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BENGALURU/METRO
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Hindustan Times

FIRST VOICE. LAST WORD.

Tahir Hussain

TAHIR HUSSAIN GETS LIFE TERM OVER MURDER OF IB STAFFER

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NEW DELHI: Former Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) councillor Tahir Hussain and four others were on Friday sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of Intelligence Bureau (IB) staffer Ankit Sharma during the 2020 northeast Delhi riots, with a city court ruling that while the crime was "horrendous" and "sickening", the prosecution had failed to prove that the convicts were beyond the possibility of reform.

₹84k-cr push for offshore oil wells gets cabinet nod

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NEW DELHI: The Union cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday approved Samudra Manthan, a ₹84,084 crore national offshore exploration scheme that aims to boost depleting domestic oil and gas resources at a time when India's crude oil import dependency has surged from 78.5% in 2014-15 to 88.7% in 2025-26.

The scheme draws on the Prime Minister's vision, articulated from the Red Fort on Independence Day last year, of a modern-day "Samudra Manthan" — a reference to the churning of the ocean in India's ancient epics — to unlock India's vast offshore energy potential, an official statement issued by the cabinet said.

"It marks a landmark step towards strengthening India's energy security, accelerating domestic exploration and production, promoting technological leadership, and advancing the vision of Viksit Bharat," the statement said.

According to a spokesperson for the petroleum ministry, the scheme, which has an approved budget of ₹84,084 crore in its first phase up to March 31, 2031, has four key components: acquisition and processing of modern offshore seismic data with an outlay of ₹28,534 crore; drilling of 60 deepwater exploration wells (total outlay ₹43,200 crore, including government support of up to 50% of eligible drilling cost or ₹675 crore per well); development of common offshore infrastructure hubs (₹10,000 crore) to facilitate commercialisation of discoveries; and establishment of oil and gas manufacturing and services zones (₹2,000 crore) to promote domestic manufacturing and localisation of critical equipment and services.

Subject to exploration success, the scheme aims to increase India's domestic oil and gas production from around 62

continued on →11

Hunting for oil

₹43,200cr Deepsea drilling

₹28,534cr Offshore data acquisition

₹675cr Financial support for each well drilled also included

₹2,000cr Oil and gas manufacturing and services zones

₹10,000cr Infrastructure to bring discovered oil and gas reserves into production

The Samudra Manthan scheme aims to boost domestic oil and gas resources at a time when India's crude oil import dependency has surged.

It comes against the backdrop of India's oil and gas production from ageing fields declining, with major producing fields being well past the "plateau production phase".

₹36K-CR OUTLAY FOR KHELO INDIA, SUPPORT TO NSFs RECEIVES NOD

The cabinet on Friday approved an expanded Khelo India Scheme and enhanced the budget for Assistance to the National Sports Federations (ANSFs) with a combined outlay of ₹36,441 crore covering the next five years. "The approved outlay is nearly eight times that of the previous Khelo India Scheme, reflecting the Government's commitment to making sports a cornerstone of youth development, nation-building and India's emergence as a global sporting powerhouse," a government statement said. →P17

MIGRANT WORKER KILLED, ANOTHER INJURED IN VALLEY TERROR ATTACK

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SRINAGAR: A labourer from Chattisgarh was killed and another sustained injuries after suspected terrorists opened fire on them at a brick kiln in Kilam village of Jammu & Kashmir's Kulgam district on Friday, officials said.

A senior police officer said that the attackers fled from the spot and a massive search operation has been launched in Kilam and its surrounding areas. "The security forces are trying to trace the terrorists responsible for this attack," the officer said.

The attack was the second terror strike in J&K since the 2025 Pahalgam attack, and the first to involve civilian deaths.

A Jammu & Kashmir Police head constable deployed on Amarnath Yatra security duty was shot dead by a lone terrorist in Anantnag on July 22. →P11

Aug-Sept rain likely to be below normal: IMD

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NEW DELHI: The southwest monsoon staged a substantial recovery in July, but is expected to slow again through August and September, with below-normal rainfall — less than 94% of the long-period average — likely for the remainder of the season, the India Meteorological Department said on Friday.

Issuing its long-range forecast for the next two months at a press conference, IMD said El Niño conditions are expected to strengthen further in the coming months, which will weigh negatively on the monsoon's second half.

IMD director general M Mohapatra said above-normal maximum and minimum temperatures are also likely across most of the country in August, a month that is itself expected to see below-normal rainfall overall, at less than 94% of LPA.

The August forecast follows a marked turnaround in July. The season's cumulative rainfall stood at -13% as of July 30 — a sharp improvement from -40% at the end of June. July itself recorded 283.3mm of rainfall nationally, 1% above the LPA of 280.5mm, reversing IMD's own forecast for the month, which had projected rainfall at 94% of LPA.

Mohapatra attributed the recovery to a surge in low-pres-

continued on →11

Drier days predicted

AUG-SEPT RAINFALL
<94% of LPA (below normal)

TEMPERATURES
Above-normal maximum and minimum temperatures likely across most of India in August

EL NINO IMPACT
El Nino conditions are expected to strengthen further in the coming months, likely weighing negatively on the second half of the monsoon. IMD attributed the season's overall rainfall shortfall to the climate pattern.

10 KILLED AFTER BUILDING MARKED AS 'DANGEROUS' COLLAPSES IN MAHA

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THANE: At least ten people were killed and three others sustained injuries after a portion of a four-storey building collapsed in Bhiwandi area of Maharashtra's Thane district on Thursday night, officials said.

The building, located in the Narpoli locality, was found to be dangerous and the civic administration sent multiple eviction notices since July 2020 but the owner had allegedly ignored them, officials added. →P11

Birth, death registration bill clears LS amid Oppn protest

Opposition MPs enact a "skit" in Parliament complex on Friday to attack BJP over Ram Temple "donation theft". →P5

NEW DELHI: The Lok Sabha on Friday passed the Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill, 2026, in less than three minutes and without debate, as Opposition members sloganeered and trooped into the Well demanding the presence of home minister Amit Shah — a demand Opposition parties said they will press again on Monday and Tuesday.

The bill, cleared by voice vote, tightens delayed registration of births and deaths by requiring a first-class judicial magistrate's order for registrations made more than two years after the event.

Parliamentary affairs minister Kiren Rijiju criticised the Opposition for boycotting the debate and then faulting the government for passing the bill without discussion. "You cannot make this allegation, because you have missed your opportunity," he said. Opposition parties have planned protests outside Parliament over alleged theft of Ram Mandir donations next week. →P5

morestories

With Oppn, but not a part of INDIA bloc: DMK →P5

Kharge reiterates demand for Shah's resignation →P5

MODI: PUNISHING 'MISGUIDED' KIDS IS NO SOLUTION

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said he and even his late mother were subjected to abusive language at Jantar Mantar during the student protest, but added that dragging such "misguided children" into court would not resolve the problem and he wanted to forgive them.

In another video released on Instagram, the PM said he could understand the anguish prevailing in society, but stressed that this was the time to guide the youngsters. "I want to forgive them. People make mistakes, but this is a cultural shock that our daughters are using such abusive

continued on →11

LIBERTY CAN'T HINGE ON ORDER'S BREVITY, SAYS SC; UPHOLDS RIOT ACCUSED'S BAIL

Utkarsh Anand
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NEW DELHI: An individual's liberty cannot hinge on the "inadequacy" or brevity of a court's reasoning while granting bail, the Supreme Court underscored on Friday, as it refused to interfere with the Uttarakhand high court's decision releasing Abdul Malik, the alleged mastermind of the 2024 Haldwani riots. The state government had assailed the high court's order primarily on the ground that it was a cryptic, non-speaking order. →P7

Migrants swarm Spain's enclave

Spain on Friday said about 50,000 migrants crossed into its North African enclave of Ceuta in a single day, with the mass influx claiming 57 lives, including some who drowned or were crushed while crossing a breakwater barrier. →P15 AP

2 BJP WORKERS ARRESTED BY CBI OVER MURDER OF SUVENDU'S AIDE

KOLKATA: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Thursday arrested two BJP workers in connection with the May 6 murder of Suvendu Adhikari's personal assistant Chandranath Rath, with officials saying the accused, who were part of Rath's team, planned the killing.

"Sagar Sonkar and Saheb Sonkar (who are brothers)... had planned the murder, from arranging the shooters and providing logistics to helping conduct the reconnaissance," a CBI official said. →P5

TRUMP CASTS DOUBT ON IRAN NEGOTIATIONS AS WAR DRAGS ON

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said he's losing confidence in Iranian negotiators, the latest sign that the renewal of armed hostilities in the Middle East could drag on.

Speaking during a Cabinet meeting on Friday, Trump took issue with missile attacks that Iran launched earlier this week against US forces in Jordan that ended a multi-day pause in fighting. "I'm losing faith in them because they do lie and do, they do misrepresent...We'll be hitting them very hard," he said. AGENCIES

Marital cases: SC seeks rules for pvt detectives

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NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Friday held that a wife found to be living in adultery is not entitled to either interim or final maintenance under the law, while simultaneously calling for a legal framework to regulate private detectives who gather evidence, including photographs and videos, in such cases, citing concerns over privacy, voyeurism, authenticity of electronic records and lack of accountability. →P6

SC TELLS STATES TO CURB STRAY CATTLE ON ROADS

The Supreme Court on Friday asked states and UTs to amend their laws to prevent stray cattle on roads and frame schemes to compensate pedestrians and motorists killed or injured in bovine attacks and accidents. The court noted that the presence of cattle on roads and highways must be prevented, adding that this is only possible if states enact laws or enforce existing regulations to hold owners accountable when cattle are left to graze in the open. →P8

LETTER FROM MP OR MLA MUST FOR DELHI'S ₹2,500 AID

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NEW DELHI: Applicants for the Delhi government's ₹2,500 per month cash payout scheme for women will have to submit a letter of recommendation from the MP or MLA of their constituency, documents show.

TASLIMA NASREEN BACK IN KOLKATA AFTER 18 YEARS

KOLKATA: Exiled Bangladeshi author Taslima Nasreen returned to Kolkata on Friday, more than 18 years after she was forced to leave following violence over her writings. "I am happy that even though I am not being able to return to one Bengal (Bangladesh), I could return to the other Bengal (West Bengal)," she said. →P6

{ MEDAL HAUL }

Dey and Singh script history with India's first ever CWG judo golds

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NEW DELHI: India scripted a breakthrough in judo at the Commonwealth Games on Friday as Asmita Dey and Harsh Singh captured the country's first-ever gold medals in the sport, while Yamini Mourya claimed silver.

Tripura's Dey earned the distinction of becoming India's first judo gold medallist in CWG, beating Canada's Heidi Quach in the women's -48kg final. Minutes later, Singh won India its second judo gold, beating Australia's Joshua Katz by Waz-Ari in the men's -60kg final.

Asmita Dey and Harsh Singh after winning the gold medals

Mourya, however, finished with a silver in the women's -57kg final, losing to England's Acelya Toprak. →P18

DKS-VIJAY MEET DEFERRED AMID CAUVERY PROTEST

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BENGLAURU: Karnataka chief minister DK Shivakumar on Friday said his August 3 meeting with Tamil Nadu counterpart Vijay has been postponed amid protests in the state over the Cauvery water-sharing dispute. →P9

PAGE ONE PLUS

From HT Archives

RIGHT TO INFORMATION BILL, 2005

The Lok Sabha passed the Right to Information (RTI) bill with a voice vote amid the Opposition's boycott of Parliament on May 11, 2005. HT ARCHIVE

Lok Sabha clears landmark RTI bill amid Oppn boycott

Excerpts from reports on bill setting basis for making right to information fundamental right

The Lok Sabha on Wednesday passed the path-breaking Right to Information (RTI) bill with a voice vote amid the Opposition's continuing boycott of Parliament.

The bill provides a framework for making a citizen's right to information a fundamental right under Article 19 of the Constitution.

The House approved the 150 amendments to the original draft piloted by minister of state for personnel Suresh Pachauri. TDP leader K Yerran Naidu said the "unprecedented" number of amendments showed the "poor quality" of the drafting of the bill. Once the bill becomes law, it will replace the Freedom of Information Act passed during the NDA's rule.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh told the Lok Sabha that the bill's provisions were "more far-reaching and effective" than the Freedom of Information Act.

In his brief intervention during the debate, Singh said the new law has the widest possible reach, covering the central and state governments, Panchayat Raj institutions, local bodies and recipients of government grants. However, the law will not apply to intelligence and security organisations except if the information pertains to allegations of corruption.

In an editorial, HT welcomed the bill as a major milestone for Indian democracy but cautioned that the exemptions allowed could leave the right to know a narrow one. Once the bill becomes law, it will pave the way for the setting up of a Central Information Commission in Delhi with a provision for similar outfits in the rest of the country. All citizens under the law can apply for information without specifying any particular reasons at the commission and its supporting outfits with a nominal fee for paper and printing. People living below the poverty line have been exempted from any fee.

Information, as defined in clause 2(c) of the proposed law, comprises "any material in any form including records, documents, memos, e-mails, opinions, archives, press releases, circulars, orders, logbooks, contracts, reports, papers, samples, models, data material held in any electronic form..."

Information accessible to a citizen under the new law empowers them with the right to inspection of work, documents, and records; taking notes, extracts or certified copies of documents or records; taking samples of certified material; and also information in the form of diskettes, floppies, tapes, videocassettes or any other electronic mode or through printouts, etc. The bill contains penal provisions against those who refuse to provide the information. The original penal provisions have been diluted by way of amendments.

'An inch too little'

"It's good to see the Right to Information (RTI) Bill get the Lok Sabha's nod," HT said in its editorial, noting the Prime Minister's description of the legislation as "a pace-setter in dealing with corruption and inefficiency in the government at various levels". The bill, it said, brought within its ambit the central and state administrations, panchayats, local bodies and even non-governmental organisations getting public funds.

"This is a password for the citizen for unprecedented access to information, including inspection of documents and extraction of data, and marks a major milestone for Indian democracy," HT said. It added that the provisions required authorities to respond to queries in as little as 48 hours if it was a matter of life and liberty and that accountability and transparency would "climb up several notches", especially as the Act promised fines and disciplinary action against erring officials.

Although the RTI replaced the Freedom of Information Act, HT said, it enshrined the same view that information that could not be denied to Parliament or a state legislature should not be denied to a citizen either. This, the paper hoped, would remove at least some of the "decades-long shadows" cast by the Official Secrets Act, forcing the central and state authorities – as gatekeepers to a radical information disclosure legislation – to move away from opaque and secretive administrative systems.

Hindustan Times

King Tut had buck teeth

Harbhajan's agony

Right to info gets LS vote

Post 9/11, Washington takes no chances

JNU student leads women in UPSC list

Lonely Planet beat MCD on meningitis

Sex-crazed blogger is a Sania fake

HT covered the passage of the bill in Lok Sabha in the May 12, 2005 edition. HT ARCHIVE

The editorial, however, flagged the exemptions. Some restrictions on information on national security, defence, foreign policy and law enforcement were understandable, it said, but "shouldn't the government have made these exceptions case-specific rather than putting them categorically out of reach?" And unless the proposed Central Information Commissions were independent monitoring bodies, HT added, "there can be no guarantee that they will not release information selectively."

Pointing to Britain and the US, where — even before 9/11 — agencies were allowed to withhold government documents from the public if the bureaucracy decided that secrecy was "in public interest", it cautioned that any restriction that might shield the authority concerned from embarrassment or exposure "would leave the bureaucracy free to use information straitjackets". "In other words, the right to know would then become the right to know narrowly, leaving the idea of a new era of 'government in the open' a stillborn," HT said.

