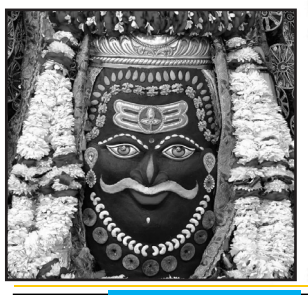
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Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath's mother Savitri Devi dies at 91 in Uttarakhand

Uttar Pradesh. (Agency).

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's mother, Savitri Devi, passed away on Friday at the age of 91 in her native village of Panchur in Pauri Garhwal district, Uttarakhand.Pauri Garhwal Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Sarvesh Panwar confirmed her demise to news agency PTI.

The last rites are likely to be performed in Haridwar on Saturday. Police and the district administration are in touch with the family members, Panwar said.Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami expressed grief over her death, describing the news as deeply saddening and heartbreaking.In a message, Dhami said a mother's affection, blessings and love are life's most precious assets, and her passing is an irreparable loss for the family.

He prayed to Lord Kedarnath to grant peace to the departed soul and strength to Yogi Adityanath and his family to bear the loss.According to a PTI report, despite receiving the news of his mother's demise, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath continued with his scheduled engagements with the youth, prioritising public service and youth welfare over his personal grief.

'Rattled' PM blames others for economic situation: Congress on FICCI address

New Delhi.(Agency).

The Congress on Friday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of being "rattled" and attacking industrialists to deflect attention from his government's economic failures, claiming that he had realised he would soon become the "outgoing PM".

Reacting to Modi's remarks at the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) annual general meeting, Congress general secretary in-charge of communications Jairam Ramesh said the Prime Minister should introspect on his government's policies instead of blaming wealth creators for the country's economic challenges.

Addressing a press conference, Ramesh said inflation remained uncontrolled, adequate employment opportunities were not being created and private investment continued to be sluggish despite 12 years of the Modi government."Mr Prime Minister, the economy cannot be run merely by delivering speeches or offering advice to industrialists. It requires sound policies, an environment of trust, and an accountable government. The nation's industrial sector deserves far better treatment and policies," he said.

Recalling the Congress's 2024 Lok Sabha election manifesto, the 'Nyay Patra', Ramesh said the party had flagged stagnant incomes, inadequate job creation, declining private investment and rising inequality.He said Modi had then dismissed the manifesto as reflecting "urban naxal thinking" and accused the Congress of insulting wealth creators."Yesterday, the PM addressed industry leaders at a FICCI event.

Amit Shah to honour Arunachal cops, review border security during 3-day visit

Amit Shah's visit comes amid protests over the proposed Siang Upper Multipurpose Project and the Centre's focus on strengthening border infrastructure, security and connectivity in Arunachal Pradesh.

Itanagar (Agency).

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will present the President's Police Colour to the Arunachal Pradesh Police, distribute appointment letters to newly recruited personnel, inaugurate a National Disaster Response Force campus and review key development and security issues during a three-day visit to the state beginning Friday evening, news agency Press Trust of India reported.The visit comes amid protests over the proposed Siang Upper Multipurpose Project and the Centre's focus on strengthening border infrastructure, security and connectivity in Arunachal Pradesh.

According to a tentative programme shared by officials with PTI, Shah will attend a function at the Police Training Centre in Banderdewa at 10.30 am on Saturday. He will lay a wreath at the martyrs' memorial, inspect the parade and ceremonial march past, and present the President's Police Colour to the state police in recognition of its service.Shah will also address the gathering and distribute appointment letters to newly recruited police personnel before leaving for Itanagar around 1.40 pm.

Later, he will chair meetings with senior state



government officials at Lok Bhavan to review major development projects and discuss issues concerning the state. Infrastructure development, internal security, border-area development and coordination between the Centre and the state are expected to be discussed, officials told PTI.On Sunday, Shah will attend a programme at the Dorjee Khandu State Convention Centre, where he will unveil the Arunachal Pradesh Cooperation Vision Document 2047, present Cooperation Awards and inaugurate Saras Mela.He will then visit Hollongi to inaugurate the campus of the 12th Battalion of the National Disaster Response Force at around 3.45 pm. He is scheduled to return to New Delhi on Sunday after completing his engagements in the state, officials said.The proposed Siang Upper Multipurpose Project has emerged as a major public and political issue, with sections of the local population in the Siang Valley opposing the large hydropower project over concerns about its possible impact on the region.Arunachal Pradesh, which shares a long and sensitive international border, has also been working to improve infrastructure and connectivity in remote border areas through central government initiatives, including.

Illegal Sand Mining in Karjan: Ghugho and Gokul Bharwad Named, MLA Akshay Patel's Name Sparks Political Controversy!

Mahanagar Metro Desk

Karjan (Vadodara District) Serious questions are being raised over alleged large-scale illegal sand and soil mining in the Karjan region of Vadodara district, Gujarat. Local residents have expressed concern over mining activities that they claim have continued unchecked for years along riverbanks, grazing lands and government-owned properties.According to allegations circulating locally, individuals identified as Ghugho Bharwad and Gokul Bharwad are linked to these mining operations. The name of BJP MLA from Karjan, Akshay Patel, has also been associated with the alleged network, triggering political discussion across the region. However, these alleged connections and claims of political protection require independent investigation and official verification.Illegal Mining Allegedly Continuing for YearsReports and complaints from local residents suggest that large quantities of sand and soil are allegedly being extracted from riverbanks, grazing lands (gauchar land) and government properties in and around Karjan.Heavy hydraulic excavators, earth-moving machinery and dump trucks are reportedly being used for these activities. Residents allege that mining takes place both during



Akshay Patel
Karjan MLA



Ghugho Bharvard



vironmental damage and affecting public land.Narmada River Under Pressure: Allegations of Heavy Machinery and OverloadingThe alleged use of heavy hydraulic machinery for large-scale sand extraction has raised concerns about the condition of the Narmada River and its surrounding ecosystem.Local complaints claim that extensive excavation has damaged several stretches of the riverbed. Questions have also been raised over the authorised limits.According to allegations, certain permits allow transportation of approximately 23 tonnes of sand, while some trucks are reportedly carrying nearly 54 tonnes. There are also claims that a single royalty permit is being used to transport sand in more than three trucks.If these allegations are verified, they could indicate serious violations of mining and transportation regulations. Overloaded vehicles also pose risks to road safety, infrastructure and the environment.Ghugho and Gokul Bharwad Named in Local ComplaintsLocal residents and concerned villagers have reportedly raised repeated complaints regarding the alleged involvement of individuals identified as Ghugho Bharwad and Gokul Bharwad in the mining activities.The central question remains: How can large-scale illegal extraction allegedly continue for such an extended period without effective intervention from the administration and the mining department?There are also allegations circulating locally regarding possible financial dealings and bribery to facilitate uninterrupted mining operations. These claims are serious and require verification through an independent investigation.

PM Modi to inaugurate, lay foundation stones for 103 projects worth Rs 60,000 crore in Bihar on November 21

PATNA(Agency).

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate and lay foundation stones for 103 projects across 21 departments, involving an investment of over Rs 60,000 crore, during his visit to Bihar on Saturday.

Modi will first visit Raghopur in Vaishali district to inaugurate the six-lane Kachchi Dargah-Bidupur bridge, named Nitish Setu, across the Ganga.Connecting Kachhi Dargah on the river's southern bank in Patna to Bidupur on its northern bank in Vaishali, the six-lane bridge, one of India's longest bridges, spans a 19.76 km stretch, which includes the 9.76 km bridge and 10 km of approach roads.

The inauguration of the newly built bridge is expected to significantly improve connectivity between Patna and North Bihar, reduce travel time and facilitate the movement of goods and commuters.The bridge is also expected to boost trade, transport and economic activities in the region.PM will then address a public meeting at Rajapakar in Vaishali, where the projects will be inaugurated and launched. The 103 projects include completed projects to be dedicated to the public and new initiatives for which foundation stones will be laid.

They cover 21 government departments



and involve an expenditure of more than Rs 60,000 crore. The project has an approved cost of Rs 4,988.40 crore, including Rs 696.60 crore for land acquisition, according to a Bihar government document.It received financial assistance of USD 450.84 million from the Asian Development .

Bulldozer driver arrested in death of BJP leader' son, SP leader detained

Gorakhpur.(Agency).

Two days after a BJP leader's 14-year-old son was run over by a bulldozer during Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav's PDA Rath Yatra in Gorakhpur, police have arrested five people. The bulldozer driver is among those arrested. Nearly 25 others have been detained for questioning.SP leader Sadhu Yadav, who has been named in the FIR, was also taken from his residence for questioning. His wife, Chinta Yadav, had contested the Assembly election from Campierganj on an SP ticket.Following the incident, senior cop Nimish Patil told news agency PTI that five accused were arrested late on Thursday night. Police have also seized all four bulldozers used during the roadshow and are investigating their ownership and who had arranged them.The victim, Aryavardhan Singh, was the son of BJP leader Omkar Singh Srinet, who is associated with the party's Election Commission Contact Department in



Gorakhpur. A Class 10 student, Aryavardhan was on his way to pick up his sister from school when the incident took place on November 18.According to his father, the boy was crossing the road around 2 pm when a bulldozer in the procession allegedly hit him from behind. The impact threw him against a road divider. He was taken to AIIMS Gorakhpur, where doctors declared him dead.The four bulldozers had been deployed along Koodaghat main road to welcome Akhilesh during the roadshow. One was decorated with a large floral garland, while another carried a poster describing him as the "favourite of Gen-Z". Akhilesh was also presented with a floral garland using a bulldozer.

PROTESTS AFTER BOY'S DEATH

The boy's death triggered protests by his family and BJP workers, who demanded that a murder case be registered against Akhilesh Yadav and the organisers of the event. They staged a road blockade outside Jharkhandi Colony in Gorakhpur, alleging serious lapses in the management of the procession.

11-year-old leaves home with 'mama', raped & hit with belt

Noida.(Agency)

An 11-year-old girl was allegedly raped and brutally assaulted before being abandoned in a field near Eastern Peripheral Expressway in Greater Noida's Badalpur area. Police said a neighbour, whom she addressed as 'mama' (uncle), was arrested on Thursday within two hours of her being found, following an exchange of fire.

The Class V student, who sustained multiple injuries to her face, head and neck, was found in a critical condition and taken to Govt Institute of Medical Sciences (GIMS). She is currently under medical supervision.Police said the child had left her house with her 'mama' Rohit alias Chanda on Wednesday around 9:30 pm to give a mobile phone to her grandmother who was attending a pre-wedding function in the neighbourhood.However, the child never reached the venue. When her family members returned home, they realised that the child had gone missing. They tried looking for her before approaching the cops at Badalpur police station.

Police teams began tracing the child using the location of her grandmother's mobile phone.

Fourth extension: Haryana's final SIR roll to now come out on Dec 22

Gurgaon.(Ajency)

Haryana's final electoral roll will now be published on Dec 22, exactly three months after its original deadline of Sept 22, with the Election Commission extending the special intensive revision (SIR) timeline for the fourth time. The latest revision, announced on Nov 17, gives election officials time till Dec 15 to dispose of notices, claims and objections, prolonging an exercise that has already undergone several deadline changes.The final publication date was first pushed from Sept 22 to Oct 3, then to Nov 6 and subsequently to Nov 30. The latest order has deferred it by another 22 days. The deadline for disposing of claims and objections, earlier fixed at Nov 20, has also been extended to Dec 15.For Gurgaon, the additional time is quite significant. The district witnessed one of the steepest contractions in Haryana's electorate during the exercise, with nearly 4.5 lakh names disappearing from the draft roll. Its voter count fell from 15.5 lakh before SIR to 11 lakh in the draft published on July 31, a decline of around 30%.

Intelligent caller' to team leader: How this call centre ran Apple gift card scam

Gurgaon.(Agency)

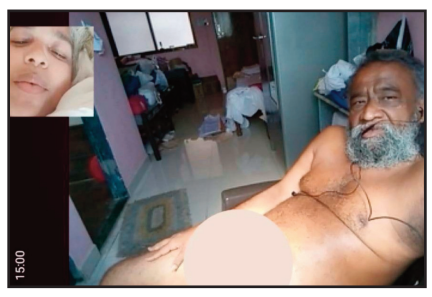
An alleged cyber fraud operation that cheated iPhone users in the US and Canada by impersonating Apple customer service representatives was busted on Thursday, with the arrest of 17 people, including five women, from a commercial office in Sector 61. Police said the operation had a structured hierarchy of callers, a team leader, a firm director and an operator referred to as the "intelligent caller".

The accused allegedly sent pop-up alerts to iPhone users claiming that a charge of $5,000 had been imposed on their Apple accounts, and asked them to call a number to get it cancelled. Police said call-centre employees received these calls through the MicroSIP application and spoke to victims in English. They told victims that their Apple accounts had been accessed by someone else and that technical assistance was needed to secure them.

"After gaining the victims' confidence, the accused persuaded them to download remote access applications on their phones.

Jain Community Demands Answers as Sagar Chandrasagar Controversy Intensifies!

Mahanagar Metro Desk
Gandhinagar/Ahmedabad:







Ahimsa (non-violence), Aparigraha (non-possession), renunciation and strict self-discipline are the fundamental pillars of Jainism. For centuries, these principles have formed the foundation of the Jain monastic tradition. The attire of a Jain monk is regarded by devotees as a symbol of faith, dedication, purity and spiritual discipline. However, serious questions emerging from the controversy surrounding Sagar Chandrasagar have shaken the Jain community, not only in Gujarat but also across India and abroad.This controversy is no longer limited to the conduct of an individual. It has raised wider questions about the credibility of the monastic tradition and the functioning of religious institutions entrusted with protecting the dignity, discipline and values of the community.Viral Audio Clips and Digital Evidence: What Is the Truth Behind the Controversy?Audio clips and digital documents circulating across various social media platforms have intensified the controversy. The alleged conversations and materials reportedly linked to Sagar Chandrasagar have triggered widespread concern among followers of Jainism.However, it is important to establish that no digital material can be treated as conclusive evidence without proper forensic verification. This raises two critical questions: If the circulating material is fabricated, why has decisive legal action not been taken against those responsible for spreading it? And if even a part of the allegations is substantiated.

From SIR deletion to SSR inclusion: 'Being left out was strange feeling'

Ghaziabad.(Ajency)

For more than seven months, they lived with the unsettling possibility that they might no longer be able to vote. Their names, which had figured on electoral rolls for years, had suddenly disappeared in the final SIR list published on April 10.Now, with their names reappearing in the Nov 17 draft roll, the relief is palpable, but so is the confusion. Most are still trying to understand why they were struck off in the first place.For several residents of Noida and Ghaziabad, the intervening months meant repeated calls to booth-level officers (BLOs), hearings, address verification and fresh applications, often without any clear explanation for the deletion. The return of their names has eased the fear of being disenfranchised, but has not erased the uncertainty of those seven months.For Sandhya Sharma, a resident of Gaur City in Greater Noida West, the confusion began when the final SIR roll was published on April 10. She and her son, Shivam, found their names missing, while her husband, Shailendra, continued to figure on the list. The family suspected their shift from Cleo County to Gaur City might have triggered the deletion, but nobody could confirm it."I had no clue how that could happen when my husband's name was there. I remember calling the BLO, but all she said was that it could have been a mistake. Perhaps, it was because my parents were not voters. I was completely puzzled. It was a strange feeling of disenfranchisement," she said.The family eventually stopped pursuing the matter, partly because attending hearings and making repeated calls was difficult for them. Their names resurfaced only after Shailendra raised the issue with the BLO during the latest special summary revision (SSR). The family was advised to apply through Form 6 as new voters. They submitted the applications – and waited.

Thieves steal 6 batteries from 4 trucks, smash windshields of 3 in IMT Manesar

Gurgaon.(Ajency)

Six batteries were allegedly stolen from four parked trucks and three other vehicles had their windshields damaged during an overnight incident in IMT Manesar that came to light on Nov 14.

The vehicles belonged to an automobile carrier transport company whose office is located opposite Gate No 2 of Maruti Suzuki's facility on the Gurgaon-Delhi road. The trucks were parked along a road in Sector 8, near the World Trade Centre building.On Wednesday, transport company manager Dinesh Sharma filed a complaint stating that drivers parked the vehicles at 10 pm on Nov 14 and then went to dinner at their rented rooms in Shankar Dhani, IMT Manesar.

When they returned about an hour later, they found the front windshields of three trucks broken.The drivers called the company's clerk, Sonu Kumar, and informed him about the damage. They were told that the matter would be discussed the following morning. The drivers returned to their rooms. When they came back around 6.30 am on Nov 15 and checked the vehicles, they found that six batteries had been stolen from four trucks.Two batteries were missing from an Eicher 32-foot truck driven by Rinku, a resident of Another two batteries were stolen from a Tata 32-foot truck driven by Subodh, also from Badaun. One battery each was missing from two Eicher 32-foot trucks. The latter was driven by Atul.Sharma told police that the drivers informed Sonu Kumar about the theft and he then alerted the company owner.Sharma expressed suspicion over Naveen Kumar, a former employee who was dismissed around three months ago over alleged irregularities. However, police have yet to establish his involvement in the incident.Police on Wednesday registered an FIR at Sector 7 IMT Manesar police station on the basis of Sharma's complaint.

