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Amit Shah opens public library

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Rajnath: Future wars will still be won by resolve and soldiers, not just AI

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'Had fun exploring trio of dysfunctional women'

SET Rs 35,000-CR TRADE TARGET BY 2030

India, NZ anchor stronger ties

MPOST BUREAU

AUCKLAND: India and New Zealand on Saturday elevated their ties to a strategic partnership, set an ambitious target of doubling their annual bilateral trade to Rs 35,000 crore by 2030 and decided to ramp up maritime security ties.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Kiwi counterpart Christopher Luxon vowed to work towards a peaceful Indo-Pacific. The talks between the two leaders yielded 18 concrete outcomes, including 10 agreements. Key among them were a four-year roadmap to expand overall relations alongside three crucial pacts aimed at boosting hydrographic data sharing, facilitating mutual naval logistics and framing enhanced maritime engagement in the Indo-Pacific.

Expanding bilateral trade through the early implementation of the free trade deal was also a key focus of the talks, underscored by Wellington's commitment to invest USD 20 billion in India over the next 15 years.

A joint statement noted that Modi and Luxon reaffirmed their shared commitment to a free, open and prosperous Indo-Pacific. They also emphasised the importance of safeguarding sovereignty, territorial integrity and the rules-based international order.

The resolve by the two countries to work jointly for a peaceful Indo-Pacific comes amid growing global concerns over China's increasing military muscle-flexing in the region, including apprehensions over its test of a submarine-launched, long-range ballistic missile earlier this week.

In line with the focus on boosting Indo-Pacific cooperation, the two sides also agreed to establish a maritime security dialogue, besides a joint working group on counter-terrorism.

An India-New Zealand joint action plan on sport was also firmed up. It provides for collaboration in high-performance sports, sports science, sports medicine and athlete development.

Modi landed in Auckland last night to a warm welcome in the final leg of his three-nation tour - after visiting Indonesia and Australia - that largely focused on ramping up cooperation in the Indo-Pacific against the backdrop of China's increasing assertiveness in the region.

The visit came following the recent signing of the India–New Zealand Free Trade Agreement. Continued on P4

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon during an Indian community event, in Auckland, New Zealand PTI

CLOSER LOOK

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- The talks between the two leaders yielded 18 concrete outcomes, including 10 agreements
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Sea of sorrow

Vietnam boat capsize kills 15 Indians

Coast Guard Region 4 Command personnel rescue the tourists ANI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

HANOI: Fifteen Indian tourists were killed after the speedboat they were travelling in capsized off Vietnam's Phu Quoc Island on Saturday, the Indian Embassy in Hanoi said.

There were 36 people on board, including 32 Indian tourists and four local crew members, of which 21 were rescued.

Phu Quoc, Vietnam's largest island, is a major tourist destination, known for its white-sand beaches, coral reefs and island-hopping excursions. The tourists in this case were reportedly returning from an island trip.

The speedboat capsized about 400 metres off Hon May Rut Ngoai, an island in the An Thoi archipelago off the coast of Phu Quoc, Vietnamese news portal VN Express International reported.

The report said nearby tourist boats rushed to pull passengers from the water before the border guards, the navy, the coast guard and other forces joined the search-and-rescue operation.

It also quoted eyewitnesses saying some of the passengers were trapped inside the overturned boat, which made rescue difficult. The bodies of all the deceased tourists have been recovered, according to local media reports.

Of the 15 victims, 10 were from Tamil Nadu, three were from Andhra Pradesh and two were from Kerala. Two of the deceased were women, according to a list shared by the Indian Embassy on X.

"A big wave hit us, 20 people came out of it, and the balance members got stuck," said survivor Nirmal Kumar.

"It's a closed boat. Since we were on the front, we (Kumar and a friend) managed to survive. Others who were behind, got stuck. The boat authorities maintained proper safety measures," he said.

Television footage aired by Vietnamese media showed rough seas and strong winds as rescue teams threw life buoys to people in the water, AP news agency reported. Jet skis were used to ferry survivors to the shore, where bystanders administered first aid to some of the victims, it said.

Continued on P4

TRAGEDY

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South's Nightingale S Janaki falls silent

MYSURU: Veteran playback singer S Janaki died at a private hospital here on Saturday due to age-related ailments, family sources said.

She was 88 years old.

According to sources, she developed breathing issues last night and was subsequently admitted to the hospital.

Known for her versatility, Janaki recorded over 48,000 songs in multiple languages, predominantly the South Indian languages of Kannada, Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam.

Over a career spanning six decades, she sang for films, albums, television and radio in about 20 Indian languages, including Hindi, Odia, Tulu, Urdu, Punjabi and Bengali.

Sharing the news on behalf of the family, her granddaughter Apsara Vydyula, in an Instagram post, said, "It is with profound sadness that I share the passing of my beloved grandmother and legendary singer, Smt S Janaki."

"She left us peacefully, surrounded by the love of her family. While our hearts are heavy, we are also filled with gratitude for the extraordinary life she lived and the immeasurable joy she brought to millions through her timeless music," she said.

"To the world, she was an iconic voice whose songs became part of countless Continued on P4

INTERIM DEAL BUCKLES

US-Iran: War of words returns

ASSOCIATED PRESS

DUBAI: US and Iranian leaders traded further threats on Saturday as the interim deal to end the war buckles under repeated crossfire in the Middle East.

President Donald Trump upped threats of further missile attacks against Iran in a string of comments on his Truth Social that came after senior US officials demanded that Iran make a public statement saying the Strait of Hormuz is open and that ships crossing the vital corridor won't be attacked.

Trump also made the comments after the funeral of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei saw open calls for the US leader's killing.

Later Saturday, Iranian Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei vowed that Iranians would continue to avenge the killing of his father, Ali Khamenei, who was mourned in funeral events throughout Iran this week. He said in remarks carried by state television that such revenge "is the will of our nation and must certainly be carried out."

So far, Tehran has not submitted to US demands over the Strait of Hormuz, instead insisting that the route remain under its control and that it be allowed to charge ships moving through it.

There had been multiple days of US airstrikes targeting Iran, as well as Iranian retaliatory fire targeting nations across the Middle East. Those strikes had been sparked by Iran attacking three ships in the strait earlier this week.

On Truth Social on Friday, Trump declared the ceasefire over but said the US would continue negotiations. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi travelled to Oman for more talks on Saturday, a day after Qatari mediators separately traveled to Iran to meet with officials amid the regional strikes.

A thousand "missiles are Locked and Loaded and aimed at the Islamic Republic of Iran, with thousands more to immediately follow, should the Iranian Government act on its threat," Trump wrote on his website.

The US president said he was responding to threats "to assassinate, or attempt to assassinate" him. During Khamenei's funeral, mourners repeatedly held Continued on P4

FILE PHOTO

TAKEAWAYS

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- Those strikes had been sparked by Iran attacking three ships in the strait earlier this week

Patience isn't weakness: J&K CM Omar to Centre

Seeks clarity on statehood timeline

MPOST BUREAU

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Saturday asked the Centre not to mistake his patience for weakness when it came to the restoration of statehood, and demanded that the Union government make the definition of 'appropriate time' clear.

He was addressing a grand workers' convention at the mausoleum of his grandparents in Hazratbal on the occasion of the 26th death anniversary of his grandmother Akbar Jehan.

Abdullah asserted that if the Centre was ready to talk to the people of Ladakh, then "why not the people of Jammu and Kashmir".

Paying tribute to his grandmother, Abdullah said he has learned a lot from her, but the biggest lesson was to have patience. "We have to keep patience -- as was shown by her. But patience is not the path of weakness. Patience is not the path of silence.

"It doesn't mean that we don't have to raise our voice for our rights. It doesn't mean that you will take undue advantage of our patience. It doesn't mean that you will think us weak. This patience is our strength, it is our voice, and God willing, Continued on P4

NEW BEGINNINGS

Newborn babies at Nowrosjee Wadia Maternity Hospital on the occasion of World Population Day, in Mumbai, Maharashtra, on Saturday PTI

Heavy rain lashes parts of India

NEW DELHI: Heavy to very heavy rain lashed parts of India on Saturday, with Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh among the worst-hit as landslides blocked roads and disrupted public life. According to the India Meteorological Department, very heavy rainfall was recorded over Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, East Uttar Pradesh and Meghalaya, while heavy rainfall was recorded over West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar, Punjab, Haryana, West Uttar Pradesh, Mizoram, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

In Uttarakhand, heavy rainfall triggered landslides, blocking 120 roads, including three national highways, while around 100 pilgrims were escorted to safety across a washed-out stretch of the Yamunotri National Highway after the route remained cut off for two days.

According to the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), a massive accumulation of debris completely blocked the highway at Syanachatti in Uttarkashi district on Thursday after incessant rain triggered a landslide that washed away nearly 100 metres of the road. Rescue personnel secured a rope along an alternative path and carefully guided the stranded travellers across one by one. See P4

SUPPORTERS CLASH, BLOCK HIGHWAY

MP bypoll: BJP ticket row turns violent

Police detain the supporters, in Datia, on Saturday ANI

MPOST BUREAU

"WE TRIED TO PACIFY THEM, CITING THE ENFORCEMENT OF THE MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT IN THE TOWN. HOWEVER, AFTER THEY REFUSED TO BACK DOWN AND PELTED STONES, COPS FIRED TEARGAS SHELLS TO CONTROL THE SITUATION"

DATIA (MP): Violence erupted in Madhya Pradesh's Datia district on Saturday, as supporters of senior BJP leader Narottam Mishra clashed with police and blocked a national highway after the former minister was denied a ticket for the July 30 Assembly byelection.

The nearly 12-hour blockade on NH-44 by over 3,000 protesters left the Datia superintendent of police and several cops injured before security forces cleared the highway and arrested some agitators, officials said.

The ruling BJP on Friday announced the candidature of Ashutosh Tiwari for the Datia assembly bypoll, angering Mishra's supporters.

Enraged workers staged a blockade on the national highway for close to 11-12 hours, and despite asking them to clear the road, they pelted stones on the police, Continued on P4

SIXTY SHOTS FIRED, FOUR GANGSTERS DEAD

Movie-like encounter, Nandal back in spotlight

OUR CORRESPONDENT

GURUGRAM: A fierce late-night police operation at the upscale Sushant Lok locality, on the outskirts of South Delhi, here that left four alleged criminals dead and another injured has put spotlight on gangster Deepak Nandal, once a well-known figure in the Haryanvi music industry, and his international extortion syndicate.

The encounter, in which more than 60 rounds were fired, took place at Sushant Lok A Block late Thursday, in which four alleged shooters of Nandal gang were shot dead, one received bullet injuries, while three policemen were hit in the exchange of fire.

The five members of Deepak Nandal gang had allegedly held Vishal Beri, a property dealer and son of the founder of SGT University, hostage at his residence. When police appealed to them to surrender, they opened fire. In the ensuing gunfight, four shooters were killed, and one was injured, while Beri was rescued safely, police said.

Nandal, once a known face in the Haryanvi music industry as a producer and rapper, has been linked to several crimes such as extortion, murder, kidnapping and ransom demands in Delhi and Haryana.

A wanted criminal, Nandal operates an international extortion racket from overseas and recruits young people via social media. Though police did not specify the country, he is believed to be active in the UAE, the UK and Canada.

Before taking to crime, Nandal worked on several popular songs alongside Haryanvi singer Rahul Fazilpuria and rapper Badshah, including 'Haryana Roadways' sung by Badshah and Fazilpuria, and 'Kar Gayi Chull', a remake version of which was used in the 2016 film 'Kapur & Sons'.

Fazilpuria survived multiple attacks, including a targeted assassination plot Continued on P4

Police personnel secure the area following an encounter between Gurugram Police Crime Branch teams and suspected criminals in the Sushant Lok Phase-2 area, in Gurugram

GURUGRAM

- The encounter, in which more than 60 rounds were fired, took place at Sushant Lok A Block late Thursday, in which four alleged shooters of Nandal gang were shot dead
- One received bullet injuries, while three policemen were hit in the exchange of fire
- The five members of Deepak Nandal gang had allegedly held Vishal Beri, a property dealer and son of the founder of SGT University, hostage at his residence

India seeks review of proposed 12.5% tariff, cites flaws in USTR's probe

'In light of India's genuine engagement on forced labour issues, it strongly expresses its concerns at the USTR's determination'

OUR CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI: India has asserted that trade issues with the US should be resolved through bilateral trade negotiations rather than unilateral measures, urging the USTR to reconsider its proposed 12.5 per cent tariff, citing inconsistencies in its Section 301 investigation into forced labour concerns.

Participating in the public hearing, Joint Secretary in Department of Commerce Brij Mohan Mishra submitted that in light of India's genuine engagement on forced labour issues, it strongly expresses its concerns at the USTR's (US Trade Representative) determination.

India takes the elimination of forced labour seriously as a constitutional obligation, and as a matter of international law and principle.

"India would like to highlight its concerns with the USTR's report and findings against India," he said.

The USTR has not satisfied the relevant legal standards under Section 301(d) of the Trade Act. A mere absence of a forced labour import prohibition without evidentiary basis of other statutory requirements cannot be construed as unreasonable under Section 301, he added.

India remains willing to engage constructively with the USTR through consultation and dialogue on any specific concern

HIGHLIGHTS

- India takes the elimination of forced labour seriously as a constitutional obligation, and as a matter of int'l law and principle
- 'India would like to highlight its concerns with USTR's report & findings against India,' Joint Secy in Dept of Commerce Brij Mohan Mishra said
- The USTR has not satisfied relevant legal standards under Section 301(d) of the Trade Act

The USTR determination does not provide a rationale for countrywide tariffs and impermissibly clubs 46 economies (including India) into a single category, according to the written transcript of the hearing, held on July 8 and published on the USTR website.

The USTR's Section 301 investigation report concerns the failure to impose and effectively enforce a prohibition on the importation of goods produced with forced labour.

India has stated that the adopted methodology is particularly flawed as the determination is based on case studies of a handful of economies and relied on broad trade patterns.

The report, he said, relies on broad data and it presupposes that an economy's imports flagged for this stuff involving imports made with forced labour are exported to the US without providing any sector-or country-specific evidence and actual linkages with forced labour.

In relation to India, there is inadequate and insufficient evidence that lack of forced labour import ban causes an unfair competitive advantage to the detriment of the American industry, he said.

"In conclusion, it is submitted that the USTR reconsider the imposition of tariff in light of the identified inconsistencies in the report in the Federal Register notice. We ask any trade problems be addressed within the framework of the India-US bilateral trade negotiation, not through unilateral measures such as this investigation," he added.

India remains willing to engage constructively with the USTR through consultation and dialogue on any specific concern.

Making submissions on behalf of (APEDA), Shreyans Gupta, First Secretary in the Embassy of India in Washington, DC, said that the export promotion body objects to the USTR's observations on the import of rice allegedly made with forced labour into India and the alleged impact on such imports in distorting the competitive conditions for the export and domestic sale of rice produced in the US.

It is important to note that India's imports of rice are very small and that caters to targeted demands of specific and niche rice varieties.

Gupta said that the overall value of rice imported into India in relation to the value of rice exported from India to the US is not even three per cent.

He added that there are regulatory checks in place that prevent exports from India of imported rice that have been produced with forced labour.

Export of rice from India to the US is allowed only from the rice mills and processing units registered with the agriculture ministry.

"For these reasons, the present investigation against India may be rescinded without prejudice," Gupta said requesting exemption for Indian rice from the proposed duty if the proceedings continue.

CII too has submitted that the proposed 12.5 per cent additional tariff is neither supported in the evidence presented, nor likely to advance the stated policy goal.

The USTR report does not establish that India's policy framework burdens US commerce, the chamber said.

Gadkari urges deeper BRICS cooperation on global mobility

OUR CORRESPONDENT

NAGPUR: Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Saturday called for deeper cooperation among BRICS nations to build transport systems that are sustainable, resilient, inclusive and future-ready, stating that the grouping's collective strength presents a unique opportunity to shape the future of global mobility through innovation, partnership and shared responsibility.

The Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways was addressing the 3rd BRICS Transport Ministers' Meeting being held in Nagpur under India's BRICS Chairship.

Welcoming transport ministers, delegation heads and senior officials from the member countries, Gadkari said the meeting is a significant step towards strengthening transport cooperation among emerging economies.

India's BRICS Chairship, guided by the theme 'Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability', reflects a people centric, humanity-first approach inspired by the timeless philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' or the 'world is one family', he added.

"BRICS, representing nearly half of the world's population, is uniquely positioned to lead the development of transport systems that are cleaner, safer, smarter and more efficient while advancing sustainable economic growth and regional connectivity," Gadkari said while calling for stronger BRICS collaboration.

Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari

Common challenges relating to infrastructure financing, congestion, emissions, road safety and last-mile connectivity require collective solutions, he asserted. The Union minister emphasised India's readiness to deepen cooperation through knowledge sharing, capacity building, technological collaboration and joint research in green hydrogen, electric mobility, alternative fuels, digital transport systems and sustainable multimodal infrastructure.

Expressing confidence in the outcomes of the meeting, Gadkari said the deliberations would further strengthen BRICS transport cooperation and contribute to practical, innovative and people-centric mobility solutions.

He called upon BRICS nations to work together to build transport systems that promote inclusive growth, strengthen regional connectivity, protect the environment and contribute to a more sustainable and prosperous future for all.

Emphasising that transport is the backbone of economic development, Gadkari highlighted India's rapid transformation across the road, rail, maritime and aviation sectors.

"India has developed the world's second-largest road network while significantly expanding access-controlled expressways and multimodal connectivity. The Hybrid Annuity Model as a successful framework for mobilising private investment in infrastructure," he pointed out.

Indian Railways have undergone unprecedented modernisation through near-complete electrification of the broad-gauge network, expansion of Vande Bharat services, progress on the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail Corridor and landmark engineering achievements such as the new Pamban Bridge, he said.

Gadkari also highlighted the Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047, digital initiatives including e-Navik and e-Samudra, and the Green Shipping initiative as important steps towards strengthening maritime infrastructure and logistics efficiency.

The two-day meeting is being organised under India's BRICS Chairship theme 'Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability'.

The delegates from member countries — Brazil, Russia, Indonesia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates — will participate in discussions on sustainable transport, infrastructure, clean mobility, logistics resilience and multimodal connectivity.

Over 1.7 cr ITRs filed for AY 2026-27: I-T dept

NEW DELHI: Over 1.7 crore I-T returns have been filed for 2025-26 financial year so far, the Income Tax Department said on Saturday.

The last date to file ITRs 1 and 2 for income earned in 2025-26 fiscal year is July 31.

"Over 1.7 Crore taxpayers have already taken the smart step and filed their ITRs for Assessment Year (AY) 2026-27," the department said on X.

Of this, more than 10 lakh returns were filed on Friday.

Income Tax Return (ITR) Form 1 (Sahaj) is a simpler form that caters to a large number of small and medium taxpayers.

Sahaj can be filed by a resident individual having annual income up to Rs 50 lakh and who has salary income, one house property, and agricultural income up to Rs 5,000 a year.

ITR-2 is filed by individuals and Hindu Undivided Families (HUFs) not having income from profits and gains in business or profession, but having income from capital gains. PTI

Income Tax department rolls out ITR-7 Excel utility for AY27 filing

NEW DELHI: The Income Tax Department has released the ITR-7 Excel utility for Assessment Year (AY) 2026-27, enabling eligible trusts, institutions, political parties and certain other entities to prepare their income tax returns offline ahead of the filing deadlines.

With the rollout, taxpayers using ITR-7 can download the Excel utility from the Income Tax e-Filing portal, fill in and validate return details offline, generate a JSON file and upload it to complete the filing process.

The department announced the launch through a post on X.

ITR-7 is applicable to persons, including companies, required to file returns under Sections 139(4A), 139(4B), 139(4C) and 139(4D) of the Income-tax Act.

It is primarily meant for charitable and religious trusts, political parties, scientific research institutions, universities, colleges and certain educational institutions. It is not intended for salaried individuals.

According to tax platform ClearTax, firms, companies, associations of persons (AOPs), local authorities and artificial juridical persons covered under these provisions can also file using ITR-7 where applicable.

The department has clarified that, from AY 2022-23 onwards, entities whose income is unconditionally exempt under Section 10 and are not otherwise required to file a return under Section 139 are not eligible to use ITR-7.

The offline utility allows taxpayers to prepare returns without continuous internet connectivity.

After completing the required schedules and validation, users can generate a JSON file for electronic submission on the e-Filing portal.