{ WORLD } BROAD PEAK AVALANCHE

Noted climber among 6 missing in Pakistan

The bodies of four climbers were located by Pakistani search crews on Friday after at least 10 mountaineers went missing in a suspected avalanche on Broad Peak a day earlier, Pakistani sources said. Among those missing is Nepali mountaineer Nirmal Purja, 43, who set a record for the fastest ascent of the world's 14 highest mountains, a feat chronicled in the 2021 Netflix documentary "14 Peaks: Nothing Is Impossible." The climbers are believed to have been swept away by an avalanche on the 8,051-metre (26,414-foot) peak, the world's 12th-highest mountain, around midday on Thursday. Search and rescue operations were continuing on Friday, Sajid Hussain, deputy director of the tourism department in the Gilgit-Baltistan region. The search was focusing on a "remote and difficult area", said Hussain. →PTI

COMMONWEALTH GAMES 2026

INDIANS IN ACTION TODAY

PARA ATHLETICS
- **Men's shot put F57 final:** Soman Rana and Shubham Juyal (2:35pm)
- **Men's 1,500m T54 final:** Ramesh Shanmugam (2:50pm)

ATHLETICS
- **Men's triple jump final:** T Selva Prabhu and Praveen Chrithravel (2:40pm)
- **Women's 10,000m race walk final:** Priyanka Goswami and Ravina (3pm)
- **Men's pole vault final:** Dev Kumar Meena and Kuldeep Kumar (11:35pm)
- **Men's 5,000m final:** Gulveer Singh (12:15am, Sunday)
- **Mixed 4x400m relay final:** India (1:50pm)

BOWLS
- **Men's pairs, Group B:** India vs England (3:50pm)
- **Women's singles, Group C:** Nayanmoni Saikia vs Bridget Herselman, RSA (10:20pm)

BOXING (FINALS)
- **Women's 54kg:** Preeti Pawar vs S Delgado, CAN (3:30pm)
- **Women's 57kg:** Jaismine Lamboria vs M Walsh, NIR (2:45pm)
- **Men's 55kg:** Jadumani Singh vs J Dixon, AUS (4:15pm)
- **Women's 70kg:** Arundhati Choudhary vs Reid, ENG (9:30pm)
- **Men's 80kg:** Ankush Panghal vs D Shittu, ENG (22:15pm)

JUDO
- **Women's 63kg:** Unnati Sharma (3:30pm)
- **Women's 70kg:** T Inunganbi (3:30pm)
- **Men's 90kg:** Karanjit Singh Maan (3:30pm)
- **Men's 81kg:** Harsh Tokas (3:30pm)

TRACK CYCLING
- **Men's sprint:** David Beckham, Ronaldo Singh, Rojit Singh (2:30pm)
- **Men's 10km scratch race:** Harshveer Singh Sekhon and Dinesh Kumar (4:19pm)

{ MY INDIA } IN CALL WITH ARAGHCHI

EAM urges Iran to avoid attacks on ships

India on Friday strongly urged Iran to avoid attacks on commercial shipping and seafarers under any circumstances with external affairs ministers (EAM) S Jaishankar conveying to his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi that New Delhi condemns any such strike by any party. The EAM said this during a phone conversation with Araghchi. "Conveyed our deep concerns at the ongoing hostilities in the region. Strongly urged that attacks on commercial shipping and seafarers be avoided under any circumstance," Jaishankar said on social media. "India condemns any such attack by any party." Jaishankar said he was apprised of Iran's perspective of current developments and discussions which are underway. "India is always supportive of dialogue and diplomacy," he said. PTI

Skewed July rainfall behind floods in some states, dry reservoirs in others

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NEW DELHI: With half of the June-September monsoon season over, country-level deficit in rainfall has decreased substantially compared to earlier in the season, although it remains significant. This is thanks to July rain, which has been usual. However, an HT analysis of the gridded rainfall data of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) shows that the cumulative country-level trend hides the concentration of July rain in a few places and in about half the days of the month. This is why parts of the country are reporting devastating floods and other parts are reporting dry reservoirs. Here are three charts that explain this.

CHART 1

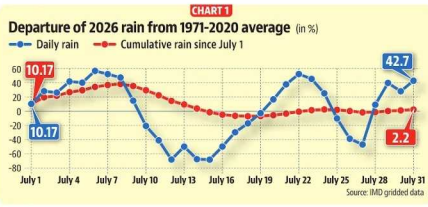


CHART 2

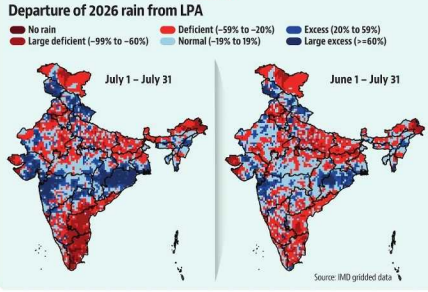
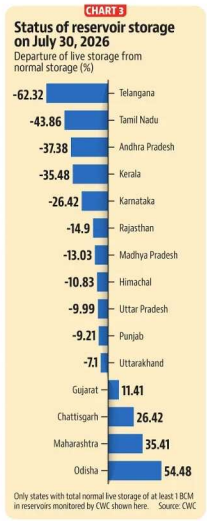


CHART 3



A small surplus in July has decreased monsoon deficit

Country-level rain in July this year is 281.9 mm, according to the gridded rain data of the India Meteorological Department (IMD). This is around 2.2% more than the 1971-2020 average, which IMD currently considers as the Long Period Average (LPA) for tracking rain's performance; and ranked 68th highest (or 59th lowest) since 1901, the first year for which IMD has published gridded data. This modest surplus has helped decrease the cumulative monsoon deficit from 31% in June to just 10.5% now. To be sure, the rank and departure might be somewhat different in the summary statistics IMD publishes because of differences in weather stations used and the process of calculation.

But this surplus was made possible by just 18 days of rain

To be sure, the small surplus in July rain was accumulated in just 18 days that recorded a surplus. In total, these 18 days received 209.3 mm rain compared to the LPA of 156.3 mm for those days, a 34% surplus. The other 13 days, all of which recorded a deficit and have a cumulative LPA of 119.6 mm, received just 72.7 mm rain, a 39% deficit.

NUMBER THEORY

This implies that the rainfall was intense. This can be seen in the departure in different intensities of rain. Light (rain up to 7.5 mm at a place in 24 hours in a day) and moderate (7.6-35.5 mm rain at a place in 24 hours in a day) rain have deficits of 4.9% and 6.2% while all categories of heavy intensity rain (at least 35.6 mm rain at a place in 24 hours in a day) taken together have a surplus of 12%.

In other words, July owes its surplus entirely to rain of heavy intensity concentrated in a few days. *(See Chart 1)*

Area under large surplus and large deficit was almost equal in July

IMD classifies a local deficit of 60% or more as "large deficient" and that of 20%-60% as "deficient". Similarly, a surplus of 60% or more is classified as "large excess" and that of 20%-60% as "excess". Rain within 20% of the LPA is classified as "normal". The area under large excess and large deficient categories was almost equal in July: 12.2% and 12.6% respectively. This further shows that July was a month of extremes, with parts of India extremely dry and other parts extremely wet. To be sure, despite the extreme contrast, the month was wet in more places than it was dry, with less than a majority of the country (44% of India's area) in the deficient or large deficient category in the month. This decreased the area under these two categories for cumulative monsoon rain from 67% on June 30 to 46% on July 31. *(See Chart 2)*

This is reflected in the geographical skew in reservoir levels

The regions of large excess in rainfall in July – such as south Gujarat, northwestern parts of Maharashtra, Uttarakhand, Nagaland, and some parts of Assam – are correlated with the places that have reported floods in the month. It also explains the geographical trends in the storage of 166 reservoirs monitored by the Central Water Commission (CWC). For example, resevoirs monitored in Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, and Maharashtra have a surplus. On the other hand, reservoirs monitored in all peninsular states and those in the Gangetic plains are running a deficit.

And this also explains the latest round of charges and counter charges in the water wars between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, both states with deficient rainfall as of July 31. *(See Chart 3)*

4.8k Indians deported from US since 2025; 1,273 this year: MEA

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NEW DELHI: The US has deported more than 4,800 Indian nationals since 2025, including 1,273 people who were sent back between January and July this year, the external affairs ministry said on Friday.

The US administration has stepped up the deportation of illegal migrants from across the world as part of a crackdown that began soon after President Donald Trump took office last year. The number of Indians deported from the US last year was the highest in the past 16 years, according to figures provided by the government in Parliament in 2025.

"The total number of Indians deported from the US to India in 2026, from January 1 till date, is 1,273. In 2025, a total of 3,567 Indian nationals were deported from the US," external affairs ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal told a regular media briefing.

PURSUING RELEASE OF 24 NATIONALS SERVING IN RUSSIAN ARMY: MEA

India is pursuing the issue of the release of around two dozen Indian nationals serving in the Russian Army with authorities in Moscow, the external affairs ministry said on Friday said against the backdrop of the Supreme Court hearing a petition filed by the kin of youths lured into military service in Russia. Over 30 Indians have died so far while serving with the Russian military on the frontlines of the conflict in Ukraine.

IN LINE WITH OUR INT'L OBLIGATIONS: MEA ON ISRAEL ARMS SUPPLY

India on Friday responded to an allegation by Amnesty International that New Delhi is supplying weapons to Tel Aviv despite warnings about war crimes by saying that all exports of dual use items are in line with international obligations. "India... carries out its export of dual-use items and technologies to various countries in accordance with national laws, consistent with our international obligations," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

Responding to a question on the number of Indians sent back by the US, Jaiswal said India is working with several foreign governments on deportation issues. "As and when such issues are referred to us, we conduct due diligence on our side to confirm the nationality of the person being referred for deportation. Once we are fully satisfied that the person concerned is of Indian nationality, only then we facilitate their return to India," he said.

Jaiswal responded to a separate question on a new bill cleared by the US Senate that would give Trump the authority to impose tariffs of up to 100% on goods from major purchasers of Russian oil and gas, such as China and India, by saying that India is closely monitoring the situation.

India condemns Pak over use of 'ruthless force' in PoK protest crackdown

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NEW DELHI: India on Friday denounced the Pakistan government's use of "ruthless force" against civilian protestors in Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK) and again urged the international community to hold Islamabad accountable for atrocities perpetrated in the region.

New Delhi has criticised Islamabad's actions in PoJK several times over the past few weeks as the region has witnessed widespread violence that has left more than 40 people dead since June. The protests in the region claimed by India are being spearheaded by the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC), which has been outlawed by Pakistani authorities under an anti-terrorism law.

"As you and all of us have witnessed, the Pakistani establishment continues to unleash ruthless force against peaceful civilians in Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir. This crackdown has resulted in the tragic death of over 40 innocent people and many more have been seriously injured," external affairs ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal told a regular media briefing in response to questions on the situation in the region.

Jaiswal contended that the Pakistani establishment's "absolute disdain for the innocent people of PoJK was laid bare" when defence minister Khawaja Asif branded the protesting civilians as "enemies".

He also highlighted remarks made by veteran Pakistani politician Rana Sanaullah, who said on a TV news programme that the situation in PoJK had been exacerbated by the presence of mujahideen who were trained by Pakistan to target India. Sanaullah currently serves as the special assistant on political affairs to Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

CM defends Mekedatu as Centre seeks revisions

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DK Shivakumar

BENGALURU: Chief minister D K Shivakumar on Friday defended the proposed Mekedatu reservoir after the Centre returned the project's detailed report for revisions, saying the scheme would primarily serve drinking water and power needs and would not be used for irrigation.

"Mekedatu will benefit Tamil Nadu more than Karnataka. We will use it only for generating 400 MW of electricity and for drinking water. The 66 TMC of water will not be used for irrigation under any circumstances," Shivakumar said.

Shivakumar also rejected reports that the project report had been turned down, saying the Centre had instead sought additional information. "It is not a rejection. They have sought clarification on some issues, and we will provide those clarifications shortly," he said.

The Centre's position was conveyed to Parliament by Raj Bhushan Chaudhary, minister of state for Jal Shakti, in a Lok Sabha reply on Wednesday. Chaudhary said the detailed project report submitted by Karnataka in 2019 had been returned to the project authority with instructions to submit a revised report complying with the Cauvery water disputes tribunal award and current central water commission guidelines.

Chaudhary said the Union government had also taken note of representations from Tamil Nadu and farmers' organisations expressing concerns about the proposed reservoir's possible impact on the Cauvery delta, including drinking water availability in other districts.

"Representations received in respect of any project are examined, as appropriate, during appraisal of the project in accordance with the applicable procedure," Chaudhary said.

The exchange comes as Karnataka and Tamil Nadu remain at odds over the Mekedatu project. Shivakumar said Karnataka would continue to pursue the project within the law despite a resolution passed by the Tamil Nadu Assembly against it.

"That is their politics. I will not question it. We will resolve matters in the interest of our state and within the legal framework," Shivakumar said.

Shivakumar said the reservoir could also help Karnataka meet its obligations to Tamil Nadu when managing the shared river water becomes difficult. Shivakumar said Karnataka would comply with the Supreme Court's direction concerning the release of 177 TMC to Tamil Nadu and had no objection to following the court's orders.

Shivakumar also said the Supreme Court had allowed scope for a balancing reservoir and that the Union government had addressed the issue in the Rajya Sabha.

Chaudhary, in his Lok Sabha reply, referred to the Supreme Court's July 16, 2018 judgment in the Cauvery water dispute. Chaudhary said the judgment did not require Karnataka to obtain the consent of Tamil Nadu, Kerala or the Union Territory of Puducherry before constructing a structure across the Cauvery.

"There is no mention that state of Karnataka has to obtain the consent of the other riparian states, namely Tamil Nadu, Kerala and UT of Puducherry, to construct any kind of structure across river Cauvery," Chaudhary said.

Chaudhary also cited the Supreme Court's treatment of Clause XVIII of the 2007 Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal award. The provision allows a state to regulate the use of water within its boundaries and enjoy its benefits, provided that such use is not inconsistent with the tribunal's order.

Chaudhary said the Centre had subsequently notified the Cauvery Water Management Scheme in June 2018 under the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act.

The scheme established the Cauvery Water Management Authority and the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee to implement the tribunal's decision as modified by the Supreme Court.

K'taka sets up panel under ex-chief secy on recruitment reforms

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S V Ranganath

BENGALURU: The Karnataka government on Friday constituted a committee headed by former Chief Secretary S V Ranganath to recommend reforms in the state's competitive examination and recruitment process, as Chief Minister D K Shivakumar directed officials to ensure complete transparency in the recruitment of over 70,000 posts and warned of strict action against any examination malpractice.

The Competitive Examinations and Recruitment Reform Committee will study the existing competitive examination and recruitment system and suggest reforms aimed at strengthening transparency, efficiency and credibility in the selection process, according to an official statement.

Besides Ranganath, the panel comprises former Chief Secretaries T M Vijay Bhaskar, Vandita Sharma and L K Atheeq.

Chairing a high-level meeting at Vidhana Soudha to review preparations for the upcoming recruitment examinations, Shivakumar said the state was undertaking the massive exercise of filling more than 70,000 vacancies and should make the recruitment process a model for the country.

"There should be no scope for any examination malpractice. Karnataka should set an example for the nation in conducting transparent recruitment," he said, while asking officials to leverage the state's technological capabilities to ensure a professional and credible examination process.

According to the government, the Karnataka Public Service Commission (KPSC) and the Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA) have scheduled examinations over the next six months to fill 36,773 posts, with around 35 lakh candidates expected to appear.

The chief minister directed officials to strictly adhere to the guidelines prepared for the examinations and suggested adopting best practices followed by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) wherever required.

foodrun

A leisurely chat that does little, but does it well

Ajit Bhaskar

Shivajinagar is one of the more fascinating parts of Bengaluru. The place is a melting pot. Kannadigas and migrants from Tamil Nadu coexist, which means that the *thindi* scene is fairly interesting. But today, we're here again to indulge in a little *chat*. Please pardon the pun.

Sagar Chats' menu boasts an All-India day trip through a few well-proportioned bites. They claim to have Bombay chat, Delhi chat, and so on and so forth. The place runs out of a small bluish cart on Narayan Pillai street, on the way to Veerapillai street. Generally, it sells wet chats for the most part.