AQI deteriorates across NCR as wind weakens

Noida.(Ajency)

With wind speed slowing down, air quality across NCR cities deteriorated further on Thursday and is expected to worsen over the weekend. At 266 (poor), Greater Noida recorded the poorest air quality index (AQI), up from 228 a day earlier. Noida's average AQI at 4 pm was 243, a significant deterioration from Wednesday's 214 and the 155 recorded the previous day. With six of its eight monitoring stations in the 'poor' category, Ghaziabad saw an AQI of 232.Two stations — Noida's Sector 62 and Ghaziabad's New Tehsil Loni — recorded the worst air quality in the region at 374 and 323, respectively, both in the 'very poor' category.

Winds blew from the southwest at 5-10 kmph across the



NCR cities in the morning. The air quality eased by afternoon as the wind picked up pace and shifted to the northwest, with four monitoring stations — Noida's sectors 150, 110 and 1 and Ghaziabad's Govindpuram — recording AQIs of 198, 189, 188 and 108, respectively, and recording 'moderate' air quality.

Fourteen stations across the three NCR cities remained in the 'poor' category. Of them, three, including sectors 39, 116 and 125, were in Noida with AQIs oscillating between 234 and 264. Six other stations with 'poor' air were in Ghaziabad. Vasundhara and Ved Vihar Loni were at the top with AQIs of 268 and 259, respectively. The four others were Loni and Indrapuram, both at 227, Wave City at 228 and Sanjay Nagar at 201.

In Greater Noida, all five monitoring stations remained in the 'poor' category, even as Ghodi Bachheda missed the 'very poor' mark by four notches and recorded an AQI of 296.

Fire breaks out in two locations of Ghaziabad in a span of 2 hours; 12 shanties gutted, 2 flats damaged



Gurgaon.(Agency)

Two major fire incidents in Ghaziabad were reported to the fire department within a span of two hours on Thursday. The first fire, which broke out in Nandgram, left 12 shanties completely gutted while the second fire damaged two flats in a high-rise housing complex in Vasundhara.No casualties were reported in either incident, a fire department officer said.The Nandgram fire started at around 11am in a cluster of shanties at Krishna Nagar in Sadiq Nagar near Meerut Road. After the Kotwali fire station was informed, three fire tenders were dispatched to the location to contain the fire.

When the firefighting team arrived at the spot, it found the fire had already spread to several shanties and completely destroyed them. Under the supervision of the chief fire officer of Ghaziabad, the firefighting operation began. The fire had already spread across the settlement, posing a threat to neighbouring huts and nearby residential buildings.Under the supervision of the Chief Fire Officer (CFO), Ghaziabad, firefighters deployed hose lines and launched an extensive firefighting operation. After considerable efforts, the flames were brought under control.The fire department officer said 12 shanties were gutted but timely intervention prevented the fire from spreading to the remaining huts and houses.Barely two hours later, another fire broke out at JKG Heights, a multi-storey residential building in Sector 18 in Vasundhara.The Vaishali fire station received information about the blaze around 1 pm. Four fire tenders and a hydraulic platform were immediately rushed to the society.On reaching the spot, firefighters discovered that flames had engulfed flats 801 and 901, located on the eighth and ninth floors of the building.

Gurgaon court rejects 'settlement' between accused & victim in cyberfraud case, denies bail

Gurgaon.(Agency)

A city court has denied bail to a man accused of facilitating cyber fraud despite the defence claiming the complainant and accused had reached a compromise and the cheated amount of Rs 1.95 lakh had been returned.

Additional sessions judge Varsha Jain rejected accused Saurabh Pandey's plea, citing the seriousness of the allegations, his alleged role in arranging bank accounts to receive fraud proceeds for a 20% commission, chats recovered during investigation, and an absconding co-accused. The court also referred to the high court's observations on cybercrime's wider societal impact.

The case relates to a complaint by retired Indian Navy officer Prabhat Kumar Ghosh, who alleged that Rs 1,95,500 was fraudulently withdrawn from his Union Bank of India account through three transactions on Sept 26 and 29. He later found a file named 'RTO CHALLAN APK' on his mobile phone, which he suspected had been installed to gain access to his phone and banking details.

Police found that Rs 99,500 had been transferred to an HDFC Bank account in the name of Manju Verma, wife of co-accused Ajay Singh. Another Rs 96,000 went to an Axis Bank account belonging to Akash Pandit.According to the prosecution, Singh told investigators during interrogation that he had provided his wife's account details to Pandey in return for monetary benefits. He further alleged that, on Pandey's instructions, he withdrew the money from different accounts and handed it over to a person named Sandeep in Varanasi.Opposing bail, public prosecutor Aakash Deep said Pandey had actively facilitated the fraud by procuring account details to receive the cheated amount against a 20% commission and arranging its transfer and withdrawal. He pointed to suspicious chats about bank transactions recovered from the mobile phones of Pandey, Sandeep and another co-accused Monu Tiwari. The prosecution also said the investigation was incomplete, Tiwari was yet to be arrested, and Pandey could hamper the probe or commit similar offences if released.Pandey's counsel Bhaskar Yadav said his client had been falsely implicated and was not named in the FIR, and that the complainant had been repaid in full and the dispute settled. "With the matter settled and the trial likely to take time, there was no justification for keeping him behind bars," the counsel submitted.The court, however, noted the repayment was not a sufficient ground for bail. The judge observed that cybercrimes undermine public confidence in digital financial transactions and can expose several unsuspecting people to financial risks.

TN sanctions Rs 387 cr for 1,604 urban infra works

CHENNAI.(Agency)

The Tamil Nadu government has sanctioned 1,604 civic infrastructure projects including road improvement, drinking-water supply upgrades, parks and crematoriums in municipalities, corporations and town panchayats at a combined cost of Rs 386.91 crore under the Chief Minister's Integrated Urban Development Mission (CMIUDM) for 2026-27.The projects were approved by the Common Project Sanctioning and Monitoring Committee at its second meeting on October 27 and administrative sanctions were issued through two orders dated November 18 by additional chief secretary (MAWS) Gagandeep Singh Bedi, who heads the panel.

The 12 water supply projects account for Rs 247.87 crore, nearly two-thirds of the sanctioned amount. Of this, Rs 42.19 crore will go towards improving the existing supply system in Cumbum and Rs 36.41 crore for the same in Cuddalore, while the remaining Rs 169.27 crore will fund 10 schemes in town panchayats such as Marudhur, Nangavaram, Swamimalai and Sirugamani.

Of the total projects, 730 will be implemented in municipalities and corporations other than Chennai at a cost of Rs 132.33 crore.These include the renewal of 469 bitumen-topped roads covering 90 km, 199 cement-concrete roads spanning 21 km and 21 interlocking paver-block roads in Gobichettypalayam besides 39 parks at Rs 6.64 crore.The mission will contribute Rs 119.10 crore with the urban local bodies bearing the remaining Rs 13.23 crore.

Septage released into Rubber Park pond at Airapuram

KOCHI.(Agency)

The water distribution system at Airapuram Rubber Park, which houses around 60 industrial units on its 110 acre campus, has been shut down for the past 10 days as unidentified persons released septage and effluents into the only water source on the premises. According to workers, a foul smell spread in the area and an oily layer appeared on the waterbody on November 9. Following complaints, managing director George V James inspected the pond and found that the water had turned black.Samples of the water were sent for testing which confirmed high levels of e-coli and iron content in the water. The artificial pond has a capacity of 35,000 kilo litres per day (KLD) and all industries depend on the pond for industrial and domestic needs. For the past 10 days, the Rubberpark has been depending on water tankers to meet the industrial demand.

"The industries on the Rubber Park premises need around 1,100 KLD water per day and we have been depending on water tankers for the past 10 days. A team of doctors from the health department had visited the pond and directed to chlorinate the pond. Though the latest test results show a decline in coliform level, we are waiting to ensure that the water quality meets industrial level.

Dust, chemicals, onset of winter causing smog in Kochi: Experts

KOCHI.(Agency)

When it comes to air quality index (AQI) values in Kochi, private monitoring sites and the Kerala State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) report conflicting numbers. On Thursday, private air quality monitoring sites like aqi.in reported Kochi's AQI at 197, with PM2.5 at 121 µg/m³ and PM10 at 157 µg/m³. However, KSPCB, which remains handicapped due to non-functional air quality monitoring stations, claimed that the private site numbers were incorrect and that the parameters are well within permissible limits.

However, smoggy mornings fail to alleviate Kochiites' concerns. According to Rajeevan Erikkulam, a weather enthusiast, researcher, and climate expert, even though Kochi's AQI numbers will not go as high as Delhi's, which came to around 400 or 500, there is a need to be careful. "However, one can't go by the values presented by the private sites alone," he added. Dr S Abhilash, atmospheric scientist and academic, said Central Pollution Control Board's (CPCB) AQI values are the standard."The values presented by private sites are not dependable. They get the data from satellites and systems that don't have proper sensors," he added.According to both Rajeevan and Abhilash, smog observed in the morning in the city is due to the onset of winter. "Mainly by November, temperature starts dropping, especially if there is no rain.

'People not going to change mindset': Bombay HC weighs complete firecracker ban

Bombay HC reserves order on a firecracker ban after flagging Diwali noise, 332 fires, and fake green cracker QR codes in Mumbai.

Mumbai (Agency)

Expressing displeasure over poor air quality during Diwali and the "insensitivity" of people bursting firecrackers beyond the rules and permissible time limits, the Bombay High Court (HC) on Thursday said it was considering a "drastic order" imposing a complete ban on firecrackers, except for community displays on permissible grounds, similar to those in other countries.After concluding the hearing of the petitioners, the state government, civic authorities and intervenors, including firecracker dealers and activists, a bench of Justices Girish S Kulkarni and Neela K Gokhale reserved its order on a suo motu public interest litigation (PIL) and other pleas raising concerns over noise pollution and the bursting of firecrackers on public streets during festivities.Last month, the bench had directed that the "total ban" on bursting firecrackers on public streets and roads during festivities would apply throughout the year.The HC said that while its orders did not pertain to any particular festival or season, they appeared to have been "selectively understood" by some people who had "no consciousness for the societal cause". It also said the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's (BMC) decision to ban aerial firecrackers during Diwali was "very important".

"Because it is really causing problems to the properties of people. There were 332 fires in the city. If it is the correct figure which is actually being reflected in the news reports, then it is alarming," Justice Kulkarni orally remarked."They have no possible sensitivity in regard to the pollution and how hazardous it is… the AQI at a particular point of time during the Diwali festival was at the highest. We want to prevent this," the judge added, referring to the Air Quality



Index."We'll have to take some drastic orders now, really, in the larger interest of lakhs of citizens of this city. And unless we have this kind of proactive approach, nothing is going to improve. Because people are not going to change their mindset and we are still going to have all these firecrackers and there would be tremendous noise pollution even up to 3 am. What is this? The police and municipal machinery were totally helpless. They did their best, but it was totally beyond their control," the bench said.The judges said the court would have to "nip it (toxicity) in the bud" and that "the only thing would be to ban all these firecrackers in the city of Mumbai". They added, "There would be only community firecrackers and on permissible grounds where only it would be like in the other countries, which is kind of a fire show with no pollution—only community firecrackers to be used. It is the only solution so that you are relieved of toxicity in the city."The HC reiterated that the "social fabric and great quality of Mumbai was togetherness", irrespective of communities, and said the present situation with respect to pollution "was not good".

No sea bridge? Uttan-Virar Sea Link may shift inland; MMRDA plan to cut cost by Rs 20,000 crore

MMRDA has pitched two inland elevated options to CM Devendra Fadnavis; aims to reduce Uttan land acquisition and rehabilitation costs, and cut project cost by Rs 20,000 crore

Mumbai.(Agency)

The Uttan-Virar Sea Link may no longer run through the sea. The Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) has drawn up two alternative alignments that would take the proposed corridor inland as an elevated road, potentially reducing the project cost by around Rs 20,000 crore — from Rs 58,754 crore to approximately Rs 38,000 crore.

The alternatives on the Uttan-Virar Sea Link were presented to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis at a meeting on Thursday. The state government is yet to take a decision on the alignment.The change is being considered partly to reduce the cost of land acquisition and rehabilitation. The original alignment required the MMRDA to acquire substantial stretches of land, including 104 hectares in Uttan, largely belonging to farmers. The land acquisition process, initiated in July, faced resistance.A source said the authority had examined whether the corridor could be routed through government land in the region, reducing the need for private land acquisition and rehabilitation. The revised options would take the road inland instead of building the main stretch as a sea bridge.

The original project

The Uttan-Virar Sea Link was conceived as an eight-lane, north-south coastal corridor to connect the northern suburbs of the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) with the rest of the region. The first phase, spanning 55.12 kilometres, was designed to run from Uttan, near Bhayandar, to Virar, with a 24.35-km sea bridge forming its main component.The project also included three approach roads: a 9.32-km connector to Uttan, a 2.5-km stretch towards Vasai and an



18.95-km connector to Virar. Together, these stretches were intended to provide access to the sea link from the surrounding urban areas and create a faster north-south road corridor through the western parts of the MMR.The Virar end of the corridor was also planned to connect with the larger road network leading towards the proposed Vadhavan port in Palghar and the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway. The idea was not merely to provide a shorter route between Uttan and Virar, but to improve regional connectivity and offer an alternative to the congested road network passing through Bhayandar, Vasai and Virar.

The sea link was also part of a larger plan to create a continuous coastal road network along Mumbai's western edge. This network would bring together the operational Mumbai Coastal Road and Bandra-Worli Sea Link, the under-construction Bandra-Versova Sea Link, the proposed Versova-Bhayandar corridor and the Uttan-Virar link. Once completed, the chain would provide a coastal route connecting South Mumbai with the northern suburbs. The Uttan-Virar project, by itself, would not provide a direct route to South Mumbai; its larger benefit would depend on the completion of the other links.

Second revision

This is the second major cost revision since the project was transferred to the MMRDA by the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC).When the MMRDA was entrusted with the 55-km project in 2022, its estimated cost stood at Rs 87,427 crore. The original plan envisaged a 24.35-km sea bridge between Uttan and Virar, along with connecting roads to Uttan (9.32 km), Vasai (2.5 km) and Virar (18.95 km).

The MMRDA then reduced the proposed width of the corridor to bring down construction costs. The main bridge, originally planned with four lanes in each direction, was scaled.

TN Govt eyes long-term power bids to save state from harsh summer

CHENNAI.(Agency)

The TVK government, which has promised uninterrupted power supply, is facing a major challenge in meeting the state's electricity demand during the upcoming extended summer due to the El Nino effect, with efforts to procure additional power falling short of requirements.A senior official of the Tamil Nadu Power Distribution Corporation Limited told that the utility had floated short-term power procurement tenders four times earlier to meet the state's additional requirements.However, all four tenders were cancelled due to high tariffs and inadequate response from power generators.

"In the fifth tender, though companies quoted tariffs ranging from Rs 9-Rs 20/unit, we could not secure the required quantity of power," the official said.Despite floating tenders to procure 17,000 MW of round-the-clock power for the January-June period next year, private power generators have offered to supply only 5,311 MW (31%).Adding to the concern, another senior official said the projected evening peak power deficit was expected to rise sharply from 1,388 MW in January to 5,544 MW in April. The deficit was estimated at 3,987 MW in May and 4,796 MW in June.

"The projected deficit is a matter of concern, as it could affect power supply to domestic consumers, industries and the agricultural sector during the peak summer months," the official said.TNPDCL has also stepped up efforts to procure 3,000 MW through fresh long-term power purchase agreements for five years from March 2027.

The utility had initially sought approval to procure 1,500 MW but later doubled the proposed capacity to 3,000 MW in view of the anticipated increase in demand.The Tamil Nadu Electricity Regulatory Commission had sought details of existing power purchase agreements, future demand projections and the status of upcoming power projects before allowing the utility to proceed with the tender process. TNPDCL was granted permission only after submitting an additional affidavit providing the required details, an official said.

'How did a peaceful protest become a platform for political mobilisation?': SRFTI Vice-Chancellor Santosh Ajmera

Kolkata.(Agency)

The Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute (SRFTI), Kolkata, has seen virtually no classes since September 27, when protests broke out over an event organised by the Akhil Bharatiya Grahak Panchayat, an RSS affiliate. After alleged members of a Hindu outfit hurled bricks and bottles at students from outside on October 4, anger has grown. A section of students has been seeking the resignation of Vice-Chancellor Santosh Ajmera, 44, who took charge just a day before the unrest began, apart from action against the attackers and withdrawal of police from the campus.Excerpts from an interview with Ajmera, who also holds charge as Additional Director General, Press Information Bureau:



*** The student agitation at the SRFTI shows no signs of abating. What do you see as the way forward?**

I would first like to clarify the chronology. Permission for the external programme (the Akhil Bharatiya Grahak Panchayat) was given by my predecessor. I rushed from Delhi the same night (September 27) after hearing about the situation…Talking of the protest, nothing justifies laying siege multiple times to the V-C's office, hijacking the office for two days, damaging the official portrait of the Prime Minister, abusing Constitutional authorities, or verbal and physical attacks on the V-C.How did a peaceful protest acquire political colour and is being influenced by external forces? What is the role of outsiders? Over time, demands changed from something genuine like safety and security on the campus to those with political overtones like repeal of the NEP (National Education Policy) and 'de-saffronisation'.

