEIJING.(Agency)

Chinese President Xi Jinping urged cooperation with the United States, Beijing's state media reported, hours after being greeted in Washington on Wednesday evening local time by President Donald Trump. "Our two countries should be partners rather than rivals," Xi said in written remarks published by state news agency Xinhua, adding that "the Chinese and US peoples have enjoyed long-standing friendly exchanges, and our interests are deeply intertwined." The comments came ahead of closely watched talks between Trump and Xi, who shook hands on a red carpet after the Chinese leader's arrival in the US capital.

Thorny discussion topics are expected to include trade, technological competition -- particularly in artificial intelligence -- and Beijing's diplomatic and economic support for Tehran. Xi said that he was looking "forward to in-depth exchanges with President Trump on major issues concerning our bilateral relations and the global situation," Xinhua reported. The countries should "work towards each other to foster a stable relationship characterised by cooperation as the mainstay, competition within bounds, manageable differences and peaceful prospects," Xi said. And in a nod to Trump's signature political slogan, he said that "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and the goal of making America great again can fully go hand in hand." He said the two sides should "chart a correct path for two major powers" to get along, Xinhua reported. "I am confident we can achieve this," said Xi. "I believe that with the joint efforts of both sides, this visit will yield fruitful results, enhance the well-being of our two peoples and bring new hope for world peace," he added.

Gulf nations have found ways to keep oil flowing through the Iran war, but the costs are mounting

Analysts estimate some 6 million barrels of oil per day or more have been passing through the Strait of Hormuz on the dark shuttle route on average — some 40% or more of prewar flows.

FRANKFURT, Germany.(Agency)

When Iran shut down the Strait of Hormuz at the start of the war, choking off sea passage for some 15 million barrels of oil a day, many feared that prices would skyrocket, cratering the world economy. Instead, nearly seven months on, oil is expensive but not exorbitant, and analysts say the supply is pretty much sufficient to meet current global needs,

even as the higher prices cause political problems for U.S. President Donald Trump and others. That's because Saudi Arabia and other Gulf producers quickly found alternative routes and reached for unused pipeline capacity. When Iran and its militant allies targeted those, the oil exporters and the U.S. military found others — workarounds for the workarounds — in an often clandestine game of whack-a-mole. With oil now at around \$100 a barrel — higher than before the war but not as bad as feared — Iran has diminished leverage, while a U.S. naval blockade and tightened sanctions smother its own economy. But the workarounds are expensive and may not be sustainable. The drawing down of existing commercial oil stocks — especially by China — has also helped keep prices in check, but cannot continue indefinitely. And Iran could yet gain an edge with continued attacks on key oil

facilities.

Pipeline backups were ready

Iran began attacking ships in the Strait of Hormuz in response to the U.S.-Israeli



bombardment that started the war. In response, the Saudis turned to their East-West pipeline that carries oil to their Red Sea port of Yanbu. From there, tankers headed out through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait toward Asia. Likewise, the United

Arab Emirates used its pipeline cutting across neighboring Oman to Fujairah — a route that skirts the strait. Both pipelines had spare capacity, and the UAE's state oil company ADNOC and Saudi Aramco used it to keep exports from collapsing completely during the first weeks of the war. Meanwhile, some oil leaked out of the Strait of Hormuz. In May, ship operators willing to risk Iranian attack started taking advantage of a U.S.-supervised route near Oman, defying Iran's demands to use its own vetted route. They shuttled back and forth at night with location systems and mobile phones turned off, and offloaded to tankers waiting outside the strait. Flows from Kuwait, Iraq, and the UAE started to rise again. But Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen disrupted the Yanbu workarounds in July by declaring a blockade of Saudi oil shipments, threatening the Bab el-Mandeb — a repeat of the Hormuz disruption.