Now, Mani Chats has been serving up some fun stuff over the last decade or so. Their chats are perfectly decent, but their *masal puri* is the signature. While dried green and brown *batani* (peas) is an unusual combo, it is the brown gravy that makes the real magic.

It is thick, creamy and loaded with a savoury undertone. It tastes far better than it looks, which is to say, it's not the prettiest plate. That dark brown gravy with some onions, chopped coriander and sev sprinkled in. No carrots, which generally add a welcome hint of colour, and of course, they also neglected the multicoloured mixture. Nothing.

Except the taste. Sometimes, a minimalist approach is the best one, and this is one of those examples. Of course, the same could not be said for their *bhel*, which lacked seasoning and was a touch too soggy for me. They could be having an off day for all I know though, so I will give them the benefit of the doubt.

I hope to visit the place again and try some other items on their menu, which is very compact, just the way I like it. Their motto seems to be "Do little, but do it well." It's a good, unpretentious place to grab a quick bite if you're on a food hunt or shopping spree in nearby environs.

Thing is, you will have to stand and eat. But hey, live a little once in a while.

(Ajit Bhaskar, a researcher with a multinational, is famous in Bengaluru for his Thindi (food) runs. He will profile one of his preferred (or newly discovered) haunts for HT every week)

LoP R Ashok being detained during a stir against the release of Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu, in Mandya on Friday. ANI

DKS defers talks with Vijay amid Cauvery stir; TN to move SC

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BENGALURU: Karnataka chief minister DK Shivakumar on Friday announced the postponement of his August 3 meeting with his Tamil Nadu counterpart, C Joseph Vijay amid protests in the state over the Cauvery water-sharing dispute. He said the current atmosphere was not conducive for talks and that he would seek another date for discussions. The meeting had been scheduled at Vijay's initiative.

"I had requested to visit Tamil Nadu, but the [previous] DMK [Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam] government had not given permission. Later, elections took place, and the government changed. Now Vijay has said that he will come to Karnataka with his team. In such a situation, the developments around the protests are not giving us confidence," Shivakumar said.

He said the meeting should take place in a more cordial environment. "We should create an opportunity to resolve this issue through cordiality. If the problem is resolved, it will benefit them as well as us. The atmosphere is not good now, so I will discuss requesting the Tamil Nadu chief minister to postpone our meeting for a few days," he said. The decision came as farmers and Kannada organisations staged protests against the Cauvery Water Management Authority's (CWMA) rejection of Karnataka's appeal against an order directing it to release 3,500 cusecs of water daily to Tamil Nadu for 15 days.

Protesters tore posters of Vijay's film Jananayagan and forced some theatres to stop screenings. BJP leaders, including state president B Y Vijayendra, were taken into preventive custody while marching towards the Krishna Raja Sagar (KRS) dam, officials aware of the matter said.

The party also threatened to boycott the all-party meeting convened by Shivakumar on August 2 if the state government did not assure that Cauvery water would not be released to Tamil Nadu. Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu law minister R Nirmal Kumar said the state would move the Supreme Court to secure its share of Cauvery water. "Legally, we need to get the required water through the Supreme Court," he said, adding that Karnataka had repeatedly failed to release water despite directions from the authority. Kumar said Vijay was consulting legal experts and stakeholders and would announce the state's legal strategy within a week.

Cong likely to finalise Cabinet list on Aug 2, say party leaders

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BENGALURU: The Congress high command is expected to settle the long delayed expansion of the Karnataka Cabinet by Sunday night, clearing the way for a swearing in ceremony likely to be held on Monday, state Congress leaders said after a series of discussions in New Delhi.

The final list of ministers is expected to reflect the party's calculations on caste, religion, regional representation and the balance between younger leaders, major communities and groups that remain underrepresented. Congress leaders also discussed whether to leave three or four ministerial positions vacant until the completion of Gram Panchayat and other local body elections.

Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee president BK Hariprasad said the consultations were effectively complete and that the party was now awaiting a decision from the central leadership. "We have written the exam, and now we are waiting for the results," Hariprasad, a KPCC president and MLC, told reporters.

> KPCC PRESIDENT BK HARIPRASAD SAID THE CONSULTATIONS WERE COMPLETE AND THAT PARTY WAS AWAITING A DECISION FROM THE TOP BRASS

He said chief minister DK Shivakumar, former chief minister Siddaramaiah and senior Congress leaders had held several rounds of discussions on the expansion.

Shivakumar, Hariprasad said, would decide the timing of the swearing in after considering the almanac and what he described as auspicious hours.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi held a detailed hour-long meeting with Shivakumar, Siddaramaiah, Hariprasad, Congress general secretary KC Venugopal and Karnataka in charge general secretary Randeep Surjewala. State leaders presented a list of legislators being considered for ministerial positions, and the central leadership discussed the names individually.

Siddaramaiah argued that the selection should give priority to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and minority communities. Shivakumar sought what party leaders described as a broader balance, including younger legislators, major communities and groups that have had less representation.

The chief minister also argued that the composition of the ministry should be considered with the 2028 Assembly election in mind.

After the meeting, Gandhi asked the Karnataka leaders to return to Bengaluru and said the final list would be sent on Sunday night. Shivakumar indicated that he preferred the swearing in ceremony to be held Monday. Basavaraj Rayareddy, a former minister and a close aide of Siddaramaiah, said the talks had ended positively and that Monday was the most likely date for the ceremony.

The leadership also considered appointments to the posts of Assembly Speaker, Legislative Council chairman and chief whips in both Houses. The nomination of five seats in the Legislative Council was discussed as well. The Karnataka council of ministers can have 34 members, including the chief minister. Only 14 ministers are currently in place, leaving 20 positions unfilled. The prolonged vacancy has led to sustained lobbying by Congress legislators seeking induction into the government.

{ AMID HEAVY RAINS }

Holiday for schools in Dakshina Kannada

MANGALURU: The Dakshina Kannada district administration on Friday declared a holiday for schools, pre-university colleges, Industrial Training Institutes and diploma colleges across the district on August 1 as a precautionary measure in view of the continuing heavy rainfall forecast by the IMD.

The order was issued by the Dakshina Kannada District magistrate based on the recommendations of the District Disaster Management Authority after weather forecasts from the IMD and the Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre (KSNDMC) indicated that widespread rainfall is likely to continue across the district. The holiday will apply to all anganwadis, government-aided and private schools, including residential institutions, as well as all pre-university colleges, ITIs and diploma colleges, including residential campuses. The district administration warned that any violation of the order would invite action under the provisions of the Disaster Management Act, 2005. PTI

Govt is ignoring rising farmer suicides: HDK

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HD Kumaraswamy

MANDYA: Union minister HD Kumaraswamy launched a scathing attack on the Karnataka state government over its alleged failure to address agrarian distress, claiming that the current administration appears completely stagnant.

Addressing the media in B Hatna village, the Janata Dal (Secular) leader highlighted the grim reality of the state's agricultural sector.

"Farmer suicides have unfortunately started rising again in the state," Kumaraswamy said.

Kumaraswamy added, "Hundreds of farmers are being driven to the path of suicide due to immense distress, and massive crop damage has been reported across several regions." Criticising ministers and ruling party leaders for superficial visits to affected areas, he added, "Leaders should stop visiting fields just for photo opportunities. The need of the hour is to build confidence and boost morale among our farmers, especially now when banks have started actively issuing loan recovery notices to them."

Failure of Guarantee Schemes turning his focus toward the state's fiscal management, the Union Minister questioned the implementation of the government's flagship welfare programs. He asked what exactly the state government was doing while failing to adequately fund its own Guarantee Schemes.

"They promised a thorough revision of these schemes, but they have not even revised half of them," Kumaraswamy stated.

He urged the administration to shift its priorities, saying, "Put these guarantees aside for a moment and focus your entire attention on the plight of the farmers."

Kumaraswamy also took a swipe at internal party politics and the frequent Delhi trips made by ruling party members.

"You sit in Delhi for three to four days straight. Around 30 to 40 MLAs are currently camping in Delhi just lobbying for ministerial positions. Looking at all this, it does not even feel like this government has taken off. The government must stop this and immediately provide relief to distressed farmers." He expressed strong reservations regarding how the state has handled interstate water disputes.

M'luru courts deliver 20-year jail term in two sexual assault cases

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MANGALURU: Two separate courts in Mangaluru have sentenced five men to prison in two unrelated sexual assault cases, with four men receiving 20 years each for a 2018 gang rape and another man receiving 20 years for repeatedly sexually assaulting a minor.

In the first case, the second additional district and sessions (Special) Court on Thursday sentenced Prajwal, Arun Amin, Aditya Salian and Abdul Riyaz to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment each for gang raping a woman in November 2018 and committing offences under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

Justice Jagadeesh V N convicted the four men under multiple provisions of the Indian Penal Code and the SC/ST Act. The court also imposed a combined fine of Rs 74,000, ordering that Rs 60,000 be paid to the survivor as compensation and that her seized mobile phone be returned.

The group assaulted and restrained the man before taking the woman to an isolated area, where the four men raped her in succession, Nayak said. The accused threatened to kill both victims if they approached the police. Before leaving, one of the men forcibly took the woman's mobile phone and stored his contact details on it.

The Women's Police Station under the Mangaluru City Police commissionerate registered the case under Sections 341, 323, 354, 376D and 506 of the IPC, besides provisions of the SC/ST Act.

During the trial, which ran from January 2020 to April 2024, Nayak examined 40 of 65 witnesses, according to the prosecution. The second case, the additional district and sessions court (FTSC-2) in Mangaluru on Friday sentenced 20-year-old Sonu Maclean Noronha, a resident of Kunjathbail, to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment for repeatedly sexually assaulting a minor, threatening her and using explicit images to blackmail her.

Noronha befriended the minor in February 2024 and repeatedly sexually assaulted her between September 2024 and June 2025 at her rented house near Shaktinagar and another residence near Kembaru in Alape village.

Rat caught on CCTV 'stealing' gold jewels

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TUMAKURU: An unusual "thief", a rat was caught on CCTV carrying away gold rings and chains from a jewellery shop in this district, with the missing ornaments eventually recovered from its "hideout", the shop owner said on Friday.

The incident that occurred earlier this week came to light after staff at the said shop found that 10 rings and two chains were missing during a routine stock count, they said.

According to the shop owner Vishwas, the staff initially suspected theft and thoroughly examined the CCTV footage but found nothing unusual.

"Everyone started wondering whether a customer had taken them, but there was no evidence of that either. We couldn't understand how this had happened," he said.

They later noticed that several price tags, which carry the weight details of the ornaments, were also missing.

"We thought that if it was a thief, they wouldn't take the tags; they would only take the jewellery. So we decided to search again," he said.

Upon reviewing the previous night's CCTV footage, the staff spotted a rat carrying away a ring at around 4.30 am.

"That's when we realised it was the rat's doing. It had made a hole in one place and created a path from there to another area. Along that route, we found the chains and rings that had fallen. We recovered all the missing jewellery from that area," he added.

Ballari man held for allegedly killing wife, baby with hammer

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BIDAR: Police arrested a 28-year-old man in Ballari for allegedly killing his wife and their seven-month-old daughter with a hammer following repeated disputes over suspicions if the youngest child was his, officials said on Friday.

The killings took place between 8.30 pm and 9.30 pm on July 30 at the family's home in Andral village, according to district superintendent of police Dr Suman D Pennekar. The accused, Honnurappa, allegedly struck his wife Rajeshwari, 24, and their daughter Ashwini on the head with a hammer. Both succumbed to their injuries at the scene, police said.

The APMC Yard police arrested Honnurappa on Friday and seized the hammer allegedly used in the attack along with other evidence. He was remanded in judicial custody.

> THE ACCUSED, HONNURAPPA, STRUCK HIS WIFE RAJESHWARI, 24, AND INFANT ASHWINI ON HEAD WITH A HAMMER, COPS SAID

"The incident took place between 8.30 pm and 9.30 pm on July 30. The accused Honnurappa, 28, killed his wife Rajeshwari, 24, and seven-month-old daughter Ashwini by hitting them on the head with a hammer at their home. The severely injured mother and child died on the spot due to bleeding," Pennekar said.

A case was registered at the APMC Yard police station on a complaint by Rajeshwari's brother, Suresh. Police registered the case under Section 103(1) and began an investigation. Suresh told the police that there had been tension in the family for several days. During the preliminary investigation, police found that Honnurappa had repeatedly questioned his wife's fidelity and doubted whether their seven month old daughter was his child. Investigators said those suspicions had led to repeated arguments between the couple.

Police said the couple had been married for about six years and had three children. The youngest was seven months old when she was killed.

SOUTH REGION

Muthanga cop murder: After 23 years, all accused acquitted

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THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: A court on Friday acquitted all the accused in connection with the murder of police constable KV Vinod in 2003 during the Adivasi agitation for land rights in Muthanga in Kerala's Wayanad district. Meanwhile, the court has convicted four people, including tribal leader M Geethanandan, for involvement in a connecting attempt-to-murder case.

Vinod (29), attached to the Kerala Armed Police-4th Battalion in Kannur, was detained allegedly by tribal protesters inside a shed after the police opened fire on the agitators to evict them from the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary in Muthanga on February 19, 2003. The constable later succumbed to fatal injuries sustained after being hacked with a sword to the back of his head.

Kalpetta sessions judge Ayyoob Khan E ruled that Asokan, the second accused in the case who passed away during the course of trial, hacked Vinod on the back of his head after witnessing his associate Jogi being shot dead in police firing. There was no evidence, the court said, to establish that Asokan inflicted the fatal wound on Vinod with the foreknowledge of the other accused in the case, including first accused and tribal leader M Geethanandan.

> THE INCIDENT LED TO POLICY CHANGES IN THE ALLOTMENT OF LAND TO TRIBALS IN KERALA AND PROPELLED SUCCESSIVE GOVTS TO ADDRESS LANDLESSNESS AMONG TRIBALS

"That injury was made by Asokan (A2) at the time of firing, it was his own decision, who was provoked, who having no planning to share his decision with any of the other conspirators who were having no previous intention to murder the deceased Vinod...since A2 is no more, the proceedings against him stood abated," the court said, adding that the prosecution failed to prove the charge of conspiracy against the accused.

Of the 57 accused who were arraigned by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the Vinod murder case, only 42 stood trial at the time of verdict with the remaining 15 passing away during the course of the trial.

At the same time, the Kalpetta sessions court found four accused — Geethanandan (A1), Binu (A3), Rameshan (A5) and Anilkumar (A11) — guilty of involvement in the kidnapping and attempt to murder of police constable Abdul Salam and range officer PK Sasidharan.

The four accused were convicted under several sections of IPC and CrPC. They were sentenced to undergo rigorous imprisonment for five years and pay a fine of ₹10,000 each.

The court ruled that compensation of ₹3 lakh and ₹2 lakh be paid to Salam and Sasidharan respectively. It also stated that ₹7 lakh compensation be paid to the family of police constable KV Vinod. KV Babu, Vinod's brother and a retired deputy superintendent of police (DSP), said his family listened to the court verdict "with a numb heart."

"That it took 23 years for this verdict to arrive tells so much about the state of the society we live in. That all of the accused have been acquitted is extremely disappointing. My father, when he was alive, would consistently follow the case developments. It's good he didn't have to hear the news of the accused being acquitted," Babu told reporters.

"If the State government does not appeal against this verdict, my family will," he added.

Defence counsel TM Rasheed, who represented the accused, said the verdict does not provide justice for the families of Vinod and Jogi, the tribal man killed in the police firing.

"There has not even been an investigation into the killing of Jogi. The CBI failed to bring the people who killed him to account," said Rasheed.

In January 2003, members of the Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha (AGMS), under the leadership of Geethanandan and CK Janu, entered the forests under the wildlife sanctuary in Muthanga, set up huts and began cultivation in protest against the then Congress government's inaction on allotting land parcels to tribals. The tribal protesters attempted to assert their rights over the land in Muthanga which were declared forest property in the 1960s.