A majority of the students have returned to their hometowns since academic activities were halted, and the continuing agitation involves a relatively small group… The SRFTI cannot become a platform for political mobilisation at the cost of its educational mandate.I remain open to dialogue. Disagreement is part of any democratic institution; intimidation and disruption are not. The right to protest cannot become the right to paralyse an institution. A small group cannot hold the academic future of an entire student community to ransom.

Post office in a Gujarat village wants a new address, a law for 'disturbed areas' blocks it

Ahmedabad.(Agency)

A decision to shift a post office from a dilapidated independence era building in a Gujarat village has got stuck due to a state law that governs transfer of properties in communally disturbed areas. Its clients, mostly senior citizens, now point fingers at the authorities concerned for "dragging their feet" on reopening the post office in Vatva village on the suburbs of Ahmedabad.The postal department has moved the post office temporarily to the Vatva GIDC, a state-controlled industrial estate, which residents of the village say is "far".Following pressure, the department of posts rented a building in the village – some 200 metres from the older building — only to find that it falls under the 'Disturbed Areas' and will have to be cleared by the district collector before it is put to use. Vatva came under the Disturbed Areas Act in 2020, which means all properties changing hands will have to be cleared by the collector's office.Govindbhai Prajapati, 74, who retired as a sub postmaster, complained how the temporary post office is "too far" for him."The post office in Vatva Gam has been shut down for almost a year now. The building's condition deteriorated over the years with the ceiling leaking during the monsoon and no space for the staff to sit or stand," Prajapati told ."Now I have to travel nearly 5 km to the GIDC to avail the postal services. With my pension account, recurring account, children's accounts and other financial services I have to visit the post office at least five times a month," he says.



Since 2023, post offices have been offering banking facilities to customers within five kms of a village which does not have a bank, and give people access to various government schemes and digital services. Every post office is meant to serve an average area of 19.92 square kilometres, according to the India Post website. In August this year, the Central government launched the Dak Sewa and Dak Mitra facilities enabling paperless postal services on mobile phones and at doorsteps using technology, even as it has taken up renovation of post offices across the country.

Blueprint for viksit healthcare

Wooing venture capitalists to invest in both the health and insurance businesses can be seen as a moral scandal for a country as impoverished as India. Can our self-image of development afford to be one where cities are dotted with posh multi-storeyed hospitals housing world-class health businesses to cater only to the rich and generate enormous profits?The recent mergers and acquisitions of a number of hospitals by foreign private equity and wealth funds have consolidated India's private healthcare sector, lessening competition that keeps prices in check and players on their toes, and creating large corporatised chains focused on profits. Such takeovers have been reported from Kerala, Telangana, Maharashtra and West Bengal, among others. The wave has spread to tier 2 and 3 cities, too.This is no criticism of private healthcare, which may help improve efficiency and provide services public-funded institutions lack in a particular geography. But we must look closer at the drivers for such a shift in a country where large sections still depend on State-run facilities. The topmost driver of corporatisation is high unmet demand for tertiary care. The Indian middle class wants a standard of living that's comparable to that in rich nations. They want a matching medical care, too. Not surprisingly, the 80th Round of Household Consumption Survey on health noted a significant proportion of people going to the private sector. The last three survey rounds also show a rise in the use public healthcare facilities in rural India.

In corporate hospitals, profit is paramount. Return on investment is the primary operational goal, not client satisfaction. Healing as an ethical service can take a backseat. The top executives check billing and set targets, especially for high-margin procedures like robotic surgeries and assisted reproductive technologies. It matters what proportion of patients come under the knife. As the Supreme Court has recently noted, this leads to rampant overbilling, and unnecessary costly procedures and laboratory tests. It's no wonder that the average expenses at private hospitals have increased by 70 percent in rural areas and 80 percent in urban areas over eight years.

The public-private disparity continues in out-of-pocket medical expenditure per hospitalisation (excluding childbirths). According to the latest government survey, such expenses in private hospitals were 7.5 times that in public ones, whereas the median expense exceeded 10-folds. These continue to be significant due to shortage of medicines, diagnostic services and high transport and other non-medical costs.Insurance often fails to cover these deductibles. Genuine outpatient consultations and medications are denied as the insurance claim-settlement ratio falls. False claims and unnecessary investigations are both on the rise.

The resultant trauma and financial crisis can be mitigated by making the public health system more robust. While insurance coverage has increased considerably compared to previous health survey rounds, this has not translated into a significant rise in the use of hospital care. Currently, less than half rural and urban households are covered by some form of health insurance, mainly by government-financed insurance schemes.

The deafening silence of CM Vijay

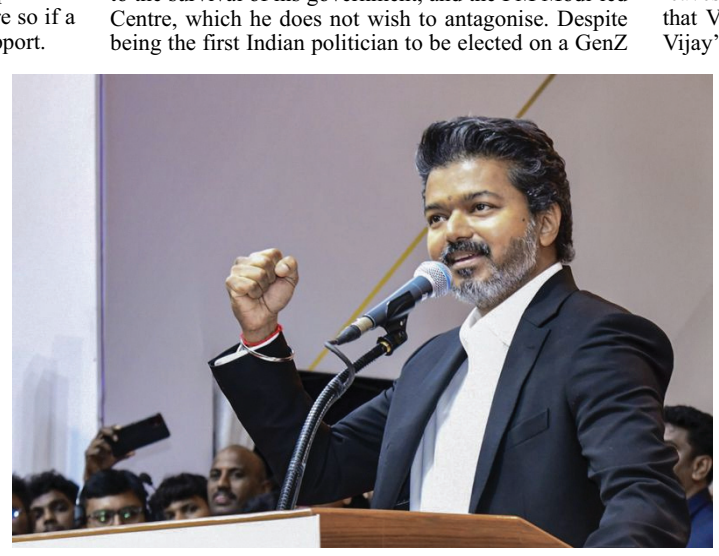
Actor-turned-politician's balancing act defines the first six months of his term

THOSE who predicted that the C Joseph Vijay government in Tamil Nadu would not last six months — or even three — have been proven wrong. The half-year mark has come and gone, and Vijay and his Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) are still in the saddle. But these six months have been nothing less than revelatory about the actor-turned-politician, who leads a post-poll ruling coalition, the state's first in seven decades.Contrary to the impression he gave during the campaign, Chief Minister Vijay does not believe in public communication. In GenZ parlance, he is ghosting the same people he wooed so assiduously before the elections. In democratic politics, people want their leaders to remain engaged with them, more so if a leader has won an election on the back of their support.

Engagement is seen as a means to accountability. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has, of course, normalised a one-way communication that prevents questioning. But even he has something to say every day to his vast audience through Twitter and Instagram.Vijay seems to have entered a silence zone. Tamil Nadu is used to its political leaders speaking to them directly or through the media on a daily basis.The late M Karunanidhi was a communicator par excellence. He was accessible to journalists. His column My Brethren in the DMK eveninger Murasoli was eagerly read and parsed by supporters as well as opponents. His son and former chief minister MK Stalin, who has run the Tamil daily after Karunanidhi's death, is not a big one for press conferences, but as CM, he did not shy away from speaking to journalists.Jayalalithaa was also not keen on press conferences, but she would respond gamely enough to journalists doorstepping her office at the secretariat, and could be often seen on TV, ready with sharp answers to their questions.But the actor who enticed voters with dialogues at public rallies about "pure force" (TVK) vs "evil force" (DMK) has gone quiet. He says nothing about the big issues of the day. His X handle has no quotable quotes. The silence has continued even though the "pure" government has, in recent days, come under the scanner for the headline-grabbing conduct of its party members.While M Ravishankar, Deputy Speaker of the TN Assembly, allegedly thrashed a constituent who went to him with a complaint about shortage of drinking water and a garbage pile-up in his area, a TVK MLA is accused of sending inappropriate messages to a woman IAS officer.Vijay's silence in both cases is being compared unfavourably to how Jayalalithaa publicly humiliated people in her party who were accused of similar offences — sacked from public offices, removed from party posts. Vijay's big move was to summon all MLAs and party functionaries to a resort in Mahabalipuram to caution them against tarnishing the party's name.

Some of Vijay's silences, or inaction, can be put down to the numbers. The TVK has 109 legislators, nine short of the halfway mark in the Assembly. Pulling up MLAs or party functionaries could prove risky for a party that is counting every seat. Earlier this month, rumours were rife of an Opposition vote of no-confidence against the government. These have not entirely gone away.

Other silences seem necessitated by a balancing act between the Congress, whose five legislators are crucial to the survival of his government, and the PM Modi-led Centre, which he does not wish to antagonise. Despite being the first Indian politician to be elected on a GenZ wave, Vijay made no comments about the Cockroach Janta Party, nor did he express any fellow feeling with the protesting youth in Delhi.He was noticeably quiet on the controversial SIR, though the Congress is leading the "vote chori" campaign. Also, he did not attend the Congress-led rally at Ramlila Maidan on November 1.



However, his presence at Sonia Gandhi's glittering book launch on November 16 may have made up for his absence from the rally. He was seated in the front row next to Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge. But the question the DMK and other Opposition parties in Tamil Nadu have is this: did he take up the issue of the dam the Congress government in Karnataka is building on the Cauvery with Congress leaders, or with the Karnataka CM, who was seated in the same row?Still other silences have no plausible explanation. His Metro ride with PM Modi in Chennai shows him staring into space blankly while seated between the Prime Minister and an official who are having an animated conversation. The clip quickly went viral, with social media users' comments ranging from "Me, at family functions" and "Bro is a bigger introvert than me" to "Bhai gutkha daba kar baitha hai".In other ways too, Tamil Nadu has not seen a chief minister like Vijay. Not only is he silent, he dresses differently, in a black jacket and trousers, unlike the white veshti and shirt of his male predecessors, perhaps seeking to send a message of corporate-style governance.

His work style is different as well. He is said to arrive at the colonial-era Fort St George, the seat of the state government, before 10 am, brings his lunch with him, and leaves around 5 pm, prompting Stalin to take the swipe that Vijay had not been elected to an office job. Later, Vijay's close associate Aadhav Arjuna, who is also a minister, sought to dispel the impression of a hands-off CM, saying that he worked 18 to 20 hours a day. Yes, he has one thing in common with Karunanidhi, the desire for a new secretariat. The DMK stalwart's dream office was completed after he lost the 2011 election. Jayalalithaa turned it into a hospital. Notwithstanding all the expenditure, Vijay wants a new sea-facing office.

Clothes, working hours and silences aside, Vijay will be judged on the basis of governance. While six months may be unfairly early to take stock, it is enough time for extravagant promises made during elections to come up against the reality check of budgets and deficits. Some have been substantially scaled down in implementation, while others are on hold.Vijay still enjoys extraordinary goodwill among large sections of his voters, especially the younger lot. But for how long is the question. Stalin believes that it will run out sooner than later. But as Vijay's feet are being held to the fire, the government's investigation into two big cases may also put the DMK under a harsh spotlight.The first is a child sex racket presided over by a granite baron, with the police accused of not investigating crucial evidence submitted last year, when the DMK was in office. The TVK is also seeking to lay at the DMK's door the blame for a large-scale scam in the procurement of books for public libraries, first flagged by the celebrated writer Perumal Murugan, when he noticed AI-generated and plagiarised titles on the shelves of the Periyar Knowledge Centre in Coimbatore.

Amidst all this, another famous actor seems to be making a side entry onto a more public stage. Dhanush, superstar Rajinikanth's former son-in-law, has made a move that is seen as suggestive of bigger plans. He has brought his fan club associations together as a "welfare movement", imitating Vijay's own path to politics. But the 43-year-old has not indicated that he has political ambitions. At least not yet.

Coal dependence remains as COP31 debates pledges

Environmental groups are sceptical of this language surviving till a possible final deal, as fossil fuel-producing countries would resist stronger commitments

COP31, the latest edition of the United Nations' annual climate conference that's going on in Türkiye, seems very far from ending on a consensual note, with countries divided sharply over fossil fuel use, emission reduction and climate finance. That some countries have already rejected the first draft of Cover Decisions, the most significant achievement till date in a summit that ends on November 20, sums up the sentiment. The 18-page draft, prepared to facilitate negotiations, mentions 'fossil fuel' six times—and that remains the most contentious part.

While recognising that geopolitical tensions have left supply chains uncertain, it calls for "accelerated action… through immediate transition away from fossil fuels". Environmental groups are sceptical of this language surviving till a possible final deal, as fossil fuel-producing countries would resist stronger commitments. The faultlines were already exposed with developing countries contesting sectoral targets and raising apprehensions over rich nations' climate finance obligations, at a time a study revealed that their pledges had fallen 70 percent through



2026. The 35-by-35 promise—commitment to raising electricity's share of global energy consumption to 35 percent by 2035, from the current 23 percent—championed by host Türkiye has come in for criticism as rapid electrification has to be accompanied by a higher targets for renewable energy use and fossil fuel reduction.For developing economies, this has direct implications for access to affordable finance for energy transition and disaster preparedness. India has been clear that financial obligations from rich nations would be central to global action and has called for equity while maintaining it would contribute with national economic interests in view. However, its challenges are elsewhere. While the country has met its commitment on installed renewable capacity well in advance, links to distribution grids and efficient transmission hold the key to their use. Meanwhile, in the first half the current year, India started constructing 21.6-gigawatt in coal power capacities. With more coal blocks unlocked, another 9.7 GW is proposed. This comes with a huge environmental cost. The government's Forest Advisory Committee gave its nod to a block in Jharkhand that would require 6 lakh trees to be felled. India is right in its climate action stand at COP31. But it must ensure that the cost of prevention does not exceed the loss it incurs on the way.

The cowherd continuum

The Gita is a quantum leap in Indian thought, a deep wish-fulfilment, where God speaks at length to man. We are gifted a cosmic context that also details our place in it. When read within the epic, we can better grasp its whys and wherefores, and Krishna's ultimate pep talk

Gopashtami 2026 will be celebrated on Tuesday across many parts of India during the Shukla Paksha, or bright half, of the ongoing Indian month of Kartik. The festival commemorates the day Sri Krishna and Balarama were promoted from tending calves or vatsapas to herding full-grown cows in Vrindavan as gopas. This transition is described in Srimad Bhagavatam 10:15:1. The verse says that upon reaching the pauganda age (six to ten years old) in Vrindavan, Krishna and Balarama were entrusted with tending cows with their friends, blessing the land with the marks of their lotus feet.Since Krishna and cows are both deeply revered in Indian tradition, observing Gopashtami is believed to invite divine blessings. Those who can may donate to a religious institution or goshala they know and trust, towards Gau Samrakshana, or cow protectionBusy, working people across India who have no time to sit in puja nevertheless carry extra rotis from home to feed cows they meet on the way. I have seen an Uber driver do this in Delhi. He asked permission to stop for two minutes and fed a herd of long-horned cattle by the side of the road. He said this was an intelligent breed that calmly waited its turn instead of crowding him, and I saw that it was. Appropriately, we were headed to a neighbourhood called Dwarka.These are not meaningless or superstitious gestures but expressions of Sanatana Dharma's two driving principles—ananda (joy) and kritagyata (thankfulness). A gesture towards cows is an expression of gratitude for their generosity to us along with the pleasure we derive from drinking milk and eating butter, curds, ghee and paneer. Let's remember that the practice of Gopashtami comes from long ago, when our cows fed on sweet, wholesome grass and were not left to feed on garbage, as we distressingly see in towns and cities today. If we truly loved Krishna, we would not abandon his beloved cows to such a sorry plight.Let us take thi opportunity to look again at Krishna. He is not called the Sampoorna Avatar or complete avatar for nothing. He is everything to everybody—the holy child, the playmate, the beloved, the counsellor, the Friend of friends, the guru, the redeemer. The 'Vana Parva', or Forest section of the Mahabharata, in which the Pandavas spend 12 years exiled in the forest, contains one of my favourite Krishna moments. Once, Rishi Markandeya's visit to the Pandavas coincides with Krishna's. The rishi is a great favourite of theirs since he's a good storyteller. They sit around him, and Krishna says, "Please tell us a story, tell us lots of stories!" His enthusiasm for stories is so endearing to us.But despite his saulabhyam, or accessibility, do we really know him? Even Arjuna, so dear to him, has to ask at Kurukshetra, "Katham vidyaam aham yogim", BG 10:17 (How may I know Thee, Lord?).

The Bhagavad Gita describes Krishna's answer in beautiful poetry like this: "pashya me partha rupanishatasho 'tha sahasrasah/nana-vidhani divyani nana-varnakritini cha'" BG 11:5, meaning, 'Behold now, Arjuna, my countless forms in countless colours'.

When the Vishwarupa is revealed, Arjuna sees a terrifying sight: "yatha pradiptam jvalanam patanga/vishanti nashaya samriddha-vegah/tathaiva nashaya vishanti lokas/tavapi vaktrani samriddha-vegah", BG 11:29.

This means, 'As moths rush to perish in flames, so do great numbers rush to die in your blazing mouth'.The Gita is a quantum leap in Indian thought, a deep wish-fulfilment, where God speaks at length to man. We are gifted a cosmic context that also details our place in it, and our goals. We can then move on to the remaining half of the Mahabharata, which describes the 18 days of battle and what happens afterward.