The launch follows the recent release of the ITR-5 Excel utility. Most major return forms, including ITR-1, ITR-2, ITR-3, ITR-4 and ITR-5, are now available through online filing, Excel utilities or both, allowing different categories of taxpayers to begin filing their returns. The due date for filing ITR-7 is August 31, 2026, for non-audit cases, October 31, 2026, for entities requiring an audit, and November 30, 2026, for taxpayers required to furnish transfer pricing reports. AGENCIES

OECD faces $500 bn productivity hit by 2040 as ageism keeps older workers sidelined: WEF

NEW DELHI: Age-related workplace barriers could cost Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) economies nearly $500 billion in cumulative productivity losses by 2040, the World Economic Forum and Marsh said in a new report, as ageing populations grow far faster than the working-age workforce.

"OECD countries, it is estimated, will suffer nearly $500 billion in productivity losses by 2040, due to under- and unemployment of adults aged 55+ relative to younger workers," the report finds. The losses are tied to longer unemployment spells and structural barriers that push many older adults out of the labour force entirely.

The demographic pressure is intensifying. "By 2040, the global population aged 65 and over will grow by more than 50 per cent, increasing from 856 million to 1.3 billion. Meanwhile, the working age population, aged 25 to 64, will grow by just 13 per cent," the analysis notes.

The cost is already visible country by country. Between 2025 and 2040, extended unemployment among workers aged 55+ is projected to cost the US $113 billion and France $106 billion in cumulative GDP losses.

In Canada, the estimate reaches $7,530 million. Other major impacts include the United Kingdom $25,590 million, Brazil $105,810 million, Netherlands $26,250 million, and Japan $5,870 million.

Beyond GDP, the report links ageism to health impacts. "Research suggests that ageism is linked to 17 million incidences of disease in the United States alone." In 2018, ageism added at least $63 billion in extra health costs in the US alone, with studies also showing links to depression, physical illness and reduced access to healthcare.

The WEF says the problem is worsened because many discouraged older workers exit rather than appear in unemployment data. "These figures are just the tip of the iceberg. Many people who feel disadvantaged due to ageism simply choose to exit the workforce and do not appear in the unemployment figures."

The report points to alternatives. It highlights that multi-generational teams "fuel growth and productivity through higher levels of creativity and innovation," and that experienced employees can mentor younger colleagues while gaining digital skills in return.

It also cites policy examples. South Korea saw a record 70 per cent employment rate for adults aged 55 to 64, and Japan has seen employment levels for workers over 65 increase for 20 consecutive years. In Europe, Sweden's flexible pension system lets people take 25 per cent to 100 per cent of their pension while continuing to work. ANI

Bank deposits surge, capital flows pick up; SBI Research sees stronger Q1 growth momentum

NEW DELHI: India's banking system and credit markets are signaling a stronger start to FY27, with SBI Research pointing to buoyant capital flows, higher deposit growth and a pickup in both commercial paper and bank credit as early signs that economic growth may have surprised on the upside in Q1FY27.

The report by SBI Research expects the momentum to sustain through the quarter. It flags softer crude prices as a key tailwind. "Average crude oil price for Indian basket is now expected at $80/bbl which will lead to savings of $30 to $35 bn in oil import bill against our previous estimate when oil price crossed $130/bbl." The house also notes the rupee outlook "remains positive" despite a recent 0.4% depreciation amid geopolitical tensions.

For the fortnight ended 30 June 2026, overall deposits jumped by around Rs 7 lakh crore, the "third highest fortnightly growth in 29-years." SBI Research said that netting out the quarter-end effect of Rs 3.5-4 lakh crore, the surge also reflects stronger capital inflows. "An informed guess of the magnitude of overall capital flows stripping out the trend growth indicates that this number could be $15 bn." The report attributes part of this to FCNR(B), ECB and OFCB flows, and notes India has received "$7 bn FII inflows since the measures announced by the Government to bring the foreign inflows and boost the rupee." Cumulative Debt FAR inflows stand at $2.7 bn. RBI's foreign currency assets rose by $4.4 bn during the fortnight to $545.6 bn.

Credit activity has also accelerated. CP issuances in Q1FY27 were Rs 5.38 lakh crore, up 19% YoY, with June at a 55-month high of Rs 2.55 lakh crore. Incremental bank credit rose to Rs 5.6 lakh crore in Q1FY27 versus Rs 2.4 lakh crore a year ago. SBI Research observes that "Bank Credit and CP Issuances moving in the same direction - indicating economic resilience." Top CP-issuing sectors such as power, real estate and steel also showed higher bank credit growth, and together these sectors account for "~69% of the new projects announcement in Q1."

On rates, long-tenor G-sec yields rallied faster than corporate bonds in May-June on foreign inflows, while 3-year AAA saw better demand. The spread between CP weighted average yield and bank lending rates has narrowed to 115 bps in May 2026 from 169 bps in March.

With liquidity set to turn comfortable after the deposit surge and oil savings in view, SBI Research expects funding conditions to ease further, supporting both corporate borrowing and project execution in the coming months. ANI

FSSAI issues nine notices to Swiggy Instamart over food safety complaints

NEW DELHI: Food safety regulator FSSAI has issued nine notices to Swiggy Instamart following multiple consumer complaints alleging the supply of expired, spoiled and unsafe food products through the quick-commerce platform.

The notices, issued under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, seek a detailed explanation and compliance report from the company, failing which legal action may be initiated, the regulator said on Saturday.

According to FSSAI, complaints included the delivery of rotten, contaminated and expired food items, including an infant food product allegedly found in a deteriorated condition due to improper storage and handling. The regulator also cited complaints of contaminated eggs and milk, damaged packaged food items, and the alleged re-supply of a returned unsafe product. FSSAI further flagged incorrect, invalid or non-existent licence numbers & alleged discrepancies between listed food business operators and their registered names.

The regulator also noted complaints of inadequate grievance redressal, with some consumers alleging that only refunds were offered without addressing food safety concerns.

The notices raise questions over seller onboarding, compliance verification, traceability, food quality monitoring and consumer grievance mechanisms on the platform.

A Swiggy Instamart spokesperson said the company is reviewing the flagged listings and is in touch with the authorities to resolve the issues. The regulator said the action follows both consumer complaints and suo motu cognisance. Recently, FSSAI has issued similar notices to several food companies, energy drink makers, alcoholic beverage firms and quick-commerce platforms. AGENCIES

Aditya Birla Group plans to invest ₹12K cr in Kansariguda alumina refinery expansion

The announcement was made by the group's chairman Kumar Mangalam Birla after meeting Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi here

BHUBANESWAR: The Aditya Birla Group on Saturday proposed to invest an additional Rs 12,000 crore for the expansion of its greenfield alumina refinery project at Kansariguda in Odisha's Rayagada district, an official statement said.

The announcement was made by the group's chairman Kumar Mangalam Birla after meeting Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi here.

The company, which already has a refinery and two smelter plants in Odisha, has been implementing a 1 MTPA capacity greenfield refinery project at Kansariguda at an investment of Rs 8,000 crore through Hindalco Industries Limited.

With the proposed expansion of the project from 1 MTPA to 3 MTPA capacity, the company's investment would increase to Rs 20,000 crore. The meeting provided a platform to discuss the implementation of major projects being undertaken by the group in Odisha and identify measures for their timely facilitation, the statement said.

The discussions also focused on further expansion of the Aditya Birla Group's presence in sectors where it does not currently have significant operations in the state.

Keeping in view the long-term potential of the project and the proactive support extended by the state government, the group proposed an additional investment.

CLOSER LOOK

- The company has been implementing a 1 MTPA capacity greenfield refinery project at Kansariguda at an investment of Rs 8,000 cr through Hindalco Industries Ltd
- With the proposed expansion of project to 3 MTPA capacity, company's investment would rise to Rs 20K cr
- The project is expected to generate substantial direct and indirect employment opportunities

The project is expected to generate substantial direct and indirect employment and create further opportunities for local enterprises, service providers and downstream industries, the statement said.

Welcoming the proposal, Majhi said Odisha's mineral strength must translate into greater value addition, advanced manufacturing and quality employment within the state.

The chief minister said aluminium is central to this vision.

"We intend not only to lead the country in alumina and aluminium production but also to build a globally competitive ecosystem across the entire value chain, from refining and primary metals to downstream and advanced products," Majhi said.

The chief minister further said the expansion of the Kansariguda refinery will further strengthen this momentum and reinforce Odisha's position as India's leading metals and metallurgy hub.

The Aditya Birla Group's additional investment in the expansion of its greenfield refinery project came days after the state government signed an MoU with Adani Enterprises Ltd (AEL) and Abu Dhabi-based International Resources Holding (IRH) to develop an integrated greenfield aluminium project at an estimated investment of about Rs 1.08 lakh crore ($11.5 billion). PTI

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Shah opens public library, stresses importance of young readers

CM Gupta says library will be an important resource for aspirants

ANAMTA FATIMA

NEW DELHI: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday inaugurated the New Delhi Municipal Council's (NDMC) Jayaprakash Narayan (JPN) Public Library at Udyan Marg, describing libraries as the true measure of a nation's future and urging young people to cultivate the habit of reading.

Addressing the gathering, Shah said a country's progress should not be judged solely by its industries, markets or agriculture, but by the number of young people studying in its libraries. "A nation's future is shaped not by agriculture, markets or industry alone, but by the crowds of young people gathering in its libraries," he said, adding that libraries play a vital role in promoting knowledge, shaping personalities and strengthening nation-building.

Recalling his childhood, Shah said his association with a local library transformed his life and inspired him to explore Indian literature, the Vedas and the Upanishads. He also urged the Delhi government to interconnect libraries across the city and strengthen their links with schools to encourage reading among students.

Amit Shah, Rekha Gupta and Parvesh Verma during the inauguration PTI

Spread across 2,265 sq. metres, the ground-plus-two-storey, digitally enabled library has a seating capacity of around 200 readers and houses over 35,000 books, journals and reference publications. It also features a research centre, a children's section, a modern auditorium, an RFID-enabled book management system, free Wi-Fi and an e-library offering access to more than one crore digital books through the National Digital Library of India.

CM Rekha Gupta described the facility as a major addition to the capital's educational infrastructure, saying it would serve as an important resource for students preparing for competitive examinations, including the UPSC. "I think the inauguration of this library is a big gift for the people of Delhi. This will serve as an asset for young people. Those preparing for UPSC and other examinations will get the kind of study environment they need through this library," she said.

Gupta also said the city was witnessing improvement in civic infrastructure during the monsoon.

"The problems that used to trouble the people of Delhi are gradually ending. Delhi is moving towards becoming a developed city. This time, we are seeing much better drainage arrangements and minimal waterlogging. A lot of credit goes to PWD Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh Verma and the entire government working together," she said.

NDMC Chairman Keshav Chandra said the library has been dedicated to the legacy of freedom fighter and socialist leader Jayaprakash Narayan, whose vision of Sampoorna Kranti continues to inspire democratic values and social reform.

Highlights

- Shah said the library offered access to around 32,000 books and one crore e-books, and expressed hope that the Delhi government would integrate libraries across the city
- Spread across 2,265 sq. metres, the ground-plus-two-storey, digitally enabled library has a seating capacity of around 200 readers and houses over 35,000 books, journals and reference publications
- Gupta also said the city was witnessing improvement in civic infrastructure during the monsoon

L-G Sandhu advocates clean, labour-centric industry in Dwarka

SHIVANGI SHUKLA

NEW DELHI: Lieutenant Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu has advocated for a clean, non-polluting and labour centric industrial ecosystem in Dwarka that generates large scale employment for the local workforce while chairing an interaction with leading industry representatives on strengthening the sub-city as a major economic and commercial hub.

L-G Taranjit Sandhu during the event MPOST

Emphasising sustainable industrial growth, he said Dwarka's development should remain environmentally responsible so that its economic rise translates directly into livelihood opportunities for the people of Delhi. He also stressed that urban redevelopment, infrastructure upgradation and planning reforms are essential to sustaining Delhi's long term economic growth.

Reiterating his vision for Dwarka, the Lieutenant Governor said that as one of Asia's largest planned sub-cities, its proximity to the international airport, seamless connectivity and maturing urban ecosystem make it investment ready across sectors, including commerce, hospitality, healthcare, education and technology. He further observed that planning and development norms, including Floor Area Ratio (FAR), need to be reviewed and rationalised in line with emerging urban requirements, while sector specific policy measures are required to enhance Delhi's competitiveness as an investment destination.

The interaction, attended by industry representatives from the real estate, infrastructure, hospitality and healthcare sectors along with senior government officials, focused on improving ease of doing business and strengthening Dwarka's investment ecosystem.

Industry representatives suggested improved infrastructure, research and innovation facilities, a streamlined single window clearance mechanism, simplified approvals, and promotion of hospitality, tourism, healthcare, IT, ITES, GCCs and MICE infrastructure.

The Additional Chief Secretary (Industries) said major Ease of Doing Business reforms are underway, including a new Industrial Policy, integration of approval processes across departments and financial support for research and innovation. The Secretary Tourism said initiatives are being taken to promote tourism and Delhi's evening economy, while the MD, ITPO said five star hotel infrastructure and convention facilities are being considered to strengthen the hospitality ecosystem.

Labourer falls to death at site despite 'MCD stop-work notice'

NEW DELHI: Mayor Pravesh Wahi on Saturday directed officials of the MCD to intensify enforcement against spa centres and commercial establishments violating civic regulations, while also asking the civic body to formulate an e-cart policy at the earliest.

A 42-year-old construction worker died after falling from the fifth floor of an under-construction building in west Delhi's Tilak Nagar, an official said on Saturday.

Police sources said that the incident happened despite a stop-work notice issued by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD).

The deceased was identified as Mohammad Bhola, a native of Bihar's Supaul district who lived in Keshopur village in Tilak Nagar and worked as a labourer.

According to the police, the incident took place around 2.40 pm on Friday at an under-construction building. Bhola allegedly lost his balance while working on the fifth floor and fell to the ground.

He was rushed to Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital by fellow workers, where doctors declared him dead. Police said a case has been registered on the complaint of the victim's brother, who alleged that adequate safety measures were not in place at the construction site, police said.

During the investigation, police found that the MCD had earlier issued a notice directing that construction at the property be stopped. AGENCIES

Bomb threat spurs security at Red Fort

NEW DELHI: Delhi Police beefed up security at the Red Fort here on Saturday after receiving information about a bomb threat, sources said.

However, after an extensive search of the premises, the threat was declared a hoax, they said. The threat call was made to the Mumbai Police control room, with the caller claiming that the iconic monument in Delhi would be blown up. Following the alert, security was tightened. AGENCIES

FIRST STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

DDA to hold 'Yamuna Dialogues' in September

SHIVANGI SHUKLA

NEW DELHI: The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has organised the first stakeholder consultation workshop under its 'Yamuna Dialogues' initiative, following the directions of Lieutenant Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu to promote a 'Green and Clean Delhi'.

The initiative follows the Lieutenant Governor's visits to the Yamuna floodplains and subsequent review meetings with senior DDA officials, during which he directed that pollution in the river be addressed through a multi dimensional approach. He also emphasised that residents, experts and other stakeholders should become active partners in the rejuvenation of the Yamuna, making its restoration a shared civic mission.

The Yamuna Dialogues have been conceived as a collaborative platform bringing together national and international experts and institutions to share Indian and global best practices in river restoration and riverfront development.

The initiative will culminate in two major sessions proposed to be held in September 2026 and January 2027, where the Delhi Yamuna Compact a comprehensive roadmap outlining agreed priorities, implementation strategies and timelines for the restoration of the Yamuna corridor will be deliberated upon and finalised. The consultation marks the beginning of a participatory process to prepare the Zero Draft of the Delhi Yamuna Compact.

DU introduces nail art course

ANAMTA FATIMA

NEW DELHI: Delhi University has introduced a Nail Art course under its Skill Enhancement framework, marking another step towards integrating industry-oriented learning with higher education in line with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

The course aims to equip students with practical skills in the beauty and wellness sector alongside their academic programmes. The curriculum includes nail care and hygiene, basic and advanced nail art techniques, gel polish application, nail extensions, creative design, client interaction, salon etiquette, and professional safety and sanitation standards.

University officials said the programme is designed to enhance students' employability by providing hands-on training in a growing industry.

Besides preparing students for careers in salons, beauty studios and wellness centres, the course is also expected to encourage entrepreneurship.

Government clears fellowships for heritage digitisation

NEW DELHI: The Delhi government has approved research fellowships in archives and archaeology to facilitate scientific study, documentation and digitisation of the capital's historical heritage, which spans thousands of years and includes manuscripts, archival records, archaeological sites and monuments representing multiple civilisations.

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said Delhi is not only the national capital but also a living heritage of history, culture and civilisation.

She said preserving this legacy through scientific research, systematic documentation and wider accessibility for future generations is among the government's priorities.

The Delhi Cabinet has approved the Research Fellowship in Archives and the Research Fellowship in Archaeology with the aim of promoting specialised studies and creating a strong pool of experts in history, archaeology and heritage conservation, a statement said.

The Research Fellowship in Archives will focus on high-quality archival research, strengthening archival management, preservation and conservation of historical records, digitisation of documents and making important records accessible to the public, it said. According to the statement, areas covered under the scheme include records management, conservation of archival material, digitisation, dissemination of information, data management, microfilming, reprography, research |publications. MPOST

Kejriwal visits service station over rising E20 issues

NEW DELHI: AAP national convenor Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday visited a petrol pump and service station in Delhi to interact with vehicle owners over their experience with E20-blended petrol, claiming that several consumers complained of reduced mileage and vehicle performance.

During the visit, Kejriwal spoke to people who had come for refuelling as well as those who had brought their vehicles for servicing. He said the interaction helped him understand the concerns being raised by some vehicle owners regarding the use of ethanol-blended fuel.

In a post on X, Kejriwal said, "Today, I went to a petrol pump and a service station in Delhi to understand the ground reality. Many people told me that their vehicles' mileage has reduced, and some also complained about mechanical issues." He said the government's claims on E20 fuel are "white lies". AGENCIES

Rs 5 lakh cash looted at gunpoint in Rohini; FIR lodged

NEW DELHI: An employee of a finance firm was allegedly robbed of Rs 5 lakh at gunpoint by occupants of a black Mahindra Thar near Dwarkadhish Apartment in Rohini, police said on Saturday.

The 45-year-old employee was returning with the cash after collecting it from a spare parts dealer in Shahbad Daulatpur, according to an FIR registered at the KN Katju Marg police station.

The complainant, a resident of Tilak Nagar, told police that he works as a recovery executive with a finance company.

"On Friday afternoon, my employer asked me to collect Rs 5 lakh in cash from Shahbad Daulatpur," read the FIR. Police said after collecting the cash, he kept it in a white cloth bag inside the car and drove towards Rohini.

Around 2:45 pm, near Dwarkadhish Apartment, a black Mahindra Thar overtook and stopped his vehicle, the FIR stated.

Police said one occupant allegedly pointed a pistol at him, threatened to kill him, forced him to unlock the car and then allegedly took the money from the dashboard and fled in the Thar.

He immediately informed the financier, who asked him to alert police. AGENCIES

SOUTH WEST DELHI HAS THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF WATER BODIES AT 291

Over 1K water bodies; many encroached: Report

NEW DELHI: Delhi has identified 1,080 water bodies, with the highest number in South West Delhi, while many face encroachment, drying up and poor water quality, according to a status report filed by the Wetland Authority of Delhi before the National Green Tribunal (NGT). The status report, submitted on July 9 in compliance with the tribunal's directions, was filed in a case initiated after media reports on the disappearance of water bodies in Delhi.It compiles information received from 16 land-owning agencies, including the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), Revenue Department, Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), Delhi Jal Board (DJB), Forest Department, Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Central Public Works Department (CPWD) and others.

The DDA accounts for 856 water bodies, followed by Revenue Department with 130

South West Delhi has the highest number of water bodies at 291, followed by Outer North with 266 and South Delhi with 156. North East has 56 water bodies, East 52, South East 49, West 42, North 40, Central North 29, Central 14 and New Delhi five. The report also lists four water bodies under Old Delhi, 35 under the DDA's O-Zone category and others.

According to the report, the DDA accounts for 856 water bodies, followed by the Revenue Department with 130, the Forest Department with 28, MCD with 24, ASI with 16, DJB with six and CPWD with five among others. AGENCIES

DOCTOR KILLED IN UTTARAKHAND

Heavy rains wreck havoc across India

OUR CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI: Heavy to very heavy rain lashed parts of India on Saturday, with Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh among the worst-hit as landslides blocked roads and disrupted public life.

According to the India Meteorological Department, very heavy rainfall was recorded over Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, East Uttar Pradesh and Meghalaya, while heavy rainfall was recorded over West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar, Punjab, Haryana, West Uttar Pradesh, Mizoram, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

In Uttarakhand, heavy rainfall triggered landslides, blocking 120 roads, including three national highways, while around 100 pilgrims were escorted to safety across a washed-out stretch of the Yamunotri National Highway after the route remained cut off for two days.