Clashes broke out on the morning of February 19, 2003 when personnel from the police and forest departments began an operation to evict the protesters from the wildlife sanctuary in Muthanga. Pellets and tear gas shells were fired by the police in a bid to clear the area. The tensions escalated when constable Salam and forest officer Sasidharan were detained by the tribals, resulting in police firing. One tribal, Jogi, was killed in the firing, while Vinod succumbed to fatal injuries sustained during the clashes.

While official records point to only two fatalities, unofficial estimates by human rights groups and tribal outfits stated over a dozen deaths. The alleged indiscriminate firing by the police on the tribals, allegedly without any provocation, were widely condemned by rights groups and remains a dark chapter in the history of Adivasi land rights in Kerala. Late Justice VR Krishna Iyer, in a preliminary report, termed the police action as 'excessive'. The incident led to policy changes in the allotment of land to tribals in the state and propelled successive governments to address landlessness among tribals.

{ TASMAC CASE }

SC grants pre-arrest bail to Senthil Balaji

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BENGALURU: The Supreme Court on Friday granted anticipatory bail to Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) MLA and former Tamil Nadu minister V Senthil Balaji in a corruption case concerning alleged irregularities in the functioning of the Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation (TASMAC).

A bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and justice Joymalya Bagchi passed the interim order while hearing Balaji's appeal against an order of the Madras high court that had refused protection from arrest to him.

While the Madras high court had observed that the allegations against Balaji involved a loss of around ₹17 crore to the State exchequer and that the DVAC required his custodial interrogation, the Supreme Court said that Balaji was no longer a serving minister and it was unlikely he exercised any clout to influence the ongoing investigation in the case. "If he is guilty, he will have to face consequences. This man is not going to jump investigation and go out. We will ensure he participates in investigation and he will not interfere with investigation. If there is any perception of breach, come to us," the Supreme Court said while allowing Balaji's plea seeking anticipatory bail.

The Court directed him to cooperate with the probe and to

V Senthil Balaji

surrender his passport.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, who appeared for Balaji assured the bench that the DMK leader will cooperate with the investigating authorities and that he had already deposited his passport with the investigating officer probing the case.

Senior advocate Guru Krishna K, who appeared for the Tamil Nadu government, opposed Balaji's plea arguing that he had been a State minister from the years 2021 and 2025 minister, and during his tenure, he had ensured no cases over the alleged regularities could be registered. "He (Balaji) cannot seek blanket protection. In a serious corruption case of this nature, why anticipatory bail?" Krishna said. The Court however, reiterated that if Balaji did attempt to tamper with the probe or influence witnesses, it will "bring him back" and cancel the relief granted to him. Balaji had filed the present Special Leave Petition just hours after his anticipatory bail application was rejected by the Madras high court on Thursday.

TWO ARRESTED IN TASMAC FINANCIAL IRREGULARITIES CASE: OFFICIALS

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CHENNAI: Two individuals allegedly involved in financial irregularities in the Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation (TASMAC) were arrested, the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC) said on Friday.

The duo, identified as Karthik and his close associate Ramesh, both from Karur district, were arrested on July 30 and sent to judicial custody after being produced before the principal judge of the principal session court, city civil court, Chennai, a press release said.

The arrests follow a corruption case registered by the DVAC based on information received from the state government. The agency said it had conducted a discreet enquiry into the documents received from the government.

The DVAC has booked former DMK minister V Senthil Balaji, former TASMAC managing director S Visakan, TASMAC officials Rama Durai Murugan and Panneer Selvam, Rathesh and Karthik. The DVAC has registered cases under various sections of the BNS 2023, and the Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Act, 2018.

Cases filed against Meta India Head, social media users over posts on PM

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HYDERABAD: The Hyderabad Cyber Crime police has registered two cases against some social media users and Head of Meta in India, following a complaint by BJP activists over alleged objectionable content targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The FIR was booked under Sections 66C (identity theft), 67 (publishing obscene material in electronic form) of the IT Act, and 353 (2) (accused person to be competent witness), 336 (4) (forgery) of the BNS following a complaint made on July 29 by a social media core committee member of the Telangana BJP.

"The cases were booked against those who posted and how they (social platforms) allowed it," a cyber crime official told PTI on Friday.

In one case, the FIR was registered against 'users of Instagram and Facebook' mentioned in the complaint and the Head of Meta in India.

The complainant sought an investigation into certain Instagram accounts that allegedly published and circulated content derogatory toward PM Modi.

> "We are in touch with the concerned agencies and are cooperating with them to resolve the matter"
> META SPOKESPERSON

The complaint stated the content appears to promote narratives prejudicial to the nation's sovereignty, integrity and public order.

The complainant submitted details of the Instagram and Facebook post URLs.

He requested the police to preserve electronic evidence related to the social media accounts and posts, identify the individuals operating the accounts, conduct a thorough probe, and coordinate with Meta to obtain necessary account details and preserve relevant digital evidence if required.

Telangana BJP Chief Spokesperson N V Subhash on Friday demanded immediate and exemplary legal action against those responsible for creating, disseminating and amplifying morphed, abusive and derogatory content targeting PM Modi during the CJP-led NEET paper leak agitation

Subhash asserted that "freedom of speech can never become a licence for organised abuse and character assassination".

At the heart of this issue lies a "fundamental constitutional question"-- whether repeated and organised public abuse directed at a constitutional office-holder falls within the ambit of free speech or amounts to actionable misconduct, he said. The Constitution protects liberty, but it does not legitimise lawlessness. Rights come with responsibilities and accountability necessarily follows when legal limits are allegedly breached, Subhash said in a statement.

Meanwhile, a Meta spokesperson said, "We are in touch with the concerned agencies and are cooperating with them to resolve the matter."

Modi regime caused ₹151 lakh-crore debt burden: CM Revanth

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HYDERABAD: Telangana chief minister A Revanth Reddy on Thursday attacked the NDA government at the Centre over the country's rising debt, claiming the Narendra Modi government had added ₹151 lakh crore to the debt burden since assuming office in 2014.

A Revanth Reddy

Addressing government teachers who visited Finland and Germany as part of an international exposure programme, Reddy said the country's total debt burden had now risen to ₹201 lakh crore.

"While all the Prime Ministers till 2014 since Indepedence took a debt of ₹ 51 lakh crore, the debt mounted by the present Prime Minister between 2014 and 2026, in 12 years, has been ₹151 lakh crore," he said.

He said previous prime ministers had built railway lines, National Highways and provided electrification, education, irrigation and drinking water to lakhs of villages. Questioning the Centre's development record, he asked, "Has the country got new airports, railway lines, major ports in the last 12 years?" Citing a recent reply in Parliament, he reiterated that the country's debt burden had risen to ₹201 lakh crore.

Reddy defended former prime ministers Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, saying they made stellar contributions to the country but continued to face criticism.

Urging teachers and their unions to take a pledge to transform the education sector in five years, Reddy asserted that he would be in the chief minister's post till 2034. He said education and skill development were like two eyes for him and expressed concern over the employability of engineering graduates. "You (teachers) give a plain paper to them (engineering graduates) and ask them to fill a job application... Criminal waste... He won't apply for a small job because he studied engineering. He does not learn skills," Reddy said.

He said 1.10 lakh engineering graduates complete their course in the state each year, with many unable to write an application for a job. Reddy clarified that he was not blaming graduates but the education system.

The chief minister listed initiatives including a breakfast scheme for students from nursery to Class 12, teacher recruitment and transfers, and the transformation of ITIs into Advanced Technology Centres.

Meanwhile, opposition BRS and BJP accused Reddy of "insulting" engineering graduates with his "criminal waste" remark.

BRS working president K T Rama Rao asked, "What are his (CM) qualifications to be saying so? Did he ever write any competitive exam in his entire life? Did he ever appear for an interview for a job? Did he ever work anywhere In a professional environment?"

State BJP chief spokesperson N V Subhash said, "While Rahul Gandhi referred to students as "idiots," his "protégé" Revanth Reddy has gone a step further by calling engineering students "criminal waste.""

PM-SHRI ROW EXPOSES FISSURES IN KERALA UDF

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THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Indications of fissures between UDF partners Congress and IUML emerged over the implementation of the PM-SHRI scheme, with IUML leader and industries minister PK Kunhalikutty contradicting UDF convener Adoor Prakash's claim that the state government would go ahead with the programme.

The scheme aims to upgrade the infrastructure of select government schools using funds from the Union government.

Kunhalikutty told reporters on Friday that PM-SHRI was not discussed at the UDF coordination meeting in the state capital on Thursday.

"There was no discussion on PM-SHRI at the meeting yesterday. A cabinet sub-committee is examining the matter. After the panel submits its report, the government and the UDF will respond," he said. He also denied any rift within the UDF over the issue. At the same time, Kunhalikutty said that even if the state proceeds with the scheme, the UDF government will not accept the Centre's conditions on curriculum and selection of schools.

UDF convener Adoor Prakash had said on Thursday that the state could not withdraw from the scheme as the previous LDF dispensation had signed the MoU last year.

Meanwhile, MoS Jayant Chaudhary told the Rajya Sabha on July 29 that states can choose to implement the scheme or withdraw from it, countering the UDF leaders' claim that states cannot withdraw after signing the MoU.

TN man reunited with kin after 20 yrs in Pb as a bonded labourer

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PATIALA: A 68-year-old woman from Tamil Nadu was reunited with her son here after 23 long years, after his rescue from alleged bonded labour in Punjab, officials said on Friday.

Patiala Deputy Commissioner Dr Himanshu Aggarwal said Prakash was rescued in 2022 after spending nearly two decades as a bonded labourer at a dairy farm in Amritsar district. He was handed over to his family after completion of legal formalities and identity verification, the official said. The district administration has directed the labour and social security, women and child development departments to ensure that Prakash receives compensation and rehabilitation benefits.

It has also ordered legal action against those allegedly responsible for keeping him in bonded labour, the official added.

At Apna Farz Seva Society's shelter home in Lachkani village of Patiala, Prakash's mother, R Sundari, embraced her son after more than two decades.

According to officials, Prakash went missing in 2003 at the age of 16 after leaving home following a tiff with his younger brother.

Despite repeated efforts, his family could not trace him and eventually presumed he was dead. His father died of cancer in 2021 without knowing his son's whereabouts.

The NGO said Prakash

> ACCORDING TO OFFICIALS, PRAKASH WENT MISSING IN 2003 AT THE AGE OF 16 AFTER LEAVING HOME FOLLOWING A TIFF AT HOME

reached Punjab under unknown circumstances and allegedly spent nearly two decades as a bonded labourer at a dairy farm in Jasraur village of Amritsar, before being rescued in 2022.

He was shifted to the NGO's shelter in Patiala, where he initially suffered from trauma and memory loss. As his memory gradually returned, he recalled the name of his native village, enabling volunteers to trace his family.

The search was aided by retired Haryana Vidhan Sabha Secretary Subhash Chander and Tamil Nadu journalist Muthaiya, who located Prakash's mother after extensive inquiries across the state.

Before the reunion, authorities in Tamil Nadu verified Prakash's identity through school records, ration cards and other official documents.

His younger brother travelled to Punjab to identify him, while his mother confirmed his identity through video call.

Following the verification, Coimbatore and Patiala district administrations coordinated to facilitate Prakash's safe return and rehabilitation, leading to the reunion, officials said.

Tamil Nadu CM C Joseph Vijay at Rajarathinam Stadium in Chennai on Friday. PTI

CM Vijay presents medals to police, flags off new fleet of vehicles

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CHENNAI: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay on Friday presented prestigious state and national medals to police, fire, and allied departmental personnel, and flagged off a new fleet of vehicles for the Coastal Security Group during a grand ceremonial parade here.

The chief minister arrived at the saluting dais and conducted an inspection of the parade in an open vehicle.

The parade, commanded by Deputy Commissioner of Police Akash Joshi and Second-in-Command Assistant Superintendent of Police Ajith Punia, featured contingents, including the Mounted Police, Fire and Rescue Services, Disaster Response Force, Coastal Security Group, the all-women 'Singappen' Special Task Force, Prisons and Correctional Services, and the Commando Force.

During the event at Rajarathinam Stadium, attendees paid respects to the President's Colour, the highest honour awarded to the Tamil Nadu Police for its 160 years of service, marking it as the first force in South India to receive the distinction.

The Director General of Police, Head of the Police Force, Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal, delivered the welcome address, affirming the police force's dedication to maintaining law and order and public safety.

CM Vijay formally distributed a wide range of honours to distinguished personnel. The awards included the Chief Minister's Fire Service Medal for Gallantry and Excellence, the President's Medal for Distinguished Service, the Medal for Meritorious Service, the Union Home Minister's Medal for Special Operations and Intelligence, and the Chief Minister's Anna Medal.

To enhance surveillance, patrolling, and emergency response along Tamil Nadu's 1,076 km coastline spanning 14 districts, the CM flagged off 42 newly inducted Mahindra Thar Roxx four-wheelers and 96 Honda Unicorn two-wheelers for the Coastal Security Group.

The ceremony also featured specialised operational demonstrations, including a hostage rescue and anti-terror mock drill conducted by the Quick Reaction Team and House Intervention Team of the Tamil Nadu Commando Force.

The event additionally featured a synchronised silent weapon drill performed by 72 personnel and a daredevil motorcycle stunt display led by Woman Inspector T Anbarasi.

Kerala govt will withdraw all cases linked to NEET protestors across state: Chennithala

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THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The Kerala government has decided to withdraw all cases registered in connection with protests held across the state in support of the NEET agitation in Delhi, Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala said on Friday.

Speaking to reporters here, Chennithala said the decision was taken following requests received from Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and Chief Minister V D Satheesan.

He said several youth organisations and political parties had organised demonstrations across Kerala expressing solidarity with the protests over alleged irregularities in the NEET examination.

"Several cases were registered in connection with those protests. We received many requests seeking withdrawal of these cases."

"The chief minister forwarded all those representations to me, and I have directed the DGP not to proceed further with any of these cases," Chennithala said.

Although FIRs had been registered in several instances, the protests were held over an issue of national importance and did not involve any violence.

"It was a positive agitation highlighting a major public issue. Even the Supreme Court took a positive view of the matter. No violent incidents took place here. Therefore, I have directed the DGP not to proceed with any of the registered

Ramesh Chennithala

cases," he said.

Asked about the number of cases that would be withdrawn, Chennithala said instructions had been issued that no further action should be taken in any of the cases, irrespective of their number.

Further, he said joint searches by the police and the Prison Department under "Operation Toofan" were continuing in prisons across the state following complaints about the use and sale of narcotic substances inside jails.

Responding to a question on the alleged use of delivery personnel in drug trafficking, Chennithala said the government would deal sternly with such activities.

"The use of delivery personnel for the distribution of drugs will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Strict action will be taken against those involved," he warned.

On the Vigilance department decision to close the Punarjani FCRA case against Satheesan, Chennithala said the no evidence was found against the CM by the probe agency.

He said the Vigilance Director had only observed that alleged violations of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) did not fall within the jurisdiction of the state agency and would have to be investigated, if necessary, by central agencies.

"The Vigilance categorically stated that there was no evidence against Satheesan and recommended closure of the case. When such a report is submitted, how can the Home Minister insist on proceeding with the case," he asked.

Rejecting CPI(M)'s criticism of the decision, Chennithala said the previous LDF government had also not referred the matter to any central agency despite being in office for years.

"If they want to approach the court, they are free to do so. We have no objection," he added.

LS clears birth, death certificates' bill sans debate; BJP slams Oppn

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NEW DELHI: The Lok Sabha on Friday passed the Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill, 2026, amid Opposition protests, with the legislation being cleared without a debate. Parliamentary affairs minister Kiren Rijiju criticised Opposition members for not participating in discussions on the bill and later accusing the government of rushing legislation through Parliament.

The bill, which seeks to make delayed registration of births and deaths more stringent by requiring an order from a judicial magistrate (first class) for registrations made more than two years after the event, was passed by voice vote in less than three minutes amid disruptions in the House.