Pentagon investigates after China obtains parts from F-35 stealth fighter jet

WASHINGTON.(Agency)

The Pentagon is investigating how parts of the nation's most advanced fighter jet ended up in Hong Kong, with a news outlet reporting Wednesday that China has obtained the F-35 equipment. The F-35 Joint Program Office said in a statement that it and the Defense Department are aware of "a shipment issue" with F-35 components. "We are actively working with U.S. authorities and industry partners to retrieve these components, investigate the incident, and place safeguards to avoid a future occurrence," the office said. Australian Defense Minister Richard Marles acknowledged that the jet components ended up in Hong Kong when responding to questions from reporters Tuesday. But he denied that the missing parts were

"sensitive equipment." Australia is one of several nations whose



militaries operate the stealth fighter jet. "Yeah, so we are obviously working with the United States and obviously with its prime contractor Lockheed Martin, in respect of this," Marles said. He added: "My understanding is that there is a sense of comfort, and we're not talking about sensitive equipment here or sensitive parts. Ultimately, though,

this is an issue which is going to be managed by the United States and by Lockheed in terms of what has occurred." Lockheed did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment Wednesday, when Chinese leader Xi Jinping arrived in Washington for a state visit with President Donald Trump. China's Foreign Ministry said it was not aware of the incident, and the Hong Kong government said it would not comment on specific cases. Bloomberg reported Wednesday that China has the F-35 parts — a cockpit canopy and weapons-bay door — after the shipment was unexpectedly diverted to Hong Kong while on the way from Australia to the United States for either repair or disposal months ago. It was not clear how the shipment was diverted.

Russia uses citizens of India, 46 other countries in its war against Ukraine: Zelenskyy tells UN

→The White House has not released many details about Wednesday's greeting, but Trump is expected to participate in an arrival ceremony at the base with Xi and his wife, Peng Liyuan.

UNITED NATIONS.(Agency)

Russia uses citizens of India and over 40 other countries to fight in its war against Ukraine, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told the UN General Assembly, urging the countries to not let Russian President Vladimir Putin "drag you into this war." "...And right now, I want to speak not to Europe. I want to speak to those countries whose people Russia may try to use in another absolutely brutal campaign,"

Zelenskyy said Wednesday in his address at the General Debate of the 81st session of the UN General Assembly. He said Ukraine gets prisoners of war hailing from several nations, not just from North Korea. "We know that Russia uses



citizens of 47 countries in its war. In this war, Ghana, Nepal, Tajikistan, India, Yemen, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Cuba, Belarus, Sudan, South Africa, and many, many others. And from time to time, we receive requests to send particular POWs (Prisoners of War) back home," Zelenskyy said. He said Ukraine knows that people from

other countries fighting in the war are dying on the battlefield.

"We also see people dying on the battlefield, who are not Russians, people from your countries, 47 countries, who ended up in Russia through deception and tricks."

Appealing directly to every representative of the 47 countries, he said, "You know what Russia is doing with your people, your citizens. Take care of them and do not let them end up on another front. Do not let (Russian President Vladimir) Putin drag you into this war. Do not let Russia put out its fires, cover up its shame, and pay for its madness with the lives of your people. Limit his room to act. Limit his money. Limit his war." Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri had said earlier this month that the issue of Indian citizens being recruited into the Russian armed forces has been discussed between India and Russia "at various levels on various occasions".

Pakistan says it hit 10 Afghanistan sites after accusing Kabul of drone attacks

PESHAWAR.(Agency)

Pakistan said early Thursday that it had carried out airstrikes on 10 sites in Afghanistan that it said were used to launch drone attacks against Pakistan a day earlier, a sharp escalation in recent fighting between the neighbors that threatens mediation efforts.

There was no immediate response from Kabul to the latest strikes, but Zabihullah Mujahid, a spokesperson for Afghanistan's Taliban government, denied Wednesday that Afghan Taliban forces had carried out any attacks. The conflicting statements came two days after Pakistani fighter jets struck sites in eastern Afghanistan that Islamabad said were militant hideouts. The announcement by Pakistani Information Minister Attaullah Tarar in a post on X came after officials said Afghanistan's Taliban forces had fired eight drones and shelled Pakistani border posts after Pakistani troops foiled what they described as a cross-border infiltration attempt by militants.

The accounts could not be independently verified. The latest escalations threaten mediation efforts by China, Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia to broker a lasting peace between Kabul and Islamabad.