According to the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), a massive accumulation of debris completely blocked the highway at Syanachatti in Uttarkashi district on Thursday after incessant rain triggered a landslide that washed away nearly 100 metres of the road.

Rescue personnel secured a rope along an alternative path and carefully guided the stranded travellers across one by one.

The national highway had been blocked for two days, the officials said, adding that repair work is underway but is being hampered by continuous rain and fresh debris and stones falling from the hillside.

In Chamoli distirct, a doctor was killed when he was inspecting construction work of a health centre, which was damaged by a landslide and flash floods on June 28.

In Himachal, moderate to heavy rains lashed the state, causing a landslide in Shimla, the collapse of a Bailey bridge in Sangla, and floodwater submerging a single-storeyed house in Kinnaur district.

In Kinnaur district, incessant heavy rainfall swelled the Lippa stream, submerging a single-storeyed house near the Lippa bus stand, while a flood threat loomed large over several houses.

In the national capital, Delhi, the minimum temperature rose marginally, amidst forecast of light rain.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has not issued any alerts for Delhi over the coming days.

In Uttar Pradesh, most parts of the state received normal rainfall, while 10 districts recorded excess rainfall and 21 districts remained rain-free.

According to the latest rainfall distribution chart issued by the Meteorological Centre, Lucknow, no district has reported large excess or large deficient rainfall so far this season. The rainfall distribution indicates that a majority of districts have received near-normal monsoon precipitation, although rainfall deficits persist across 21 districts.

In Rajasthan, parts of the state witnessed gusty winds and light to moderate rainfall at isolated places over 24 hours, according to the daily weather update issued here.

Rajgarh/Sadulpur in Churu district recorded the highest rainfall in the state at 55 mm during the period, the report said.

Shimla: People cover themselves as they walk amid rainfall, in Shimla, Himachal Pradesh, Saturday PTI

Highlights

- In Uttarakhand, heavy rainfall triggered landslides, blocking 120 roads, including three national highways, while around 100 pilgrims were escorted to safety
- In Rajasthan, parts of the state witnessed gusty winds and light to moderate rainfall at isolated places over 24 hours, according to the daily weather update issued here

T'gana: POCSO accused out on bail kills six, including his own children

OUR CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD: A 35-year-old man, an accused in a POCSO case, allegedly killed six people—his two children and three members of the family that had filed a complaint against him among them—in neighbouring Rangareddy district, police said on Saturday.

The accused allegedly killed the victims at different locations in Shabad mandal late on Friday night, police said.

P Rajkumar, a farmer, initially went to the house of the minor girl in Shabad town and killed her mother and maternal grandmother, who were asleep, Future City Police Commissioner Tarun Joshi told reporters.

He then took the minor girl in a car to his native village of Dhaivalguda and stabbed her to death near a lake.

The accused did not harm the minor girl's elder sister, a person with physical and intellectual disabilities, when he targeted the other family members at their house, police said.

Rajkumar subsequently went to his house, about 250 metres from the lake, and killed his wife (in her 30s) and his two sons, aged four and one-and-a-half years, who were all asleep, the commissioner said.

The man was booked under the POCSO Act for stalking and harassing the minor girl in May this year, based on a complaint filed by the girl's family.

He had recently secured anticipatory bail in the case, police said.

The accused used a sickle and a knife to stab the victims and slit their throats.

Immediately after the murders, the accused called his father and confessed to the crimes, telling him that he was going to take his own life, police said, adding that he then switched off his phone.

The parents of the accused then reported the matter to the police. Rajkumar fled the scene and remains absconding.

The six bodies were sent to a hospital for post-mortem examination.

Telangana Minister for Panchayat Raj and Women and Child Welfare D Anasuya Seethakka directed officials to take stringent action against the accused, expedite the investigation, and ensure justice for the victims' family.

Seven teams were formed to nab the accused and are searching for him, the commissioner said, adding, "We will get (nab) him soon."

According to the available information, the accused was alone while carrying out the killings, he said.

The exact motive for the killings is under investigation, the official said, adding that the full picture would be known once he is apprehended and interrogated.

Investigators suspect a deep-seated grudge against the minor girl, but the motive behind killing his wife and two children is yet to be ascertained, police said.

"As of now, we don't know why he killed his own wife and children," Joshi said.

The senior police official said the accused's family told police that he was addicted to gambling and had taken loans, which they believed had left him under severe stress.

Hyderabad student missing in Finland for over 2 months found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD: The body of an 18-year-old student from Hyderabad who went missing in Finland in May this year, was recovered from the sea in Helsinki, as per information given to the family members here by the Indian Embassy in Finland.

The Indian Embassy in Finland, in an email to the family on Friday, informed that the authorities in Finland intimated them that the body of Manideep Reddy was found in the sea in Helsinki, the family's lawyer KLB Kumar said on Saturday.

Manideep Reddy was pursuing a Bachelor's Programme in Software and Systems Engineering at Lappeenranta-Lahti University of Technology (LUT University), Lahti Campus, Finland. He was residing at Ritaniemenkatu, Lahti.

Kumar said Manideep Reddy was last seen at a mall in Helsinki on May 5.

Rajasthan: Nine women die after operation in 2 hospitals, state govt sends expert teams

JAIPUR: Nine women, who underwent surgery in the obstetrics and gynaecology department at two government hospitals of Bhilwara and Banswara districts of Rajasthan, died over the past week, raising concerns over maternal healthcare and hospital practices and prompting the state government to order inquiries by expert teams.

Officials maintained that investigations are underway to ascertain the exact causes.

In Bhilwara, five deaths were reported at the Mahatma Gandhi Hospital. Its Superintendent Arun Gaur said infection control measures are being strictly followed and a probe is in progress. He said an operation theatre (OT) where a sample was found unsatisfactory has been shut for the last three days.

In Banswara, four females, including a minor, died between July 7 and 10, leading to the probe by an expert panel.

Rajasthan Medical and Health Minister Gajendra Singh Khimsar said on Saturday that the government is treating the incidents with "utmost seriousness" and has deployed expert teams.

He said that a meeting with gynaecology experts will be held on Monday to review the cases and discuss corrective measures, while he himself will visit Bhilwara on Tuesday.

"The state government is taking the incidents of maternal deaths in Bhilwara and Banswara with utmost seriousness. A team of expert officials from the Directorate has been sent to both districts to investigate the real causes," the minister said.

Referring to the Bhilwara cases, Khimsar said the preliminary report has not established any link between the deaths and OT infection.

"The preliminary report of Mahatma Gandhi Hospital, Bhilwara, has been received, in which no confirmation of infection in the operation theatre has been found," he said. AGENCIES

Driver kills 3 members of family, dies by suicide in Bengaluru

BENGALURU: A 34-year-old man allegedly hacked to death his mother, grandmother and maternal uncle before dying by suicide here on Saturday, police said.

The incident occurred at Kottigepalya under the Kamakshipalya Police Station limits, they said. According to police, the accused, Prashant, a driver, allegedly attacked his mother, Mangalamma (55), a garment factory worker, his grandmother Nanjamma and his maternal uncle Satish with a machete at their residence.

In its statement, police had earlier said that Satish was Prashant's brother-in-law but after preliminary inquiry, it was revealed that he was actually his mother's brother and was unmarried. However, no death note was recovered from the spot. Citing a preliminary investigation, a senior police officer said Prashant was reportedly suffering from mental health issues. AGENCIES

From Page 1

India, NZ

"We have decided to elevate our ties to a strategic partnership. We will move forward across every sector with clear goals and concrete outcomes," Modi said after the talks.

The two prime ministers called for freedom of navigation and overflight, and other lawful uses of the seas, in accordance with international law, the joint statement noted.

In his remarks at the meeting, Modi said deeper cooperation between India and New Zealand, both maritime nations, will inject new strength into the Indo-Pacific.

They agreed to work towards doubling bilateral two-way trade in goods and services to 7 billion New Zealand dollars, or approximately Rs 35,000 crore, by 2030. Currently, the volume of bilateral annual trade between India and New Zealand stands at around Rs 18,000 crore.

"I am confident that my visit will further strengthen our bilateral relations and enhance our contribution to global peace, stability, and security. We can act as a catalyst, advocate for peace, and - through peace - advance towards global well-being," Modi said.

Delving into the West Asia conflict, the two leaders expressed concern over renewed escalation of tensions and called upon all parties to exercise restraint, de-escalate tensions and ensure protection of civilians, the joint statement said.

They reiterated the importance of dialogue and diplomacy, and adherence to international law to achieve a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict.

Modi and Luxon also pitched for "bold and effective" reform of the United Nations and affirmed their support for expansion of the Security Council.In this regard, New Zealand reaffirmed its support for India's permanent membership of a reformed and expanded United Nations Security Council.

On the Ukraine issue, Modi and Luxon expressed concern over the ongoing war, which continues to "cause immense human suffering and global consequences," according to the statement.

The two leaders also reiterated their condemnation of terrorism in all its forms including cross-border terrorism.

WITH PTI INPUTS

Sea of sorrow

The exact cause of the incident is yet to be ascertained.

According to AP, Vietnamese Prime Minister Le Minh Hung has ordered an investigation into the cause of the accident and directed authorities to hold those responsible accountable.

He also asked officials to review waterway and maritime safety measures in the area of the accident and other similar locations, the news agency reported.

The Indian Embassy and Consulate in Vietnam are providing all possible assistance, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a post on X.

"Extremely saddened to learn about the tragic news of a boat accident involving Indian nationals near Phu Quoc, Vietnam," PM Modi said.

"My sincere condolences to the families who lost their loved ones. My prayers for the early recovery of the injured survivors. Our Embassy and Consulate are providing all possible assistance. Our officials are also in close contact with the Vietnamese authorities," he added.

J&K CM

this patience will be our success," the chief minister said at the convention, overlooking the Dal lake.

He further said the central government should ask itself why, after being in power for over one-and-a-half years, the ruling party in Jammu and Kashmir was mulling a protest at Jantar Mantar.

"There must be some compulsion; something must have changed. I kept my political future and reputation at stake and told the Centre that we want to secure our rights through dialogue and not violence, knowing that this decision can be very risky for me politically," he said.

Abdullah said after he formed the government, he wanted the Centre some time to fulfil its promises. "The reality is that they want to keep the situation like this," he said.

The chief minister said his party's success in assembly elections has become a "punishment" for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. "Why did you (let us) form the government if you will not allow it to function? What is the benefit? Then you should not have conducted the elections," he said.

He accused the BJP-led central government of controlling governance of Jammu and Kashmir through the LG and said, "If you had to harass people through the Raj Bhavan, dismiss employees and run bulldozers, then why did you bring us forward?"

"They should have told us at that time that you come forward, but we will tie your hands behind your back. That we will give you those officers who will not implement (your) decisions. It is our patience that we are still working like donkeys to achieve something for the people of Jammu and Kashmir," he added.

Abdullah also asked the Centre to define the implication of "appropriate time".

"I ask them, for God's sake, how will we know that the appropriate time has come. What do my colleagues and I have to do to reach that appropriate time?" he said.

He further asked if the appropriate time implies the BJP coming to power in the erstwhile state. "Have the courage to say it publicly. At least, we will not remain in this deception that you will fulfil the promise," he added.

US-Iran

posters or banners calling for him to be killed along with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Iran war's opening moments on February 28 saw an airstrike that killed Khamenei, 86. Iran only buried Khamenei this week following a dayslong funeral ceremony that saw his body taken to cities in both Iran and Iraq.

Trump added in his post that the US military would "completely decimate and destroy all areas of Iran — PRAISE BE TO ALLAH!"

Trump, repeatedly during the war and its uneasy ceasefire, has invoked the name of God in Arabic, as well as threatened to destroy Iran's very civilisation. The Council on American-Islamic Relations, a nationwide advocacy group, has in the past criticised Trump's "deranged mocking of Islam."

US officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe to reporters the state of play with Iran, said the resumption of strikes this week came after what they described as a rogue faction of Iranian hardliners trying to sabotage the ceasefire between Tehran and Washington.

However, Iran has insisted its theocracy is unified after the war under the country's new supreme leader.

The US officials said Friday that Trump is giving US negotiators limited time to reach a deal with Iran but, in a sign of the challenges ahead, they underscored that the president had a wide range of options if talks fall apart.

Moments before the US officials spoke, however, Tehran's diplomat at the United Nations told reporters that any activity in the Strait of Hormuz, including its opening or demining operations, "rests exclusively with Iran."

Qatari mediators separately travelled to Iran to meet with officials on Friday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said.

Iran has said the strait must now be under its sole control and that vessels should begin paying fees to Tehran — even though the world has for decades considered it an international waterway. About a fifth of all traded oil and natural gas passed through the strait before the war began.

Iran's grip on the strait during the conflict led to a global energy crisis, though oil prices have sharply dropped since wartime highs of USD 120 a barrel.

After the US wrapped up its latest strikes on Thursday, more attacks reportedly hit Iran, leaving questions about who else may be targeting the Islamic Republic.

Israel didn't claim them, meaning the Gulf Arab states may have launched them, likely as a means to deter Iran from attacking them again. Iran on Thursday retaliated for US strikes by targeting Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait and Qatar.

The strikes in Iran over two days killed at least 17 people and wounded 115 others, Iranian Health Ministry spokesperson Hossein Kermanpour said.

Across the Strait of Hormuz on Saturday, Araghchi is scheduled to meet with his counterpart in Oman.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan told his country's state broadcaster TRT that he believed "a solution can be reached" this weekend between Iran and Oman, which lie on opposite sides of the narrow waterway.

However, Araghchi on Saturday accused the US of violating the interim deal by ending waivers allowing Iran to sell crude oil on the open market in US dollars. Washington did that in response to the attacks on ships in the strait.

"Reality check: There can only be mutual compliance," Araghchi wrote on X.

The US continues to urge mariners to travel on a southern route through Oman's territorial waters to avoid Iranian waters and the commands of its paramilitary Revolutionary Guard. That has angered Tehran and sparked the attacks in the strait.

The US officials also told journalists that any deal on Iran's nuclear programme would require Tehran to turn over its stockpile of highly enriched uranium. That's something Iran has repeatedly refused.

If the US does not reach a deal with Iran to turn over its nuclear material, it has military options to ensure that it remains buried underground forever, the officials said. They did not detail those options.

The uranium, enriched to near weapons-grade levels, is believed to be at nuclear sites the US bombed in 2025.

Iran long has insisted its nuclear program is peaceful, despite the International Atomic Energy Agency saying the Islamic Republic is the only country in the world to enrich uranium so highly without a weapons programme.

The officials also insisted that they would never reach a nuclear deal with Iran if it did not first stop its attacks on ships in the Strait of Hormuz.

S Janaki

memories. To us, she was a loving grandmother whose warmth, humility, kindness and grace will remain with us forever. We kindly request that you respect our family's privacy during this difficult time as we grieve and come to terms with this loss," she said, thanking everyone for their love, prayers and understanding.

Janaki was born on April 23, 1938, in Pallapatla, Guntur, in Andhra Pradesh.

Fondly known as "Janaki amma" among her disciples and followers, she was regarded as the "Nightingale of South India".

Janaki began her singing career with the Tamil film, 'Vidhiyin Vilayattu' (1957) at the age of 19.

Though she was highly popular in other South Indian languages, Janaki is said to have sung the most songs in her career in Kannada. Her duets with legends such as P B Srinivas, S P Balasubrahmanyam and Dr Rajkumar are considered evergreen hits.

Fans in Karnataka called her "Gaana Kogile". She also sang songs in English, Japanese, German and Sinhala.

Janaki won four National Film Awards and 33 different state film awards. AGENCIES

MP bypoll

forcing the cops to fire teargas shells to disperse the mob, Datia collector Swapnil Wankhede told reporters.

The Datia SP, other senior officers and jawans suffered injuries, he said, clarifying that cops did not cane-charge the protesters.

Wankhede said that the angry mob damaged police and other vehicles, but the road was subsequently cleared, and the situation is under control.

SP Mayur Khandelwal said that more than 3,000 protesters disrupted the peace in Datia town, tried to close the market, and staged a 12-hour road blockade.

More than six policemen suffered injuries in the stone-pelting, he said.

"We tried to pacify them, citing the enforcement of the model code of conduct in the town. However, after they refused to back down and pelted stones, cops fired teargas shells to control the situation," the senior officer said.

Some of the protesters were also arrested and warned of strict action if they resorted to violence, the SP said.

Sources said that following Friday's political development, some of the party office-bearers, including the district unit president and local corporators, resigned from the party in protest.

Ashutosh Tiwari's nomination came as a setback for former minister Mishra, who, according to party sources, expected the ticket and had even purchased a nomination form.

Tiwari, a resident of Sevda town in Datia, has been active in the state BJP organisation, they said.

An elated Tiwari told reporters outside the state BJP office that he met senior party leaders and expressed his gratitude.

"Mishra is a very senior leader, my guardian, and he said he will campaign for the party and me," Tiwari said. WITH AGENCY INPUTS

Nandal back

in Gurugram in July 2025, when assailants fired at his car on the Southern Peripheral Road in Sector 71, though he managed to escape unhurt.

In August 2025, Rohit Shaukeen, an associate of Fazilpuria, was shot dead in broad daylight in Gurugram, with Nandal claiming responsibility for the murder.

In May this year, Nandal's shooters opened fire at the residence of Saurabh Yadav, Fazilpuria's event manager, at Kanhai village in Gurugram, according to police.

Nandal, whose rise in the underworld was rapid, initially gained notoriety for local disputes and smuggling of illegal weapons. It took him little time to take to extortion and contract killing, earning him a place in the wanted list of Rohtak and Sonipat police.

With the Special Task Force (STF) of Haryana Police also on his trail, Nandal hatched a plan to leave the country and managed to flee in 2023.

Since then, Nandal has been operating his extortion network from abroad, with police back home engaged in the legal process of issuing a Red Corner notice against the gangster to have him deported from his foreign hideout.

According to police, Nandal is active on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, through which he connects with young people to recruit them into his gang.

He also uses WhatsApp and Signal to run his illegal operations, and promptly claims responsibility for the shootouts he orchestrates on social media.

Many prominent figures across Delhi-NCR, including builders, businessmen, fashion designers and singers, have been his target in recent times.

Teams from the Scene of Crime (SoC) unit, the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL), and other investigation units carried out a detailed scientific examination of the area and collected forensic and technical evidence.

Police said further legal proceedings are underway in accordance with the law.

The identities of the dead and injured accused and their criminal backgrounds will be shared later, the police said.

For now, the police have recovered five foreign-made pistols. WITH AGENCY INPUTS

DEFENCE MINISTER COMMISSIONS INS MAHENDRAGIRI IN VIZAG

Rajnath: Future wars will still be won by resolve and soldiers, not just AI

OUR CORRESPONDENT

VISAKHAPATNAM: Future wars may be fought with Artificial Intelligence, but they will still be won by national resolve, trained soldiers and robust military power, Defence minister Rajanth Singh said on Saturday.

Speaking at the commissioning ceremony of INS Mahendragiri here, Singh also said Andhra Pradesh has emerged as a new powerhouse of India's defence and aerospace manufacturing.

Highlighting the government's balanced approach towards defence modernisation, Singh said India is investing in next-generation technologies while simultaneously strengthening conventional military capabilities.

He cited Operation Sindoor as an example of the effective integration of conventional and modern capabilities to safeguard national security.

Defence minister Rajnath Singh addresses the commissioning ceremony of INS Mahendragiri, in Visakhapatnam PTI

"Future wars may be fought with Artificial Intelligence, but they will still be won by national resolve, trained soldiers and the capable military power. So, I would say that new technologies and conventional platforms are not opposed to each other, but supplement each other, complete each other. Without conventional platforms, new technologies are incomplete in themselves," he said.

According to Singh, it is certain that new technologies have reshaped warfare, but they have not diminished the role of conventional warfare means.

The strong conventional capability that is still necessary for the fulfilment of basic principles of war is as important as it was before.

Emphasising that maritime security and economic security are closely interconnected, Singh said the seas remain vital for trade, supply chains, energy security and economic growth.

He reaffirmed the government's commitment to the Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) vision in the Indo-Pacific.

Calling India a net security provider and trusted regional partner, Singh said the Indian Navy has consistently demonstrated its commitment through humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations, anti-piracy missions and the evacuation of Indian and foreign nationals from conflict-hit regions, earning recognition as both a first responder and a preferred security partner.