The legislation was taken up for consideration and passage after the Lok Sabha reassembled at noon with BJP MP Dilip Saikia in the Chair. It was passed amid sloganeering by Opposition members, several of whom trooped into the Well of the House demanding the presence of home minister Amit Shah.

Soon after its passage, the House was adjourned for the day. Rijiju said Opposition members should not blame the government for passing bills without discussion when they themselves chose not to participate in debates.

"You say that the government passes bills by steamrolling them through... You cannot make this allegation, because you have missed your opportunity. ... Mr. Chairman, I only wish to say that regarding any bills we bring forward in the future... ...if you create such a ruckus over them as well, it will not be good at all. ... Therefore, please cooperate and do not create a ruckus," Rijiju said in the House.

"We wanted all Members of Parliament to participate in this. The timing for this was also decided in the Business Advisory Committee. You should not go outside later and ask why the bill was passed without discussion. You should not say that. We repeatedly asked all of you to come to this House for the discussion. The public has sent us to this House precisely to voice their concerns," Rijiju added.

The parliamentary affairs minister said he had repeatedly appealed to the Congress to participate in discussions on what he described as an important piece of legislation.

"Yet, our colleagues from the Opposition did not participate in the discussion. It is unfortunate. Please do not do this in the future. The public will demand an answer from you...," he said urging Opposition members to participate in debates on future legislation instead of creating disruptions.

The legislation was cleared for introduction by the Union Cabinet on July 20.

Kharge reiterates demand for Amit Shah resignation

NEW DELHI: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Friday accused the Centre of acting out of a sense of vendetta against students by filing FIRs against them and subjecting them to forced detentions, as he asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to get home minister Amit Shah to resign.

"Narendra Modi ji, 10 days ago, your government cracked down on the youth using lathis, batons and pellet guns," Kharge said, referring to the July 20 'Sansad Chalo' march by the Cockroach Janta Party.

"Now that the students have withdrawn their protest, you are acting out of a sense of vendetta by filing FIRs against them and subjecting them to forced detentions," Kharge said on X.

PTI

With Oppn, but not a part of INDIA bloc, DMK clarifies stance

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LEADERS SAID NEXT WEEK, THEY WILL DEMAND THAT UNION HOME MINISTER AMIT SHAH COME TO THE HOUSE

NEW DELHI: Dispelling speculation on the DMK's strategy for the monsoon session of Parliament, party MP and former Union minister Dayanidhi Maran has told HT that the party remains a part of the Opposition and would join efforts to oppose the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) amendment bill expected to be taken up for debate next week.

The statement comes amid the Opposition's efforts to form a joint strategy. A section of the Opposition is in touch with former Tamil Nadu chief minister and DMK leader MK Stalin. Opposition leaders told HT that next week, they will demand that Union home minister Amit Shah come to the House. It will also organise protests against the alleged theft of donations for the Ram Mandir outside Parliament.

DMK leaders, however, have stopped attending the Opposition's meeting held every morning at Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge's office as the party snapped ties with the largest Opposition party.

"We are with the Opposition. But we are neither with the Congress nor a part of the INDIA bloc because the Congress betrayed us. But we have been opposing this government on various issues. We have always opposed the NEET and we want it to be abolished. We opposed the exam paper leak bill. Our role and objectives as the Opposition are solely guided by the interests of Tamil Nadu," Maran said.

Hitting out at the BJP, he said, "The BJP is trying to divert attention of the people from the real issues by bringing bills such as the one to protect Vande Mataram. Look at the situation in West Asia and India is facing a huge pressure on oil prices. But Congress is not raising raise these real issues. They are helping the BJP."

The DMK lawmaker said the party will oppose the FCRA amendment bill. "This FCRA bill is a classic attempt of the BJP to browbeat the minorities. DMK will oppose the bill."

A section of the Opposition, led by the Trinamool Congress, has kept the communication channel open with the DMK. TMC's Rajya Sabha floor leader Derek O'Brien said, "We are in contact with the DMK and AAP. They are a key part of the Opposition. Our floor strategy is based on the coordination we have with all such parties."

O'Brien said the Opposition has decided that on Monday and Tuesday, they will demand Shah's presence in the House. "All Opposition parties have decided that on Monday and Tuesday, we will demand that home minister Amit Shah's comes to the House. He must face the Opposition. The protests over the Ram Mandir donation theft are equally important and we will raise it outside the House during those two days," he said.

When asked about the FCRA bill, O'Brien said, "We know the BJP playbook: Introduce draconian bills like FCRA. Then bulldoze in Parliament with no debate. When Parliament doesn't function, who benefits? The government. But the government is accountable to Parliament and Parliament is accountable to people. When Parliament doesn't run, government is accountable to no one."

OPPN STAGES SKIT IN PARL COMPLEX OVER RAM TEMPLE CASE, BJP HITS BACK

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NEW DELHI: The Opposition intensified its attack over the "chanda chori" (offerings theft) at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya by enacting a "skit" in the Parliament complex on Friday, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) hit back, alleging that an attempt is being made to denigrate the Hindu faith.

The Congress and the Samajwadi Party (SP) escalated their protest against the alleged theft of donations, though some of their slogans also referred to the police crackdown on the July 20 march by students protesting NEET paper leaks to Parliament.

As part of its show-and-tell protest, the Opposition kept donation boxes in front of the Makar Dwar steps, the main entrance for MPs, and Independent MP Rajesh Ranjan, popularly known as Pappu Yadav, sat with the boxes.

MPs, including Rahul Gandhi, put money inside the boxes, and Yadav, clad in saffron robes, slipped money into his pockets to symbolise the alleged theft at the Ram temple. Ayodhya MP and SP leader Awdhesh Prasad, SP MP Dimple Yadav and other Opposition MPs also briefly appeared.

According to people aware of the developments, the Speaker's office is likely to meet lawmakers to discuss the enforcement of existing guidelines governing protests and demonstrations on Parliament premises so as to not create problems for MPs to exit and enter the precincts.

The BJP criticised the portrayal of saffron-clad saints as thieves. "It is in poor taste. The government took swift action against the accused... no one has been spared," said a senior BJP MP. The VHP condemned the act. Several prominent seers and office-bearers associated with the Ram temple and Ayodhya's religious institutions urged President Droupadi Murmu and Lok Sabha Speaker to cancel their membership.

SC orders DNA test on 20 Indians killed in Russia

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THE SUPREME COURT ORDERED THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS TO ENSURE THAT THE TESTS ARE DONE BEFORE THE BODIES ARE SENT BACK TO INDIA

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Friday mandated DNA testing of the mortal remains of 20 Indians that have to be brought back from Russia where they died as part of the Russian Army in the ongoing conflict with Ukraine.

Directing the Centre to arrange for such a testing prior to repatriating the bodies to India, the court ordered the ministry of external affairs (MEA) to appoint a nodal officer to help aggrieved family members to file compensation claims with the Russian authorities.

The order was passed after the Centre informed the court that among the 80 Indians who reportedly joined the Russian Army and are stated to be either dead or missing, 51 deaths have been confirmed. Of these, the bodies of 29 were brought back while 2 were locally cremated in Russia. There are 20 dead bodies yet to be returned.

As regards those who are missing, the Centre pointed out that five have been confirmed to be missing by the Russian side while the whereabouts of 24 others are yet to be traced.

A bench headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant said, "In the event of casualty, MEA will arrange DNA test of the mortal remains with that of family members for identification of dead body and on doing such exercise of DNA test, the body shall be handed over to the family members."

The order of the court became necessary as some of the petitioners expressed concerns that their demands for a DNA probe are not being met. The lawyer representing them told the court that coffins are being sent containing flesh and bones.

The Centre disputed these claims stating that the lawyer is "misleading" the court and stated that the Indian Embassy at Moscow has even entertained requests for DNA examination by families and the same was facilitated by the Russian authorities.

It added that the Deputy Defence Minister of the Russian Federation informed the Indian Ambassador that since the bodies are in the conflict area, which remains under constant drone attacks and explosions, locating the mortal remains of deceased soldiers continues to remain "extremely difficult".

Out of the approximately 219 Indian nationals who reportedly joined the Russian Armed Forces, 139 have been prematurely discharged from the contracts executed by them with the Russian Army. Of the remaining 80, the Centre stated that 51 have died are 29 are yet to be traced out.

To facilitate filing of compensation claims, the court directed the legal services authority in the concerned states to provide free legal aid for filing compensation claims and with regard to supply of DNA samples for matching.

BSF RESERVATION BENEFITS EXTEND TO EX-AGNIVEERS

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NEW DELHI: The Centre on Thursday issued a notification extending reservation benefits to ex-Agniveers in the Border Security Force (BSF).

According to existing reservation policy for constable (General Duty) posts in central armed police forces (CAPFs), 15% seats are reserved for Scheduled Castes, 7.5% for Scheduled Tribes (ST), 27% for other backward classes (OBCs).

The selected ex-Agniveers, upon completion of their service in the armed forces, will be joining as Constables (General Duty) in the different CAPFs.

"The provisions of reservation shall also apply in the case of ex-Agniveers," the July 30 notification said.

The Union home ministry also notified the government's announcement made in Parliament last week regarding 50% reservation in the CAPFs and exemption for ex-Agniveers from the written exam, physical standards and physical efficiency tests. HT first reported on April 14 that retired Agniveer soldiers would be exempted from all the three tests during their induction in the CAPFs.

To be sure, Centre is yet to announce how merit will be determined among the ex-Agniveers applying for recruitment to the CAPFs and Assam Rifles. People aware of the matter said the home ministry is working on this and is holding regular discussions with chiefs of CAPFs.

On July 21, minister of state for home affairs Nityanand Rai informed Parliament that former Agniveers will be entitled to 50% reservation in the recruitment of Constable (General Duty) and Rifleman posts in the CAPFs and Assam Rifles, besides being exempted from the Physical Standards Test (PST), Physical Efficiency Test (PET) and the written examination.

Govt clears floating solar capacity boost, PM-Kisan extension

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THE PM-KISAN SCHEME HAS BEEN EXTENDED UNTIL FY31 WITH A TOTAL OUTLAY OF ₹3.15 LAKH CRORE

NEW DELHI: The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Friday approved a series of measures aimed at strengthening farmer welfare, expanding sports infrastructure and accelerating India's clean energy transition.

The decisions include extending the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme until FY31 with an outlay of ₹3.15 lakh crore, clearing the ₹5,070-crore Pradhan Mantri Surya Sarovar Yojana (PM-SSY) to develop 5,000 MW of floating solar capacity backed by battery storage, among others.

The government said the measures are expected to boost renewable energy generation, support domestic manufacturing, create jobs and ensure continued financial assistance to millions of farmer families.

Under PM-SSY, the government plans to install 5,000 MW of floating solar capacity between 2026-27 and 2030-31. Each project will be required to include a minimum energy storage capacity of two hours (10,000 MWh). Financial support under the scheme will continue until 2032-33, officials aware of the matter said.

They said the Centre will provide Central Financial Assistance (CFA) of ₹1 crore per MW for eligible solar photovoltaic projects after commissioning.

"In addition, a CFA of up to ₹50 lakh per project will also be available for undertaking feasibility studies, including bathymetry and hydrography assessments, environmental studies, and other activities for de-risking the project development," an official said.

The approval follows an assessment by the National Institute of Solar Energy, which estimated a floating solar potential of around 102.18 GWp across reservoirs and other suitable inland water bodies in India. At present, the country has just over 700 MW of installed floating solar capacity.

Officials said the programme is expected to reduce around 10 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions annually and generate about 16,000-17,000 full-time equivalent jobs.

In a separate decision, the Cabinet approved ₹3.15 lakh crore for the continuation of PM-KISAN from 2026-27 to 2030-31. Under the scheme, eligible landholding farmer families receive ₹6,000 annually in three equal instalments directly into their bank accounts.

According to the government, more than ₹4.47 lakh crore has been transferred to farmers through 23 instalments since the scheme's launch in 2019. The latest instalment benefited more than 9.49 crore farmers, with over ₹18,984 crore released.

The Centre said an evaluation by NITI Aayog found that more than 92% of surveyed beneficiaries used the assistance for agricultural activities and farm investments, while around 85% reported higher farm income and reduced dependence on informal credit.

SC grants pre-arrest bail to ex-TN minister in TASMAC graft case

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BENGALURU: The Supreme Court on Friday granted anticipatory bail to Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) MLA and former Tamil Nadu minister V Senthil Balaji in a corruption case concerning alleged irregularities in the functioning of the Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation (TASMAC).

A bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and justice Joymalya Bagchi passed the interim order while hearing Balaji's appeal against an order of the Madras high court that had refused protection from arrest to him.

While the Madras high court had observed that the allegations against Balaji involved a loss of around ₹17 crore to the State exchequer and that the DVAC required his custodial interrogation, the Supreme Court said that Balaji was no longer a serving minister and it was unlikely he exercised any clout to influence the ongoing investigation in the case.

Senthil Balaji moved the SC soon after Madras HC denied him anticipatory bail.

"If he is guilty, he will have to face consequences. This man is not going to jump investigation and go out. We will ensure he participates in investigation and he will not interfere with investigation," the Court said while granting anticipatory bail to Balaji.

Meanwhile, the DVAC arrested two people in the case.

The Court directed him to cooperate with the probe and to surrender his passport. Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, who appeared for Balaji assured the bench that the DMK leader will cooperate with the investigating

Earlier this week, the DVAC widened its probe into alleged corruption in TASMAC, carrying out searches at 41 sites across the state and registering a fresh FIR against Balaji and six others.

2 BJP workers held for Suvendu's PA murder

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KOLKATA: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Thursday arrested two Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) workers who allegedly planned the murder of Chandranath Rath, personal assistant of Suvendu Adhikari, officials said.

A senior official said that the two accused Sagar Sonkar and Saheb Sonkar are brothers. They used to work in Rath's team.

Rath was shot dead on May 6, three days BJP before Adhikari took oath as the chief minister of West Bengal. The results of the state legislative assembly were declared on May 4.

"Two persons Sagar Sonkar and Saheb Sonkar have been arrested for their alleged involvement in the crime. They had planned the murder starting from arranging the shooters, providing logistics and even helping in conducting the recce," a CBI official told HT.

The CBI had earlier arrested nine persons. Some of the accused were arrested from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

"The two were BJP workers and used to work in Rath's team. Preliminary investigation revealed that they were also in touch with a rival political party. Further investigation is going on," said a CBI official.

On the night of May 6, Rath was shot dead at Madhyamgram in North 24 Parganas, when he was on his way back home in a SUV.

Class 10 student stabbed to death

BHUBANESWAR : A Class 10 student was allegedly stabbed to death inside a government school in Odisha's Koraput on Friday, police said.The victim, Mahesh Bagh, 15, was allegedly attacked police said, adding that he died during treatment. Police said a 17-year-old former student allegedly stabbed him outside the classroom, and the motive was yet to be established.

Red notice issued over Tripura murder

DEHRADUN: Uttarakhand Police have got an Interpol Red Corner Notice issued against the prime accused in the Tripura student murder case, Yagya Raj Awasthi, who has been absconding for over seven months. Anjel Chakma died after being attacked in Dehradun on December 9.

Test result delayed, KV teaching posts aspirants launch drive

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MUMBAI: Lakhs of applicants from across the country who sat for entrance exams for 23,029 teaching and non-teaching posts in schools run by the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathna (KVS) have launched an online campaign over the delay in announcing the results, even as the education ministry maintains that the "prescribed process" is being followed with an emphasis on "accuracy and transparency" and that the results will be "declared at the earliest".

But the applicants say that more than four months since the examinations were conducted, there has been no announcement on the final results or the next stages of recruitment. Their campaign, they say, comes on the back of a year-long recruitment process.