By reading a detailed translation, we learn things that little abridged books may not tell. For example, how much the formidable Trigarta clan, allies of the Kauravas, harassed and delayed the Pandavas in battle. Arjuna is forever rushing around trying to quell them. (Even today, a former ruling clan called the Katoch, in the Kangra Valley, claims descent from the Trigartas). Important heroes like Satyaki and Salya are fleshed out with their loyalty and valour. The death of young Abhimanyu, when read in detail, is unlikely to leave a dry eye.The encounter between Kunti and Karna, the soldier of misfortune, is heart-rendingly told by Vyasa. How Karna holds back from killing Nakula, Sahadeva, Bhima and Yudhishtira is poignantly described. His death scene is as hair-raising as Kunti's revelation of his true identity.I find that when you read the Gita in the flow of the epic, it can sometimes make more sense than it might otherwise in its seemingly detached loftiness. When read within the epic, we can better grasp its whys and wherefores, its essential nature as the ultimate pep talk, and how Krishna tries to give Arjuna the long perspective on the nature of life and its sometimes difficult duties. My personal favourites are Canto Ten, which is like a movie montage on the nature of God ('Of seasons I am Spring…'), and Canto Sixteen on 'divine and demonic natures', which helps us choose between what we must do and what we must never do. Interestingly, many positive qualities are feminine in Sanskrit.The Bhagavatam and Bharatam thus give us Krishna's enthralling journey from little gopa boy to Jagadguru, the personality of the One we have loved from his time to ours. Gopashtami is another loving reminder of his eternal presence in our lives.

Indulge in a post-festive detox at hotels with the best Pools





After the whirlwind of festive celebrations, there's nothing more comforting than unwinding in a pool and sipping on a drink or two, especially if it comes with a generous side of views.

From mountain hugging plunge pools in the Himalayas to secluded getaways in the Indian Ocean, let's dive into the list of hotels where extraordinary pools and breathtaking views combine to create the ultimate post-celebration escape.

Detox in style in Krabi

After weeks of festive frenzy, it's time to slow down on the white sands of Krabi in Thailand. Check into the Reserve villa with a private pool at Phulay Bay, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve. After relaxing laps, lounge on the sundeck enjoying the Andaman Sea view. You can also swim in the infinity pool by the Phang Nga Bay. Take the healing a notch higher by learning Batik painting and lotus flower folding at this 3-Michelin Keys resort. Love Thai food? Take a cooking class and learn the ropes. Come home not just rejuvenated but with enriching skills.

Insider tip for the ultimate detox: Take a guided session with resident yoga master and mallakhamb expert Himani Pal against the stunning limestone mountains and the Andaman Sea as backdrops. If you are at the property on December 1-4, you can join a series of group sessions and exclusive private classes with Daria Gudkova, a spiritual wellness expert who specialises in sound therapy, crystal meditation sessions, and chakra activation.

Valley views from Bhutan's finest

Tucked in the Punakha Valley of Bhutan, Pemako Punakha is a place where time stands still. Indulge in tranquillity in one of the 21 luxury tented villas that are crafted to immerse you in some R&R. Each villa here has a private temperature-controlled pool that overlooks the river and the rolling hills below. It is the ideal spot to indulge in a hearty floating breakfast in the AM or a sneaky dip with your partner in the PM. Inside, Serge Ferrari fabrics and copper fixtures, including a vintage copper tub in the bathroom that meets the Bhutanese aesthetic in all ways, await.

Insider tip for the ultimate detox: Hike along an off the beaten path under the shade of pine trees on the way to Jiligang Monastery. The sight of the meandering river below complimented by the chirping of different birds and earthy scents will fade away your tiredness the moment you catch the first glimpse of the monastery.

Sandy retreats in Seychelles

Waldorf Astoria, Platte Island is a serene sanctuary in Seychelles is surrounded by nothing but the ocean and is designed for privacy and comfort. Your days are spent looking out for hawksbill turtles, reef sharks and stingrays or cycling across the island's airstrip which is also the best place to view the Milky Way on a clear night! Each of the 50 villas here have pools under towering palm trees and direct access to paradise. Inside, they have a nautical theme going on with materials like wood, rope and mosaic tiles used, and the furniture is further accented with blue and green décor that reflect the ocean and surrounding vegetation. In the expansive outdoor hideaway sip on locally crafted beverages in your pool as you are serenaded by the ocean ahead of you.

Insider tip for the ultimate detox: Retreat from the everyday and unwind with contemporary and traditional services in one of their six treatments and indulge in a session of Ayur-Abhyanga. This ancient therapy uses medicated herbal oils that are applied to the entire body using rhythmic strokes that stimulate energy points and relieve fatigue and stress and balances the body and mind.

Gulf views to cure your holiday blues

Looking for a short-haul beach getaway to wash off post-festive blues? Ras Al Khaimah is the spot. Located on Al Marjan Island and opening out to the shimmering waters of the Arabian Gulf, the beachfront chalet at Mövenpick Resort Al Marjan Island is ideal. Kick back and relax in your private pool hidden behind lush greens and overlooking the Gulf.

Insider tip for the ultimate detox: Enjoy a brunch or few at Ula, a restaurant that makes you feel right at home. Think long lunches, shimmering sunsets, and if you are up for it then late-night house beats – a place that transports you to where you need to be.

Design meets zen in Sri Lanka

With private gardens, plunge pools, and more, this brag-worthy suite in Lunuganga is made with a love of design and architecture. The Geoffrey Bawa Suite is furnished with a rare collection of original artworks as well as Bawa's library, making it the best escape to unwind and relax under the hues of greens with a book or two. The suite opens out to a charming private courtyard with a sitting area and a tropical plunge pool under tall palm trees, perfect for those looking for seclusion and privacy.

Insider tip for the ultimate detox: Find your zen moment as you explore the whimsical gardens on a guided tour of Lunuganga's gardens. Learn about Geoffrey Bawa and his extraordinary work as you meander through this living masterpiece – it's an escape that will clear your mind and spark fresh inspiration.

Chorao Island

The island life in Goa you need to experience



Chorao Island is not a hidden gem, and we say that because it's literally an island that's located just 11 km away from the capital city of Panjim. But even though it is so close to the bustling Panjim, Chorao has managed to keep the serene vibe about it. For those who can't do without sightseeing, Chorao Island is the place for them.

Here's what makes Chorao Island unique and popular – the stunning mix of natural beauty, vibrant wildlife, traditional Goan roots and a slower pace of life. It's the latter that we find the most intriguing about Chorao Island.

Beautiful offbeat destinations in Western Ghats for a perfect getaway

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When compared to the hustle and bustle of Panjim and the nearby places, with their beaches and nightlife, Chorao Island is where you come to drop all that, embrace the minimal and really soak in all the nature that's around you.

The silence here is beautiful.

One can reach Chorao Island by taking the ferry from Ribandar. The ferry ride is a very simple yet exciting one. If you have a four-wheeler with you, you will only need to pay INR 10 for the vehicle only. For people and two-wheelers, the ferry ride is free of cost. The 10-minute ferry ride on the Mandovi River takes you through the lush mangroves. Feel free to climb the stairs up to the observation deck on the ferry. It will not give you a bird's eye view of the place but it's just a fun thing to do.

The real fun, however, begins once you get off the ferry. Right at the mouth of the ferry point, is the entrance to the very famous Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary, named after the very important Bird Man of India – Dr. Salim Ali.

For those who are unaware, Dr. Salim Ali was a noted ornithologist and one of the most influential citizen scientists India has ever seen. Thanks to him, today we know about avian diversity in India, and we have so many bird sanctuaries where we can visit and truly appreciate nature, especially birds, as they should be.

The sanctuary boasts a captivating variety of bird species, including kingfishers, eagles, herons, and so many species of migratory birds. Birdwatchers and nature enthusiasts from all over India and the world come to experience this avian wonderland. Here, you can observe the birds in their natural habitat and at the same time, explore and learn more about the mangroves and the backwaters. This bird sanctuary will let you have a good start to your Chorao experiences.

From here on, you will start to notice that there is practically no crowd, no traffic hold-ups, no busy streets. The roads here are quieter and the surroundings are greener as compared to other parts of Goa.

Most people visiting Goa tend to hire either a car or a scooty to go around town. If you are on a scooty, you are going to love the ride on this island. Yes, the roads are narrow, but they are also pretty isolated and quiet. But that, in no way, means that you will throw caution to the wind. Ride slowly and enjoy the scenery and the greenery, these are things that are so hard to come by these days, especially for those outstation visitors.

You will be passing through small villages on the way, and these are some of the best ways to experience the traditions and culture of the locals.

Scattered along the way are also small local eateries where they serve traditional Goan cuisine. At these eateries, you will find from hot cups of tea and plates of fried veggie fritters to delectable local seafood items.

When in Chorao, take some time out to explore some more. Just an hour and a half away inland is Goa's hinterlands. Chorla Ghats is where one gets to experience the best of the Western Ghats in Goa. From Arvalem Falls and Pandava Caves to the ancient Tambdi Surla Temple and Dudhsagar Waterfalls, these jewels of the Chorla Ghats are great addition to your Chorao Island itinerary.

Chorao Island in Goa is what we call perfect slow-living. It's the relaxed pace of life that we find the most attractive here in Chorao Island.

How can I reach Chorao Island in Goa?

To reach Chorao Island, fly to Goa International Airport, then take a taxi to the nearest ferry point (Ribandar) and hop on a short ferry ride to the island

What are the main attractions on Chorao Island?

Chorao Island's highlights include the Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary, serene beaches, historical sites, and scenic cycling trails

Are there accommodations on Chorao Island?

Accommodations on Chorao Island are limited, so many visitors choose to stay in nearby areas and visit for day trips. Booking in advance is recommended during peak seasons.



Places to experience the best of Parsi heritage in India



Places to experience the best of Parsi heritage in India According to old records, the Parsis first arrived in India in the 8th-10th century and Sanjan was the first place where they set foot. Sanjan town is situated in Umargam taluka in Valsad district, Gujarat. Being the first settlement of Parsis in India, Gujarat, by default, is also an important heritage destination for the Parsis. Over time, the Parsis moved to Maharashtra, especially Mumbai, which has the largest number of Parsis in India.

Over the years, the Parsis have not only managed to integrate into the Indian society, but have also maintained their rich culture and heritage. Here are some of the best places in India, where you can experience the beautiful Parsi culture and heritage.

Udvada

Udvada is a coastal town situated in Pardi in Valsad district, Gujarat. It is also one of the most important places for the Parsis. The town is home to the Zoroastrian temple, Udvada Atash Behram. The Atash Bahram fire temple is the most sacred of all Zorastrian temples in India. The holy fire has been continuously burning for centuries now, making it one of the oldest continuously burning fire temples in the world.

Baroda

Baroda is located in Sayajigunj in Baroda, Gujarat. The city is home to Parsi Agiary, the first Parsi temple in Baroda (1923). The temple was built by the then state contractor for the Baroda state, Faramji Contractor, for the Parsi community living in the city. The temple is managed by the members of the family only. Parsi Agiary is a great way to get to understand the local architecture style mixed with the Parsi elements.

Pune

When you are in Pune, you can't really miss MG Road, which is also one of the largest Parsi hubs in the city. It is a great place to experience Parsi food, especially the Camp area. Back in the day, Camp was a very popular landmark. In present times, Sharbatwala Chowk is probably one of the most well-preserved in terms of Parsi culture and heritage.

Bahrot caves

Bahrot Caves near Dahanu, Maharashtra, are the only Zoroastrian cave temples in India. Located approximately 25 km from Sanjan, Bahrot Caves once gave shelter to the Parsis when Sanjan was invaded by Alaf Khan, a general of Muhammad bin Tughluq in 1393. According to history, they hid in the caves for 13 years. When the Parsis moved to Bahrot, they also brought with them the holy fire – Iranshah Flame. This fire is now burning in the Atash Behram in Udvada.



Dadar Parsi Colony

Dadar Parsi Colony is the largest Parsi colony in Mumbai, and is probably the best. It's a posh colony, where you will see art deco buildings. The colony is also home to the famous Five Gardens created by Mancherji Joshi, the founder of the Dadar Parsi Colony.

Auto drivers launch protest over delay in fare revision

Delhi.(Agency)

Cab fares across the National Capital Region (NCR) spiked on Thursday morning as transport unions staged a protest to demand higher auto and taxi fares. The protesters, organised by transport unions affiliated with the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) at Ramlila Maidan, also sought a ban on private bike-taxi services and the withdrawal of certain fitness-related requirements for auto-rickshaws.

A statement issued by the unions said, "A large number of transport workers from different states across India participated and raised their voices against the policies of the



Centre and Delhi government. The government in Delhi has been in power for more than one and a half years, yet not a single promise made to auto and taxi drivers has been fulfilled."According to Rajendra Soni, former general secretary of the unions, said the Delhi government introduced new rules that increased difficulties of drivers. He said, "Drivers are the backbone of the transport system, but their problems continue to be neglected."

Commuters faced problems, claiming that a ride from Mayur Vihar to Sector 62 in Noida, which costs around Rs 300 on cab-hailing platforms, was showing fares of over Rs 400- Rs 450.

SUV hits auto, runs over people sleeping on footpath, 2 dead

Delhi.(Agency)

Two persons were killed and six others sustained injuries when a Toyota Fortuner rammed into an autorickshaw on on Yudhishthir Setu in North Delhi's Kashmere Gate area early Wednesday, before hitting people sleeping on a footpath.

Police identified the deceased as Shahid Ali, the autorickshaw driver, and a passenger, Suresh Sharma, from Rajasthan. They succumbed to their injuries during treatment on Wednesday evening.

The police, meanwhile, are looking for a 23-year-old man, who was allegedly driving the Fortuner in an inebreited condition.An officer said he was initially arrested on the spot. An FIR was registered under sections 281 (rash driving) and 125(a) (causing hurt by endangering life of others) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).However, he was subsequently granted bail from the police station as none of the victims had died then. Following the two deaths, police added Section 105 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) of the BNS to the case. The accused is now untraceable, police said.

"The driver's blood sample had revealed traces of alcohol," said an officer. "He is a resident of Ghaziabad and was allegedly returning from a party," the officer added.The accident took place around 1.30 am, when the Kashmere Gate police received information about the collision and rushed to the spot.Preliminary investigation revealed that the autorickshaw was coming from the wrong direction, while the Fortuner was allegedly being driven at a high speed. The two vehicles collided head-on, causing the autorickshaw to overturn.

The Fortuner driver lost control of the vehicle, which mounted the footpath and hit several people sleeping there, police said.

The autorickshaw was carrying two passengers besides the driver, said police. All eight injured persons were shifted to a hospital with the help of PCR personnel.Following postmortem examination, the bodies were handed over to the families, said police, adding that the six injured persons have been discharged.

Chhath over, DPCC yet to submit report on discharge into Yamuna

Delhi.(Agency)

Even as the Supreme Court has directed state pollution control boards to ensure real-time disclosure of data on discharge from sewage treatment plants (STPs) and common effluent treatment plants (CETPs) into the Yamuna, the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) is yet to finalise and issue October's monthly water quality analysis of the river.The delay comes even as the festival of Chhath Puja, which sees thousands of devotees offer prayers and perform rituals on the banks of the river, has concluded. The last time the DPCC had issued a monthly water quality analysis was in September, based on samples collected on the 7th of the month.The report had recorded biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) levels and faecal coliform counts exceeding the prescribed criteria at several monitoring locations downstream of Wazirabad.

At Palla, BOD levels of 2 mg/l and 4 mg/l at Wazirabad, against the prescribed criterion of 3 mg/l for Class C water — a classification by CPCB that should be suitable for drinking after disinfection — was recorded. At the ISBT Bridge, the BOD level was 30 mg/l, while dissolved oxygen (DO) was 2.9 mg/l, below the prescribed minimum of 5 mg/l. Faecal coliform was recorded at 35,000 MPN/100 ml at the site, against the maximum permissible level of 2,500 MPN/100 ml.At ITO Bridge, Nizamuddin Bridge and Okhla Barrage, BOD levels stood at 18 mg/l, 14 mg/l and 10 mg/l, while faecal coliform levels at these locations were 17,000, 15,000 and 21,000 MPN/100 ml, respectively. At Asgarpur in Haryana, the last monitoring point, BOD was 18 mg/l and faecal coliform was 38,000 MPN/100 ml. Dissolved oxygen was



recorded as nil.The delay in releasing the October analysis has also been flagged by environmental activist Pankaj Kumar, founder of Earth Warrior and Avni Sanrakshak Foundation, through a letter to the DPCC on Thursday.

Kumar has sought the immediate release of pending reports of the Yamuna, major drains, STPs and CETPs, an explanation for the delay and an assurance that reports will be issued within 15 to 20 days of sampling in the future.

The letter also cited transparency obligations under the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, and directions of the National Green Tribunal.The issue comes amid renewed judicial scrutiny of pollution in the Yamuna. In an order earlier this week, the Supreme Court had directed that every STP and CETP install tamper-proof energy meters within a month and that readings be uploaded live, plant-wise, to CPCB and state pollution control board websites. A gap of more than 24 hours in the data feed would indicate that the plant was not operating.

The court also directed officers in charge of treatment plants and major drains to file monthly compliance affidavits. It asked the CPCB to propose a penalty mechanism under which penalties can be imposed on states, Union Territories and districts if water quality deteriorated in their respective stretches of the river.At a review meeting on June 8 this year, Union Home Minister Amit Shah had also called for continuous monitoring of BOD, chemical oxygen demand (COD) and total suspended solids in STPs, industrial units and drains discharging into the Yamuna.A senior Delhi Jal Board (DJB) official, while pointing out that the board monitors pollution levels in the river especially to track ammonia concentrations, said that analysis of the river water was primarily the responsibility of the DJB.