Referring to the Indian Navy's role during the recent West Asia conflict, Singh said under Operation Urja Suraksha, the Navy safely escorted 18 merchant vessels carrying essential cargo valued at more than Rs 9,000 crore, highlighting its role in protecting not only national security but also India's economic interests.

Highlights

- Singh also said Andhra Pradesh has emerged as a new powerhouse of India's defence and aerospace manufacturing
- Singh cited Operation Sindoor as an example of the effective integration of conventional and modern capabilities to safeguard national security

Despite global challenges, India's pace of development 'unprecedented': PM

Modi says India giving world new models of development

AUCKLAND: India's pace of development is "unprecedented" despite global challenges, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Saturday, emphasising that the country is giving the world new models of development.

Speaking at an Indian community event titled 'Kia Ora Modi' in Auckland, also attended by his Kiwi counterpart Christopher Luxon, Modi said that the relationship between India and New Zealand is built on cherished memories, enduring friendship, shared values and a mutual commitment.

"Amidst global challenges, the speed at which India is developing is unprecedented. Today, India is the world's fastest-growing major economy," Modi said, amid applause from the audience.

PM Modi said India is giving the world new models of development.

"Today in India, billions of digital transactions are happening every month through

UPI. India is touching new heights in drone technology and the space economy," he said.

Stating that the future of India and New Zealand is intertwined, Modi said the bilateral trade agreement will accelerate India's journey towards a developed nation.

Modi said that the space sector itself demonstrates the immense potential of the economic partnership between India and New Zealand.

"The same spirit is reflected in our trade agreement. This agreement will accelerate our journey towards a developed India. It will create new opportunities for businesses in both India and New Zealand," he told the more than 10,000-strong gathering of the Indian diaspora.

"This is the picture of the new India, showing how India is maintaining a balance in both ecology and economy, just like New Zealand," he added.

Modi, who arrived in Auckland on Friday on the final leg of his three-nation tour, said that there is another important similarity between the two nations.

"It is our shared commitment to celebrating and preserving our indigenous cultures," he added.

Modi, the first Indian prime minister to visit New Zealand in 40 years, showed a muffler to the crowd and said he received it as a gift along with a cap and glove when he visited New Zealand around 25-30 years ago, before entering public life. WITH AGENCY INPUTS

Will expose you in public: SC slams Maharashtra govt

For opposing bail plea of foreign national but not expediting trial

OUR CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI: Warning the Maharashtra government of "exposing" it in public, the Supreme Court has slammed the state for opposing bail plea but not expediting trial in criminal cases.

A bench of Justices Ahasanuddin Amanullah and Sheel Nagu was hearing a plea filed by a foreign national seeking bail.

"Every day, we get cases of this nature from Maharashtra. You oppose bail tooth and nail, but do not take steps to expedite the trial. When we examine the case, the evidence is weak. We will expose you (the state) in public," the bench said.

The accused, arrested in a kidnapping and murder case, contended before the bench that he had been in jail for four years and his case was listed before the trial court on 86 dates.

He told the apex court that he was not produced before the court 53 times.

The top court said there was a serious lapse by Maharashtra in not producing the accused before the trial court.

Pointing to the apex court's judgement on an accused's fundamental right to speedy trial, the bench said, "We are feeling embarrassed. Only two of the 34 witnesses have been examined in four years. This aspect has been bothering this court for some time.

"When the state opposes bail pleas tooth and nail, it has a corresponding duty to conduct the trial smoothly, but it is found lacking," the bench stated.

The counsel appearing for the Maharashtra government informed the court that the state was now producing all the accused on every date of hearing before the trial courts.

The top court, however, said that states must provide a specific policy on expediting trials.

"Let at least four witnesses be examined per week, and let the record of this order be placed before the trial court. If such cases are brought to notice in future, similar stringent orders shall be passed," the bench said.

Closer Look

- A bench of Justices Ahasanuddin Amanullah and Sheel Nagu was hearing a plea filed by a foreign national seeking bail
- 'Every day, we get cases of this nature from Maharashtra. You oppose bail tooth and nail, but do not take steps to expedite the trial'
- The top court said there was a serious lapse by Maharashtra in not producing the accused before the trial court

Ram Temple donation row: 'Champat Rai headed Temple affairs, yet signed none of key records'

BISWAJEET BANERJEE

AYODHYA: Ram Temple Construction Committee Chairman Nripendra Mishra on Saturday described the alleged theft of donations at the Ram Temple as a "stain" and said the incident had left everyone associated with the project feeling ashamed.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the second day of the Ram Temple Construction Committee meeting at the Ram Katha Museum, Mishra expressed confidence that corrective measures would be taken to prevent such incidents in future.

"It is a kind of stain. We all deeply regret it and feel diminished by what has happened. I am fully confident that the system will be strengthened and such incidents will not recur," he said.

Referring to the ongoing inquiry, Mishra said a high-level committee had been constituted to examine the matter.

"A high-level committee has been formed, possibly headed by a judge. It will submit its findings and recommendations to the trust, which will consider them," he said.

Notably, no member of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust attended Friday's meeting held at the temple complex.

Meanwhile, the trust has outlined the eligibility criteria for appointing its first full-time Chief Executive Officer. According to the selection committee, the CEO will be a retired IAS officer or an officer of equivalent rank with at least 20 years of government service. The candidate should also have prior experience in managing a temple or a similar religious institution.

The appointment will initially be for a three-year term, with the trust board retaining the option to extend the tenure. The selected officer will be required to reside in Ayodhya.

The donation theft case has also triggered a fresh round of political sparring in Uttar Pradesh.

In Gorakhpur, Samajwadi Party leader Arvind Upendra Dutt Shukla put up posters targeting the BJP over the alleged scam. One poster read, "Chant the name of Ram, keep the devotees' donations for yourself," while another said, "Lord Ram told Sita that in Kaliyug, thieves will steal from the temple while the watchman looks on."

Ram Temple donation theft a 'stain', says Nripendra Mishra

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AMID INDEFINITE FAST

I am not Gandhi; be your own hero: Wangchuk

NEW DELHI: Educator and climate activist Sonam Wangchuk has said he is "just an ordinary citizen", not a "modern Gandhi" or a hero, urging people to become the "heroes" of their own lives instead of looking for someone else to lead.

The Cockroach Janta Party's (CJP) protest at Jantar Mantar over alleged examination irregularities entered its 22nd day on Saturday, while Wangchuk entered the 14th day of his indefinite hunger strike.

According to a health update shared by the outfit, he has lost 7.5 kg since beginning the fast and his blood pressure was recorded at 106/74 mm Hg.

In a video posted on X on Friday night, Wangchuk said he was feeling less energetic than

Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk during a hunger strike at Jantar Mantar, in New Delhi PTI

the previous day but remained committed to the agitation.

"Today, on the 13th day of my fast, I am not feeling as energetic as I was yesterday. I am feeling a little tired. It happens -- some days are better and some are not," he said.

Thanking people for supporting the movement on social media, Wangchuk said two kinds of comments left him disappointed. MPOST

CM Saini launches upgraded 'Track and Trace' system, online excise services

MPOST BUREAU

CHANDIGARH: Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Saturday launched the upgraded 'Track and Trace' system and eight online excise services, taking yet another major step towards the digital transformation of the state's excise administration.

The new initiatives are aimed at strengthening transparency through technology-driven governance, enhancing regulatory oversight, safeguarding government revenue and promoting ease of doing business.

The CM launched these services while reviewing the Haryana Vision-2047 roadmap of the Excise and Taxation Department. He also assessed the progress of sankalps and the progress made by the department in executing the projects and works of Chief Minister's announcements.

As part of the initiative, the Haryana government has introduced an upgraded QR code-based 'Track and Trace' system for liquor. Under the system, every movement of each bottle of liquor, from distilleries and bottling units to wholesale distribution and retail sale will be closely monitored and uniquely identified. The mechanism will enable better tracking of inventory movement, ensure compliance with excise laws, curb the circulation of illicit liquor and promote fair and transparent trade.

The upgraded system will also enable the Excise Department to undertake real-time monitoring of the entire supply chain, strengthen enforcement against tax evasion and smuggling, support data-driven decision-making and safeguard State revenue.

BJP govt privatising power: Hooda

MPOST BUREAU

CHANDIGARH: Former Chief Minister and Leader of the Opposition Bhupinder Singh Hooda has stated that granting a parallel license to 'Eleven Power Private Limited' for electricity distribution in revenue districts like Gurugram and Nuh would prove to be a disastrous step towards privatisation.

"There is widespread opposition to this move. The Congress party also opposes it in the public interest and demands the withdrawal of this decision," he said.

During discussions with Hooda, employee organisations explained that an 'Agri-DISCOM' is being carved out for agricultural consumers, effective August 11, specifically to cater to the interests of the private company.

"This move ensures the private company avoids the obligation of supplying electricity to farmers, as the latter receive subsidies," he pointed out.

"Gurugram alone contributes approximately one-third of the total revenue of the DHBVN (Dakshin Haryana Bijli Vitran Nigam). Handing this region over to private entities would result in a massive revenue loss, thereby undermining the corporation's financial stability," he said.

"There is also a risk that instead of supplying electricity to all categories of consumers, private companies would focus solely on industrial zones, malls, commercial hubs, and urban areas, while neglecting rural households, farmers, and low-income consumers. The responsibility for supplying electricity to these neglected areas would remain with the DHBVN, a task that would be unfeasible without the corresponding revenue. In effect, a large population could face an energy crisis," he added.

Hooda said that electricity supply is merely a business venture driven by profit motives for a private company.

CJI flags delay in creation of Arbitration Council of India

NEW DELHI: Flagging the delay in the formation of the Arbitration Council of India, Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Saturday expressed the hope that a bill in this regard will now come up before Parliament.

Speaking at the Indian Institute of Arbitration and Mediation silver jubilee event, CJI Kant stressed that India is moving towards treating alternative dispute redressal (ADR) not as a lesser substitute for justice but as one of its ordinary pathways.

He said the Arbitration Council of India was created on the statute book by the 2019 amendment to grade institutions and accredit arbitrators.

"Six years later, it has still not been constituted. A further Draft Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill, circulated for public consultation in October 2024 on the recommendations of the Viswanathan Committee, remains exactly that, and its new avatar is hopefully now being introduced in Parliament. MPOST

Haryana set to take a new leap in development with India's first 'Hydrogen Train' on July 17

July 17, 2026, will not merely be remembered as the date of a government event in Haryana's history; it will stand as a historic symbol of the state's commitment to modern technology, world-class infrastructure, and environmental sustainability.

From the sacred land of Jind, when the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, flags off India's first hydrogen-powered train, the nation will enter a new era of clean-energy transportation. On the same occasion, the inauguration and foundation laying of development projects worth thousands of crores will further accelerate Haryana's journey towards the vision of "Developed Haryana for a Developed India."

Transforming Infrastructure and Earning Global Recognition

Over the past decade, under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has witnessed unprecedented growth in roads, railways, airports, and digital connectivity. This transformation has strengthened the country's economic foundation.

Haryana has not only witnessed this remarkable change but has emerged as one of its foremost contributors.

The launch of India's first hydrogen-powered train from Haryana is a global testament to the state's technological capability and environmental responsibility. Hydrogen is widely regarded as the fuel of the future, capable of drastically reducing carbon emissions and minimizing dependence on fossil fuels. By embracing this advanced technology, Haryana is poised to become a national leader not only in agriculture and industry but also in green technology.

A Unique Initiative: A Completely Eco-Friendly Public Gathering

The public event in Jind itself will set an example in environmental conservation.

Following the directions of Chief Minister, Nayab Singh Saini, the entire programme has been designed as an eco-friendly event, where only electric vehicles (EVs), CNG vehicles, and e-rickshaws will be used instead of petrol and diesel vehicles. This initiative reflects the Prime Minister's global vision of "One Earth, One Family, One Future" in action.

Accelerating Healthcare, Education and Connectivity

The landmark projects to be dedicated on July 17 will have a direct and lasting impact on Haryana's economy and the lives of its people.

Healthcare Revolution: The establishment of new medical colleges in Bhiwani and Narnaul will provide modern healthcare facilities closer to home for millions of people in southern Haryana while creating better opportunities for aspiring medical students.

Relief from Traffic Congestion: The elevated railway track in Kurukshetra will permanently resolve the city's decades-old traffic congestion.

Expanding Road Connectivity: Major infrastructure projects, including the Delhi–Katra Expressway, the Ambala–Kala Amb Greenfield Corridor, the Jind–Gohana National Highway (NH-352A), the Hansi–Barwala four-lane highway, and the Bikaner–Siwani–Sonipat road project, will significantly improve connectivity across the state.

Improved road infrastructure will directly benefit farmers, traders, and industries by reducing transportation costs, attracting fresh investment, and generating lakhs of employment opportunities for the youth. Additionally, the proposed modern Sikh Museum in Kurukshetra will further strengthen Haryana's religious and cultural tourism.

Beyond Announcements: Time-Bound Delivery and Inclusive Development

The greatest strength of our double-engine government lies in its commitment to delivering results rather than merely making announcements. Every project is implemented within a defined timeline to ensure tangible benefits for the people.

The development visible across Haryana today is not confined to its major cities. Strengthened rural connectivity has enabled farmers to access larger markets directly, reducing regional disparities and promoting balanced growth. This truly reflects the spirit of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas" (Together with All, Development for All).

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has always shared a special bond with Haryana. Every visit by the Prime Minister has brought new opportunities for the state's growth and prosperity.

The Bharatiya Janata Party firmly believes that the path to a Developed India passes through the development of its states.

Let us celebrate July 17 not merely as a ceremonial occasion, but as a grand festival of green development, good governance, and public participation.

The journey of progress that begins from Jind will write a new golden chapter in Haryana's development story.

Development, Trust, and a Brighter Future—this is the new resolve of Haryana today.

(Archana Gupta, Haryana BJP president)

CM highlights Tripura's progress towards healthcare self-reliance

Techno India announces further investment in the state

ABHIJIT BHATTACHARJEE

AGARTALA: Tripura is steadily progressing towards self-reliance in the healthcare sector, stated Chief Minister Manik Saha while inaugurating Time Hospital, a new multi-speciality healthcare facility near Tripura University.

The Chief Minister informed that the number of patients travelling outside the state for treatment has declined by nearly 80 per cent, reflecting the significant advancement of healthcare facilities within Tripura.

He also announced that the State will soon establish a Medical University and urged medical professionals to continue serving society with greater dedication and responsibility.

Inviting further investment in healthcare, Saha remarked that Tripura's excellent law and order situation makes it an ideal destination for investment.

The multi-speciality hospital has been established through the initiative of Kanak Narayan Bhattacharya and Jayanta Dey.

On the same day, addressing a programme at the Techno India Knowledge Campus, Ram Prasad Paul, Deputy Speaker of the Tripura Legislative Assembly, praised the significant contribution of Techno India Group towards the expansion of quality education in the State.

Responding to the Chief Minister's call for greater investment, Techno India Group has announced an additional investment of Rs 220 crore in Tripura over the next five years.

Russian attacks kill six, injure 29 as Ukraine hits oil tankers

Ukraine's General Staff said 21 oil tankers, four tugboats, two cargo ships and a dredging vessel were damaged

KYIV: Russian attacks on Ukraine killed six people, including a child, and wounded 29, officials said Saturday, adding that Ukrainian forces damaged more than two dozen Russian tankers and other vessels in the Sea of Azov.

Ukraine's General Staff said 21 tankers used to transport oil and petroleum products were damaged overnight, in addition to four tugboats, two cargo ships and a dredging vessel. Russian officials said one person was killed in the Ukrainian drone strikes and that only four ships came under attack.

In Ukraine's northeast Sumy region, four people were killed, including a child, and 17 people were wounded when two aerial glide bombs hit a crowded area where civilians were present, said Sumy regional head Oleh Hryhorov.

Eleven people, including one child, were wounded in missile and drone attacks overnight on Kyiv, the State Emergency Service reported. In the southern region of Odesa, two people were killed after a Russian missile struck a building, said regional head Oleh Kiper. Another man was wounded by shrapnel.

Explosions and fires were reported across Kyiv's Solomianskyi, Darnytskyi and Dniprovskyi districts, the emergency service said.

Russia launched 12 missiles, including six ballistic missiles, along with 121 drones against Ukraine overnight, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said. He said most of the drones and some of the missiles were shot down, but the ballistic missiles reached their targets, reiterating Ukraine's dire air defense gaps. Ukrainian air defences said they shot down or electronically suppressed two missiles and 111 drones. The air force said direct hits were recorded at 11 locations.

Russia's Defense Ministry said its forces targeted drone production facilities in Kyiv, as well as the ports of Izmail and Chornomorsk in the Odesa region. The ministry also said Russian air defences destroyed 178 Ukrainian drones overnight over eight Russian regions, as well as over the Russian-occupied Crimean Peninsula and the Black and Azov seas. AGENCIES

A sapper examines the impact site of a Russian missile in a residential area of Kyiv on Saturday AP

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HIGHLIGHTS

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China evacuates 2 mn, issues red alert for rainstorms as Typhoon Bavi makes landfall

BEIJING: Nearly 2 million people were evacuated in eastern China on Saturday as Typhoon Bavi made landfall, bringing strong winds and heavy rain to the region, officials said.

Several Chinese cities, including the capital Beijing, have stepped up emergency response measures as the local authorities issued a red alert for rainstorms as Typhoon Bavi barrelled down on its east coast.

Bavi, the ninth typhoon of the year, landed on the coast of east China's Zhejiang Province at around 11:20 pm Saturday, Zhejiang provincial meteorological observatory said.

The typhoon, with the maximum wind force at its centre reaching 40 meters per second, churned ashore at Yuhuan City, a county-level city, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Earlier on Saturday, China's National Meteorological Centre issued a red alert for rainstorms, the highest level in its four-tier system, and an orange alert for the typhoon, Xinhua reported.

More than 2 million people have been evacuated in eastern China, the report added.

Within 24 hours until 2 pm on Sunday, torrential rains are expected to drench large parts of the country, including Zhejiang, northern Fujian, northeastern Jiangxi and southern Anhui, and some parts of Beijing and Hebei, according to the national observatory's forecast. Scores of flights and ferry services have been cancelled across eastern China, while Zhejiang province has stepped up emergency preparations.

Cangnan County, a possible landing point for the typhoon in Zhejiang's Wenzhou city, has relocated people to safety and set up temporary shelters in local schools.

Nine districts in Beijing activated a Level-I emergency response for flood control on Saturday afternoon after a red alert for torrential rain was issued for these regions. Downpours are forecast to batter the districts of Fangshan, Pinggu, Miyun, Huairou, Mentougou, Fengtai, Daxing, Tongzhou and Shunyi, mostly in the suburbs, the Beijing Meteorological Observatory announced on Saturday. China Southern Airlines and Spring Airlines have cancelled about 60 flights to and from Shanghai.

The neighbouring province of Zhejiang raised its typhoon emergency preparations to the highest level, which allows it to relocate large numbers of people, close schools and workplaces, and mobilise all resources needed. Over 50 major tourist attractions in Shanghai have been temporarily closed or adjusted their operating hours on Saturday as Typhoon Bavi barrels toward the country's eastern coast, according to the Shanghai Municipal Administration of Culture and Tourism and scenic sites operators.

After landfall, Bavi is forecast to move northwestward and then shift toward a more northerly direction.

As of Saturday at 7 p.m., Taiwanese authorities registered at least 113 injuries from Typhoon Bavi, some sustained while riding motorcycles in rain and winds on slippery roads. More than 14,200 people had also been evacuated around the island, including from the eastern county of Hualien and the central city of Taichung. AGENCIES

Huge waves crash on the coastline ahead of Typhoon Bavi in Wenling in eastern China's Zhejiang province. AP

Several Chinese cities, including Beijing, have stepped up emergency response measures as the local authorities issued a red alert for rainstorms as Typhoon Bavi barrelled down on its east coast

KEY POINTS

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- Earlier on Saturday, China's National Meteorological Centre issued a red alert for rainstorms, the highest level in its four-tier system, and an orange alert for the typhoon

US citizen tests positive for Ebola in Congo

KINSHASA: A US citizen working for a humanitarian organization in Congo has tested positive for the Ebola virus, the US Centres for Disease Control & Prevention said on Friday.

The CDC said it was working with the person's employer, US agencies, the public health authorities and Congolese partners to prevent further transmission and identify close contacts. It did not provide any further details.

Earlier this week, the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention said that the outbreak is the fastest-growing Ebola outbreak ever recorded on the continent, with 1,830 confirmed cases in Congo, including 648 deaths.

Cases have also been confirmed in neighboring Uganda.

In the first week of the outbreak, an American doctor working in Congo tested positive for the virus and was transferred to Germany for treatment.