The central government-funded KVS runs 1353 Kendriya Vidyalayas, 661 Navodaya Vidyalayas (NVS) which are residential schools, while the National Education Society for Tribal Students runs 485 Eklavya Model Residential Schols (EMRS). There have been 23,029 teaching and non-teaching positions vacant in these schools for the last several years. The last recruitment was done in 2015. Vacancies in KVS and NVS also include 987 posts for special teachers, appointments for which were assured by the Centre in 2024 in the Delhi High Court.

In December 2025 and January of 2026, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) which is the nodal agency for these recruitments conducted what is called a Tier-I exam which is a basic online screening test. Over 2 million candidates appeared for the Tier-I examination, the results for which were declared on January 31 and February 28 in which 8.5 lakh candidates made the cut for KVS and NVS positions while data for EMRS candidates is not available.

Between March 22 and 31 this year, CBSE conducted advanced subject knowledge tests known as Tier-II exams. In May, CBSE released the answer key for objections. This was handled by a third party, Coempt Edutech Private Limited which had earlier scanned CBSE class X and XII answer sheets. "When I went to CBSE headquarter in Delhi to enquire about the Tier-II results, officials there told me that there was some glitch in result processing and that Coempt would be resolving it," one of the candidates told HT. He refused to go on record as at present he works as a temporary teacher in a CBSE-affiliated school in Mumbai.

There have been 23,029 posts vacant in these schools for the last several years. HT ARCHIVE

Coempt is the same company that has come under fire for its handling of CBSE Class XII exam papers, which were scanned and marked online for the first time this year, a process that has proved glitchy and error-prone.

An education ministry official who asked not to be named said the evaluation process is ongoing. "The Tier-II exam comprised both objective and descriptive components. More than 2.1 lakh descriptive answer books are required to be evaluated. As this is a large-scale, multi-post recruitment exercise, comprehensive post-examination scrutiny and validation along with evaluation are essential before finalisation of the results. CBSE is following the prescribed process and undertaking all necessary checks to ensure accuracy and transparency. The process is being completed on priority so that the results may be declared at the earliest, while fully adhering to due process."

But candidates say there has been no further communication regarding the declaration of results, merit lists, interviews, skill tests, or document verification. A M Saini, who works as teacher in a government school on a clock-hour basis (CHB) in Mumbai, and who is one of the candidates for KVS, said, "The delay has left us uncertain about our future plans. I postponed joining other jobs or making career decisions because I was waiting for the recruitment process to be completed."

Saini further stated that there is a shortage of teachers across schools under KVS. To fill the learning gap, most school managements have appointed teachers on CHB or on a contract basis.

Kiran Shelar, another candidate from Mumbai who applied for NVS, said, "We prepared for a year and cleared the first stage before appearing for Tier-II. We are not asking for any special treatment, we only want the authorities to share a timeline for the results." They say that the academic year for students in these schools is also being impacted on account of shortfall of teachers.

Earlier this week, these candidates launched a massive social media campaign demanding the declaration of results of the Tier Two exam and the completion of the recruitment process. A few of them have even got together to launch EMRS, KVS, NVS Janata Party and threatened a public protest if the results are not declared soon.

In addition, a Delhi lawyer, Ashok Agarwal, has sent a legal notice to the Commissioners of KVS and NVS and the Chairperson of CBSE over the delay in the recruitment process. In the notice, he referred to a 2024 Delhi High Court order and alleged that the authorities were not complying with the court's directions on recruitment.

The notice refers to a petition filed in 2024 by the Social Jurist, a civil rights group, seeking the appointment of special teachers in KVS schools. In its judgment dated August 8, 2024, the Delhi High Court had noted that the Ministry of Finance had approved 987 posts for special teachers and that their recruitment process would be completed within six months.

These 987 posts were included in the 2025 recruitment advertisement, but no appointments have been made so far. "This is a clear case of contempt of the August 8 High Court order. It has now been nearly two years since the order was passed, yet no appointments have been made in the schools," said Agarwal, who has given the authorities time until Saturday to declare the results, failing which he said he would file a contempt petition before the Delhi High Court.

KERALA TO DROP CASES AGAINST NEET PROTESTERS

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The Kerala government has decided to withdraw cases registered in connection with protests held across the state in support of the NEET agitation in Delhi, Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala said on Friday.

Speaking to reporters in the city, Chennithala said the decision was taken following requests received from Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and Chief Minister V D Satheesan.

He said several youth organisations and political parties had organised demonstrations across Kerala expressing solidarity with the protests over alleged irregularities in the NEET examination. "Several cases were registered in connection with those protests. We received many requests seeking withdrawal of these cases. The CM forwarded all those representations to me, and I have directed the DGP not to proceed further with any of these cases," he said. "It was a positive agitation," he said, adding instructions had been issued that no further action should be taken in any of the cases. PTI

SC seeks rules for PIs in marital cases

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NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Friday held that a wife found to be living in adultery is not entitled to either interim or final maintenance under the law, while simultaneously calling for a legal framework to regulate private detectives who gather evidence in such cases, citing concerns over privacy, voyeurism, authenticity of electronic records and lack of accountability.

In a ruling that could significantly shape maintenance disputes and the use of surveillance in matrimonial litigation, a bench of justices Sanjay Karol and Vipul M Pancholi ruled that while allegations of adultery do not automatically disentitle a wife from maintenance, trial courts cannot postpone deciding such pleas until the conclusion of maintenance proceedings.

At the same time, the court said the growing reliance on private investigators to collect photographs and videos in matrimonial disputes has created serious legal questions that Parliament and the Law Commission should examine.

The judgment came in an appeal filed by a man against the Rajasthan high court's refusal to interfere with a trial court order granting interim maintenance to his estranged wife, despite his plea that she was living in adultery and was therefore barred from claiming maintenance under Section 125(4) of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).

Setting aside the high court's order and remanding the matter to the trial court, the Supreme Court held that the statutory bar contained in Section 125(4) extends to both interim and final maintenance. "If adultery is proved, the wife claiming maintenance would not be entitled to the same as an interim measure and therefore, obviously, not even as a final measure," it held.

SC said if adultery is proved, wife would not be entitled to interim or final maintenance.

The court clarified merely alleging adultery would not be sufficient to deny maintenance. Husband would have to place "clear and cogent" material before court which, on the face of it, establishes the allegation. "If the application for maintenance is to be denied at the interim stage itself, the party having filed the application under Section 125(4) must present clear and cogent evidence that would ex facie establish adultery," it said.

The bench held that the trial court erred in refusing to examine the husband's application under Section 125(4) and in deferring the issue until the final disposal of the maintenance proceedings.

The case arose after the couple, who married in 2014, separated in 2020. The wife sought maintenance under Section 125 CrPC, while the husband opposed the claim on the ground that she was involved in an adulterous relationship. Relying on photographs, videos and other electronic material, he sought dismissal of her maintenance claim. The trial court nevertheless awarded interim maintenance of ₹25,000 each to the wife and their son while leaving the adultery issue to be decided later. The Rajasthan high court upheld that approach.

While deciding the appeal, the Supreme Court turned its attention to the manner in which the electronic evidence had been procured. The husband had placed before the courts nearly 237 photographs and 92 videos allegedly showing his wife in a relationship outside the marriage. Observing that the material appeared to have been collected through private investigators, the bench said the case exposed a complete regulatory vacuum governing private detective agencies.

The court questioned the legality and reliability of such evidence, asking: "Who took these pictures? Did they have any authorization to do so? ...Whether these pictures sought to be adduced as evidence are in fact genuine...or have they been morphed? What are the implications for the right of privacy of individuals?"

The Supreme Court directed that a copy of its judgment be forwarded to the Union ministry of law and justice and the Law Commission of India to consider framing an appropriate regulatory framework governing private investigation agencies and the use of electronically collected evidence.

Muslims offer prayers on land adjacent to Bhojshala complex

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BHOPAL: After two weeks, Muslims offered Friday prayers on a plot of land adjacent to the boundary wall of the Kamala Maula Dargah near Bhojshala complex in Dhar.

The administration levelled a plot and spread plastic sheets over rain-soaked muddy soil and allowed the prayers after 2 pm. This was done at the instance of the Supreme Court.

Police forces were deployed for security and barricades were put up after a few locals objected to the administration's decision to allow the prayers; they claimed the land was private property but failed to show any legal papers, officials claimed.

"We offered prayer on the space provided by the administration as a temporary arrangement till the final hearing of the Supreme Court. The space was even and muddy but the administration used plastic covering. Now, we are satisfied that at least we can see Kamal Maula Mosque while offering prayer," said Kamal Maula Welfare Society's Abdul Samad.

On July 10, the Supreme Court asked the administration to allocate land adjacent to Bhojshala for Friday Namaz between 1 PM and 3 pm. The administration had designated land near Chalispir Dargah in Maliwada village, about 1.5 km away, but the Muslim community refused to perform prayers there.

Muslims offer prayers at the premises of a dargah in Dhar, Madhya Pradesh on Friday. PTI

During Thursday's hearing the top court approved the adjacent plot of land. However, a few villagers staged a protest against this allocation of farm land.

A local resident Radha Devda said, "This is private land and belongs to my father and brothers. They asked for papers but we couldn't provide them as the male members weren't present."

Sub-divisional Magistrate Rajkumar Haldar said, "In the records, khasra no 611 and 612 belong to the government. They couldn't show us the papers but we have given them time."

On May 15, Madhya Pradesh high court ruled that the religious character of the complex is that of a temple.

STF JAWAN HELD IN BHARAT TIWARI ENCOUNTER CASE

ARRAH: A special task force personnel was arrested in Arrah city on Friday morning in connection with the death of Bharat Tiwari during a police encounter in Bihar's Bhojpur district last month, an officer said.

The death had triggered a political storm, raising questions over the use of force by police and prompting demands for an independent investigation.

Superintendent of police said, "The special task force jawan was arrested by police in Arrah this morning." In the FIR registered, the jawan has been identified as Akshay Kumar.

Tiwari's mother, Asha Devi, expressed relief over the development and demanded immediate arrest of other officials involved in the encounter.

"This is a result of the assurance given by chief minister Samrat Choudhary during our meeting. It is a matter of relief, but other officials involved in the encounter should be arrested immediately," she told reporters.

Police had maintained that Tiwari opened fire on a police team when they attempted to arrest him on June 17. Police had said they retaliated in self-defence and injured the accused, who died during treatment.

His family, however, alleged that he had surrendered before the shooting.

The state police suspended four of its personnel last month for allegedly failing to respond promptly in the incident. PTI

{ DEHRADUN } DOWRY HARASSMENT ALLEGED

Teacher's death sparks row, MLA seeks probe

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DEHRADUN: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA from Devprayag, Vinod Kandari, on Friday wrote to chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami seeking a high-level probe into the claims of dowry harassment around the alleged suicide of a government school teacher, who was found dead at her in-laws' home in Dehradun's Doiwala.

"She was a resident of my Assembly constituency and worked as a teacher. She died under mysterious circumstances on July 29. I request you to order a high-level investigation into her death and ensure strict punishment for those found guilty," he wrote.

Meanwhile, Uttarakhand State Commission for Women chairperson Kusum Kandwal also took cognisance of the case and directed Dehradun senior superintendent of police (SSP) Pramendra Dobhal and Doiwala circle officer Vandana Verma to ensure a fair and thorough investigation.

A video message from the woman purportedly addressed to her mother contains allegations of repeated abuse and ill-treatment by her in-laws. In the FIR registered on Wednesday over her death, her mother accused her husband, mother-in-law and sister of repeatedly taunting her daughter and also physically assaulted her.

"They harassed her mentally and physically, sometimes over dowry and sometimes by calling her *manhoos* (inauspicious). My daughter used to share these incidents with me," she alleged.

Police said the couple was married in November last year.

Doiwala SHO Vinod Kumar Gusain said that the case was an apparent suicide. "The autopsy was conducted on Thursday. Our probe is underway," he said.

CO Verma said a forensic team has inspected the scene. "The mother has alleged her daughter was subjected to harassment by her husband and in-laws. These allegations are being verified..." Verma said.

MAJOR, CAMEL DEAD, 2 LIEUTENANTS HURT AS SUV HITS ANIMAL

BARMER/JAISALMER: An Indian Army Major was killed while two lieutenants sustained serious injuries after the Army's Tata Safari SUV collided with a camel and overturned multiple times near the Thaiyat Army area in Jaisalmer late Thursday, police said.

The accident occurred around 12.30 am, nearly 18 km from Jaisalmer city, police said.

According to ASI Jagdish Charan, Major Hamza Arif (26), a resident of Madhya Pradesh, was returning from duty when he hit a camel that suddenly came onto the road. The impact caused the vehicle to overturn four to five times before skidding for nearly 100 metres.

All three Army personnel were rushed to the Army Hospital at Thaiyat. Major Hamza Arif, a resident of Madhya Pradesh who had got married just a month ago, was declared dead on arrival. Lieutenants Ayushman and Abhinav Rathore sustained serious injuries and are undergoing treatment at the Army Hospital.

Rajasthan Police and the Military Police have launched a joint investigation. HTC

Taslima Nasreen back in Kolkata after 18 yrs

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KOLKATA: Bangladeshi author Taslima Nasreen landed in Kolkata on Friday, more than 18 years after she was forced to leave the city after violent protests over her writings, to attend a literary event.

"I am feeling very happy. Thank you all," the 63-year-old told reporters at the Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport.

The author, who has been living in Delhi on a long-term residence permit for over a decade, is on a two-day visit to Kolkata for an anti-fundamentalism literary event on Saturday.

Chief minister Suvendu Adhikari and West Bengal BJP president Samik Bhattacharya are also expected to attend the event.

"I can't believe that I am in Kolkata now. I was driven out in 2007. Initially I had thought that I will be able to return. Kolkata is a progressive city. But as years passed, I had a feeling that I may never be able to return. But then Osman Gani Mallik of Secular Mission invited me to Kolkata. He made all the arrangements," she said in an TV interview.

Taslima Nasreen

Nasreen was forced to leave Bangladesh in 1994 after she received death threats over her writings and the book *Lajja*, which depicted atrocities faced by a Hindu family in Bangladesh in the aftermath of the Babri Masjid demolition. She moved to Europe and received a Swedish passport.

In 2007, Muslim organisations accused her of insulting the religion in her autobiographical work, *Dwikhandito*. Riots erupted and the army had to be deployed. The Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee-government asked her to leave Kolkata. She left on November 21, 2007.

"I want to forget everything. I am happy that even though I am not being able to return to one Bengal (Bangladesh), I could return to the other Bengal (West Bengal)," she said.

Police arrest 21-yr-old woman for killing 4-day-old daughter in MP

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BHOPAL: A 21-year-old woman was arrested for allegedly killing her four-day-old daughter, whose body was found in a water-filled blue drum in Madhya Pradesh's Sidhi district, police said on Friday, describing the incident as a case of infanticide.

According to police, the child, named Prisha, was the second daughter of Sonu Patel, the accused, and Pankaj Patel, a farmer in Bhelki village, the fourth in the family with his elder brother having two daughters. Police cited the villagers as saying that the family members were not happy after the birth of the baby girl. "Given the circumstances, we are suspecting it to be a case of infanticide. When interrogated, the mother confessed that she did not want the girl child," Churhat police station in-charge Rita Tripathi said.

ACCORDING TO POLICE, THE CHILD WAS THE SECOND DAUGHTER OF A FARMER IN BHELKI VILLAGE IN SIDHI

"The infant was born on July 26 at the Community Health Center in Churhat and discharged with her mother on July 28. Her body was discovered in the water-filled drum under suspicious circumstances on Thursday," Tripathi said, adding that the post-mortem confirmed drowning as the cause of death.

A case under section 103(1) (murder) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita has been registered and police have arrested the woman, Tripathi said.