DFS to install high-tech communication gadget

Delhi.(Agency)

The Delhi Fire Service (DFS) is planning to strengthen its communication network with the installation of a Very High Frequency (VHF) repeater at its Shankar Road fire station in central Delhi to improve coordination during firefighting and rescue operations.The facility is likely to be installed by March 2027 and is expected to improve radio connectivity, ensuring smoother coordination among firefighters and emergency response teams when they are battling challenging situations on the ground, a DFS official said.A VHF repeater helps extend the coverage of radio communication, enabling personnel to communicate more effectively, particularly during emergencies. "The proposed VHF repeater is expected to make communication among fire personnel smoother, faster and more effective, particularly during critical firefighting and rescue operations.The repeater tower will initially be installed at the Shankar Road fire station in central Delhi. Subsequently, the DFS plans to expand the network to other parts of the city, with particular emphasis on the outer areas, where improving radio connectivity is equally important," the official said.The department is also working on an upgraded communication facility, which is likely to be introduced gradually in the coming years, he added.

Earlier this month, the Delhi government announced a comprehensive overhaul of the DFS to strengthen emergency response, upgrade technology, and address infrastructure gaps in the national capital.The government has also announced plans to set up more fire stations and create 2,345 posts in the department to strengthen firefighting and emergency rescue operations.

Several major fire incidents have been reported in the national capital this year. In one such incident, more than 20 people, foreigners, died after a major fire broke out at Flourish Stays B&B in a narrow bylane in south Delhi's Malviya Nagar on June 3.In another incident, nine people were killed after a fire broke out at a residential building in east Delhi's Vivek Vihar.

'Can't inspect 40-50L buildings': MCD for holding owners responsible for safety

Under the proposed framework, owners of buildings older than 15 years would be required to get periodic structural inspections conducted and maintain official safety certificates.

Delhi.(Agency)

Maintaining that Municipal Corporation of Delhi's (MCD) capabilities are limited to inspect dangerous buildings in the Capital, MCD Commissioner Sanjeev Khirwar said during a Standing Committee meeting on Thursday, that the civic body is in discussions with the Centre to make changes to the Unified Building Bye-Laws (UBBL), 2016 to hold property owners responsible for the structural safety of their buildings.Under the proposed framework, owners of buildings older than 15 years would be required to get periodic structural inspections conducted and maintain official safety certificates. Separate maintenance and inspection protocols would be prescribed for buildings older than 50 years."MCD cannot deploy personnel to inspect every individual building across Delhi's 40-50 lakh structures, given the extensive time required for structural stability verification. It is far more practical for property owners and occupants to maintain direct contact with empanelled engineers instead of MCD hiring inspectors, because structural evaluation is not a one-time exercise," Khirwar said."As a house ages, it requires ongoing structural stability checks, especially after earthquakes or ground vibrations. Because of these factors, we need a regularized scheme where owners take primary responsibility and maintain active safety certifications with empanelled engineers rather than municipal authorities inspecting every interior," he added.

The move comes in the wake of repeated building collapses in the Capital. Addressing concerns raised by councillors over the structural safety of several buildings, Khirwar said the proposed



amendments would introduce a dedicated chapter specifying mandatory structural inspections and maintenance requirements based on the age of a building."We must acknowledge that building collapse accidents happen, some of which become uncontrollable. For instance, yesterday a 50-year-old balcony collapsed over a railway track despite no ongoing construction taking place at the site. Reports indicate the tenant had been advised for 5 to 6 years that the location was unsafe, yet the owner and tenant continued residing there,"Highlighting the civic body's limitation to prevent building collapses, Khirwar said, "The MCD has a responsibility to inspect dangerous buildings, but the department's capabilities are limited and rely on visual inspections, which cannot be considered a 100% foolproof exercise. A 100% foolproof exercise will occur when we require owners of buildings older than 15 or 20 years to conduct regular checks, pay the required engineering.

90 sites to be turned into healthcare centres

Delhi.(Agency)

With Mohalla Clinics having disappeared from Delhi's healthcare landscape, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has proposed 90 additional vacant sites to the Delhi government's Health and Family Welfare Department for setting up Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, a senior department official said. The proposal is over and above the civic body's earlier plan to convert 78 community centres into such facilities, as the government looks to rapidly expand its neighbourhood-level healthcare network across the national capital."The proposal for 90 additional sites is expected to provide the Health Department with more options to expand the network of Arogya Mandirs,which are envisaged as the first point of contact for residents seeking basic healthcare services," said an official.



He also added that they have already started executing the plan to work on the proposed sites as they are being assessed for their suitability, infrastructure requirements and other necessary clearances before they can be converted into functional health centres.

The proposal comes at a time when the Delhi government is expanding its network of Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, with an announced target of setting up 1,100 such centres across the national capital. According to the official, Delhi currently has 415 Arogya Mandirs and all of the Mohalla clinics have been closed. Meanwhile the government is planning to open these centres in phases, with new facilities being inaugurated across Assembly constituencies.It was in January this year, the government had ordered the closure of 137 of the 167 Mohalla Clinics, leaving 30 at the time.

The MCD's earlier proposal to convert 78 underutilized community halls into Arogya Mandirs was approved in September. The civic body had identified these facilities based on their low utilisation and annual booking rates, with healthcare centres proposed primarily on their ground floors.To transform these community centres into Arogya Mandirs, the government has offered `65 lakh. Government this year had announced Rs 12,645 crore in allocation for the health sector. In the budget, additional 750 Arogya Mandirs were for proposed for 2026-27 when 370 were already functional.

IAF signs MoU for yoga training with Central Sanskrit University

Speaking at the MoU signing ceremony, CSU Vice-Chancellor Professor Shrinivasa Varakhedi described the collaboration as a meaningful partnership between two prestigious national institutions.

Delhi.(Agency)

The Indian Air Force (IAF) and Central Sanskrit University (CSU) on Thursday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to provide specialised yoga training to Agniveervayu personnel under the 'Yoga Setu' programme.

The partnership will introduce an online, computer-based Yoga Instructor (Level-1) certification course, enabling Agniveervayu personnel to acquire professional knowledge and skills in yoga.

The programme will strengthen their physical fitness, mental fortitude, concentration and self-discipline, helping them maintain composure and operational efficiency in challenging situations.



The curriculum will also cover various aspects of yoga, including yogasanas, pranayama, meditation, stress management, yoga philosophy and yogic diet. Beyond physical well-being, the training will focus on developing mental balance and emotional resilience among personnel.Speaking at the MoU signing ceremony, CSU Vice-Chancellor Professor Shrinivasa Varakhedi described the collaboration as a meaningful partnership between two prestigious national institutions. Emphasising the complementary roles of the organisations, he remarked, "You are in the sky, and we are at the roots; yoga makes this connection even stronger."Quoting the Bhagavad Gita's teachings, 'Samatvam yoga uchyate' and 'Yogah karmasu kaushalam', he highlighted that yoga is not merely a physical exercise but a holistic discipline promoting equanimity, self-control and excellence in action.

Want to own Anthropic shares? How Indians can invest after its IPO

New Delhi. (Agency)

The excitement around Anthropic's stock market debut may have left many Indian investors wondering whether they can get a piece of the AI company's growth story. While they could not participate in its initial public offering (IPO), there is still a way to buy its shares now that it has started trading on Nasdaq.Anthropic shares opened at $111.5, around 34% above their IPO price of $83, attracting strong buying interest in the opening minutes. The stock witnessed some volatility later in the session, but its debut has put the spotlight on the growing appetite for artificial intelligence (AI) companies.Indian retail investors were excluded from Anthropic's international IPO offering, which was restricted to countries such as Australia, Canada, Japan, Switzerland, the UK and select European markets.However, missing out on the IPO does not mean Indian investors have lost their chance. Resident Indians can buy US-listed shares through eligible international investment platforms, subject to the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) rules.Here's how they can invest in Anthropic shares and what they should keep in mind.

HOW CAN INDIAN INVESTORS BUY ANTHROPIC SHARES?

Indian residents can invest in US-listed stocks under the RBI's Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS), which allows individuals to remit up to $250,000 per financial year for permitted overseas investments and other transactions, said Shauryam Gupta, CEO of Rupeezy."The growing interest in companies like Anthropic reflects how Indian investors are increasingly looking beyond domestic markets to participate in global innovation and technology-led growth.

Technology firms hunt for talent to build and deploy AI agents

BENGALURU. (Agency)

Technology employers in India have moved, within a year, from hiring people who can use generative AI (GenAI) tools to hiring engineers who can build, deploy and govern AI agents in live business systems. Job postings for agentic solutions engineers grew 400% quarter-on-quarter in July–September 2026 (Q2 Fy27), Kapil Joshi, Chief Executive Officer of Quess IT Solutions, told The New Indian Express.“We are also seeing newer roles emerge in FY27, including Agentic Solutions Engineers, AI Prompt Engineers, Data Security Engineers and SAP BTP LLM Developers,” Joshi said.“These roles reflect the growing need for professionals who can integrate AI into enterprise applications, manage AI systems and ensure secure, reliable deployment.”In August 2025, TeamLease Digital’s annual Digital Skills & Salary Primer listed prompt engineering first among the AI skills employers increasingly sought. Its FY26-27 edition says salary premiums have moved to roles that build AI systems, with AI governance and architecture roles setting the pay ceiling.“The opportunities will go beyond traditional IT jobs and include electrical and mechanical engineers, cooling specialists, network engineers and AI infrastructure professionals,” Neeti Sharma, CEO of TeamLease Digital, told .

EPFO changes PF withdrawal rules: Retirees can now opt for monthly payouts

New Delhi. (Agency)

The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has approved a major change in how subscribers can access their retirement savings, allowing retiring members to draw their provident fund (PF) corpus in monthly, quarterly or half-yearly instalments instead of taking the entire amount as a lump sum.ams, its lowest level in over a year, amid broad.The decision, taken at the 240th meeting of the Central Board of Trustees (CBT) on November 19, 2026, introduces a voluntary Systematic Withdrawal Plan (SWP) for retiring members. The remaining balance will continue to earn returns within the EPF system, providing retirees with an additional source of periodic income.The board has also reduced the minimum balance that members must retain in their PF accounts from 25% to 10% and cut the waiting period for final PF settlement after unemployment from 12 months to two monthsThe changes could benefit subscribers who need greater access to their savings as well as those who want to preserve their retirement corpus and draw income gradually.

Until now, members retiring at the prescribed age could withdraw their accumulated EPF balance as a lump sum. Under the new proposal, they will be able to retain their savings within the EPF system and receive periodic payouts.

The withdrawal frequency will include:

- Monthly payouts
- Quarterly payouts
- Half-yearly payouts

The unwithdrawn balance will continue to earn interest at the prevailing EPF rate. The facility will be voluntary, so members who prefer to withdraw their entire eligible corpus can continue to choose a lump-sum settlement, subject toThe proposal also provides for nominees or dependants to either withdraw the remaining balance or continue receiving periodic payments if the member dies during the payout period. the applicable rules.

Gold below Rs 1.22 lakh, silver sinks 6.3%: Will prices fall further

A sharp sell-off has rattled the precious metals market, with gold and silver losing ground. Should investors brace for more losses or look at the dip as a buying opportunity

NEW DELHI. (Agency)

Gold and silver prices came under heavy selling pressure on Thursday, with both precious metals witnessing a sharp fall in domestic futures trade. Silver took a bigger hit, falling over 6%, while gold prices dropped more than 4%, leaving investors wondering whether this is a good time to buy or whether prices could fall further.At around 10.49 am, MCX gold futures were trading at Rs 1,21,663 per 10 grams, down 4.54%. MCX silver futures were quoted at Rs 1,47,464 per kg, declining 6.36%.The sharp fall has put the spotlight on the near-term outlook for precious metals, particularly after the recent volatility in gold and silver prices.

WHY ARE GOLD AND SILVER PRICES FALLING?

The fall in domestic gold and silver prices reflects the pressure on precious metals in the futures market. Currency movements are also playing a role. A stronger rupee can make imported gold relatively cheaper in India and add to the downward pressure on domestic prices.Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, said gold opened with a sharp gap down near Rs 1,23,630 and extended its losses to trade around Rs 1,22,790, down approximately 3.7%.

He pointed out that the rupee's strength was adding to the pressure on domestic gold prices. The USD/INR pair was down around 0.2%, leaving gold without the cushion that a weaker rupee could otherwise provide.Silver witnessed an even steeper decline. It opened with a sharp gap down near Rs 1,51,180 and slipped to around Rs 1,49,230, losing approximately 5.2%.The metal underperformed gold, reflecting the stronger selling pressure in silver futures.

HOW MUCH FURTHER CAN GOLD AND SILVER PRICES FALL?

According to Ponmudi, gold is currently testing an important support zone of Rs 1,22,000–1,22,800. If prices decisively break below this range, the next support could emerge around Rs 1,18,000–1,19,000.For silver, the immediate support zone is between Rs 1,48,000 and Rs 1,50,000. A decisive break below this range could take prices towards the next support level of Rs 1,40,000–1,42,000.These levels are important for investors to watch as they



could offer clues about whether the current decline is stabilising or whether more downside is possible.

WHAT SHOULD INVESTORS DO NOW?

The sharp correction in gold and silver may tempt investors to buy at lower prices. However, a fall in prices does not automatically mean that the metals have become attractive bargains.

Investors should avoid rushing into large purchases simply because prices have declined. With both metals facing selling pressure and important support levels being tested, it may be sensible to wait for prices to stabilise before making fresh investments.Those looking to invest in gold for the long term should focus on their asset allocation rather than trying to predict the exact market bottom. Staggering purchases over a period of time can help reduce the risk of investing a large amount just before another decline.Silver investors, in particular, should remain cautious.

The metal has fallen more sharply than gold and can be more volatile. Those investing through silver ETFs or other market-linked products should be prepared for wider price swings.For existing investors, the latest fall is not necessarily a reason to panic and sell. Their decision should depend on their investment horizon, financial goals and the proportion of precious metals in their overall portfolio.

GTA 6 made Rs 22,000 crore on launch. Here's how insane that number is

GTA 6 has arrived, and how! One video game, an estimated Rs 22,000 crore and a launch that puts some of the world's biggest businesses and entertainment properties to shame. Here's putting that number in perspective.

New Delhi. (Agency)

Global pop star Taylor Swift needed 149 concerts, five continents and nearly two years to generate $2.08 billion from her Eras Tour. GTA 6 has managed to surpass that figure by its launch day. And that's just one way to look at the money the video game has generated.The estimated sales are also marginally higher than the entire worldwide theatrical collection of Avatar: The Way of Water. The James Cameron film took months to earn around $2.33 billion in cinemas. GTA 6 has reached an estimatedRockstar Games' Grand Theft Auto VI is off to a staggering start. According to estimates by market intelligence firm Sensor Tower, the game had



sold around 24.58 million copies by Thursday evening, generating an estimated $2.36 billion. That's roughly Rs 22,000 crore.For context, Swift's Eras Tour grossed $2.08 billion from 149 shows between March 2023 and December 2024, according to Guinness World Records. GTA 6's estimated sales are around 14% higher. $2.36 billion by launch day.The comparison with Avatar: The Way of Water is even closer. The film's worldwide theatrical collection stands at approximately $2.334 billion. GTA 6's estimated sales have just edged past it.And then there's Avengers: Endgame. The Marvel blockbuster generated around $2.94 billion worldwide during its theatrical run. GTA 6 has already reached roughly 80% of that figure by launch day.

Sensex falls nearly 300 points, Nifty below 25,500; Axis Bank down 3%

New Delhi. (Agency)

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Domestic equity benchmark indices opened lower on Friday, tracking weakness in global markets amid continued concerns over the artificial intelligence trade. At 9.20 am, the BSE Sensex was trading at 82,931.01, down 90.74 points or 0.11%. The NSE Nifty 50 stood at 25,467.05, declining 47.25 points or 0.19%.The weakness in domestic markets came as global technology stocks remained under pressure. The Nasdaq Composite fell 2.25% in the previous session, adding to concerns over elevated valuations of AI-linked companies.Dr V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Investments Limited, said the weakening AI trade was weighing on markets such as South Korea, Taiwan and Japan.

"Weakening of the AI trade continues with another 2.25% cut in Nasdaq yesterday, and this is dragging other AI-related markets like South Korea, Taiwan and Japan down," he said.However, Vijayakumar noted that Indian equities had continued to outperform global markets this month.

"Nifty is the only high performing market in the world this month with a 10.7% surge in just 13 trading days," he said.According to Vijayakumar, while investors are booking profits, sustained buying by foreign institutional investors (FIIs) is lending support to the market."Profit booking is happening in the market but the FII buying is so sustained and aggressive that the bulls are calling the shots. Despite occasional dips, the market is likely to remain resilient on the back of massive FII flows assisted by impressive corporate earnings," he said.He also pointed to a shift in foreign investor allocations, with financial services, particularly major banking stocks, attracting significant inflows."It is important to note that the bulk of the FII flows have gone into financial services, particularly the banking majors. FIIs are now buying the very same stocks they have been selling to raise money for the AI trade," Vijayakumar said.