Initially, Trump administration officials had said that the US was planning to send Americans who are exposed to Ebola while abroad to a new facility in Kenya instead of flying them home. But the project has been suspended after an order from a Kenyan court. AGENCIES

Pak PM holds talks with Iran, Qatar leaders to revive US-Iran talks

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif held separate talks with the leaders of Iran and Qatar in an effort to revive the stalled US-Iran negotiations.

The talks were held on Friday night as efforts picked up pace to mend the broken peace bridge between the warring sides after the recent escalation and attacks on the rival targets.

In his conversation with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, Sharif expressed "deep concern over the recent escalation in tensions in the region" and underscored the urgent need to "restore regional peace and stability," according to a statement by the PM Office.

He urged parties to "exercise restraint and refrain from any action that could jeopardise the hard-earned peace gains achieved over the past few months".

Sharif stressed the importance of upholding the commitments undertaken under the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), describing it as an enduring framework for promoting mutual understanding, respect and shared prosperity in the region and beyond.

Reaffirming Pakistan's steadfast commitment to regional peace, Sharif assured Pezeshkian of Islamabad's readiness to continue playing an "honest and sincere role" in facilitating dialogue and supporting all efforts aimed at preserving peace and stability.

President Pezeshkian thanked the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Field Marshal Asim Munir, and other senior Pakistani leaders for attending the funeral ceremony of the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

He also reaffirmed Iran's commitment to peace and appreciated Pakistan's constructive support and sincere efforts for regional stability.

The two leaders also reviewed the implementation of the decisions taken during President Pezeshkian's visit to Islamabad last month and agreed to expedite follow-up actions to further strengthen bilateral cooperation across diverse fields.

Both leaders agreed to remain in close contact and continue consultations on matters of mutual interest and regional peace.

In a separate telephone conversation with Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Sharif reiterated his "deep concern over the recent escalation in tensions in the region". AGENCIES

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif

Ten killed after small plane crashes in Bahamas

SAN JUAN: A small plane crashed in the Bahamas on Friday, killing 10 people and prompting the government to temporarily ground Flamingo Air flights. The deadly incident happened in North Andros, located in waters just west of Nassau, the archipelago's capital.

Bahamian Prime Minister Philip Brave Davis had initially said that one person survived, but he later confirmed in a press conference that the person died from their injuries. The victims have not been publicly identified.

"We gather beneath a cloud of great sorrow," he said, noting that people were celebrating the Bahamas' 53rd independence anniversary. "It has become a day of mourning. ... To every family that has received the devastating news, that someone they love will not be coming home, we offer our deepest condolences."

The Bahamian Aircraft Accident Investigation Authority said in a statement that the plane had departed Lynden Pindling International Airport in Nassau and was headed to San Andros when it crashed. It identified the plane as a Cessna 402 aircraft registered in the Bahamas.

The Ministry of Energy, Utilities and Aviation said in a statement that the suspension of Flamingo Air's air operator certificate is only a precautionary safety measure as officials investigate the cause of the crash. AGENCIES

Top Pak cleric declares trading in cryptocurrency 'haram', issues 'fatwa'

KARACHI: A leading Pakistani cleric has issued a "fatwa" against trading in cryptocurrencies, declaring it "haram" under Islamic law, in a ruling that comes as the government pushes to regulate and promote the virtual assets sector.

The fatwa (religious ruling), issued by Islamic scholar Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani, was made public by the Darul Uloom Karachi. Though a fatwa is a religious opinion and not legally binding, it may influence how many Muslims in Pakistan view cryptocurrency trading and investment.

According to the seminary, the fatwa has been endorsed by several other Islamic scholars.

The ruling covers cryptocurrencies, crypto tokens and stablecoins, and states that such digital assets do not meet the Islamic definition of wealth or property, making their buying and selling impermissible under Shariah.

It further states that different terms such as cryptocurrency, virtual currency, token and stablecoin refer to the same category of digital assets, and merely changing the terminology does not alter the religious ruling.

The ruling, therefore, applies not only to cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin & Ethereum but also to blockchain-based tokens and stablecoins, including USDT (Tether). The fatwa comes at a time when the Pakistan government has been actively encouraging the development of the cryptocurrency sector. AGENCIES

Japan's reusable rocket aces its first test flight

JAXA and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries have been co-developing the RV-X

TOKYO: Japan's experimental reusable rocket took off and safely landed in a first test flight Saturday as the country seeks to achieve the technology key to cut launch costs and compete in the global space market dominated by SpaceX.

The RV-X rocket lifted off, hovered and moved horizontally before landing during its less than one-minute flight at the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency's Noshiro Testing Centre in northeastern Japan, which was livestreamed by the NVS, a group of space fans.

JAXA is expected to explain the results in an online briefing later Saturday.

Japan seeks to catch up with the technology Elon Musk's SpaceX has been using for several years to cut launch costs of delivering payloads into space.

Saturday's flight is a step forward for Japan in achieving the technology needed to develop a lower-cost successor to the country's current mainstay, single-use H3 series.

The flight comes one day after state media in China reported the country achieved its first successful recovery of the first stage of a rocket after liftoff. Japan's H3 rocket is designed to be more cost-effective than its predecessor H-2A series, which had a near-perfect success record, but still needs further cost cuts to compete in the global space market.

The Japanese government says a stable, commercially competitive transport capability is key to the country's space program and national security.

JAXA and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries have been co-developing the RV-X, which is 1.8 meters (5.9 feet) in diameter and 7.3 meters (23.9 feet) long and equipped with engines with enhanced durability and four shock-absorption landing gear. AGENCIES

The Reusable Vehicle eXperiment, known as RV-X, is seen in a test launch at the Noshiro Rocket Testing Center of the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency in Noshiro Saturday. AP

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY

E-Procurement Tender Notice No. 26/31 Date: 10.07.2026

E-Procurement Tender Notice

On behalf of the President of India, The Principal Chief Materials Manager, North Central Railway, Prayagraj, (An ISO 9001:2015 certified unit) invites the following E-Procurement Tenders.

S. N.	Tender No.	Short Description	Qty.	Tender Opening Date
1	50261368	Lead Acid secondary cell 2 volt 80 AH	5858 Nos.	14.09.2026
2	80261066	COMPRESSED OXYGEN GAS	317002 CUM	07.08.2026
3	20263489	Set of Labyrinth and Bearing CAP(DE)	616 Set.	28.07.2026
4	RGCSUB-SIDIARY-LED5026	Subsidiary LED Signal (Rout, Shunt & Calling ON)	7770 Nos.	27.07.2026
5	64265113	TAMPING ARM SMALL EN-19	288 Nos.	29.07.2026
6	30262646	PAD FOR SECONDARY SUSPENSION	2909 Nos.	30.07.2026

Note:- The Complete information of above tenders can be seen and download from IREPS website i.e. **https://www.irpes.gov.in**. For any change/ corrigendum in tender, please visit this website regularly. No separate corrigendum/change will be published in news paper. 1577/26 (MG)

North central railways @CPRONCR www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr.P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person **Pradeep Mandal** S/o Nannu Lal Mandal R/o H. No. E-209, Gali No. 3, Rama Bai Mohalla, Johripur, North-East, Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence FIR No. 251/2019 u/s 420 IPC at P.S. Jagatpuri, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said **Pradeep Mandal** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said **Pradeep Mandal** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proceeding u/s 82 Cr.P.C. has been initiated in the case. Proclamation is hereby made that the said **Pradeep Mandal** accused of FIR No. 251/2019 u/s 420 IPC at P.S. Jagatpuri, Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on **17.08.2026**

By Order: Ms. Anushtha Srivastava,
Judicial Magistrate First Class-05,
Room No. 7, 2nd Floor,
Karkardooma Courts, Delhi

DP/8978/SHD/2026

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr. P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Person **Sanju Kumar S/o:** Ranga Kumar, **R/o:** H.No. B-11 Gujjar Colony Vinay ka Makan Ghondli, **Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in **DD No: 120/25, U/s: 40(1) Delhi Excise Act PS: Jagatpuri, Delhi,** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused person(s) **Sanju Kumar,** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused person(s) **Sanju Kumar,** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused person **Sanju Kumar**, of **DD No: 120/25, U/s: 40(1) Delhi Excise Act PS: Jagatpuri, Delhi,** is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **13.08.2026**.

By Order
Anushtha Srivastava
Judicial Magistrate First Class-05
Room No. 07 Ground Floor Shahdara District
karkardooma Court, Delhi

DP/9369/SHD/2026
(Court Matter)

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr. P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Person **(1) Omkar (2) Kanti Devi (3) Satender Kumar R/o:** 111/45, Block-38, Near Nagia Park, Shakti Nagar, **Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in **FIR No. 675/2023, Dt. 07.12.2023 U/S: 498-A/406/34 IPC, PS: harsh Vihar, Delhi,** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused person(s) **(1) Omkar (2) Kanti Devi (3) Satender Kumar,** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused person(s) **(1) Omkar (2) Kanti Devi (3) Satender Kumar,** has absconded (or is concealing themselves to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused person **(1) Omkar (2) Kanti Devi (3) Satender Kumar,** of **FIR No. 675/2023, Dt. 07.12.2023 U/S: 498-A/406/34 IPC, PS: Harsh Vihar, Delhi,** is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **18.08.2026**.

By Order
Ms. Pooja Suhag
Judicial Magistrate First Class Mahila Court No. 3
Second Floor Shahdara District
Karkardooma Court, Delhi

DP/9339/NE/2026
(Court Matter)

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY

E-TENDERING TENDER NOTICE

Divisional Railway Manager (Works) North Central Railway, Jhansi for and behalf of President of India invites sealed "Open Tender" through on Line (E-Tendering) for the following work.

E-Tender No.: JHS-ENGG-C-2026-159

Description of Work: Provision of infrastructure to convert level crossing gate from unmanned to permanently manned in Ait-Konch section of Jhansi division.

Approx Cost (Rs.): ₹14479505.13 | **Earnest Money (Rs.):** ₹289600.00

Date of Closing Tender: 03.08.2026 at 15:00 hrs.

Date of completion/period from issue acceptance letter: 09 Months

E-Tender No.: JHS-ENGG-C-2026-161

Description of Work: Replacement of 2 nos. old steel over head tanks with 2 Nos RCC Over Head Tank with capacity 110000 Litres underADEN/Lalitpur jurisdiction.

Approx Cost (Rs.): ₹10132257.96 | **Earnest Money (Rs.):** ₹202700.00

Date of Closing Tender: 03.08.2026 at 15:00 hrs.

Date of completion/period from issue acceptance letter: 12 Months

- Tender on line can be submitted up to **15:00 hrs.** on **03.08.2026.**
- For full details and submission of bid please see the Indian Railways website **www.ireps.gov.in.** 1576/26 (A)

North central railways | @CPRONCR | www.ncr.Indianrailways.gov.in

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr. P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Person **Sudhir Sharma S/o:** Ram Sagar Sharma **R/o:** C-238 JJ Colony Madipur Delhi **Also At:** Village Narayan Piper Ward No. 17 Pansalla Distt. Beghusarai **Bihar** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in **DD No. 96A/2023, U/s: 182 IPC PS: Paschim Vihar East, Delhi,** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused person(s) **Sudhir Sharma,** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused person(s) **Sudhir Sharma,** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused person **Sudhir Sharma,** of **DD No. 96A/2023, U/s: 182 IPC PS: Paschim Vihar East, Delhi,** is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **13.08.2026**.

By Order
Moksha Bains
Judicial Magistrate First Class-II (West)
Tis Hazari Court, Delhi

DP/9459/OD/2026
(Court Matter)

When life gives you Lammens

Merino pounces on Lammens' error to send Spain into France showdown

INGLEWOOD: Mikel Merino is Spain's World Cup hero once again, and even he finds it hard to believe.

A mere four days after Merino scored a clutch goal as a substitute in injury time to beat Portugal, he found himself in the right spot again in the quarterfinals when Belgium's backup goalkeeper spilled the ball into his path.

Merino booted it home in the 88th minute, sending Spain to a 2-1 victory Friday and into a titanic semifinal showdown with tournament favourite France.

"I've done this again, and it's happened to me again, so it would seem that coincidence exists," a smiling Merino said. "If you're ready and you try, I guess it can happen for you."

Already a versatile contributor in any role he can get as a depth player for his country or English club Arsenal, the multi-positional Merino has transformed into the ultimate super-sub while providing exactly what Spain needed to survive two knockout matches against top opponents.

Merino has scored two goals in his first World Cup — and they're both historic.

"Honestly, it's crazy to be able to help the team once again," he said. "This time in a different way, but at the same time to believe and trust that the opposing goalkeeper could make a mistake and to stay alert. ... I prepare for when the moment comes, and hopefully they keep coming."

Merino is the first to admit he also needed luck, and Belgium keeper Senne Lammens provided it after he was forced into his first World Cup match in the 71st minute by an injury to starter Thibaut Courtois.

Merino came on in the 86th minute and scored on his second touch of the match, charging into the box and pouncing after Lammens lost control of Pau Cubarsí's long shot.

Fabián Ruiz scored a rebound goal in the 30th minute for Spain, but Belgium forward Charles De Ketelaere evened it with the first goal allowed by the Spanish team in the entire World Cup in the 41st minute. Merino's clutch goal against an upset-minded Belgium sent La Roja to the semifinals for the first time since they won the World Cup in 2010. A powerhouse matchup with France has been anticipated since the draw was announced late last year. AGENCIES

Mikel Merino bangs it in for the winner after Belgium's Senne Lammens spills a shot AP

1

Merino is the first Spain player to score two winning goals in the 80th minute or later in WC

Tears for 2 Belgium goalkeepers

INGLEWOOD: Tears streamed down Belgium goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois' face as he sat on the bench with a leg injury during the second half of Friday's World Cup quarter-final against Spain. But after his team's 2-1 loss, the 34-year-old was trying to console his replacement Senne Lammens.

"Senne, obviously, I gave him a big hug," Courtois said. "I know, for goalkeepers, this is a shit feeling, and he's a great goalkeeper, and he will only get stronger from this."

Courtois said he had felt a twinge as he launched a long kick early in the second half. "I felt something here in my muscle. Then, I did some saves, I felt okay, so I thought, okay, we'll continue. Then I kicked again long and I felt it a bit more." The decision for him to leave the field was made by team manager Rudi Garcia. AGENCIES

A MOUTH-WATERING SEMI-FINAL

Mind games on? France should fear us, says Yamal

INGLEWOOD: Lamine Yamal thinks France should be afraid of Spain with the European giants headed to a World Cup semifinal showdown on Tuesday.

"I believe if France has to fear anyone, it should be us, in my opinion," the teenage sensation told broadcast reporters after Spain beat Belgium 2-1 on Friday to secure its first semifinal berth since 2010. "We were the ones who knocked them out before."

Spain beat France in the 2024 European Championship semifinals and again in Nations League play last year. Yamal became the youngest player to score in the continental competition.

The powerhouses meet again at the home stadium of the Dallas Cowboys next week for a spot in the final.

"We don't fear anyone," said Yamal, who was named the man of the match against Belgium. "It's clear that we are two great teams, world-class national teams, and for me they are one of the best."

Spain advanced on a winning goal by substitute Mikel Merino in the 88th minute of the quarterfinals at SoFi Stadium. La Roja conceded their only goal of the entire World Cup late in the first half against Belgium, while France has piled up 16 goals in its six World Cup matches. France have made the past two World Cup finals, winning it all in 2018. Spain has made only one World Cup final in its history, but the current team is unbeaten in 37 consecutive competitive matches since March 2023 — a stretch that also includes a loss on penalties to Portugal in the Nations League final last year.

Spain coach Luis de la Fuente has been asked by the international media about this potential showdown with France throughout the tournament, but particularly since the start of the knockout rounds two weeks ago. He has been uniformly complimentary of Les Bleus while echoing his own players' confidence.

"Let me be clear: We are not finished," de la Fuente said. "We are pleased to be in the semifinals, but we want more. ... We are capable of winning this game, and not just now, but I would have said this a few weeks ago as well."

Yamal, who turns 19 on Monday, has only one goal and no assists while putting 10 shots on target in his first World Cup, but his playmaking and activity down the right side of Spain's attack have been noticeable in almost every match. AGENCIES

Lamine Yamal in action against Belgium AP

HIGH JUMPER MAKES HISTORY

Sarvesh leaps onto historic DL podium

Sarvesh Anil Kushare finished third on his Diamond League debut AP

MONACO: National record holder Sarvesh Kushare scripted history by becoming the first Indian high jumper to finish on the podium at a Diamond League meet, claiming third place on his debut in Monaco and joining an exclusive four-member club of Indian achievers.

The 31-year-old Kushare sailed over 2.26m to take the third spot in a star-studded field Friday night and grabbed a remarkable personal milestone. He was competing just two weeks after setting a national record of 2.31m while winning gold at the National Inter-State Championships in Bhubaneswar last month.

He became only the fourth Indian to finish in top-three of a Diamond League event after javelin throw superstar Neeraj Chopra (13 times since 2022), long jumper Murali Sreeshankar (once in 2023) and former discus thrower Vikas Gowda (on two occasions in 2015).

Kushare beat some big stars including three-time world champion and Tokyo Olympics gold winners Mutaz Essa Barshim of Qatar, who finished joint eighth with a 2.20m effort, and Gianmarco Tamberi of Italy and 2023 World Championships silver winner JuVaughn Harrison of the USA, who finished joint fourth.

World leader and world indoor champion Oleh Doroshchuk of Ukraine won the title after clearing 2.32m, while Great Britain's Jack Kimani was second with 2.30m. Kimani could not clear 2.32m in three attempts while Doroshchuk did it in his first try. Kimani was unlucky as he could only sail over the 2.16m height in his third attempt while Kushare cleared it with ease. AGENCIES

Animesh blurs to PB

WETZLAR : Commonwealth Games-bound sprinter Animesh Kujur clocked the fastest-ever 100m time by an Indian on foreign soil, finishing second at the Fast Arms Fast Legs meet, a World Athletics Continental Tour Challenger event.

The 23-year-old crossed the finish line which a personal best effort of 10.14 seconds in the final, improving on his 10.19-second effort in the heats earlier in the day on Friday.

The timing is now the second-fastest ever by an Indian, behind Gurindervir Singh's national record of 10.09 seconds, set at the Federation Cup in Ranchi in May. AGENCIES

Hardcourt reset fuels Sinner ahead of final clash with Zverev

LONDON: Jannik Sinner was still struggling to rediscover his rhythm a month after his meltdown at the French Open and Novak Djokovic was lurking in the Wimbledon semifinals.

Sure, Sinner had won his opening five matches of his title defense at the All England Club. But none of those performances resembled the way that Sinner awed the tennis world earlier this year during a 30-match winning streak.

So how did the top-ranked Sinner suddenly rediscover the form that enabled him to completely overwhelm Djokovic — the seven-time Wimbledon champion — during Friday's highly awaited encounter on Centre Court?

The answer lies in a return to familiar gound.

Instead of continuing to toil away on Wimbledon's grass courts, Sinner spent Wednesday practicing on an indoor hard court, the top-ranked player's team said. Hard courts are the surface where Sinner has won three of his four Grand Slam titles and the indoor setting was reminiscent of where Sinner learned to play while growing up in a small Alpine village in the Italian Dolomites.

The decision by his two coaches, Darren Cahill and Simone Vagnozzi, enabled Sinner to regain the timing that has made him the strongest and most feared baseline player in the sport.

"He's reminded himself just how much that ball can explode off his racket," said Andre Agassi, who was also coached by Cahill in his career.

Zverev, whose breakthrough at Roland Garros came in his fourth Grand Slam final, is attempting to become the first man in the professional era (since 1968) to win his second major title at the next event immediately after his first.

But Sinner has won nine straight meetings with Zverev and 14 consecutive sets against the German. "You can't underestimate anyone, especially in a Slam final," Sinner said. "His victory at Roland Garros really helped him. He's playing very aggressively. He's a different player now." By reaching the final, Zverev will leapfrog the injured Carlos Alcaraz and move up to No. 2 when the new rankings are released. AGENCIES

Jannik Sinner has been in top form AP

Djokovic had beaten Sinner over five sets in their previous meeting in this year's Australian Open semifinals

Neeru Dhanda wins women's trap gold

LONATO: Asian Championships gold medallist Neeru Dhanda clinched her maiden ISSF World Cup title with a dazzling performance, ending India's wait for an individual shotgun medal on the global stage this year by winning gold in the women's trap event here on Saturday. The 26-year-old she shot 27 out of 30 in the eight-shooter final to outclass a world-class field. AGENCIES

Blue Tigers to play two friendlies in NZ

NEW DELHI: The Indian men's football team will make its first-ever tour of New Zealand when they travel there for two international friendlies against the hosts on November 12 and 15 during the FIFA international match window, the national federation announced on Saturday. The tour will also mark India's first visit to an Oceania Football Confederation (OFC) member nation since 2005, when it played two international friendlies against Fiji.