Pakistan has repeatedly accused Afghanistan's Taliban government of allowing militants to operate from its territory and carry out attacks across the border, an accusation Kabul denies. Instead of dismantling these networks and taking credible and verifiable action against those using Afghan territory to perpetrate terrorism against Pakistan, the Afghan Taliban regime has chosen to escalate the situation through hostile drone operations against Pakistan," Tarar said. "The strikes were deliberate, precise, calibrated, and proportionate and strictly limited to identified military objectives directly linked to the attempted attacks against Pakistan," he added. Pakistani officials also claimed Wednesday that security forces had neutralized eight rudimentary drones launched by the Afghan Taliban before they could enter the northwestern city of Kohat and the border town of Torkham, and that Afghan Taliban forces fired mortars and other heavy weapons at Pakistani border posts. Pakistani forces responded with artillery fire targeting Taliban border posts, mortar sites and defensive positions, they said.

The four officials spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to talk to the media about the latest flare-up. In Monday's airstrikes, Pakistan's Information Ministry said 28 militants were killed, while Afghan authorities said at least three civilians died and four others were wounded. The U.N. mission in Afghanistan confirmed the civilian casualties and Kabul formally protested the attack.

US Citizen Injured After Immigration Agents Tried To Mistakenly Detain Him

world.(Agency)

A US citizen was left bloodied and injured on the side of the road in a Chicago suburb after a confrontation with immigration enforcement agents who mistook him for a fugitive, according to local police and a



resident who tried to help the man.

The man, whose identity was not disclosed, was taken away in an ambulance after the encounter on Sunday in Evanston, a city around 12 miles (19 kilometers) north of downtown Chicago. He told police his head,

neck and teeth were injured, according to a news release from the Evanston Police Department. A federal agent told officers who responded to calls reporting an altercation at just before 10 a.m. that morning that five agents in separate vehicles were looking for a fugitive with a Chicago address and a warrant for his arrest, according to the release. The agents mistook the man for the fugitive, the agent told police. When the man refused to give his identification, the agents tried to handcuff him, the agent said. After realizing he was a US citizen and not the person they were seeking, they released him. One police officer saw blood on the agent's hands, according to the release. The agent told police he was injured while trying to handcuff the man, and that they left the area immediately after because they feared protesters who had gathered would attack them, it noted. Police have visited the man at the hospital and photographed his injuries, and are investigating the encounter.

GURBULAK BORDER CROSSING, Turkey.(Agency)

Hundreds of trucks idle along the road into Iran from Turkey's mountainous eastern border. Bustling even in normal times, the countries' largest crossing is now a make-or-break economic lifeline for Tehran as the U.S. navy blockades its ports. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has pressed to accelerate overland trade as the blockade limits the vast majority of imports while cutting off the oil and gas sales that largely keep the economy alive. It's the latest test of Iran's endurance. Frustrated Iranian truck drivers spoke to The Associated Press at the Turkey border crossing, where lines now stretch for miles. "I've been driving through this border gate for 15 years. I've never had to wait as long as now," said Muhammed Rıza Shiri, 55, who had waited four days to carry his load of rubber into Iran. "We had to wait at the end of a seven-kilometer (4.3-mile) line. We used to wait, maximum, for three days here. Because of the war, the waiting times exceed five days." Iran accuses the U.S. of

trying to weaken the country. "They are trying to create difficulties wherever they can, and they are holding nothing back. They are closing off routes, shutting down air routes, blocking land routes and trying to fuel



internal divisions," President Masoud Pezeshkian said Tuesday.

Iran insists the pressure will not change its stance in negotiations with Washington. Tehran wants the U.S. blockade to end before it allows commercial shipping to flow again through the Strait of Hormuz, where Iran's grip has shaken global markets and oil prices. Iran had relied on the gulf for over

80% of its trade. Iran has a huge challenge as it tries to shift trade from sea to land. Its economy relied on the gulf for over 80% of its trade before the war, according to Iran economist Mohammad Farzanegan.

Now Iran's land crossings with Turkey to the west and Pakistan to the east are crucial in connecting with Europe and Asia. Drivers carry goods that are vital to Iran's petrochemical and other manufacturing that were badly damaged by U.S. and Israeli strikes. But the land crossings are badly strained.

"Logistics, capacities of these borders are limited. Regulations, border controls, corruption, all these things would make the transit much more difficult and time-consuming," Farzanegan said. Overland trade "would not basically be able to substitute or compensate for the blockade." At Turkey's Gurbulak border, truck waiting times have more than quadrupled since the war began, according to data from the International Transporters Association, which represents Turkey's international logistics sector.