He added that telecom stocks had also been attracting substantial inflows, while a sharp correction in metal prices had triggered buying interest in automobile stocks and consumer durables.On Thursday, the Sensex surged 989.94 points, or 1.21%, to close at 83,021.75. The Nifty gained 286.35 points, or 1.14%, to settle at 25,514.30.

Gen Z wants flexibility, older staff seek stability: Why managing employees harder

New Delhi. (Agency)

One employee wants the freedom to work from home, another is keen to climb the career ladder, while a third values the reassurance of a stable job. They may share the same office, work on the same projects and report to the same manager, but their idea of a satisfying workplace can be worlds apart.As Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X and older employees work side by side, companies are facing a new challenge: how do you keep everyone motivated when their priorities are so different? The traditional one-size-fits-all approach to employee engagement may no longer be enough.A new survey by Great Place To Work India reveals just how wide this gap in expectations has become. Its Voice of CHROs 2026 report on multi-generational workforces and employee retention finds that only 3 in 10 Chief Human Resource Officers (CHROs) say their organisations clearly understand what motivates employees across generations.The challenge is not just understanding these differences. Companies also need managers who can navigate them. Yet, only 21% of CHROs say their organisations have formal training programmes and clear guidelines to help managers lead multi-generational teams effectively.

ONE WORKPLACE, DIFFERENT EXPECTATIONS

Think about what a typical workday means to employees from different generations. For a young professional, having the flexibility to work remotely or choose how they manage their day could make a job more attractive. For someone from an older generation, a predictable role and the assurance of job stability may matter more.The survey captures this contrast. As many as 78% of CHROs associate flexibility with what Gen Z values most. In fact, 59% identify a lack of flexibility as the biggest reason why younger employees leave their jobs.

Millennials, meanwhile, appear to be looking for a clear path ahead. Nearly 49% of CHROs identify fair and transparent career progression as their biggest priority for this generation.For Gen X and earlier generations, the priorities are different. As many as 78% of CHROs say stability and predictability are their dominant workplace expectations.Salary, however, remains important across age groups.

‘Directors need steady training’

Pandey called for a more continuous and structured approach to learning, including a wider Capacity Building Network for independent directors.

MUMBAI. (Agency)



Independent directors and other corporate gatekeepers need continuous training to keep pace with emerging risks and regulatory developments, Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) Chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey said on Thursday.Speaking at the Corporate Governance Summit, themed ‘Gatekeepers of Governance: The Future Beckons – Is Regulation Keeping Pace?’, Pandey said independent directors, auditors, compliance professionals, company secretaries and credit rating agencies play a critical role in ensuring scrutiny of corporate decisions and reliable disclosures to investors.With boardrooms increasingly required to deal with complex financial structures, cybersecurity, data governance and artificial intelligence, one-time induction programmes and occasional training sessions are no longer adequate, Pandey added. Pandey called for a more continuous and structured approach to learning, including a wider Capacity Building Network for independent directors.

The proposed network could facilitate peer learning, discussions on boardroom challenges and the sharing of case studies and gover nance practices. “The objective should be to move beyond conventional compliance training towards informed discussions on strategy, emerging risks and effective board oversight,” he said.

The effectiveness of independent directors has come under scrutiny amid concerns that they often lack the information, expertise or autonomy needed to challenge management and promoters effectively

Tambaram police arrest 18 in special drive against narcotics

CHENNAI.(Agency)

The Tambaram city police arrested 18 people during a special drive against narcotics offenders and rowdy elements across the commissionerate limits, according to a release on Thursday.Acting on the instructions of CoP Najmul Hoda and led by DCP (Pallikaranai) T Eswaran, 47 special teams comprising 162 police personnel held checks at 90 locations identified for narcotics-related activities and the movements of habitual offenders.

During the drive, the police registered six cases under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act and arrested 14. They also seized 4.28 kg of ganja and 119 tablets, the release stated.In a separate crackdown on rowdy elements as part of the drive, the police registered three cases and secured four, including history-sheeters.

In total, nine cases were registered and 18 were secured during the operation.Of the 18, 17 were remanded in judicial custody and one was released on station bail, the release added.

Chennai: Functional RWH systems now must for completion certificate

CHENNAI.(Agency)

Completion certificates for buildings in the city will be issued only after officials verify that their rainwater harvesting structures are functional, and not merely present, Greater Chennai Corporation Commissioner G S Sameeran said on Thursday.He was speaking on the sidelines of a stakeholder meeting by civic body with the Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Associations of India (CREDAI), the Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (CMWSSB), resident welfare associations and NGOs, to promote rainwater harvesting as part of the 'Thuli' people's movement.

According to a CMWSSB survey of 10 lakh properties, only six lakh had functional rainwater harvesting structures.The corporation aims to raise the number to 13-14 lakh buildings, covering at least 70% of the 17 lakh assessed properties in the city, wherever feasible, particularly in larger buildings.

Sameeran said a government order (G.O. 193) issued by the municipal administration and water supply department on January 2 lays down schematic diagrams and guidelines on construction of rainwater harvesting structures based on soil types.Copies of the order will be distributed to RWAs, and residents will be trained in maintaining and repairing.

Try to build consensus, KRMB tells Andhra and Telangana

HYDERABAD.(Agency)

With Andhra Pradesh (AP) and Telangana lodging complaints against each other over 20 unauthorised irrigation projects/structures', the Krishna River Management Board (KRMB) on Thursday said that all new projects required prior appraisal and technical clearance. It also said that contentious issues would remain inconclusive in the absence of consensus between the two states.

In a letter to the Irrigation secretaries of both states, the KRMB said that project conception or construction based on presumed availability of unallocated or surplus water did not, by itself, confer an assured or legally enforceable entitlement to its utilisation. Project-wise allocations remained to be determined by the competent Tribunal.Responding to requests from both states to restrain each other from constructing unapproved projects, the Board advised them to comply with Principle 7 of the Eleventh Schedule of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014, which requires new projects to undergo prior appraisal and technical clearance by the respective Board before being sanctioned by the Apex Council.

Punjab records 23.5% decline despite 22.4% spike in stubble burning incidents

Jalandhar(Agency)

Even as Punjab has recorded a sharp increase in paddy-residue fire incidents this season compared to last year, the actual agricultural area affected by stubble burning has declined by 23.5 per cent, revealing a significant divergence between the number of fires detected and the extent of land burnt.A district-wise analysis of satellite-based burnt-area data, compiled through the Punjab Pollution Control Board (PPCB), for the period September 15 to November 15 shows that the cumulative burnt area across Punjab fell from 19.41 lakh hectares in 2025 to 14.84 lakhhectares this year. This represents a net reduction of 4.57 lakh hectares.The decline was widespread, with 21 of Punjab's 23 districts registering a reduction in burnt area. Only two districts recorded an increase, both marginal. SAS Nagar saw its burnt area rise from 19,870 hectares last year to 21,780 hectares this year (an increase of 1,910 hectares, or 9.6 per cent), while Hoshiarpur recorded a marginal increase of 0.24 thousand hectares (0.8 per cent), from 31,740 to 31,980 hectares.

The reduction in affected acreage comes despite a substantial increase in fire detections. Between September 15 and November 15, the state recorded 5,972 farm-fire incidents, up 22.4 per cent from 4,877 during the corresponding period in 2025. The gap widened further over the next four days: by November 19, the cumulative number of incidents had reached 6,874, compared to 5,034 last year — a jump of 36.5 per cent.

Agricultural officials say one reason for the divergence could be a change in the extent of burning within individual fields. In some instances, farmers resort to partial burning of crop residue instead of setting entire fields on fire. Such instances are counted as individual fire incidents in satellite-based fire detection, irrespective of how much of the field is actually affected. Consequently, a higher number of fire detections does not necessarily translate into a proportionate increase in the total area burnt, added sources.PPCB sources said the two parameters capture different aspects of



stubble burning: fire incidents indicate the number of detected ignition events, while burnt-area mapping helps assess the geographical extent of land affected. The latter, therefore, provides an important additional measure for understanding the actual spread of burning across agricultural fields.The distinction is significant for this year's figures. Despite the increase in the number of fire incidents, the satellite-based assessment shows that the overall burnt footprint has contracted substantially, suggesting that the fires have not translated into comparable increases in the area affected.

Major gainers and laggards

Among Punjab's major paddy-growing belts, Ferozepur recorded the steepest absolute reduction in burnt area, with a decline of 61,320 hectares, from 1.36 lakh hectares in 2025 to around 75,000 hectares this year. Sangrur, traditionally a major hotspot, followed with a reduction of 53,450 hectares, from 1.84 lakh to 1.31 lakh hectares, while Moga recorded a decline of 51,770 hectares, from 1.08 lakh to 56,690 hectares.Bathinda and Barnala completed the top five districts in terms of absolute reductions, with burnt areas declining by 41,990 hectares (from 1.25 lakh to 83,270 hectares) and 36,700 hectares (from 82,007 to 45,370 hectares), respectively.

Punjab High Court stays PCS recruitment: Opposition demands CBI probe, ouster of PPSC chief

Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma said Meghalaya was the only Indian destination featured in the BBC's list of 20 Best Places to Travel in 2027. Other destinations on the list include Burgundy in France, Sardinia in Italy, Christchurch in New Zealand and Madagascar.

Chandigarh.(Agency)

Opposition parties on Thursday welcomed the Punjab and Haryana High Court's decision to stay the Punjab Civil Services (PCS) recruitment process amid allegations of irregularities, demanding a CBI probe and the resignation of cand its members.Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Bikram Singh Majithia demanded a CBI investigation into what he termed a recruitment scam, alleging that more than Rs 100 crore had changed hands to favour influential candidates.Addressing a press conference jointly with candidates who had challenged the recruitment process in court, Majithia said the High Court's intervention had vindicated their stand. He accused Saini of failing meritorious candidates and attempting to cover up the alleged irregularities."Maj Gen Saini does not have any moral right to continue in office," he said, demanding the immediate resignation of the chairman and commission members.Terming the court order a "slap on the face" of Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, Majithia accused him of refusing to meet the aggrieved candidates and failing to order an independent inquiry despite their complaints. "Bhagwant Mann even compounded his sin by not ordering a probe into the case himself and trying to defend it by hiring topmost private lawyers to defend the government. If he has any shame, he should resign immediately," he said.

Claiming that Punjab had witnessed 10



recruitment scams and that the PCS controversy was the biggest among them, Majithia cited allegations of broken paper seals, clusters of candidates with consecutive roll numbers being seated together and some candidates being accommodated in separate rooms during the Mains examination."Punjabis need to know who is behind this scam and who manipulated the entire process to help undeserving candidates," he said, arguing that only a CBI probe could establish the facts.

Candidates who had failed the Mains examination, the results of which were declared on November 4, also addressed the press conference. Veerpal Singh Gill said the High Court had taken note of irregularities in the examination notification and the conduct of the Preliminary examination.Rubalpreet Kaur said the candidates did not want to politicise the issue but were seeking justice. She alleged that they had approached the court after the PPSC chairman refused to disclose the names of candidates who had cleared the Mains examination and the identities of examiners, some of whom she claimed were research scholars.Ramanpreet Kaur and Abhishek Dagar said they had also submitted a written request seeking a meeting with the Chief Minister, but were denied an audience.Punjab Congress president Pargat Singh describing the HC order as an important step towards safeguarding the rights of the state's youth and ensuring transparency in recruitment. He questioned why the government and the PPSC had failed to address candidates' complaints despite repeated representations. "Thousands of young people in Punjab work day and night to prepare for competitive examinations. Their families often stretch their financial resources to meet the expenses of education and coaching so that their children .

Researchers propose smart systems for ghats

HYDERABAD.(Agency)

Researchers presented solutions to road construction, maintenance and traffic safety challenges at the inaugural session of the 85th Indian Roads Congress (IRC) in Hyderabad on Thursday, including solar-powered accident alert systems for ghat roads and methods to reduce road construction costs.Sudarshan Sampatrao Bobade of Pimpri Chinchwad College of Engineering and Research, Pune, presented proposals to improve safety on ghat roads and ease urban traffic congestion.One proposal involves installing smart poles at accident-prone locations along ghat roads. Powered by solar panels and wind turbines and equipped with surveillance cameras, the poles would track vehicles travelling between designated points using artificial intelligence-based detection technology.

If a vehicle failed to reach the next monitoring point within the expected time, the system would alert authorities to a possible accident, enabling them to initiate rescue operations.The system could be particularly useful on ghat stretches with poor mobile network connectivity.For urban traffic, Bobade proposed redesigning junctions with separate lanes for vehicles travelling straight and heavy and light vehicles taking U-turns, reducing conflicts caused by the larger turning space required by heavy vehicles.

He also proposed multi-level bridges with separate decks for light vehicles, heavy vehicles and local traffic. Restricting the upper deck to light vehicles could reduce structural loads and construction costs by 35-45%, he said.The proposals would, however, require pilot studies to establish their feasibility.In another presentation, Dr Suryakant Sahdev of IIT Ropar discussed Full Depth Reclamation (FDR), a road repair technique that reuses existing pavement material instead of replacing the entire road.

The process involves breaking down the existing surface, stabilising the underlying material with cement or other additives, and compacting it for use as a base for a fresh asphalt or concrete layer.The study was based on field trials at four locations in Himachal Pradesh's Hamirpur and Bilaspur districts. Researchers examined four sources of reclaimed road material and tested cement dosages of 4%, 4.5% and 5% by dry weight of aggregate.

Man accused of pushing friend to death found hanging in jail; warder suspended

Lucknow.(Agency)

An undertrial accused of pushing his partner to her death from a hotel building in Lucknow was found hanging in the bathroom of the district jail early Wednesday, more than a month after he surrendered before a court.Avneesh Jaiswal alias Dev, was found hanging from a ventilator with a towel around 2 am Thursday in barrack number 83 of Circle 3, where the 30-year-old prisoner was lodged, officials said, claiming he died by suicide.Meanwhile, jail authorities suspended barrack in-charge and jail warder Hari Om, citing prima facie negligence in duty, and initiated departmental proceedings against him.Departmental action is also being taken against three head jail warders — Dev Prakash Singh, Uday Narayan and Dipendra Singh, officials said.A jail staff member told that Jaiswal had appeared upset and generally kept to himself since his admission to the prison.



Jaiswal had surrendered on October 15 and was sent to jail in connection with the death of Samreen, 24, who allegedly fell from the 10th floor of a hotel in Sushant Golf City police station area of October 12.Police said Samreen had checked into a hotel room with Jaiswal in the morning. She fell from the room's balcony around 6 pm. Hotel staff alerted the police who reached the spot and began an investigation.During the initial probe, Jaiswal had been captured on CCTV footage leaving the hotel through the lobby lift and walking out of the building within minutes of Samreen's fall.Samreen's mother and sister told the police that she had been in a relationship with Jaiswal, who lived in Lucknow's old city area. They alleged that he had been pressuring her to marry him, but she was reluctant because they belonged to different religions and her family opposed the marriage. They further alleged that he pushed her from the hotel floor following an argument. Samreen was married but was living separately from her husband, with divorce proceedings pending, police said. Jaiswal, a native of Sultanpur district, ran a motor spare parts shop in Lucknow's old city area.A murder case was registered in connection with Samreen's death, following which Jaiswal surrendered before the court and was remanded to judicial custody.

Protest at Calcutta Medical College over showcause notice to 8 junior doctors: Minister orders probe into protest, calls them 'Maoist-minded'

Kolkata.(Agency)

Amid the ongoing stir by junior doctors at Calcutta Medical College and Hospital over the showcause notice to eight of their colleagues, the state Health Minister Sharadwat Mukhopadhyay on Thursday ordered a fast-track probe into the gherao of administrative officials, alleging that "Maoist-minded" students are spearheading the protest.

The minister's decision to set up a fast-track inquiry committee came hours after Wednesday night's clash on the campus allegedly between the protesting junior doctors and members of the RSS student outfit, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP).Protesting junior doctors alleged that a group of people belonging to the ABVP and National Medicos Organisation (NMO) attacked them with batons and pelted stones at them, leaving several of the medicos injured.The medicos have been protesting against the showcause notice issued to eight junior doctors on Tuesday over last month's Chorbagan Puja Pandal stampede in which 19 people had died. The junior doctors were served show-cause notices for allegedly criticising the government's decision to shift people injured in the stampede to a private hospital.The junior doctors had questioned why the critically injured patients requiring advanced, life-saving treatment had to be moved to a private hospital when government medical colleges were equipped to provide such care free of cost.They had also alleged an acute shortage of medicines and equipment on



the day of the stampede.Following the issuance of the notice, the junior doctors have been protesting on the campus. On Wednesday, they gheraoed the principal, Indranil Biswas, outside his office, seeking withdrawal of the notices. They alleged that the notices were served on the instructions of higher authorities without any preliminary inquiry.According to the protesting doctors, they had submitted documents flagging shortages of essential medicines and equipment.

Sandpapergate row: Michael Clarke demands full truth after Bancroft's explosive claims

New Delhi.(Agency)

Michael Clarke has dismissed the suggestion that there can be multiple versions of the truth in Australia's ball-tampering scandal, insisting the public deserves a clear account of what happened during the infamous 2018 Cape Town Test.