The first match will take place at the Go Media Stadium in Auckland, while the second will be held at the One New Zealand Stadium in Christchurch. The matches were announced as part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to New Zealand and will be among a series of sporting events marking '100 Years of Unity Through Sport' between the two nations.

India and New Zealand have faced each other on two previous occasions -- a goalless draw in the 1981 Merdeka Tournament in Malaysia and a 2-1 victory for the visitors in the 2018 Intercontinental Cup in Mumbai.

New Zealand recently participated in the FIFA World Cup 2026, where they drew with Iran and lost to Egypt and Belgium. AGENCIES

FIFA puts WC final pitch up for sale at $450 a piece

Take home the turf

EAST RUTHERFORD: Even the field for the World Cup final is for sale.

FIFA, accused of charging high prices for this year's tournament in the United States, is selling the grass that will be used for the July 19 final at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey at USD 450 per piece.

FIFA's store says each segment of turf is 17.5 by 17.5 by 17.5, although it doesn't specify whether that figure is inches, centimetres or millimetres. Soccer's governing body did not immediately respond to an email requesting details of the dimensions.

"Own a genuine piece of football history with an authentic 2026 FIFA World Cup Piece of the pitch, permanently preserved in a premium acrylic with a USB keepsake," the website says. "Each piece contains an original fragment of the iconic Final playing surface, making it a unique collectible that celebrates one of the world's greatest sporting events."

FIFA said "the acrylic USB features an authenticity film, while offering a sleek, contemporary display piece. Presented in a premium hinged shoulder box with striking spot UV detailing, this exclusive item is designed for collectors, fans, and football enthusiasts alike."

FIFA is making the turf available to send only to addresses in the United States and Europe. "Orders will not be shipped until after the FIFA World Cup 2026 Final," the governing body said. AGENCIES

People enjoy playing football outside the MetLife Stadium AP

BEFORE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-II, DELHI
4TH FLOOR, JEEVAN TARA BUILDING, PARLIAMENT STREET, NEW DELHI-110001

Notice under section 19(4) of the Recovery of Debts Due to Bank and Financial Institutions Act 1993 read with rule 12 & 13 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal (Procedure Rule) 1993) in the matter of
TMA NO 113/2024 **DATE: 02.07.2026**
STATE BANK OF INDIA **APPLICANT**
VERSUS
SATENDER DAGAR AND ORS. **RESPONDENT**
To, DEFENDANT
D1. MR SATENDER DAGAR SO SH JAI PRAKASH
R/O C-4 F-107 1ST FLOOR JANAKPURI NEW DELHI - 58
D2. M/S VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FOUNDATION THROUGH ITS AUTHORISED **MR SHREYA RASTOGI,** PLOT NO. 4 KNOWLEDGE PARK-I, BUDH NAGAR UP

Whereas the above named applicant (s) has / have instituted a case for recovery of **Rs. 57,50,875/- (RUPEE FIFTY SEVEN LAKH FIFTY THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED SEVENTY FIVE ONLY)** against you and where as it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in the ordinary way therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance in the Tribunal on **20.11.2026 At 11.00 A.M.** Take notice that in default of your appearance on the day before the mentioned, the case will be heard and determined in your absence.

All the matters will be taken up through video Conferencing or physical and for that purpose:- (i) All the Advocates/Litigants shall download the **"Cisco Webex"** application/ software: **(ii) "Meeting ID"** and **Password** for the date of hearing qua cases to be taken by Hon'ble Presiding Officer/Registrar shall be displayed in the daily cause list itself at DRT Official Portal i.e. drt.gov.in **(iii)** In any exigency qua that the Advocate/Litigants can contact the concerned official at **Ph. No. 23748478.** Given under my hand and seal of the Tribunal this the 02ND day of July., 2026.

BY ORDER OF THE TRIBUNAL, (SURAJ PARKASH) **SECTION OFFICER, DRT-II, DELHI.**

WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY
SIGNAL & TELECOMMUNICATION (CONST) BRANCH-OPEN TENDER
NIT DATED 08.07.2026

Invitation of E-tender on behalf of the president of india acting through Deputy Chief Signal & Telecommuncation Engineer (Construction), West Central Railway, Jabalpur for the following works **-NIT NO.-**JBP-SnT-CONS-TEND-Sig-138 dated 08.07.2026, **Name of work with location-**Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of Indoor and Outdoor Signalling Equipment's, Power Supply Equipment's and associated works in connection with the provision of centralized type Electronic Interlocking at SABDUA, BALUPUR and AJAYGARH station in PANNA-KHAJURAHO section and BAHARI, DEOSAR station and EI alteration at Gondawali station in Gajrahi- Singrauli section along with balance work of Khajuraho (Excluding) - Singrauli Section in connection with NEW BG Rail Line Work of Khajuraho (Excluding) -Singrauli section on WCR. **Approx cost of the work (Rs.)-** Rs.33,64,70,081.16, **Address of the office from where the tender form can be purchased-**Deputy Chief Signal & Telecommunication Engineer (Construction), Ist Floor, DRM office Building, Jabalpur, **Earnest money (In Rs.)-**Rs.67,29,400/-, **Completion period (In months)-**18 Months, **Date & Time for submission of tender-**15.00 Hrs on 05.08.2026. Complete details of the e- tender notice is available on the Railway website" http://ireps.gov.in" and also placed on notice board of the Deputy Chief Signal & Telecommunication Engineer (Construction) office, WCR, Jabalpur. Tenders other than in the form of e-bids shall not be accepted for above tender.

(SD.)
Dy Chief Signal & Telecommunication Engineer (Const) WCR

स्वच्छ भारत अभियान, एक कदम स्वच्छता की ओर

कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय,
पथ निर्माण विभाग, पथ प्रमण्डल, बोकारो

ई–प्रोक्युरमेंट सूचना
(एफ 2 फॉर्म ऑफ कॉनट्रेक्ट आधारित अल्पकालीन ई–निविदा)
ई–निविदा प्रसंग संख्या–RCD/BOKARO/878 /F.Y. 2026-2027
दिनांक–11.07.2026

1.	कार्य का नाम	पथ प्रमण्डल, बोकारो अन्तर्गत तेलगड़िया से मानपुर तक भाया शिवबाबुडीह पथ का साधारण मरम्मति कार्य (कुल लम्बाई 7.41 कि0मी0) वर्ष 2026–27.
2.	प्राक्कलित राशि (रूपये में)	रू0 1,20,00,000.00 (एक करोड़ बीस लाख रूपये) मात्र
3.	कार्य पूर्ण होने की अवधि	02 (दो) माह।
4.	वेबसाईट पर निविदा प्रकाशन होने की तिथि एवं समय	24.07.2026, 12.00 बजे दोपहर।
5.	बिड प्राप्ति की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय	07.08.2026, 12.00 बजे दोपहर तक।
6.	निविदा आमंत्रित करने वाले कार्यालय का नाम एवं पता	कार्यपालक अभियंता, पथ निर्माण विभाग, पथ प्रमण्डल, बोकारो
7.	प्रोक्युरमेंट पदाधिकारी का सम्पर्क संख्या	**06542–265569**
8.	ई–प्रोक्युरमेंट सेल का हेल्पलाईन संख्या	**0651–2403007**

नोटः–प्राक्कलित राशि घट बढ़ सकती है।
विस्तृत ब्यौरा के लिए वेबसाईट http://jharkhandtenders.gov.in पर देखा जा सकता है।

कार्यपालक अभियंता,
पथ निर्माण विभाग,
पथ प्रमण्डल, बोकारो

PR 384766 Road(26-27)#D

NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-AUCTION NOTICE

Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/PS, Northern Railway Delhi Division invites bids through e-Auction through IREPS **(https:// ireps.gov.in/)** for the allotment of Deluxe Pay & Use Toilet Contracts on ROMT & MOT Basis, at following Railway stations/locations:

E-Catalogue No.	Date & Time of bidding	Railway Stations/Locations/Sites
PaynUse-8-2026	27.07.2026 at 12:00 hrs.	Hazrat Nizamuddin (NZM) 02 Sites, Delhi (DLI) 01 Site, Anand Vihar (ANVT) 01 Site, Patel Nagar (PTNR) 01 Site, Jind 01 Site, Narwana (NRW) 01 Site, Mansa (MSZ) 01 Site & Panipat 01 Site (PNP) Total 9 Sites.

Website particulars where complete details of E-Auction can be seen	**https://ireps.gov.in/**

All contractors who intend to participate in the e-auctions conducted through E-Auction Leasing module of IREPS should fulfil following mandatory requirements before they can submit their bids: • Registration on IREPS for E-Auction Leasing module -Active IREPS User Account for E-Auction Leasing Module • Payment of One Time Registration Fee; Current Account in State Bank of India; Integration of SBI Bank Account with IREPS Account; Lien Marking of Funds; Updation of Turnover Details. • A new mechanism namely Virtual Account Number (VAN) has been introduced now for E-Auction Leasing module, which can be used by the bidders as an alternative to Lien Marking Mechanism.

The bidders are free to switch between Lien Marking Mechanism (if activated) and VAN mechanism at any point of time, before entering the bidding room. VAN mechanism does not require the bidder to have a current account in State Bank of India. The users are free to transfer money from any of their existing bank accounts in any bank to their VAN account, which enables them to participate in IREPS E-Auctions. • Contractors who do not have IREPS account for any module of IREPS can submit their online request for registration by clicking on New Vendors / Contractors (E-Tender /E-Auction Leasing) link on IREPS Home page.

Railway Authority to contact, in case of any query	**Divisional Railway Manager's Office, Commercial Branch, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055** **E-Mail: sanitationcell@gmail.com** **Tel.:011-23743084**

No. 7PUB/TN/Pay&Use Toilets/Auction/2022 Dated: 10.07.2026 2387/2026
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

OFFICE OF THE RESIDENT COMMISSIONER
GOVT. OF MADHYA PRADESH, MADHYA PRADESH BHAWAN
29-C & D, JESUS AND MARY MARG
CHANAKYAPURI, NEW DELHI-110021
Phone No. 011-26772001, 2002

NIT No. 13/Hiring Taxi Services /MPB/2026 Dated: 06/07/2026

TENDER NOTICE

Online tenders for Hiring Agencies for round the clock Taxi Services in State Guest Houses of Government of Madhya Pradesh at New Delhi, namely, Madhya Pradesh Bhawan, Plot No. 29 CD, Jesus & Mary Marg, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi-110021 and Madhyanchal, 12 IHC Pocket, Institutional Area, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi-110070 are invited with two bid system (Technical bid & Financial bid) through e-tendering website www.mptenders.gov.in or www.mpbhawan.gov.in in the prescribed proforma from interested parties/ Registered Firms/ Registered Companies/ Reputed Organizations/ Agencies.

S. No	Description of Items	Remarks
11.	NIT No. & Date	NIT No. 13/Hiring Taxi Services /MPB/2026 Dated: 06/07/2026
12.	Issuance of tender	M.P. Bhawan, New Delhi website (www.mpbhawan.gov.in) (www.mptenders.gov.in)
13.	Date of Submission of tender	Submission on or before 27/07/2026 up to 03:30 PM.
14.	A Pre-bid conference	21/07/2026 at 03:30 PM
15.	Date of Opening of technical bid	28/07/2026 on 03:30 PM
16.	Date of opening of financial bid	03/08/2026 on 03:30 PM
17.	Annual Probable Amount of Contract	₹ 2,00,00,000/-
18.	Cost of Tender cost	₹ 3,000/- (to be paid online)
19.	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)	₹ 6,00,000/- (to be paid online)

G15498/26 "स्वभाव स्वच्छता, संस्कार स्वच्छता"
Addl. Resident Commissioner
M.P. Bhawan, New Delhi

Police officials at the site after a clash broke out between BJP and TMC workers during a protest march over the rape and murder of an 11-year-old girl in Baruipur, in Kolkata

AUTHOR

DIPANKAR DEY

Crime Beyond Criminal Justice

THE BARUIPUR RAPE AND MURDER CASE HAS GROWN BEYOND A CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION, RAISING DIFFICULT QUESTIONS ABOUT POLICING, POLITICAL ACCOUNTABILITY, WOMEN'S SAFETY AND THE RULE OF LAW

Since the new government attained power in May 2026, a rapid surge in crimes against women and social unrest due to the large-scale eviction of hawkers across the state has gripped West Bengal. The latest gruesome incident involving the rape and murder of an 11-year-old girl has turned into a major political flashpoint after one of the prime accused, Prabhas Mondal, was killed in a police encounter during a crime scene reconstruction exercise. The case, which had already triggered widespread public anger and protests, has now opened a fresh political battle over law and order in the state. The case sparked protests after the girl's body was recovered from a pond in the Surjyapur Haat area on July 5, a day after she went missing. Police have alleged that she was gang-raped and murdered before her body was dumped.

The incident in Surjyapur village in Baruipur, on the outskirts of Kolkata, has triggered days of violent protests, the mob lynching of an innocent man, and the police killing of one of the suspects. Three other men who have been arrested remain in custody. Opposition parties have questioned the police action. Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra called it "jungle law" and alleged that Bengal was moving towards "Uttar Pradesh 2.0". To contain the public anger, Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari visited the village on Tuesday and met the victim's family. Less than 24 hours later, Prabhas Mondal was killed in a "police encounter". In 2019, in a similar incident, four men accused of gang-raping and murdering a young woman in Hyderabad were killed by the police in an encounter. Just hours after the shootings, about 2,000 people gathered at the site to celebrate the police action. They chanted "Police zindabad". Hours after the news of the shooting broke, one of the top Twitter trends in India was #Singham, comparing the Cyberabad policemen to the revenge-seeking police officer-hero of the 2010 Tamil film Singam, which was remade a year later in Bollywood as Singham, reports BBC. In the Baruipur encounter case, opposition politicians and rights activists, however, have questioned the killing, saying it went against the rule of law.

It may be recalled that during the April election in West Bengal, a video of IPS officer and "encounter specialist" Ajay Pal Sharma—a 2011-batch IPS officer of the Uttar Pradesh cadre who was deputed as a police observer in West Bengal by the Election Commission to ensure free and fair elections—created a huge political uproar. Sharma, who earned the moniker 'Singham' for his crackdown on criminals, was seen in the video warning Jehangir Khan, the TMC candidate, and other "troublemakers" of strict action if anyone tried to disrupt the election process. This led to a major controversy, with the Trinamool asserting that it would drag Sharma to court and take strict action against him if he committed any "illegal activities or anti-constitutional acts". Siding with the Trinamool, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav called Sharma a "tested agent" of the BJP.

Law and order was one of the key issues on which the BJP had attacked the Trinamool Congress government, particularly after incidents such as the rape-murder case at RG Kar Medical College (August 2024) in Kolkata became a major political controversy. During the previous government's tenure, the BJP had accused the Banerjee administration of failing to ensure women's safety and questioned the handling of high-profile criminal cases. Analysts say one of the main reasons three-term Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee lost the election was growing concern over women's safety and her government's handling of the rape and murder of a junior doctor at a government hospital. The victim's parents later joined the BJP, and her mother, Ratna Debnath, won the election as a BJP candidate.

RAPE HOTSPOTS OF INDIA

The total number of rape cases reported in India between 2005 and 2024 increased from 18,359 to 29,536. In 2023, the corresponding figure was marginally higher at 29,670. The highest number of recorded rapes—38,947—occurred in 2016. However, in a culturally and economically diverse country like India, the incidence of crimes against women, especially rape, varies from state to state.

Numerous studies on gender equity and crimes against women reveal that India is one of the most dangerous countries in the world for women. Indian women are constantly in a state of high alert when alone on the streets, at work, or in markets. Due to India's predominantly patriarchal social structure, domestic violence is often considered culturally acceptable. Studies reveal that even a majority of working women suffer domestic abuse from their husbands. A non-earning woman's position further exacerbates her vulnerability and dependence on her male partner, compared to a woman who contributes financially to the household. Rampant poverty across the country is a major driver of low literacy rates and, consequently, the disempowerment and abuse of women.

An analysis of statistics relating to the offence of rape, as reported by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) for the periods 2001–2013 and 2014–2022, by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), reveals a few rape hotspots in the country. These are Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh (UP), Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh (including Telangana), Assam, Odisha, Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, and Haryana. These ten states and one Union Territory recorded around 78% of the total number of rapes in India during 2014–22. (Refer to Table 2.)

A total of 2,72,844 cases—averaging more than two rapes every hour, every day across the country—were reported across the 28 states and seven Union Territories in India during the 13-year period (2001–13). In 2001, the total number of reported rape cases across India was 16,075, which increased to 33,707 in 2013. The corresponding figure for 2014–22 was 2,99,520.

If one compares the fifteen worst rape hotspots in India during the two phases, 2001–2013 and 2014–2022, it reveals that in the second phase only Karnataka entered the list, replacing Tamil Nadu. All other states and Union Territories figure in both lists. (Refer to Tables 1 and 2.) Rajasthan emerged as the worst-performing state during 2014–22, accounting for nearly 14% of the total reported rapes in India.

A notable exception in the lists is West Bengal, which ranked as the second-worst hotspot with 22,472 rape cases during 2001–13, accounting for 8.24% of the total rapes in India. This averaged almost five incidents of rape per day across the state, although fewer rape cases were reported in 2013. The absolute number fell from 2,046 in 2012 to 1,685 in 2013. During 2014–22, the state improved from the 2nd rank to the 13th rank, with a share of 3.46% of total rapes in India. However, in 2023, West Bengal reported 1,110 rapes, including 27 involving minors, constituting 3.74% of the total number of rapes recorded nationwide. It also recorded 34,691 cases of crimes against women. The NCRB report stated that in 2023, the police disposed of 34,344 cases during the year and maintained a 93.8% charge-sheet filing rate in West Bengal.

GROWING HELPLESSNESS OF CITIZENS

According to Zeynep Dierks, a researcher with Statista, a rape victim in India not only experiences social stigmatisation but also faces an uphill battle for justice because the system often blames the victim for her misfortune. Instances have been reported where victims encountered hostile conditions at police stations and were often pressured to withdraw their complaints. However, once a case goes to trial, it can take decades before it is resolved. Rape cases, in particular, face a huge backlog, with the number of new cases exceeding the number disposed of each year. The process is arduous and can add so much trauma to a victim's life that many eventually buckle under pressure from their own families or from the family of the perpetrator.

It is alleged that the ideology of rape as a tool for exercising power over political or other opponents, or as a weapon to advance one's ideology through force, was imbued in the Sangh Parivar by none other than its revered icon, 'Veer' Savarkar. In Chapter VIII, titled Perverted Conception of Virtues, of his book Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History (English Edition, 1971), he criticised Shivaji and Chimaji Appa for restoring the women of defeated Muslim and Portuguese governors to their families. Since Shivaji did not permit the molestation of captured women, Savarkar wrote: "Did not the plaintive screams and pitiful lamentations of the millions of molested Hindu women, which reverberated throughout the length and breadth of the country, reach the ears of Shivaji Maharaj and Chimaji Appa?" (page 179). It is believed that Veer Savarkar remains a much-admired figure among Sangh Parivar followers and has inspired Hindu rioters to commit atrocities against Muslim women during the Gujarat riots (2002), the Muzaffarnagar riots (2013), and other incidents.

The same explanation of the weaponisation of rape has been cited in the cases of Unnao and Kathua. In the Kathua case, sexual violence was allegedly used as a means of inciting communal fear. What was even more astonishing was the open support that right-wing groups extended to the accused, joined by ministers from the ruling BJP. In Unnao, BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar was found guilty, along with others. The victim and her family were forced to the verge of self-immolation before the state took notice and registered their complaints. The 11 convicts in the Bilkis Bano case, who gang-raped Bilkis Bano and killed 14 people, including her infant daughter, were honoured after being released despite having been sentenced to life imprisonment by a Mumbai court in 2008. People reportedly touched their feet outside the trial court. Analysts argue that this lack of remorse for rape may stem from an ideological foundation. The 11 convicts were granted remission, and a legislator from the ruling camp in Gujarat described them as "Brahmins with good values" or "sanskaar". In addition to these incidents, the emergence of a horrific video showing two naked women being paraded and molested by a mob during the violence in Manipur highlighted how rape can be weaponised during conflict.

Unfortunately, the same trend is being observed in the Baruipur incident as well. Communal remarks by a few leaders threaten to give the crime a religious colour, as the victim was Muslim while the arrested men are Hindus.