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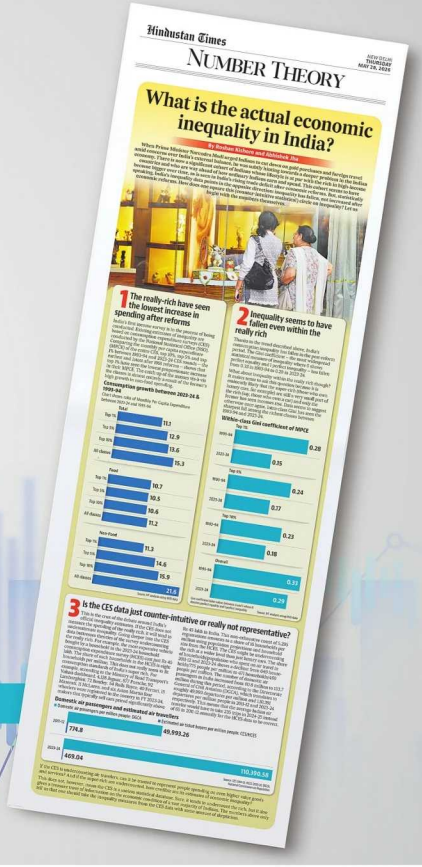

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Liberty not reliant on order's brevity: SC in Haldwani riots case

Utkarsh Anand

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The top court held that a bail order did not always need to contain elaborate reasoning.

NEW DELHI: An individual's liberty cannot hinge on the "inadequacy" or brevity of a court's reasoning while granting bail, the Supreme Court underscored on Friday, as it refused to interfere with the Uttarakhand high court's decision releasing Abdul Malik, the alleged mastermind of the February 2024 Haldwani riots.

A bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana dismissed the Uttarakhand government's special leave petition challenging the April 16 order granting bail to Malik, observing that the top court would ordinarily be reluctant to interfere with a bail order unless it glaringly reflected non-application of mind.

"Liberty does not depend on inadequacy of a court order. It depends on the prosecution's case," remarked the bench.

The state had assailed the high court's order primarily on the ground that it was a cryptic, non-speaking order granting bail to the principal accused in one of the state's most serious cases of communal violence.

Senior additional advocate general Gaurav Bhatia, appearing for the state, argued that the law now required reasoned bail orders and that granting bail "in such a cursory manner without any justification" would have serious repercussions. He submitted that Malik's house was used to hatch the conspiracy and that he could not be enlarged on bail merely because a co-accused had secured similar relief.

The court, however observed that while a bail order must indicate application of mind, it need not contain elaborate reasoning in every case. "We are dealing with a matter where bail has been granted and not otherwise...Bail is bail, why should we ordinarily interfere?" the bench observed.

The bench also reminded the state that allegations regarding the conspiracy would have to be established during trial and noted that Malik had already spent over two years in custody.

When Bhatia argued that the grant of bail demoralised the police because the accused was allegedly responsible for burning down a police station, the bench said that the state ought to have expedited the trial. It noted that only one prosecution witness was examined so far.

The bench also question the invocation of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA). "How is UAPA attracted? Someone throwing a bomb will attract UAPA? Why was it invoked?... If a mob goes and burns down a police station, can it invoke UAPA?" it asked.

The case concerns large-scale riots in Banbhoolpura on February 8, 2024, during an anti-encroachment drive to demolish an allegedly illegal madrasa and clear encroachments. Malik was arrested on February 24, 2024. Three FIRs were registered against him under UAPA, IPC, the Arms Act and the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act.

SC SEEKS CENTRE'S REPLY ON PLEA FOR POLYGAMY BAN FOR MUSLIMS

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Friday sought the Centre's response on a fresh petition seeking a law to prohibit polygamy among Muslims, declare such marriages void from the outset and make the practice punishable under the BNS, while directing that the matter be tagged with a batch of long-pending petitions awaiting consideration by a constitution bench.

A bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana issued notice to the Centre on the plea by women's rights activists Zakia Soman and Noorjehan Safia Niaz, journalist and civil rights activist Javed Anand, and two others. The bench ordered that the matter be tagged with the pending batch of cases challenging the constitutional validity of polygamy and nikah halala under Muslim personal law. Those were last heard in August 2022.

The petitioners also sought compulsory registration of all Muslim marriages and divorces, citing instances of secret second marriages documented in a 2025 study by the Bharatiya Mahila Andolan. UTKARSH ANAND

ABDULLAH, WIFE SEEK SC NOD FOR DIVORCE DECREE

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NEW DELHI: Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Omar Abdullah and his wife have decided to formally part ways by filing a joint request before the Supreme Court to draw out a divorce decree putting an end to their 32-year-old marriage.

The fact was informed to the top court on Friday in a proceeding by Abdullah challenging a Delhi high court order turning down his divorce plea. He approached the top court in 2024 and since then, several attempts to mediate the dispute had failed.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the J&K CM said, "Both of them have embraced freedom. The mutually agreed terms of settlement have already been filed.

Abdullah had challenged the December 12, 2023 judgment by the Delhi high court disputing his claim that his estranged wife Payal deserted him and this amounted to mental cruelty.

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SC tells states to stop cattle straying on roads

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NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Friday asked states and Union territories to amend their laws to prevent stray cattle on roads and frame schemes to compensate pedestrians and motorists killed or injured in bovine attacks and accidents.

A bench of justice Sanjay Karol and justice N Kotiswar Singh said, "It is commonplace to see reports in newspapers regarding bovine-related incidents and accidents...accidents with a direct and proximate bovine cause are not few and far between."

Dealing with a 2007 incident in Sangrur, Punjab, where a stray bull attacked a man who sustained head injuries and later died, the bench directed the state to award a lump sum compensation of ₹15 lakh to the widow, holding that the order shall not be treated as a precedent. The bench said, "While this case presents a particular instance before us, we are of the view that the larger issue of these incidents must also be addressed," offering several suggestions for the Centre and states to act upon.

"Necessary amendments may be carried out or rules promulgated, as is deemed fit by the competent authority, to develop a mechanism for payment of compensation in accidents caused as a result of bovine/cattle, in both categories of cases i.e., pedestrian or vehicular," the bench said.

> We live in a deeply flawed world...We let the cattle roam without caring for their safety, on the other end, find it offensive if one uses them to secure a full stomach for himself or his family
>
> **JUSTICE KAROL,** SC Judge

The court noted that the presence of cattle on roads and highways must be prevented, adding that this is only possible if states enact laws or enforce existing regulations to hold owners accountable when cattle are left to graze in the open.

Justice Karol, authoring the judgment, said, "We live in a deeply flawed, human world. Perhaps it is a feature of this flawed world that, on the one end, we let them (cattle) roam about without caring for their safety, and, on the other, find it deeply offensive if an individual uses them to secure a full stomach for himself or his family."

Noting that 24 states have enacted laws regarding the protection and preservation of bovines, the court asked all such states to take steps to ensure complete and immediate implementation of the law in letter and spirit.

In the case before the court, the bench noted the plight of the victim, who had filed a police complaint after being injured by the bull. While still alive, he wrote to the Municipal Council, Sangrur, demanding compensation of ₹1 crore. The council replied that it received no funds to provide such compensation. He then moved the Punjab and Haryana high court, where a single judge in 2019 calculated compensation by applying the scheme under the Motor Vehicles Act. However, a division bench of the high court set aside this decision in November 2025, directing the widow to file a suit before a civil court.

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Extend deadlines by 4 mths due to war, RERAs told

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NEW DELHI: The union housing and urban affairs ministry (MoHUA) on Friday issued an advisory to all state Real Estate Regulatory Authorities (RERAs) to grant a one-time four-month extension to the registration and completion timelines of eligible real estate projects, invoking the Force Majeure provisions under the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016, in view of disruptions caused by the ongoing situation in West Asia.

In an advisory issued on Friday, MoHUA said the geopolitical situation has adversely affected global supply chains, resulting in shortages of construction materials and delays in the timely execution of real estate projects. The ministry noted that the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance, had, through an Office Memorandum dated April 29, 2026, treated the ongoing West Asia situation as "war" for the purpose of invoking the Force Majeure clause.

The advisory applies to registered real estate projects whose completion date, revised completion date or extended completion date falls on or after February 28, 2026. It also advised state RERAs to consider issuing a common order instead of requiring individual developers to submit separate applications for extension, with the aim of reducing procedural delays.

MoHUA CITED THE ONGOING WEST ASIA WAR FOR THE PURPOSE OF INVOKING THE FORCE MAJEURE CLAUSE IN THE RERA ACT, 2016

Section 6 of the RERA Act permits extension of project registration on account of Force Majeure, including "war", while Section 7(3) allows regulatory authorities to keep a project's registration in force, subject to conditions, instead of revoking it where it is in the interest of homebuyers.

Welcoming the advisory, National Real Estate Development Council (NAREDCO) president Parveen Jain said the ministry had taken a "timely and pragmatic" decision by recognising the extraordinary circumstances affecting the sector. "We earnestly request all State Real Estate Regulatory Authorities (RERAs) to implement the Ministry's advisory in letter and spirit. Timely extension of project registration and completion timelines will provide much-needed relief to developers facing circumstances beyond their control due to the ongoing war-related disruptions, while also protecting the interests of homebuyers," he said.

Ex-army chief General Sharma dies at 96

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Gen Vishwa Nath Sharma

NEW DELHI: Former army chief General Vishwa Nath Sharma passed away on Friday at the age of 96. He served as the army chief during 1988-90.

Sharma was the younger brother of Major Som Nath Sharma, the first soldier to be awarded the Param Vir Chakra, India's highest wartime honour, posthumously. An alumnus of Indian Military Academy, Dehradun, General Sharma was commissioned into the 16 Light Cavalry in June 1950.

Offering his condolences on the former chief's demise, defence minister Rajnath Singh said on X, "Deeply saddened by the passing of former Chief of the Army Staff, General Vishwa Nath Sharma. A distinguished military leader, General Sharma served the Nation with unwavering dedication, courage and honour. He carried forward the illustrious legacy of his family, including that of his elder brother, Major Som Nath Sharma, PVC, with great distinction."

Major Sharma was among the four army heroes awarded the PVC for their uncommon courage in the 1947-48 Kashmir operations; the others were Lance Naik Karam Singh, Second Lieutenant Rama Raghoba Rane and Naik Jadunath Singh (posthumous).

The Indian Army also extended its condolences to his bereaved family and loved ones. "A distinguished soldier and visionary military leader, General Vishwa Nath Sharma dedicated his life to the service of the Nation...His exemplary leadership, unwavering commitment and enduring legacy of honour, duty and military excellence will continue to inspire future generations," it wrote on X.

Air Marshal Sandeep Thareja

AIR MARSHAL THAREJA PICKED AS NEXT DGAFMS

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NEW DELHI: The government on Friday announced that Air Marshal Sandeep Thareja will take over as the Director General Armed Forces Medical Services (DGAFMS) — India's seniormost military doctor — on August 31, replacing Surgeon Vice Admiral Arti Sarin, who will retire after more than four decades of service. He is currently serving as the Director General Medical Services (Air).

An alumnus of the Armed Forces Medical College (AFMC), Pune, Air Marshal Thareja was commissioned in December 1986. He obtained his MD in Medicine in 1997 and DM in Gastroenterology from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi in 2005, where he was awarded the 'Best DM Student Award'.

An outstanding military professional, he secured an 'A' grading in all military courses and is an alumnus of the National Defence College, the defence ministry said. "Over a distinguished career spanning nearly four decades, the officer has made significant contributions across the clinical, academic, operational and admnistrative domains of the AFMS."

COURT ACQUITS ALL ACCUSED IN MUTHANGA COP MURDER CASE

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THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: A court on Friday acquitted all the accused in connection with the murder of police constable KV Vinod in 2003 during the Adivasi agitation for land rights in Muthanga in Kerala's Wayanad district. Meanwhile, the court has convicted four people, including tribal leader M Geethanandan, for involvement in a connecting attempt-to-murder case.

Vinod (29), attached to the Kerala Armed Police 4th Battalion in Kannur, was detained allegedly by tribal protesters inside a shed after the police opened fire on the agitators to evict them from the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary in Muthanga on February 19, 2003. The constable later succumbed to fatal injuries sustained after being hacked with a sword to the back of his head.

Kalpetta sessions judge Ayyoob Khan E ruled that Asokan, who passed away during the course of trial, hacked Vinod on the back of his head after witnessing his associate Jogi being shot dead in police firing.

At the same time, the Kalpetta sessions court found four accused — Geethanandan, Binu, Rameshan and Anilkumar — guilty of involvement in the kidnapping and attempt to murder of police constable Abdul Salam and range officer PK Sasidharan. The four accused were convicted under several sections of IPC and CrPC.

DKS defers talks with Vijay amid Cauvery stir; TN to move SC

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Karnataka BJP chief BY Vijayendra and LoP R Ashoka at a protest by BJP workers in Bengaluru on Friday ANI

BENGALURU: Karnataka chief minister DK Shivakumar on Friday announced the postponement of his August 3 meeting with his Tamil Nadu counterpart, C Joseph Vijay amid protests in the state over the Cauvery water-sharing dispute.

The meeting was scheduled at Vijay's initiative.

"I had requested to visit Tamil Nadu, but the [previous] DMK [Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam] government had not given permission. Later, elections took place, and the government changed. Now Vijay has said that he will come to Karnataka with his team. In such a situation, the developments around the protests are not giving us confidence," said Shivakumar.

He said the meeting should take place in a more cordial environment. "If the problem is resolved, it will benefit them as well as us," he said.

The decision came as farmers and Kannada organisations staged protests against the Cauvery Water Management Authority's (CWMA) rejection of Karnataka's appeal against an order directing it to release 3,500 cusecs of water daily to Tamil Nadu for 15 days.

BJP leaders, including state chief B Y Vijayendra, were detained on Friday while marching towards the Krishna Raja Sagar (KRS) dam, officials said. The party also threatened to boycott the all-party meeting convened by Shivakumar on August 2 if the state government did not assure that Cauvery water would not be released to Tamil Nadu.

Leaders of Opposition R Ashoka and Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, along with MLC C T Ravi, were among those detained, the officials said.

Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu law minister R Nirmal Kumar said the state would move the Supreme Court to secure its share of Cauvery water. "Legally, we need to get the required water through the Supreme Court," he said, adding that Karnataka had repeatedly failed to release water despite directions from the authority.

Kumar said Vijay was consulting legal experts and stakeholders and would announce the state's legal strategy within a week. "The government is currently evaluating multiple avenues, which include approaching the apex court, pushing for a tribunal, conducting inter-state negotiations, or exerting pressure on the Centre," he said.

ASSAM GOVT INVOKES NSA AGAINST LAND RIGHTS ACTIVIST

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GUWAHATI: The Assam government invoked the National Security Act (NSA) against activist Pranab Doley, a day after a sessions court granted him bail in a case linked to protests against a luxury hotel project near Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve (KNPTR), preventing his release from custody.

The government, in a communication to Doley on Thursday (which was made public on Friday), said that 13 cases have been filed against him, accusing him of inciting hatred against the state, instigating violence between communities and obstructing officials from carrying out their duties, among other charges. It said 13 police cases had been registered against him.

"It is therefore considered essential to prevent you from acting in any manner prejudicial to the security of the state or from acting in any manner prejudicial to the maintenance of public order by detaining you under Section 3(2) of the National Security Act, 1980," the letter from the home and political department, seen by HT, mentioned.

Doley was among two activists arrested on July 12 by the Golaghat police, days after he took part in protests by activists and locals at Ingle Pathar village near the UNESCO World Heritage Site against the proposed hotel project.

INDIA-NEPAL TRAIN LINK PAUSED AFTER CLASHES ALONG BORDER DISTRICTS

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PATNA: The Nepal Railway Company has suspended train services between Jayanagar (India) and Janakpur (Nepal) after clashes erupted in Sunsari and other neighbouring border districts in Nepal, officials said on Friday.

Jaynagar Railway Station superintendent of Nepali Railways SL Meena confirmed that train services were suspended after curfew was imposed in Dhanusha district earlier in the day.

An official from the Nepal Railway has also written to the Government Railway Police, Railway Protection Force and the Sashastra Seema Bal and the station master in Jayanagar to ensure safety of two empty train racks stored for security reasons at Jayanagar station.