The former Australia captain's comments come after Cameron Bancroft's explosive column in *The West Australian* on Wednesday reopened the debate over the Newlands scandal and put current Test captain Pat Cummins under renewed scrutiny.Cummins has consistently maintained that he did not know Bancroft was using sandpaper on the ball during the third Test against South Africa in 2018. Bancroft, however, claimed in his column that the entire Australian team, including Cummins, knew about the use of



sandpaper before the incident came to light.The developments came just hours after Cricket Australia announced plans to hold a forum involving those who were part of, or close to, the Australian team that toured South Africa in 2018. The forum is intended to give those involved an opportunity to share their accounts of the scandal.

Jaiswal and Rahul end 32-year wait, lead India's strong reply to New Zealand 368

New Delhi.(Agency)

Only yesterday, Gautam Gambhir and Shubman Gill were facing questions over their selection calls, while India's bowlers were being criticised for letting New Zealand off the hook on Day 1 of the Wellington Test. Less than 24 hours later, India had something to cheer about, with KL Rahul and Yashasvi Jaiswal giving the visitors exactly the start they needed.India had spent much of New Zealand's innings playing catch-up after the hosts recovered from 70/5 to post 368. Henry Nicholls led the fightback with a superb 175, while Glenn Phillips struck 118 in a massive 216-run partnership for the sixth wicket. Jasprit Bumrah finished with four wickets, while Akash Deep claimed three and Anshul Kamboj picked up two.India's openers then had their work cut out against Matt Henry and Kyle



Jamieson, particularly with the new ball moving around. But Rahul and Jaiswal stood their ground, putting together a 130-run partnership that brought India back into the contest and ended a 32-year wait for an Indian opening pair to register a century stand in a Test in New Zealand.The visitors eventually closed Day 2 at 159/1 after 39 overs, trailing New Zealand by 209 runs. Rahul was unbeaten on 52, while Devdutt Padikkal had made 16 not out after coming in following Jaiswal's dismissal. India had lost just one wicket and given themselves a platform to build on.

RAHUL AND JAISWAL TURN THE TIDE

India did not have the easiest start against the new ball. Matt Henry and Kyle Jamieson found enough movement to keep the openers guessing, and it took 26 deliveries for the visitors to get off the mark.

Magnus Carlsen ends Fast Classic drought, Praggnanandhaa takes opening-day lead

Magnus Carlsen pulled off a stunning comeback against Vladislav Artemiev to register his first Fast Classic win in 11 games. Meanwhile, R Praggnanandhaa began with a win, while Anish Giri took the lead in the final.

New Delhi.(Agency)

Magnus Carlsen finally got a win in Fast Classic at the Total Chess World Championship Tour Pilot, but it was one he could scarcely afford to lose. The world No. 1 overturned a six-point deficit to beat Vladislav Artemiev 11-9, keeping his live rating above the 2800 mark.Carlsen had endured a difficult run in the format, skipping his Fast Classic games against Bibisara Assaubayeva for two consecutive days before sitting out the rapid section against Artemiev on Thursday. Competing for 17th place, the five-time world champion needed a strong finish after losing both rapid games and forfeiting the eight points that came with them.He had won three of the four blitz games, but that left him trailing 3-9. Carlsen then delivered in the Fast Classic, securing the eight-point win that turned the match around. It was his first victory in 11 games in the format.

The result lifted his live rating to 2804. A defeat or even a draw would have taken him below 2800 for the first time in 17 years.

PRAGGNANANDHAA TAKES OPENING-DAY LEAD

R Praggnanandhaa also made a winning start to his match, defeating Abhimanyu Mishra 12-8 in the contest for 21st place. The blitz games ended level at 2-2 before the Indian grandmaster won the first rapid game and drew the remaining rapid and Fast Classic encounters to seal the day.

It was a contrasting outing for Arjun Erigaisi



and R Vaishali. Erigaisi began strongly against Haik Martirosyan, winning the first three blitz games and drawing the fourth, but his opponent fought back in the rapid section before taking the Fast Classic game with Black. Martirosyan won the day 14.5-5.5 in their match for ninth place.Vaishali, meanwhile, suffered a 16-4 defeat against Nodirbek Abdusattorov in their match for 23rd place.

GIRI EDGES CLOSER TO TITLE

Anish Giri took an 11-9 lead over Alireza Firouzja on the opening day of the final. The Dutch grandmaster's advantage in blitz proved decisive, with the two players sharing the rapid games and drawing their Fast Classic encounter.Giri now needs a win or a draw on Friday to claim the Budapest pilot title without a tiebreak. Firouzja must win the second day to force an Armageddon decider.Fabiano Caruana also moved ahead in the third-place match, taking an 11-9 lead over Maxime Vachier-Lagrave. Caruana won the first two blitz games, one with each colour, before the remaining five games were drawn. He needs a win or a tie on Friday to secure third place, while Vachier-Lagrave must win to take the contest to Armageddon.

Sandpaper rot: Time for Cricket Australia, Cummins and ICC to face the bouncers

New Delhi.(Agency)

Sandpapergate was supposed to be a closed file. Three players served their bans, one captain wept at Sydney airport, a nation performed its penance, and cricket moved on to its next arguments. But scandals, like reverse swing, have a way of arriving late and from the wrong side.Eight years on, a book has reopened the



dressing room, a 68-minute press conference from the Australian captain has failed to close it again, and within days the man who was caught on camera has produced a column of more than 4,000 words to say that the matter is rather less settled than we were told. The great Australian dressing room, once presented as a vault, turns out to be a group chat nobody remembered to mute.There is a temptation to make this another debate about ball-tampering. It is not. Ball-tampering is hardly a new discovery in cricket, nor were the Australians the first team to try to alter the condition of a ball. What makes Sandpapergate different, eight years after the Cape Town Test, is that the argument has moved well beyond the sandpaper. It is now about reputations, fractured friendships, the credibility of some of Australia's finest cricketers and, above all, an investigation that many believe did not tell the whole story.

Shoaib Akhtar's admission that Pakistan used bottle tops to alter the ball, and that "the whole team knew", is another reminder of how long the practice has been part of cricket. Yet the wider history of tampering does little to answer the questions that have pulled Sandpapergate back into the light.Were the three players who were punished the only ones who knew what was happening? Did the 2018 investigation establish that fairly? And why are those questions still being contested eight years later?You may have a view on who knew what. Hold it lightly.

THE MISSING ANSWERS

"Everybody will claim to have a version of the truth," senior journalist and author Ayaz Memon tells IndiaToday.in.The latest round of Sandpapergate began with Usman Khawaja's autobiography, Sabr, before Cameron Bancroft's 4,000-word statement took the confrontation to another level. Pat Cummins had already used a 68-minute press conference to firmly reject the suggestion that he knew about the sandpaper, directly challenging the version of events emerging from Khawaja's book while making it clear he did not wish to revisit the subject publicly. Bancroft's detailed account has placed that position under renewed scrutiny.By alleging that knowledge of the ball's alteration extended beyond the three sanctioned players, and acknowledging that he withheld details from the 2018 inquiry to protect others.

Three reviews, three failures: Shubman Gill's DRS horror show against New Zealand

Sydney.(Agency)

India captain Shubman Gill's desperation to break New Zealand's resistance came at a cost on the opening two days of the first Test at the Basin Reserve in Wellington. Gill was involved in each of the three unsuccessful reviews across the opening two days, while his decision not to review a clear edge off Anshul Kamboj's bowling against Rachin Ravindra on Day 1 added to India's frustration.Gill's record as India's Test captain had already raised questions about his use of DRS. Figures reported in August 2026 showed that he had taken 41 reviews, of which only five had been successful, while the other 36 had gone against India. The three unsuccessful reviews in Wellington have added to that tally.

GILL'S FIRST REVIEW GOES AGAINST INDIA

India's first review came on Day 1 when Jasprit Bumrah bowled a delivery that moved back towards Glenn Phillips and beat his bat. The Indian players appealed for LBW, but umpire Richard Illingworth turned it down.Bumrah was not convinced that the ball was hitting the stumps and told Gill, "height hai" (it's high). Gill, however, believed there had been no contact with the bat and decided to take the review.The Snickometer showed a spike as the ball passed the bat. However, the front-on replay did not make the contact clear, prompting third umpire Paul Reiffel to take another look in slow motion. He eventually ruled that there had been a slight deflection, and the on-field decision of not out stood.Gill was unhappy with the outcome and tried to explain his reading of the incident to Illingworth. He believed there was a gap between bat and ball and that the delivery had hit Phillips' back pad first. India had lost their first review.



GILL IGNORES PANT'S DRS CALL

India also missed a clear caught-behind dismissal off Anshul Kamboj's bowling against Rachin Ravindra on Day 1. Bowling with the new ball at the Basin Reserve, Kamboj induced an outside edge from the New Zealand batter, which was cleanly taken by wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant.However, the on-field umpire turned down India's appeal.

Worry less, enjoy chess more: Anand's advice to Gukesh ahead of title defence

Viswanathan Anand has urged D Gukesh to worry less and enjoy his chess as the Indian prepares to defend his world title against Uzbekistan's Javokhir Sindarov in Geneva next week. Gukesh has struggled for form this year.



New Delhi.(Agency)

Five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand has advised D Gukesh to worry less and enjoy his chess more as the Indian prepares to defend his world title against Uzbekistan's Javokhir Sindarov in Geneva next week. Gukesh will be looking to put his recent struggles behind him when he takes on the 20-year-old challenger in what will be the youngest world championship match in chess history, with both players aged 20."I have told him that sometimes it's better to let go and just relax, because no amount of worrying is going to fix some things," Anand told reporters on the sidelines of the Total Chess World Championship Tour Pilot.Gukesh's form has dipped considerably since he became world champion. A series of disappointing results this year has pushed him down to 26th in the world rankings, with a rating of 2710. He finished last or joint last at the Prague Masters in March, Norway Chess in June and the Quantbox Chennai Grand Masters in July.Anand said he had been giving Gukesh the same advice for several years, drawing from his own experiences as a young player. He felt that worrying too much could do little to improve a player's performance."I've been mentioning it to him for five or six years now. A lot of times I told him, 'When I was 20 or when I was 18, I also worried like you.' But there are some points when it's pointless, and worrying isn't going to improve your performance, so you might as well just enjoy it," he said.

Gukesh, Arjun Erigaisi, R Praggnanandhaa and his sister R Vaishali are often referred to as 'Vishy's kids'. All four have trained at the Westbridge Anand Chess Academy, set up by the five-time world champion.

Sindarov, meanwhile, is part of the Uzbek golden generation coached by Rustam Kasimdzhanov. Anand said the emergence of young players was not limited to India and Uzbekistan, with Turkey also making its presence felt.

"First of all, the trend is to get younger. Not only India and Uzbekistan, Turkey as well. Of course there are others, but these seem to be ahead, and the Olympiad seems to confirm them.

"I'm happy with them being called Vishy's kids and all, though I'm more careful about taking credit for all sorts of things. I think the youth trend is very strong."Computers play a very, very big part in that, but as always, having somebody with some wisdom or experience tell you how to deal with this or that is useful, and probably Rustam filled that role there and I filled it."Anand also spoke about Vaishali's preparations for her Women's World Championship match against China's Ju Wenjun next year. The Indian Grandmaster, who was the lowest-rated player in the field at the Total Chess World Championship Tour Pilot, put up an impressive show, beating Wesley So and Hans Niemann in blitz before defeating compatriot Arjun Erigaisi in a Fast Classical contest.Anand felt the results, particularly her win over Erigaisi, would give .

Bottle caps, not sandpaper: Shoaib Akhtar opens up on Pakistan's ball-tampering past

New Delhi.(Agency)

Pakistan had their own way of tampering with the ball long before sandpaper became the defining image of Australia's infamous 2018 scandal. Shoaib Akhtar has now revealed that his team used bottle tops to alter the ball's condition during his playing days, while backing Usman Khawaja's claims that Sandpapergate involved more than just three players.

The former Pakistan fast bowler was speaking to Wisden's The Scoop podcast as the 2018 Australian ball-tampering scandal returned to the spotlight following fresh revelations in Khawaja's autobiography, Sabr.

Mate, come on. Let go of it now. Why are you making a huge fuss out of this? I understand it's damage to cricket. It damaged our cricket too. We used to use bottle tops, not sandpaper, back in England. We used to change the balls and do all sorts of things," Akhtar told Wisden.Akhtar, who played 46 Tests for Pakistan between 1997 and 2007, said he agreed with Khawaja's assessment and felt the controversy was being dragged out unnecessarily.The 51-year-old also suggested that ball-tampering could not have been the decision of just



a couple of players, arguing that the entire dressing room would have been aware of what was happening.

AKHTAR BACKS KHAWAJA'S SANDPAPERGATE CLAIMS

Khawaja claimed that the entire Australian team knew about the plan to use sandpaper against South Africa.



Yeh Prem Mol Liya Trailer: Ayushmann Moves Into Wife

Sharvari Wagh

Home In Sooraj Barjatya's Family Drama

Yeh Prem Mol Liya trailer, starring Sharvari and Ayushmann Khurrana, has been dropped today, on November 18, and it gives a glimpse into the world of Sooraj Barjatya's upcoming family drama. What happens when the groom moves into the bride's home, a woman calls the shots in her relationship, and marriage is no longer about choosing between sasural and mayka? Sooraj Barjatya's Yeh Prem Mol Liya appears to have some refreshing answers. The trailer of the Ayushmann Khurrana and Sharvari-starrer offers a glimpse of a family entertainer that retains the filmmaker's emotional warmth while turning some familiar social conventions on their head.At the heart of the trailer is a relationship that moves from dating to marriage, but not quite along the lines audiences might expect from a traditional family drama. Here, the husband Prem, played by Ayushmann Khurrana, moves into his wife Rupa's home, played by Sharvari, challenging the usual expectation of a bride adjusting to life in her marital home. The movie also firmly places its female protagonist in the driver's seat, presenting a woman with agency and a say in how she wants her relationship and family life to pan out.



The idea is beyond the familiar dichotomy of sasural and mayka, suggesting that a marriage can create space for both partners and their families.

More About Yeh Prem Mol Liya

According to a report in Bollywood Hungama, Yeh Prem Mol Liya has been cleared by the Central Board of Film Certification. The movie has received a U/A certificate. While it is very unusual for a Sooraj Barjatya film not to receive a U certificate, this is the second film by the filmmaker to get this rating. Earlier, the Hrithik Roshan, Kareena Kapoor Khan and Abhishek Bachchan-starrer Main Prem Ki Diwani Hoon had received a U/A certificate.As per the report, the movie has a runtime of 2 hours and 53 minutes, becoming the third-longest movie directed by Barjatya after Hum Aapke Hain Koun, which was 3 hours and 13 minutes long, and Maine Pyar Kiya, which was 3 hours and 4 minutes long.Yeh Prem Mol Liya has been described as a Himesh Reshammiya musical, and the film's music plays a key role in the film. Directed by Sooraj R. Barjatya and starring Ayushmann Khurrana and Sharvari, Yeh Prem Mol Liya is produced by Rajshri Productions in association with Mahaveer Jain Films. The film is slated to release in theatres on November 27, 2026.

Sonakshi Sinha

Reacts To Sonia Gandhi Sitting On Rajiv Gandhi's Lap, Jokes Her Kids Must Get Used To PDA



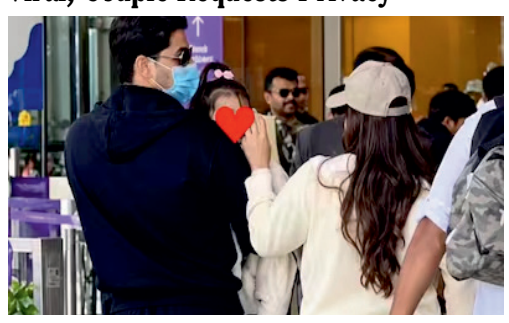
Sonakshi Sinha has a funny response to Rahul Gandhi's story about his parents, Sonia Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, and their affectionate family routine. The actress joked that her future children would have to get used to plenty of public displays of affection after Rahul revealed that Sonia would sit on Rajiv's lap during family meals.Sonakshi shared her reaction on Instagram by reposting a post from the handle Woemaniyah. The original post questioned why people were making such a big deal about Sonia sitting on Rajiv's lap during lunch. Adding her own cheeky comment, Sonakshi wrote, "Dammmmn my future kids have no idea whats comin their way. Buckle up kiddos (wherever you'll are right now)."Rahul shared the childhood memory at the launch of Sonia Gandhi's book, Belonging: A Journey of Love, in New Delhi on November 16. Speaking about his parents' relationship, he said that Sonia would sit on Rajiv's lap during lunch and dinner, even when other people were around."There would be Papa, and on Papa's lap, there would be Mama… Now, I thought this was a normal thing. So I would go to my friend's house, but their parents wouldn't be sitting on each other's lap, and I'd ask my friend, 'What is going on? Why is your mother not sitting on your father's lap?'" he said.Rahul added that he and his sister Priyanka grew up seeing their parents express affection openly. He also recalled that they had witnessed their parents fight only once. That disagreement happened when Rajiv was speaking to former Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on the phone. Sonia was trying to tell him something and had to repeat herself several times. "Papa got stressed, and that was the fight," Rahul recalled.