THE STORY SO FAR

An 11-year-old girl's rape and murder in Baruipur has triggered widespread protests, political confrontation and renewed scrutiny of policing after one of the accused died in a police encounter during crime-scene reconstruction

People accused in the alleged Baruipur rape-murder case being produced before a court, in South 24 Parganas, Wednesday

Table 1: Top States and Union Territories in terms of absolute number of Rape cases reported between 2001 and 2013

Rank	States/UT	Total nos during 2001-13	% of All India Total	Total no 2001	Total no 2013	Total no 2022 *
1	Madhya Pradesh	40422	14.82%	2851	4,335	3029
2	West Bengal	22472	8.24%	709	1,685	1111
3	U P	22108	8.10%	1958	3,050	3690
4	Maharashtra	21049	7.71%	1302	3,063	2904
5	Rajasthan	19083	6.99%	1049	3,285	5399
6	Assam	18115	6.64%	817	1,937	1113
7	Andhra Pradesh#	15114	5.54%	871	1,635	1,435##
8	Bihar	14252	5.22%	888	1,128	881
9	Odisha	13262	4.86%	790	1,832	1464
10	Chhattisgarh	13218	4.84%	959	1,380	1246
11	Jharkhand	10363	4.84%	567	1,204	1298
12	Kerala	8668	3.80%	562	1,221	814
13	Delhi (UT)	8060	2.95%	381	1,636	1212
14	Tamil Nadu	7875	2.89%	423	923	421
15	Haryana	7381	2.71%	398	971	1787
16	India	2,72,844	100%	16075	33707	31516

SOURCE: COMMONWEALTH HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVE, 2014 # UNDIVIDED ##621+814 =1435HTTPS://WWW.HUMANRIGHTSINITIATIVE.ORG/POSTOFTHEDAY/RAPE-NCRBSTATS-CHRIANALYSIS-NDELHI-VENKATN-JUL14.PDF * SOURCE: NCRB 2024

Table 2: Top States and Union Territories in terms of absolute number of Rape cases reported between 2014 and 2022

Rank	States/UT	Total nos during 2014-22	% of All India Total 2014-22	% of All India Total 2001-13 (Rank)
1	Rajasthan	41742	13.94%	6.99% (5)
2	Madhya Pradesh	36144	12.07%	14.82% (1)
3	UP	31869	10.64%	8.10% (3)
4	Maharashtra	25606	8.55%	7.71% (4)
5	AP+Telengana	16725**	5.58%	5.54% (7)
6	Assam	15188	5.07%	6.64%(6)
7	Odisha	14713	4.91%	4.86% (9)
8	Delhi (UT)	13606	4.54%	2.95% (13)
9	Chhattisgarh	13206	4.41%	4.84% (10)
10	Kerala	12452	4.16%	3.80% (12)
11	Haryana	12182	4.07%	2.71% (15)
12	Jharkhand	10676	3.56%	4.84% (11)
13	West Bengal	10359	3.46%	8.24% (2)
14	Bihar	7635	2.55%	5.22% (8)
15	Karnataka	6765	2.26%	2.27 (17)
16	All India	299520	100%	100%

SOURCE: COMMONWEALTH HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVE, 2024, ** 8931+7794=16725 HTTPS://WWW.HUMANRIGHTSINITIATIVE.ORG/DOWNLOAD/CHRI-NCRBDATA-RAPESTATS-ANALYSIS-PART1-SEP24.PDF

Tekton's Eerie Badge Battle

The Nissan Tekton has finally been unwrapped, but in India's fiercely-contested SUV market, familiar engineering alone no longer guarantees unfamiliar success

AUTHOR

RAJEEV NARAYAN

The Indian automobile market has always had a remarkable memory. It forgives late launches, erratic dealer networks and even the occasional reliability scare. But what it rarely ever forgives is déjà vu. Which is why Nissan's all-new Tekton enters the country's hottest SUV battlefield carrying not just impressive credentials, but also a very familiar face beneath its freshly sculpted sheet metal.

If the Tekton's silhouette looks eminently recognisable, it is because it is. The Tekton and Renault's Duster are, for all practical purposes, siblings separated at birth and reunited (close to next year's Kumbh Mela) with different surnames. Different grille, different badges, a few styling tweaks, perhaps a reshuffled feature list. Underneath, though, they share the same platform, the same turbo-petrol engines, the same engineering philosophy and pretty much the same driving character.

The Tekton, launched this week with deliveries beginning later this month, marks Nissan's return to India's mid-size SUV segment after 'Kicks', and arrives at a starting price that will take the fight directly to the Hyundai Creta, Kia Seltos, Honda Elevate, Volkswagen Taigun, Skoda Kushaq, Toyota Hyryder, Maruti Suzuki Grand Vitara and, ironically, the Duster, its own Renault cousin.

OLD & TRIED FORMULA

There is, of course, history at play. Long before the Tekton, there was the Terrano. That Nissan SUV was essentially the first-generation Renault Duster wearing a different suit, one resembling a Tuxedo designed on London's Saville Row. It enjoyed modest success, but never escaped the shadow of the original. Buyers admired it, but many quietly asked the obvious question: "Why not just buy the Duster?"

A decade later, the question has returned. Except this time, Indian consumers are smarter, or at the very least battle-hardened. The average SUV buyer does not just compare brochures. He watches half a dozen YouTube reviews before breakfast, studies crash-test videos over lunch, debates service costs on Reddit after dinner and walks into the showroom already knowing by rote the engine code, transmission supplier and platform architecture. Badge engineering no longer fools anyone. All it does is invite some inevitable comparisons. And comparisons, in today's SUV market, are brutal.

CROWDED ARENA

That little maxim explains why Nissan Tekton's biggest challenge is not engineering, or its suspension, or its list of features. It is perception. Mechanically, there is little to fault. The SUV shares the Renault Duster's capable platform, proven turbo-petrol engines and rugged underpinnings. Early safety credentials have strengthened its case, with the model securing a five-star Bharat NCAP rating before deliveries begin.

Yet, specs alone seldom decide success in India anymore. The Hyundai Creta has evolved into an institution. The Kia Seltos is, as always, attracting younger buyers. Honda's Elevate enjoys Japan's reputation for dependability. The Grand Vitara and Toyota Hyryder have turned hybrid technology into a compelling ownership offer. VW and Skoda have carved out a niche among enthusiasts seeking European dynamics. Standing apart in such a crowd requires more than competent engineering. It requires a distinct persona.

Ironically, Renault may itself befuddle Nissan's task. While both SUVs share their foundations, Renault is expected to retain the forthcoming strong-hybrid powertrain only for the Duster, giving it an important technological differentiator at a time when fuel efficiency and electrification are turning into decisive purchase factors. The Tekton, meanwhile, is expected to continue with turbo-petrol options alone.

> THE TEKTON MAY WEAR A FRESH NISSAN BADGE, BUT INDIAN *buyers* HAVE BECOME FAR TOO DISCERNING TO MISTAKE STYLING ADO FOR A FUNDAMENTALLY NEW SUV

BRAND PUZZLE

Thus, the real question is not whether the Tekton is a good SUV. It is. The pertinent question is whether it is sufficiently Nissan.

Global alliances have made badge engineering commonplace. Volkswagen and Skoda have perfected the art without allowing either brand to lose its individual identity. Toyota and Maruti Suzuki have successfully exchanged products while carefully preserving distinct customer experiences. Buyers understand that the Hyryder and Grand Vitara are close relatives, yet both continue to find enthusiastic audiences because each company has cultivated its own strengths in after-sales support, marketing and ownership experience.

That is the template Nissan must somehow recreate. For too long, Nissan's Indian journey has revolved around isolated bright spots, not sustained momentum. The Magnite showed that the company could still surprise the market. The Tekton represents the next phase of that revival and fresher products are likely to follow as Nissan rebuilds its portfolio and expands its domestic presence.

But products alone do not build brands. Trust does. Dealer confidence does. Consistent launches do. Visible commitment does.

WAITING GAME

There is one amusing possibility too. Given the considerable excitement surrounding the return of the Renault Duster and the inevitable waiting periods that often accompany successful launches, the Tekton could become an unexpected beneficiary. Buyers unwilling to spend months waiting for a Duster may just walk into a Nissan showroom and drive home in what is, underneath, remarkably similar engineering.

In that sense, Nissan may also quietly solve Renault's waiting-list problem without intending to. Whether that translates into a temporary sales spike or becomes the foundation of a lasting comeback depends on what follows. The catch is that while Indian buyers may happily accept shared platforms, shared engines and shared manufacturing, they have historically refused to accept shared identities. That is the lesson the modern Indian automobile market has taught auto firms over the past decade.

The Tekton deserves attention because it is a competent, well-engineered, road-ready SUV entering one of the world's toughest automotive arenas. But if Nissan truly wants to reclaim the stature it once enjoyed in India, the Tekton cannot be the destination. It has to be a beginning. The badge on the bonnet may attract a curious glance, but only a distinctive product behind the badge will keep customers queueing up.

Soliloquy: The Nissan X-Trail is a standout example of badge, perception and vehicle capability. It is a great-looking and reliable mild hybrid SUV, but few went for it; so much so that the last few units of the outgoing version had to be all but given away. Even discounts of Rs 20 lakh-plus did not cut much ice. India is a strange market and has sent enough fire-breathing vehicles packing and sputtering to their nemesis.

WELLNESS

DIAGNOSIS AND DISCLOSURE

A mental health diagnosis is personal medical information—but deciding who should know requires balancing privacy, trust, relationships and practical realities

AUTHOR

ERA DUTTA

Dear Doctor,

I am 31 years old and work in a corporate job. Two years ago, I was diagnosed with ADHD and anxiety. Treatment has helped me considerably, and I perform well at work, have good relationships, and live independently. Recently, I was shortlisted for a promotion. At the same time, my family has started looking for a marriage partner for me. I keep wondering whether I am being dishonest by not telling people about my diagnosis. Should I tell my employer? Should I tell a future spouse? Should I tell friends? Or is my mental health history nobody else's business? I am afraid that if I disclose it, I may be judged. But if I don't disclose it, I worry that I am hiding something important. What is the right thing to do?

As a doctor, I can assure you that the short answer is: It depends. One of the most common misconceptions about mental health is that a diagnosis automatically means that the person has dysfunction severe enough to affect their daily life, or that they are unstable. This is not true. A diagnosis is medical information. Like diabetes, hypertension or migraine, it belongs first to the individual. Mental health disclosure is not a moral obligation. It is a strategic, personal and, sometimes, legal decision.

AT WORK: DO YOU HAVE TO TELL YOUR EMPLOYER?

In most situations, employees are not legally required to disclose a mental health diagnosis if they are capable of performing their job.

However, disclosure may become useful if accommodations are needed. Someone with ADHD may benefit from structured workflows or written instructions. Someone experiencing significant anxiety may require temporary flexibility during treatment.

The principle is simple: disclose when disclosure helps solve a problem.

If your condition is well managed and does not affect your work, there may be no practical reason to share it. If you do disclose, tell only what is necessary. Your employer often needs to know what support you require, not every detail of your psychiatric history.

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 recognises certain mental health conditions as disabilities when they result in substantial functional impairment. The Mental Healthcare Act, 2017 also emphasises confidentiality and protects the privacy of mental health information.

In principle, employers should not discriminate against an employee solely because of a mental health diagnosis. The reality, however, is that stigma still exists. That is why disclosure should be thoughtful rather than automatic.

MARRIAGE: DIFFERENT RULES, DIFFERENT STAKES

Marriage raises a more complicated question. Legally and ethically, a distinction must be made between having a diagnosis and concealing information that could significantly affect married life. Having anxiety, ADHD, depression or a past psychiatric illness does not automatically make someone unsuitable for marriage.

At the same time, deliberately hiding a severe mental illness that substantially affects functioning, relationships, judgment or future expectations may create legal and relational consequences.

Indian courts have historically considered cases where the concealment of serious mental illness was alleged to constitute fraud or misrepresentation. However, courts generally look at the severity of the illness, its impact on marital life, and whether there was intentional concealment—not merely the existence of a diagnosis. The diagnosis itself is often less important than its current effect on day-to-day functioning.

> **A diagnosis is part of a person's story, not their entire identity**

RULES FOR SHARING A DIAGNOSIS

Before disclosing, ask yourself four questions:

- Am I well enough to have this conversation calmly?
- What purpose will disclosure serve?
- Does this person need this information, or am I sharing it simply because I feel guilty?
- Has this person earned access to something this personal?

Not everyone deserves access to your medical history. Friends may need to know if understanding your condition helps the relationship. Family members may need to know if they are involved in your support system. A future spouse deserves information that could reasonably affect shared life decisions. An employer may need to know only if accommodations are required. The goal is not maximum disclosure. The goal is appropriate disclosure.

In **The Unbecoming**, *Kartikeya Vajpai uses cricket as the entry point to a deeply philosophical exploration of ego, identity, failure and the pursuit of lasting inner peace*

The Courage to Unbecome

AUTHOR

SANJEEV CHOPRA

In an age where everyone is aspiring to 'become,' Kartikeya Vajpai offers a powerful counter-narrative: the story of 'unbecoming.' An ex-cricketer himself, Vajpai has based his debut novel around two principal protagonists: a beloved cricketer named Siddharth Kapoor (also referred to as the 'God of Offside') and his estranged coach, Ajay Goswami. The two reconnect after a nuanced conversation that takes place at the Bodhik Retreat Centre in McLeod Ganj, the spiritual and temporal headquarters of His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. In his Foreword to the book, the Dalai Lama writes that this novel 'encourages readers to begin their own journey of self-discovery, freeing themselves from ego and attachments while embracing life's impermanence as a path to deeper happiness and fulfilment.'

Siddharth is a quintessential high performer whose success on the cricket field is the stuff of legend. His resolve is second to none, as is his commitment to practising regularly and making improvements based on the reviews of his mentor, Ajay. But, as he achieves meteoric success, media attention and fawning fans create a superstar halo that can be blinding. Siddharth begins to believe in his own invincibility. When Ajay tries to counsel him, he snubs him publicly: "I am too big a player to be advised by you. What level of cricket have you ever played? You were a state-level player who couldn't even make it to the national team, and you have the audacity to advise me!" From this point of hubris, it is a downhill climb for Siddharth, both internally and externally.

The impact of this public spat is even more damaging for Ajay, who withdraws into a shell until his old friends, Prashant and Rita, bring him to their hometown, Kolkata, and resurrect his confidence. They advise that contributions cannot be held hostage to other people's points of view and suggest that Ajay take a ten-day retreat at a meditation centre in McLeod Ganj with Master Purohit, an exponent of Vedanta and Buddhist philosophy. The retreat begins with questions: Who are you? Do we truly know ourselves? Why do we feel frustration and dissatisfaction? Why do we resist change?

Over the next few days, especially during the pre-meditation morning walks, Master Purohit tells Ajay that resistance born from attachment to the current 'role' makes it difficult to accept change, which eventually leads to regrets: '... the more you delve into acceptance and truth, the more comforting life will be.' Identity is a 'role,' and once the role-play is over, it is time to move on. 'Let life happen to you. When you are fully immersed in the present, you are in a mode of acceptance. This state holds limitless possibilities.' And one of these possibilities was that of Ajay staying on at the retreat and taking the vows of monkhood, which included 'absence from lying, stealing, engaging in sexual conduct, gossip or speaking ill of others, weighing words carefully before speaking, and uttering them only for the betterment of others.'

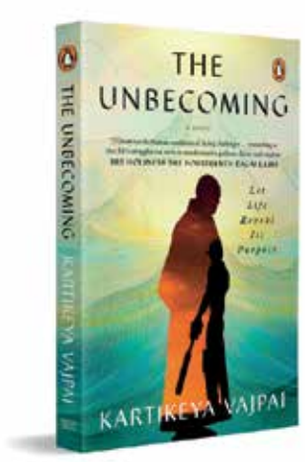
> THE NOVEL ASKS WHETHER PEOPLE ARE DEFINED BY THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS OR BY SOMETHING DEEPER THAT EXISTS BEYOND SUCCESS AND FAILURE

It is to this 'monk' Ajay that Siddharth turns after serial batting failures make him a fallen hero. The media is a fickle friend, and now that Siddharth is in need of solace, none is forthcoming. In desperation, he seeks out his former coach, only to learn that he has left the world of cricket for a monastery in the hills of McLeod Ganj—solitude in the silence of the Himalayas serving as a catalyst for internal introspection. When Siddharth touches his mentor's feet, Ajay tells him, 'I am a monk now, and my journey into monkhood began only when I could fully forgive both you and the person I used to be. In reality, you were a medium for me to embark on this path. In a way, you helped me become who I am today, and for that I am truly grateful.'

The God of Offside takes a ten-day retreat at the Centre and begins to grasp the concept of *Aham Brahmasmi*—'I am the absolute and infinite reality. I am one with everything … your limited self-perception is your adversary.' Siddharth is a new person after the retreat. His existential obsession with himself and external validation disappears. As he tells his better half, Shraddha: 'I have realised that success is not just personal effort; it's also the support of others… While I may be the face of success, the true heroes are those who empower me to perform on the field, the uncelebrated but essential.' There is an overall change in Siddharth's demeanour and relationships on and off the field. When the monk reads the news of him being named Man of the Match on an Australia tour, he is not surprised.

When Siddharth comes calling after his Australian sojourn, Ajay explains the concept of *Nishkama Karma*—action with detachment—as a means to enhance our ability to function effectively. Armed with this understanding, Siddharth plays the lead role in winning the 2023 World Cup at Eden Gardens in Kolkata, with 80,000 spectators roaring in celebration. Siddharth returns to McLeod Ganj and discusses his plans for Guru Dakshina with Ajay. 'An institution that trains young athletes in sport together will produce complete sportsmen… this approach will not only raise the bar in terms of sports performance, but will also help in cultivating proud citizens for our country.' Vajpai ends this story with a dedication to the 'superhero within the reader—that is, you. My aspiration is for you to discover the Siddharth within yourself…'

Before I close, here are some interesting nuggets that help us reflect on the milestones in the history of our nation. Till the middle of the last decade, Kolkata still had 'yellow ladybirds'—the iconic 'yellow-black' Ambassador taxis—and the two-thousand-rupee note was still in circulation. One realises that almost a decade has passed since demonetisation. This also leaves us with the realisation of the ephemerality of everything in the material world!



A River of Quiet Reflections

Radha Chakravarty's **In Your Eyes A River** *explores love, nature, memory, loss and the human spirit through luminous, evocative and deeply reflective verse*

AUTHOR

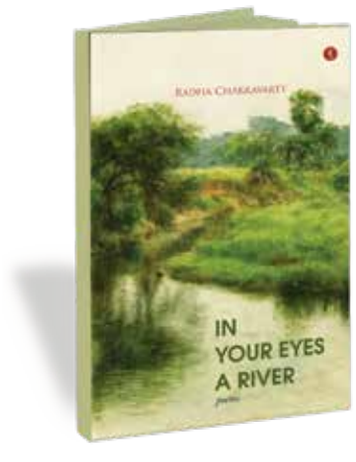
SHANTANU MUKHARJI

When I first read the poetry of Radha Chakravarty and then read another of her poetry collections, *Subliminal,* which I found extraordinarily superb in both content and emotion, I realised the depth of her poetic expression. It is not surprising that Ars Notoria (UK) termed her work one of the best poetry collections from South Asia in 2024.

Radha is a former Professor of Comparative Literature and Translation Studies at Dr B.R. Ambedkar University Delhi and has many books and translations, especially of Tagore's works, to her credit. Here, I attempt to review her latest creation, *In Your Eyes A River,* a collection of 61 wonderful poems, each one a gem in its own right.

Every poem carries its own distinct character. Randomly, I am quoting a few lines from her poems.