Rahul Gandhi Reacts With Shiva-Parvati Sculpture

Rahul also reacted to the reactions by sharing a photograph of a 12th-century sculpture from Karnataka's Hoysaleswara Temple. It depicts Goddess Parvati sitting on Lord Shiva's lap.In the caption of the picture, he wrote, "Fear, anger and hatred have woven a web in the hearts of BJP and RSS supporters that stops them from experiencing and expressing love. As a true Hindu, it is my duty to free them from this web, so that they too can start to experience the breathtaking beauty and joy of love and belonging in their lives. Satyam Shivam Sundaram."

Sidharth Malhotra, Kiara Advani's Daughter Saraayah's First Glimpse Goes Viral; Couple Requests Privacy



Sidharth Malhotra and Kiara Advani, who are expecting their second baby, were snapped at Jaipur airport yesterday with their daughter, Saraayah, and a video from their airport spotting has gone viral. The video gave fans their first glimpse of the couple's one-year-old baby girl. The video revealed the little princess's face. The couple later requested the media not to carry the picture and the video showing the baby girl's face, respecting the family's privacy.The viral video showed Sidharth in a stylish blue-on-blue track look, carrying their baby girl in his arms while Kiara walked alongside them. In the clip, for a brief moment, Saraayah's face was revealed to the camera before Kiara rushed to cover her with a cloth.Sidharth Malhotra and Kiara Advani welcomed Saraayah in July 2025. The actress gave birth to her first child at HN Reliance Hospital. The couple had announced their first pregnancy in February 2025 with a sweet post featuring their hands holding a tiny pair of baby socks.

About Sid-Kiara's Second Pregnancy

In October 2026, the couple announced their second pregnancy in the sweetest post on their social media accounts. They shared the delightful news on Instagram alongside a heartwarming photo of themselves and their one-year-old daughter, Saraayah's, hands holding a tiny pair of white crocheted baby socks.They attached the post with a joint statement that read, "Blessed once again with the greatest gift of all. Our hearts are so full of love and gratitude."Kiara and Sidharth's relationship began during the making of Shershaah. The two eventually tied the knot in an intimate wedding at Suryagarh Palace in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan, in February 2023.

Kiara Takes Advice From Alia & Katrina?

During Kiara Advani and Sidharth Malhotra's appearance on Koffee with Karan, Karan Johar recalled how Kiara would reach out to Alia Bhatt and Katrina Kaif over phone calls during her postpartum phase, seeking support and sharing her experiences of new motherhood.

Saif Ali Khan Gets Threat In Name Of Zeeshan Akhtar, Baba Siddique Murder Accused Tied To Lawrence Bishnoi Gang



Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan has reportedly received a threat in the name of Zeeshan Akhtar, a wanted accused in the murder of former Maharashtra minister Baba Siddique. Mumbai Police have launched an investigation to identify the person behind the threat and are trying to establish whether Akhtar actually issued it or someone else used his name to intimidate the actor.According to reports, the police are examining the threat and verifying its authenticity. Investigators are also checking whether the message has any connection with Zeeshan Akhtar, who is wanted in the Baba Siddique murder case.Zeeshan Akhtar is among the accused wanted in connection with the murder of NCP leader Baba Siddique, who was shot dead outside his son Zeeshan Siddique's office in Mumbai's Bandra area in October 2024. The murder sent shockwaves through political and entertainment circles, especially because of Baba Siddique's close association with Bollywood celebrities, including Salman Khan.

The Lawrence Bishnoi gang's alleged involvement in the murder also brought attention to threats against Bollywood personalities. Mumbai Police named Lawrence Bishnoi as the alleged mastermind in the case, while investigators continued examining the roles of the accused and their associates.

Saif Ali Khan's 2025 Stabbing Incident: What Happened?

The latest threat comes nearly two years after Saif Ali Khan stabbing case. He was attacked inside his Bandra residence in January 2025. On January 16, an intruder allegedly broke into the actor's home in the early hours of the morning and attacked him with a knife. Saif suffered six stab injuries, including a deep wound near his spine, and was rushed to Lilavati Hospital, where he underwent emergency surgery.Mumbai Police later arrested Mohammad Shariful Islam Shehzad, a Bangladeshi national who allegedly entered India illegally and had been living under the name Vijay Das. The police said the accused had entered the actor's residence during an attempted burglary.

"Urgent Matter": Sheikh Hasina Presses Bangladesh For New Passport

World.(Agency)

Bangladesh's former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has asked a British barrister to approach the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi on her behalf for a new passport and a National Identity Card (NIC), documents seen by show.

In a letter to Preeti Rahm, the Acting High Commissioner in Delhi, on November 19, Hasina's legal representative, Steven Powles KC, said that he was following up on his earlier letter of November 9, urging a reply "as a matter of urgency". Powles also said that the High Commission wanted proof that he was acting for Hasina.

"I accordingly attach to this letter a signed authorisation to act on her behalf. We look forward to your reply as a matter of urgency," he wrote. The authorisation, signed by Hasina and dated November 9, allowed Powles to file the application for a new passport and NIC with the High Commissioner in New Delhi.

White House Cybersecurity Chief Fired Over Multiple Recent Outages

Washington.(Agency).

Cyber security chief Sean Cairncross was fired from his post, a source close to the White House told AFP on Thursday, following major outages and growing concerns about AI threats.US President Donald Trump fully supported the firing because Cairncross lacked proper credentials to perform the job, the source said. His role will be filled in an acting capacity by current Defence Department Chief Information Officer Kirsten Davies, who has more appropriate credentials and has been Senate-confirmed, the source said. In recent days and weeks, major outages in America have disrupted travel, communications and e-commerce for countless users, but also affected a top-secret internal communications network at the National Security Administration.

4 UK Men Guilty Of Sexually Abusing Woman Drugged By Husband

world.(Agency)

Four British men were found guilty on Thursday of sexually abusing a woman who was drugged and raped by her husband for over a decade, the first such known UK convictions. The offences took place when Joanne Young's husband invited them into the family home to have sex with his wife, who had been heavily drugged.Winchester Crown Court in southern England found Norman Macksoni, 48 and Richard Wilkins, 62, guilty of rape, while Connor Sanderson-Doyle, 32, and Mohammed Hassan, 38, were convicted of sexual assault.Philip Young, 50, had previously pleaded guilty to multiple sexual offences -- including rape, voyeurism and administering a substance with intent to stupefy or overpower -- against his then-wife Joanne, who waived her right to anonymity. He and another co-defendant, Dean Hamilton, 47, who also pleaded guilty, are due to be sentenced on December 21. The four men found guilty on Thursday will be sentenced on December 21 and 22.The trial heard that Philip Young had, between 2016 and 2023, sedated his wife in their family home in Swindon, southwestern England, and invited strangers who he found online to have sex with her while she was asleep or unconscious.He had presented the proposition as a "kink" for the couple.

The defendants argued they did not realise Joanne Young was not consenting to the situation and did not see the husband administer any seHe had

Trump, Xi and Putin hold rare 3-way talks on nuclear risks but deliver no breakthroughs

SHENZHEN.(Agency).

For U.S. President Donald Trump, the meeting with the leaders of two other nuclear powers -- China's Xi Jinping and Russia's Vladimir Putin -- was supposed to be a diplomatic triumph: It would serve as proof that Trump could negotiate with two of America's toughest rivals.Before the trio met Thursday in a villa in the Chinese tech hub of Shenzhen, the U.S. president sought to flatter both Xi and Putin as his friends. The wars in Ukraine and Iran were on the agenda, as was reducing the dangers posed by their nuclear arsenals.But after roughly 70 minutes behind closed doors, they agreed to a far narrower agenda. They would like to reform the United Nations, refine more fossil fuels and curb the reach of the International Criminal Court.



What was billed as a historic trilateral meeting in the end looked like a fleeting photo op. Trump quickly left the villa and boarded Air Force One without saying a word to reporters about his time with Xi and Putin. Still, he hailed the visit as "Highly Consequential" on social media as he made his way back to Washington and announced he would hold a press conference on Friday at the White House.Following the Shenzhen talks, Trump dialed into a meeting in Berlin between U.S. envoys Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy alongside more than 40 European leaders who are supporting Ukraine's war effort. Trump told the Berlin gathering that he spoke to Xi and Putin about finding a peaceful end to the Ukraine war, Witkoff said.The agreements stemming from the trilateral meeting were modest, but the rhetoric that came at the start of it was not."We are really making history," Trump said. "The United States, Russia and China are uniquely positioned to discuss how to reduce the number of nuclear weapons on Earth and also to lessen the risk of those weapons being used."After the meeting, Xi called it positive, constructive and fruitful, while Putin described the trilateral talks as open and candid, calling the format "useful and substantive.""It is a serious collaborative work," he said in response to a question about whether the image of the meeting itself mattered more than the substance.The last nuclear arms pact between Russia and the United States, known as New START, expired in February, and Trump has said he wants "a new, improved and modernized" deal that includes China. But China has less motivation to accept limits given that its arsenal of more than 600 warheads is far smaller than the more than 5,000 warheads believed to be in each of the U.S. and Russian stockpiles.Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association, said the meeting could at best start a process that would eventually lead to a sustained set of talks for reducing nuclear arsenals.

"We need more than diplomatic theater and photo opportunities between Xi, Putin and Trump," Kimball said. "And one meeting will not likely produce dramatic breakthroughs."The leaders also talked about Iran and tradeThe U.S. president earlier had a separate one-on-one with Xi, their third substantial meeting this year.

Trump said they had a shared interest in having oil flow through the Strait of Hormuz, a key waterway for oil shipments from the Middle East that was repeatedly shut because of attacks in the Iran war. Trump suggested he would push Xi to buy more agricultural products from America.

Apple Working On Agents Who Can Do More Than ChatGPT, Muse Or Claude

World.(Agency)

An Apple Inc. job posting first spotted and reported on by Bloomberg's Mark Gurman asks us to picture a magical futuristic world:"Imagine an AI agent that can use a computer the way a capable person does," the job listing reads. "It browses the web, works across apps, runs commands, writes and debugs code, and calls services, and it chooses the right tool for each step. It does all this privately and with the polish people expect from Apple."If you're lacking in imagination, allow me to help. Go to your app store of choice and download Meta Platforms Inc.'s Muse, Anthropic PBC's Claude or OpenAI's ChatGPT. All of these, or some combination of them, can achieve everything Apple is describing as a goal for this lucky new senior engineering manager. But what's left is maybe the point: that Apple polish. Maybe the iPhone maker can do it better.

The job ad, Gurman suggests, is a sign of Apple stepping up its efforts a notch. I've argued continuously that the company has a robust position in artificial intelligence despite a chorus of critics who have been saying, for more than a year, that it was facing an existential threat, staring down irrelevance as competitors offered AI features to their devices that Apple would be too slow to match.While it's true the company has spent a fraction on AI research compared with its big tech peers and has made embarrassing missteps by blowing its own deadlines for launching features, the iPhone, as I see it, is the AI competitive moat to end all moats. It's a device so loved by its owners that it could take a decade or more to unseat it as the leading smartphone. OpenAI is working on its own device, of course. But then, 18 months on from its slick announcement, where is it?A good-enough AI agent, such as the kind Apple describes in its job ad, would be hard to beat. More from Gurman's report:"People already do their most valuable work by moving fluidly between tools: a browser, a document, a terminal, an editor, a service. We're building AI agents that can do the same," the listing says. The posting adds that Apple is working on agents that can "plan and carry out multistep tasks" across apps, browsers, command lines, code, and application programming interfaces, and they can "coordinate specialized subagents along the way.'"

Apple's upper hand is obvious. As good as Meta's Muse is, it has limits big thick walls put up by Apple in the (reasonable) name of security and privacy.

School Students Handcuffed, Searched After AI Mistook Doritos Bag For Gun

WASHINGTON.(Agency)

Students at a US school were stopped, handcuffed, searched and left traumatised by the local police after an AI tool mistook a Doritos bag for a gun. The four students at Kenwood High School have filed a lawsuit against the company that developed the AI, local police and the school administrators, alleging that the incident left them "fearing for their lives".The incident transpired in October last year when the students had wrapped up football practice. Their coach handed out bags of Doritos to the team as Taki Allen, a junior-year student at the time, took several bags. Allen was sitting with his friends near the picnic tables, waiting for their ride when six Baltimore County Police Department



officers emerged.The officers “forced the students to their knees on the concrete” and then handcuffed and searched them. The suit alleges that Omnilert, the company behind the AI gun-detection system, triggered the entire episode.“These students were failed not only by a technology that is prone to false alerts, but also by the very adults meant to keep them safe when we send them to school. Instead of this protection, they were met with guns and traumatised. And it could have been even worse," said Damon Hewitt, the president and executive director of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, which is representing the students.The lawsuit alleges unreasonable search and seizure, false imprisonment and negligence. It names Omnilert, the school, its principal and the Baltimore County Police Department as defendants.

Bangladesh PM Blames Sheikh Hasina's Party For Fresh Violence

Plantation, Florida.(Agency)

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman on Thursday accused deposed premier Sheikh Hasina's Awami League of conspiring to destabilise Bangladesh as he urged people to unite to give a befitting reply to those seeking to revive terrorism, killings and vote-rigging in the country.Speaking at a public rally in northwestern Lalmonirhat, bordering India, Rahman accused Awami League supporters of resorting to arson and killings to create unrest as a nationwide day-long lockdown called by Hasina's party sparked violence in some areas.

"The people of the country do not want to return to the politics of enforced disappearances, killings, arson,



terrorism and snatching voting rights of the people. Let us unite and give the terrorists a befitting reply, so that they can never again play with the fate of Bangladesh and its people," he was quoted as saying by the state-run BSS news agency.His remarks came as Bangladesh deployed nearly 3,000 paramilitary troops across seven districts following incidents of arson, crude bomb explosions and vandalism, which disrupted transport services in several parts of the country.Prime Minister Rahman said that the Awami League government not only ignored the interests of the country and its people, but also served the interests of their "masters" outside the border, where they fled.

Journalists On Trump's Plane Asked To Surrender Phones They Used In China

Undefined.(Agency)

Reporters traveling with US President Donald Trump were asked to surrender cell phones they had used in China in a rare security precaution as Air Force One prepared to leave Shenzhen on Thursday."A staffer collected a number of cellphones from poolers when we got on the plane and placed them in a Faraday



bag, designed to block signal," a White House pool reporter said in a note upon returning to the US."This was explained to us as being a necessary cybersecurity precaution against potential spying attempts," the report added.

According to the separate video pool report, a presidential aide collected temporary "burner" phones used by White House staff during the China visit for disposal or data wiping.

Journalists were asked to place devices they had used in the country into signal-blocking bags until the aircraft landed in the United States.The so-called Faraday bags are designed to shield electronic devices from wireless communications, reducing the risk of surveillance or data collection.Burner phones are temporary devices used in place of regular cell phones to protect them from potential security threats.The video pool report said many reporters and photographers had left their regular work and personal phones, laptops and smart watches inside the protective bags before landing in China on Wednesday.

Those devices were not collected and could be used on the return flight, while journalists who had relied on their regular cell phones during the visit were left without them.

The phones were returned to the pool reporters upon Air Force One landing stateside.

The unusual precautions followed Trump's meetings with world leaders in Shenzhen, including Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Fiona, Global Sensation Hippo, Dies After Eating Visitor's Hat At US Zoo

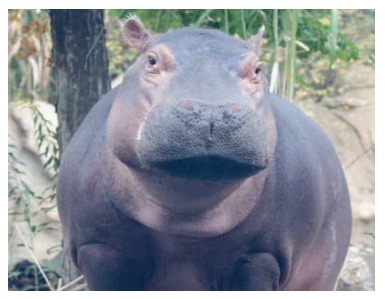
Columbus.(Agency)

Fiona, the hippo whose premature birth and fight for survival at the Cincinnati Zoo turned her into a global sensation nearly a decade ago, died Thursday from complications after swallowing a knit hat that was accidentally flung into her enclosure. She was 9 years old.

"It is with extreme sadness that we share with you the devastating news that Fiona did not make it after multiple attempts from our amazing vets and keeper team to help her through what ended up being a medical emergency," the zoo said in a statement.The zoo said Monday that it was providing Fiona with round-the-clock care after she swallowed the hat more than a week ago. Specialists had advised that surgery wasn't an option for a full-grown hippo like Fiona.

Before she died, veterinarians had been keeping Fiona hydrated, giving her treats and monitoring her every move, the zoo said. They borrowed a vibration plate from a horse farm, encouraging her to stand on it several times a day in the hopes that the shaking would help move the hat through her digestive tract.

"Despite multiple attempts to move the hat out of her system, it was ultimately too much to overcome," the zoo said.Within an hour of the announcement, visitors began leaving flowers and cards by a hippo statue outside the zoo. "Forever our Fiona," one note read.Fiona captivated people worldwide after her premature birth in 2017. Her presence was felt all around the zoo, which was scheduled to stay open late Thursday for the first night of its Festival of Lights.Amy Haacke, a special educator from Dayton, said



outside the Cincinnati Zoo that she's been a "huge fan" of Fiona since she was born because she likes underdogs. Haacke said she uses the Fiona book series in her classroom and owns three Fiona shirts.

"We were coming here anyway, but it kind of means a lot to be here," Haacke said Thursday. "We were here when she was first born and, I guess, now we're here when she's gone."Yolanda Gould, who works more than 80 miles (130 kilometres) away in Covington, said she and others in her office left early to travel to the zoo after learning about Fiona's death.