"Hum"
hold your ear to the ground
hear earth hum—
music, microseismic—
ocean floor pulsing
to the rhythm of waves—
vibrations from the depths
of our planet's beating heart
spreading and spreading
in ever-widening spheres
through transparent ether to join



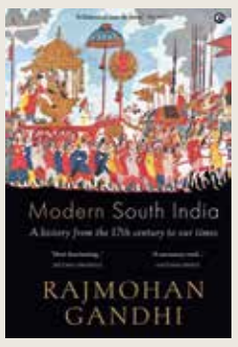
the symphony of astral bodies
exquisite cosmic melody
circling that profound percussion—
that insistent heartbeat, throbbing
in the dark hidden centre
at the core of our very being

"The Forest Watches"
the watchful forest observes the passing train
and catches, through a fleeting window pane,
a desperate face pressed against the glass, a hand
craving to touch the strangeness of the wilds
so close, yet so infinitely out of reach

"War Scars"
bullet hole
in the tree's gnarled trunk,
abandoned knife
in the lush green field
a blood-soaked handkerchief
caught in barbed wire,
helpless as a torn butterfly wing
strewn in the mud,
wildflower petals crushed
by the tyres of patrolling jeeps
beneath the bomb-struck tree,
broken eggshells from a fallen nest
on the abandoned battlefield of memory
the remains of our war of words

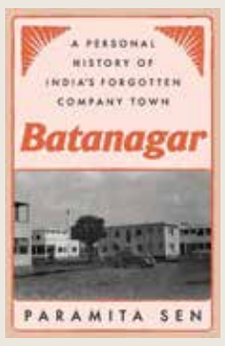
I do not want to disclose the contents of all the poems here, lest I deprive readers of the inquisitiveness to discover them for themselves. Yet, I cannot resist recommending some of my favourites, in addition to those discussed above: Love, Where Have All the Bulbuls Gone?, Ecstasy, and Conflagration. This collection is a treasure that touches upon diverse themes, gently requiring attentive and focused reading to absorb the ecstatic emotions and profound thoughts it arouses in its readers. Do read these poems at leisure, or while travelling long distances. I bet you will not find them monotonous.

Fresh on the shelf



MODERN SOUTH INDIA
Author: **Rajmohan Gandhi**

In this monumental study, the first in over fifty years, historian and biographer Rajmohan Gandhi brings us the story of South India in modern times. The history attempted here is of a peninsular region influenced by the oceans, not by the Himalayas.



BATANAGAR
Author: **Paramita Sen**

Paramita Sen paints a vivid picture of her childhood in this idyllic town in the 1970s and '80s, while also examining the larger context of the march of Indian history. She traces the impact of key moments on Batanagar – such as the Bengal Famine of 1943, the end of colonial rule in 1947, the rise of the Naxalbari movement in the 1960s and more. The town and its ethos captured the imagination of luminaries like Nehru and Tagore and was at the centre of some of Bata's landmark innovations, such as the iconic hawai chappal, which endeared the brand to its Indian consumers, who comprise its largest market to this day.

THREE WOMEN
Author: **Isheeta Ganguly**

Adapted from Isheeta Ganguly's internationally acclaimed dram-com musical Three Women: A Musical Theatre, this graphic novel offers a bold, visually immersive reimagining of Tagore's heroines. Blending literature, history, and modern reflection, it celebrates the enduring power of Tagore's women and their quest to balance purpose with passion.

ZUBEEN GARG: THE VOICE THAT BRIDGED WORLDS
Author: **Prosenjit Nath**

As conversations around representation, identity, and regional voices take centre stage, Zubeen Garg: The Voice That Bridged Worlds arrives as a timely and necessary story. It's not just about music, it's about visibility, belonging, and the power of one voice to change how a region is heard and seen. Passionate, accessible, and deeply evocative, this is more than a biography, it's the story of a man who became the sound of a people.

Champions Beyond The Noise

LIONEL MESSI
The artist whose genius continues to silence critics despite endless debates over officiating.

ERLING HAALAND
Football's new-age powerhouse redefining the modern centre-forward

CRISTIANO RONALDO
An extraordinary example of longevity, discipline and relentless physical conditioning.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC
Proof that fitness, resilience and mental strength can extend greatness beyond conventional sporting age

Technology has transformed modern sport, but no replay, VAR or algorithm can diminish the genius of athletes whose talent, discipline and longevity continue to inspire millions across generations

AUTHOR

S KANNAN

The good part about the FIFA World Cup is that even those in India who have not been football junkies now talk about referees being biased and how VAR (Video Assistant Referee) is no good. Most bold verdicts received on WhatsApp, claiming Lionel Messi has been allowed to "cheat," make me laugh.

Pray, for a nation which is still cricket-obsessed, despite shocking losses to Ireland and England in the T20 format, football being discussed at home is good. What becomes tricky, though, is when close friends ask why Indian football is not improving. I will leave that aside for now, since there is no quick-fix solution after Indian football has been kicked into the dirt and buried.

People are watching football matches at crazy hours, and one team which has been in the news, massively, is Argentina. Have Messi and his side been favoured? I do not think so. You can be critical of referees, you can be critical of VAR, and you can say anything about FIFA being biased. The fact remains that Argentina won against Egypt, courtesy of three legitimate goals, and Messi scored and soared.

There is a massive lobby out there which wants to paint Messi in a bad light. It's not going to work, really. Before this edition of the World Cup, there were doubts if fans would see the same Messi, a man who roams free on the football field, up front, and scores. He has shown that, despite his age, he is still a delight. As long as Messi runs, shows passion and performs for Argentina, malice against him is uncalled for. In an age and time when technology ensures replays are available over and over again, to say that Messi gets away with offences is like alleging a Formula One driver is not being pulled up for over-speeding!

Messi has been a class act, and whatever he has done till now in his career is path-breaking and historic. What we need to worry about is who will replace him when he eventually leaves international football for good. I am convinced Messi's legacy is not messy. He has played brilliant football, spread over six World Cups. He has inspired millions, and he will ensure he brings in crowds, even for an exhibition match.

On the more important point of VAR and bias from referees on the football field, this is a thankless aspect. For those from my generation who grew up watching multiple sports like cricket, tennis, hockey, football, shooting and Formula

One, notably, technology has not been an invasion. Technology has assisted sport and improved decisions.

Take cricket, first. In the old days of Test cricket in Pakistan, teams feared the on-field umpires more than the 11 players in the opposition. Shakoor Rana and Khizar Hayat, two well-known umpires, were 'feared.' They could 'raise their finger' as long as it suited Pakistan. They were brazen cheats, and the English cricketers best described them: "Playing cricket in Pakistan is like taking on 13 players." Much has changed since the time cricket embraced technology. You have TV umpires and much more. It is not an intrusion, certainly. Almost every decision can be reviewed. If someone says this is bad for cricket, I disagree. Yes, it has slowed the game down, but at least there is fairness.

Likewise, when hockey started using technology, more so after the off-side rule was done away with, the sport changed. There is now no 'off-side' problem. TV referrals and replays have ensured hockey has become better viewing. It is now an accepted fact that human eyes on the field have limitations. If you are going to ask me whether umpires and referees from an earlier era were not competent, my answer is that they did a good job. If they are now using technology, these men and women can breathe more freely while supervising a match. At least, in local hockey, the men who oversee a match do not get beaten up outside the stadium after it is over.

Football fans have participated in many surveys on VAR. Some strongly feel it is bad, while others say they watched the game better with their own eyes. Frequent stoppages are seen as a spoilsport. I disagree, as the time has come when football needs VAR in toto and the entire playing arena cannot be covered by human eyes alone. Do not forget, those who watch football at home are seeing replays from many angles. So, if there is assistance, accept it. We now live in an age and time where engineers and doctors are using AI. It has not killed human skill. Yet, just as CT scans and MRIs are now more important than a good old X-ray in healthcare, VAR is here to stay.

> AWAY FROM *technology*, WHEN WE WATCH MARVELS IN ACTION, THIS HAS BEEN A GREAT SEASON

Football has not embraced VAR everywhere. Unlike cricket and TV technology, VAR in football is expensive. Add reluctance to that, and one does not know how long the debate will continue. Any day, I am OK with watching hockey and football where replays are now in use. To me, it is about being more honest and ensuring there is no bias. If there are folks who will still say football referees and FIFA are compromised, please stop watching the sport.

Away from technology, when we watch marvels in action, this has been a great season. Messi is God, and Kylian Mbappé is a rock star. So, how do we define Erling Haaland, the 25-year-old darling of the crowd? Turning up for Norway, the pony-tailed hunk has caught everyone's eye. Like the proverbial "bull in a china shop," Haaland has been a delight to watch.

He looks strong, and videos of his diet and fitness drills are all over the internet. Haaland devours up to 6,000 calories a day and undertakes punishing training sessions. At six feet four inches, weighing 94 kg, he has the speed of a sprinter and the power of a heavyweight boxer. What catches my eye is the way he runs on the turf and scores. Surely, the man who has been sensational for Norway in the FIFA World Cup and has a net worth of over $100 million will be talked about in 2030 as well, when the next edition takes place. Before that, he will turn up against England.

How does one not mention another icon, CR7, whose campaign in the World Cup for Portugal ended rather early?

The moment Portugal came off the field, rumour mills went into overdrive: Cristiano Ronaldo has retired. It was cringe-worthy. At 41-plus, he looks five years younger and fitter. It is the easiest thing to rubbish him. Perhaps this happens because of jealousy. Try running on the football field for 90 minutes in the heat, 300 days a year, and then say who is fitter. Surely, CR7 will then have a big laugh.

As the tennis season also overlaps with the FIFA World Cup, one man who has again mocked age is Novak Djokovic. His run at Wimbledon this fortnight is not about breaking records established by Roger Federer. Novak is a delight for all reasons. He plays in the London heat and still enjoys it. There are folks who play mind games with him, and Novak gets upset. Yet, for someone who can still play a quarter-final against Felix Auger-Aliassime for five hours and 15 minutes, Novak has redefined fitness, endurance and the art of staying alive. Like all super athletes, Novak does not care about criticism. He mocks those who are younger as he eats up the tennis court perimeter like a gazelle in motion.

What's most important is that, just as there will not be another Leo Messi or CR7, Novak will also be remembered for decades. He has not retired, nor does he plan to. If a few ignorant fans say he cannot match Jannik Sinner, pardon them. Novak has built a legacy which is unmatched. Sport needs heroes, sport needs characters. Novak Djokovic has shown he is a true gentleman on and off the court. See the joy on his face when he is playing with his kids and family. This is what champions are supposed to be. You fall in love with them not just for the forehand and backhand, or the cross-court drives into the deep pockets of the pock-marked grass courts at Wimbledon.

Thank you, each legend.

QUICK TAKES

UNDER THE SCANNER

India's white-ball success under Gambhir has been overshadowed by mounting questions over the team's consistency, selection calls and tactical approach after recent defeats, including a record T20 loss to England. With expectations soaring, every decision is now under intense scrutiny as pressure builds before the next major assignments.

SINNER TOPPLES DJOKOVIC

Jannik Sinner dismantled seven-time champion Novak Djokovic in straight sets to reach his maiden Wimbledon final. The dominant victory marked another shift in men's tennis, ending Djokovic's latest title bid and setting up a championship clash with Alexander Zverev.

ARGENTINA FACES FBI

Argentina's march into the FIFA World Cup quarter-finals has been overshadowed by an FBI investigation into alleged money laundering involving the Argentine Football Association. US authorities are examining financial transactions linked to commercial deals worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

'Had fun exploring trio of dysfunctional women'

Black comedy 'Maa Behen', starring Madhuri Dixit, Triptii Dimri and Dharnaa Durga, has been a constant in Netflix's list of top 10 titles

What happens when three dysfunctional women try to cover up a crime and, while doing so, come to understand each other better? That was the idea that the writer-director duo of Pooja Tolani and Suresh Triveni wanted to explore in 'Maa Behen'.

The black comedy, starring Madhuri Dixit, Triptii Dimri and Dharnaa Durga, has been a constant in Netflix's list of top 10 titles after it premiered on the platform last month.

Set in a fictional, middle-class housing society called Adarsh Colony, the movie follows Rekha, a single mother and her two estranged daughters, Jaya and Sushma, whose lives spiral into chaos after they discover a dead body in Rekha's kitchen.

Tolani said she enjoyed writing about the eccentric trio of women and exploring how a small town is both unsettled by and deeply invested in their household.

"We started with this idea that it would be a comic film about a crime that these dysfunctional three women, who were crazy and unhinged, are trying to cover up. And somewhere along the way, they will come together and how they come together is by joining a sisterhood of sorts. So, I think as we developed the material, it started to kind of become evident that we need to first have fun with how people look at them and then flip the narrative," Tolani told PTI in an interview.

Dixit said she had a lot of fun playing the titular 'Maa' in the story, who is unlike the way mothers are represented in Indian cinema. Rekha loves her sleeveless blouses, colourful saris and a rose in her hair and gets more male attention than her two daughters. Then, when the perspective changes, her character also changes.

"I think these are two different personalities. One is what people see through the eyes and what she actually is. How people perceive her is as a woman who is always flirting around. She wears a sleeveless blouse. So, they feel she has some bad intentions toward everyone. Even the audience feels at that point that something's wrong. Later on, of course, you come to know that it's the eye of the beholder, like they say. I loved the fact that it was done in a fun way and not in a realistic way. And then you get to know that she's just a woman trying to survive," Dixit said.

Triveni, known for women-led dramas like 'Tumhari Sulu', 'Jalsa' and the series 'Daldal', credited Tolani for creating the distinct world of 'Maa Behen'.

"I have this greed that we have such great stories and actors who are hungry, whether it is Shefali Shah, Vidya Balan, Madhuri ma'am, Bhumi Pednekar or Triptii Dimri. The idea was to make an engaging and entertaining film that keeps you guessing. By saying that you are making women-centric films, we are limiting. But I want to work with more fantastic actors and I am proud that most of them are women," he said.

Asked about the way she projects female rage in the movie through these three women, Tolani said, "We all carry so much anger within and it is bound to boil up. I cannot just beat up people, so I use my pen to tell stories like this," she added.

Ravi Kishan, who has been on a roll with the success of 'Laapata Ladies' and 'Mamla Legal Hai', said his character of Aadarsh Gupta is a shady but respected personality in society. And it was very important for him to reflect the duality of that face, he added.

"In fact, women are just loving Gupta ji's character. I thought they should not like me, but they're just loving it because they are not looking at this character individually. They're not looking at me; they're looking at society, like how he wants the house and how he has an eye on these people. And they are coming up with their own stories of how they suffered," Kishan said.

MADHURI DIXIT SAID SHE ENJOYED THE RHYTHM OF THE LANGUAGE USED IN THE FILM

Dixit said she enjoyed the rhythm of the language used in 'Maa Behen', which has a distinct flavour of the Purvanchal region.

"Even if you fight in that language, it appears sweet to the ears. It doesn't sound harsh because of the language and its rhythm. Language itself was one of the characters in this movie. But Suresh said a very good thing. He said, 'Don't get entangled in this', but as long as you keep the lyrical rhythm of the language, we are fine," she added.

The actress said she is enjoying this phase where she gets to play different characters, be it 'The Fame Game', 'Maja Ma', 'Mrs Deshpande' or 'Maa Behen'.

"Directors and writers write according to their own standards. And create these real-life, relatable characters for the screen. And I think it's wonderful for actors like me, who are always hungry to do something new, something great and something that says something. When I did 'Mrs Deshpande', it was a very austere kind of film. It was a film with a lot of patience. But in this, I could go wild, go crazy. And the characters were also a little crazy, who lived life on their own terms. I just gave myself to this role because it was written so beautifully and directed amazingly," Dixit said, praising streamers like 'Netflix' for driving the change.

Kishan also credited 'Netflix' for giving his career new heights with 'Mamla Legal Hai'.

"'Netflix' showed the artist inside me to the world. People were forgetting me, but I came back to life. As Suresh ji listened to my request to add a Bhojpuri song in 'Maa Behen'," he said. PTI

RAKTANCHAL SEASON 3

THE REVENGE STILL AWAITS!

With revenge driving every move and power becoming the ultimate prize, season three brings the franchise to its most explosive chapter yet

The adrenaline-fuelled trailer of 'Raktanchal' season three has set the stage for the most intense season of the acclaimed crime franchise yet. Directed by Ritam Srivastav, written by Siddharth Mishra and produced by 'Jar Motion Pictures', the upcoming season boasts a stellar cast featuring Kranti Prakash Jha, Nikitin Dheer, Karan Patel, Mahie Gill, Rajesh Kumar and Vikram Kochhar.

Set against the gritty backdrop of Purvanchal, the new season dives deeper into a world ruled by revenge, ambition, fragile alliances and ultimate betrayal, where every decision comes at a price. 'Raktanchal' season three will stream exclusively on 'Amazon MX Player' from July 16.

The action-packed trailer opens the doors to the franchise's fiercest chapter yet. Having spent four years on the run, Vijay Singh emerges from the shadows with a single objective: to exact revenge on his long-time nemesis, Waseem Khan.

As years of animosity erupt into an all-out war, the conflict grows far bigger than just Vijay Singh and Waseem Khan. Sanki Pandey returns to the fray, while the political landscape becomes increasingly volatile with Saraswati Devi at its centre and the arrival of Virendra Pratap Singh and Himanshu Patnaik altering the balance of power. As rivalries intensify and political equations begin to intertwine, the trailer teases a gripping battle where every move matters and the conflict reaches its highest breaking point.

Speaking about stepping back into Vijay Singh's world, Kranti Prakash Jha said, "Vijay Singh has always been driven by grit and conviction, and returning to play him after all these years felt both familiar and exciting. This season puts him in situations that constantly test his resolve, making every confrontation more intense than the last. Fans can expect a thrilling journey that builds towards the biggest showdown the franchise has seen."

Sharing his excitement about returning as Waseem Khan, Nikitin Dheer shared, "There's something incredibly satisfying about returning as Waseem Khan because he's a character with multiple layers. He commands every room he walks into, but this season he's also forced to face his greatest challenge yet. The rivalry that audiences have followed over the years reaches an entirely new level and I think they'll enjoy every moment of what unfolds."

With revenge driving every move and power becoming the ultimate prize, 'Raktanchal' season three brings the franchise to its most explosive chapter yet. Kyunki badla abhi baaki hai... Vijay aur Waseem ki iss jung mein bachega sirf ek! MPOST

'FILMS LIKE BABY DO DIE DO A STEP IN RIGHT DIRECTION'

Huma Qureshi is known for often challenging the conventional portrayal of the Hindi film heroine

Huma Qureshi, known for often challenging the conventional portrayal of the Hindi film heroine through projects such as 'Maharani' and 'Gangs of Wasseypur', hopes that her new film 'Baby Do Die Do', a thriller about a deaf and mute assassin, leads to more such interesting roles being written for women.

The actress, who has also produced the movie, said the beauty of playing a character like Baby is that she is not outlined and easily mixes into the crowd, say, a Mumbai local.

"The fact that she is so normal and regular-looking and yet such a lethal killer is what makes it such an interesting tale. We just wanted to make a very relatable character. Baby is somebody you just meet in a Mumbai local and not bat an eyelid," Qureshi told PTI in an interview.

She added, "I think there could be a lot more change when it comes to writing better parts. There's definitely a step in the right direction."

Asked her opinion about the way women action stars are often portrayed as femme fatale on screen, the actress said that it is a 'misogynistic way' of looking at such characters. "That women have to be in these tight-fitting clothes, hyper sexualised sort of imagery to be able to be assassins. I think it is coming from patriarchy," she said.

For the longest time, female actors didn't have substantial scripts and were reduced to love interests or side characters. But that has changed now as filmmakers and writers are coming out with layered, complex and better-written roles for women in films.

The film, directed by Nachiket Samant, was released on July 3. The movie also features Sikandar Kher as Zafar, Chunky Panday as PM Jain, Seema Pahwa as Anjum Khan and Rachit Singh as Siddhu. It is produced by Qureshi and her brother and actor Saqib Saleem under 'Saleem Siblings and Samant'.

The 39-year-old actress said she read the script of the film four years ago and immediately knew she wanted to act in it.

"I read the script four years back, and I decided I wanted to act in it. When I didn't find a suitable producer, we decided to produce it under my production company called 'Saleem Siblings' and I love the fact that it is pulpy, it is cool, it has got a female hit woman and she is deaf and mute and she has a gun," she said.

Qureshi added, "I would say it is quirky. It is a thriller; it is also a comedy and a musical as it has original composition and a very unique style. I think the director has brought a sensibility which is very his own and the character is called Baby Karmarkar; that is a beautiful name."

The actress said the beauty of playing a character like Baby is that she is not outlined and easily mixes into the crowd, say, a Mumbai local

Qureshi said the film's quirky title 'Do Die Do' is, in fact, a translation of the character's surname.

Asked about her preparation for the role, the actor said she took training in sign language and also visited schools for children with special needs to understand the nuances of her character in the film.

"I had a coach who had me learn sign language. I also went to a school for kids with special needs and who were not able to speak or hear. I learnt a lot just by interacting with those kids," she said.

Qureshi explained that for her character, disability is her strongest asset.

"I think when you think of people, especially women with disabilities, you almost think of it as a weakness; you almost think of them as a weakness. Here you had a hitwoman, who is lethal and is a weapon of mass destruction. Yet, she has a disability that is actually not her weakness; it is her strongest asset," she said.

She said, "The reason why we call our film like the first desi hit woman is that there hasn't been a hit woman; people have been spies, people have been psycho killers, people have been several things, but not really a hit woman, not the woman who takes a contract to knock off people." PTI