Extra coaches from Nepal's Enerwa railway station were also stored at Jayanagar station for safety, said officials aware of the matter.

They said the train normally plies between Jayanagar and Janakpur thrice daily.

Meanwhile, a blockade has been erected at the border to prevent entry of miscreants into India and regular patrols are being conducted.

"Seven of our districts border Nepal, where additional police forces have been deployed," said a senior Sashastra Seema Bal official.

{ KARNATAKA }

HC stays ex-MLA's murder conviction

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Vinay Kulkarni

BENGALURU: The Karnataka high court on Friday stayed the conviction of former Congress MLA Vinay Kulkarni in the case concerning the murder of BJP leader Yogesh Goudar in 2016, suspended his life sentence and ordered his release on bail pending disposal of his appeal.

The order clears the way for the revocation of Kulkarni's disqualification as an MLA.

A bench of justices Mohammad Nawaz and G Basavaraja passed the interim order while allowing a plea filed by Kulkarni and seven other convicts seeking a stay of conviction and suspension of sentence.

The bench ordered release of all eight convicts on bail subject to conditions of no overseas travel without court's approval.

The state legislative assembly speaker had disqualified Kulkarni in May this year, after the special court convicted him, along with 15 others, on April 15 for criminal conspiracy and murder.

Yogesh Goudar, a 26-year-old BJP zilla panchayat member, was hacked to death from Dharwad district's Saptapur in 2016.

Kulkarni challenged the conviction before the high court on April 26. He argued that none of the 62 prosecution witnesses supported the case and that several turned hostile after the probe shifted to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in 2019 and the trial moved to the special court in Bengaluru. He argued that one of the prosecution's witnesses had stated before the Dharwad court that she was not present at the scene of the crime.

The CBI had opposed the petition, arguing that Kulkarni could not rely on evidence recorded during the previous trial in Dharwad because witnesses had been allegedly influenced by him and others.

Have fun with facts on Sundays

Catch the latest column of

HT TWTW
THE WEEK THAT WAS

A quiz on the week's development.

Sunday Hindustan Times
NEW DELHI
SUNDAY
JANUARY 22, 2023

HT TWTW
THE WEEK THAT WAS

Take a cue from the clues

Natasha Rego

Authors who are not authors, leaders who no longer lead, a beauty queen walks her last walk, and cracks appear in a Himachal village. More happened this week. Take the quiz to find out

Ammaar Reshi (right) is the author of the children's book Alice and Sparkle (above). Who actually wrote and illustrated it?

1 Ammaar Reshi is not an author or illustrator, but he "wrote" Alice and Sparkle, a children's book which has sold over 900 copies since it was listed in Amazon in December. It features characters with typically crooked eyes and 12 fingers. Who actually wrote and illustrated it?

2 She's a lapsed Mormon and was briefly a DJ. Her partner Clarke Gayford is a fisherman. Her daughter Neve attended the UN General Assembly at three months. Last week she said, "You can be your own kind of leader – one who knows when it's time to

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{ OUR TAKE }

Protestors vs pellets, yet again

Crowd control ought not to be a process ruled by tentativeness and *ad hoc*-ism

While birdshot-firing shotguns, colloquially called pellet guns, are dominating headlines in the aftermath of the student protest at Jantar Mantar, the weapon first found mention in , Ephraim Chambers's 1728 Cyclopaedia. Soon after, these instruments of avian extermination were introduced to the arsenals of England and the US. It was in the late 1917 that the gun and its ammunition became a staple for law enforcement personnel in the two countries. This was also the period when labour movements were emerging, with the police increasingly having to control street protests.

With petitioners, including a retired senior policeman, approaching India's Supreme Court with a prayer to ban the use of pellet guns, two issues arise. One, though used in India and many other countries such as Bahrain, Egypt, Tunisia and Iran by anti-riot police as a non-lethal weapon, is the pellet gun really non-lethal? And two, despite recommendations of various government committees and the standard operating procedures of law enforcement agencies, why is there no clarity on ground on their use on civilian populations?

The first question can be partly answered by reading two official documents in conjunction. In the report of Bureau of Police Research and Development submitted to the UPA government in 2010, the weapon was absent from the non-lethal category. In 2016, the TVSN Prasad Committee's report recommended that the weapon should be used in rare cases. Non-lethal alternatives such as PAVA (chilli-based) shells were recommended when crowd control necessitated the use of force.

It is the second question that's more vexatious. As reported by *HT*, an internal inquiry revealed that several personnel of the Rapid Action Force (RAF), a specialised riot control body of the CRPF, were issued pellet guns on July 20 during the CJP protest at Jantar Mantar. Petitioners put forth that these weapons violate the constitutional standards governing the use of force. The issuing and use of pellet guns is not the only concern. High level reviews have indicated that RAF personnel deviated from standard operating protocol at many fronts, including not using their nameplates.

Protests are prone to get unruly, spelling danger for the safety of people and property. In most constitutional democracies, the right to protest peacefully is a given. In the country of Mahatma Gandhi, it is an article of faith. Controlling a crowd of protestors, or the miscreants infiltrating the same, therefore, ought not to be a process ruled by tentativeness and *ad hoc*-ism. But this has to be balanced with the safety of law enforcement personnel. Clearly laid down guidelines which are inviolable even under duress do justice to both.

The CRPF chief has assured his force of complete support for *bona fide* action. He has also assured everyone of a fair review of the Jantar Mantar action. Since there is a significant element of discretion on the part of the police personnel while dealing with unarmed protestors, the intent is the key. And that makes everything trickier. Absolute transparency in investigations, along with swift action to punish the culprits, will strengthen enforcement agencies' case when excesses are brought to light. As for the present case, the chief justice has already decried both the excessive use of force by police and violence by protestors as unacceptable. Two wrongs never make a right and in this scenario they have managed to open a Pandora's Box of issues pertaining to the country's security apparatus.

{ THIRD EYE }

Barkha Dutt

PoJK protests show Pakistan's Kashmir policy is unravelling

The protests against expanding control of the region by Islamabad and Rawalpindi and the brutal crackdown mounted by the State in response conclusively bust Pakistan's myth of the so-called "Azad" Kashmir

While the world remains a passive observer, the staggering violence in Pakistan-occupied Jammu & Kashmir (PoJK) this week has upended the policies of Pakistan's deep State that has for long used instruments of terrorism to wage an asymmetric war against India on the Kashmir issue.

Pakistan faces the biggest challenge it has in decades to its positioning on Kashmir. On the one hand, Pakistan's army has, for years, nurtured terror groups such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba, pushing in their men across the Line of Control, into India, to unleash atrocities in the name of so-called "freedom fighters". Now, confronted with an uprising in its own backyard, Islamabad has abandoned all pretense of being interested in civil liberties or any kind of freedom, inflicting horrific brutalities on political protesters.

There were bodies lying in pools of blood on the roads of Rawalakot and Mirpur, with at least 40 unarmed civilians reported to have been killed in firing by Pakistan's security forces on civilians. The protests are being led by a group called the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) that has demanded the abolishment of 12 seats in the local legislature that are reserved for "refugees" from India. The Kashmiris in PoJK say this is an euphemism used by those at the helm in Rawalpindi, Islamabad, and Lahore to grab control of the region.

Amidst a media blackout by Pakistan's TV channels, the JAAC says the death toll could be much higher. Its leaders have taken to social media to reveal that the Pakistani military fired at thousands of peaceful protestors. Worse, an exact death count is difficult because, they say, bodies have been forcibly taken away from local hospitals and morgues.

As corpses piled up in the streets of PoJK, the most dismissive and nonchalant response came from Pakistan's defence minister Khwaja Asif, who said the protesters "were enemies, like India".

The untenability and intrinsic hypocrisy of Pakistan's Kashmir policy stood exposed like never before. In 2011, on a visit to Pakistan as secretary of state, with then foreign minister Hina Rabbani Khar standing by her side, Hillary Clinton had warned Islamabad, "You can't keep snakes in your backyard and expect them only to bite your neighbours."

In a rare moment of honesty, Rana Sanaullah, a key aide to Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, admitted as much to journalist Hamid Mir. He likened protestors in PoJK to the "Mujahideen we trained and sent to fight (in India)". Now, he said, they and groups like theirs were snapping at the neck of the Pakistani State.

But the current unrest is not only about Pakistan-trained terrorists proving to be a noose around their neck. It is also about the political rights of a part of Kashmir that Pakistan likes to call "Azad" or free (PoJK for us) but is entirely occupied, controlled, manipulated, and brutalised.

AS CORPSES PILED UP IN THE STREETS OF POJK, THE MOST DISMISSIVE AND NONCHALANT RESPONSE CAME FROM PAKISTAN'S DEFENCE MINISTER KHWAJA ASIF, WHO SAID THE PROTESTERS "WERE ENEMIES, LIKE INDIA"

The world's focus is, and should be, on what is happening in the part of Kashmir that is under Pakistan's occupation and control. AFP

The most recent conflagration has been over a three-phase election in PoJK. India has called this a "cosmetic exercise to camouflage illegal occupation". Pakistani political parties such as Imran Khan's Tehreek-e-Insaaf have called the election results "pre-arranged". And the JAAC has called for a mass boycott of the three-phased polls that began this week.

Ever since India abrogated Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan has been apoplectic. Islamabad wanted to conveniently forget its own history: The decision to split PoJK into two regions, what it euphemistically calls Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. It overreacted and overreached on India's internal decision-making process by vowing to never talk to India unless the abrogation was reversed, knowing fully well that this would never happen. Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan Ajay Bisaria was asked to leave and given 72 hours to pack up and go home as a response to the Article 370 abrogation. Years later, terrorism as State policy has continued and the attack in Pahalgam led to Operation Sindoor.

Now, the world's focus is, and should be, on what is happening in the part of Kashmir that is under Pakistan's occupation and control. The myth of "Azad" Kashmir has been conclusively busted. As the protesters attempt a long march on foot to Muzaffarabad, internet and mobile services were suspended. Locals say those killed had been shot in the head. The organisers of the agitation say, as they take cover at night, military snipers take aim at the light from mobile phones and shoot at will. They fear something bigger and more terrible is around the corner. "We have seen this kind of violence only in video games," one protester said in a video that has since gone viral.

If Pakistan ever deluded itself into believing that it had a moral argument to make to India or the world on the Kashmir issue, that decades-old narrative has unravelled permanently this week.

Barkha Dutt is an award-winning journalist and author. The views expressed are personal

Screens as the 'other' in intimate partnerships

Rajat K Thukral

The paradox of our technology-driven world is that we depend on smartphones to form connections with others, even as these screens create greater distance in our real relationships. Meet Ravi and Priya, an urban couple in their mid-30s who started therapy with me a few months ago, reporting relationship dissatisfaction. Most of the conflict centres on the lack of intimacy Priya experiences. Because of their differing work schedules, they barely see each other, and on the rare evenings they do, Ravi prefers to watch a movie. Whenever Priya comments on what they're watching, he quickly silences her as he detests being disturbed during his screen time.

As Indian families grow smaller and — perhaps — lonelier because of this, screens step in to soothe that longing, while making everyone appear self-reliant. Our dependence on screens keeps growing, since most apps capitalise on notifications and messages that keep the brain's reward circuitry active through intermittent reinforcement, leaving us hooked on dopamine highs and craving more. As addiction-expert Anna Lembke puts it, the smartphone is a hypodermic needle, delivering an opiate hit to any ailing soul. Perhaps it's time to retire Karl Marx's famous line — "religion is the opiate of the masses" — and accept that technology is steadily taking religion's place.

Digital screens create barriers to the authentic human-to-human connection needed for the release of the bonding hormone, oxytocin. Eye contact, non-verbal cues, touch, and the full sensory experience we need to feel seen and understood are all becoming rare. Priya craves that bonding time with Ravi, but he comfortably hides behind technology, using it to mask an avoidant attachment pattern. A pursuer-distancer dynamic has taken hold: The more anxiously Priya reaches out to connect, the more avoidant Ravi becomes. Their physical intimacy suffers too, as the tension spills into the bedroom. The smartphone becomes a companion, a transitional object, much like a soothing toy that fills the empty spaces in a relationship. The gadget then rescues them from relational pain as well. Priya often asks, "Why are we even living together if we're each lost in our own worlds?"

A recent qualitative study on digital interference and marital dissatisfaction identified eight areas of concern among Indian couples: conflicts around screen time, social media use, privacy invasion, phubbing, maintaining digital boundaries, work spilling into personal life through devices, reduced emotional intimacy, and low self-regulation. In couple therapy, it's increasingly common to see one partner scrolling through their phone while the other voices a complaint. Phubbing — choosing to interact with one's phone over one's partner is becoming a widespread habit. It's a micro-aggression, a betrayal of the authentic presence everyone desires but few manage to provide.

No partner can compete with the level of stimulation a smartphone provides — mental, emotional, visual, and auditory, all at once SHUTTERSTOCK

American psychologists and researchers John and Julie Gottman found that even seemingly happy couples can feel lonely within their marriages. An Indian study found a loneliness rate of nearly 40-50% among married couples. This loneliness epidemic isn't just about proximity, it's emotional and epistemic too, rooted in the deeply human need for a partner who understands you intellectually and emotionally. Our neurology is wired to attune to an intimate partner, and the absence of that attunement can trigger threat responses and heightened physiological stress. Anjali, another client, complains about her partner's video-game use. She consistently feels invisible in her relationship and wonders whether she should simply learn to live alone while staying in it.

Digital addiction is quietly eroding our capacity to attune emotionally and communicate attentively, as sustained smartphone use diminishes our cognitive capabilities. Technoference (a *portmanteau* of technology and interference) steadily reduces the mental and emotional capacity needed to sustain a relationship. No partner can compete with the level of stimulation a smartphone provides — mental, emotional, visual, and auditory, all at once. Digital addiction can also inflate expectations of a romantic partner, creating a desire for constant validation that no real person can reasonably sustain.

Boundaries around digital use are, therefore, necessary for couples seeking a deeper, more enriching relationship. Keeping smartphones away during intimate and leisure time is a meaningful start. Taking active steps to protect your mental well-being from digital drain is equally important. Invest in shared offline experiences, such as partner dancing or any creative pursuit that can rebuild embodied connection. Ultimately, the success of a relationship rests on how often you turn toward your partner rather than away from them.

Rajat K Thukral is a Delhi-based clinical psychologist. The views expressed are personal

The real call of duty for India's foresters

Jagmohan Sharma

Politicians, project proponents, and even seasoned bureaucrats see foresters as impediments to development. Foresters often ask themselves, why not walk the easier path. Here is why they don't.

But first, why maintain forests? Forests provide ecosystem services that man-made systems cannot: Climate regulation, watershed preservation, and air quality maintenance. They underpin food systems, support livelihoods and economic growth. Diverting forests for development precludes these benefits. The Constitution mandates maintenance of forests. The National Forest Policy 1988 recognises forest lands as national assets to be safeguarded for the benefit of the entire community. Even the Supreme Court holds forest conservation as fundamental to human well-being.

Now, the forester. A forester regards forests as irreplaceable ecological capital accumulated over centuries and knows that suggesting actions to mitigate the effects of diverting forests is politically correct but socio-ecologically inadequate. Foresters recognise the fallacy of ecological substitution — a man-made forest cannot replicate the ecological value of an old-growth forest. They recognise that while the benefits of diverting forests for other purposes are quantifiable and immediate, the ecological losses are diffuse and deferred. Accordingly, their position rests on the principle of intergenerational equity, articulated in the definition of sustainable development as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". Foresters understand that ecological systems exhibit non-linear dynamics, and incremental degradation can cascade into ecosystem collapse. Ascertaining tipping thresholds is near-impossible, so foresters adopt a precautionary approach of conservation.

Foresters undergo a rigorous two-year training programme that emphasises ecological science, forest governance, conservation ethics and high levels of physical fitness. This establishes a "framework for their collective conduct"; sociologist Émile Durkheim calls it "professional conscience". Foresters recognise their profound fiduciary duty to forests — a moral and legal obligation to safeguard them in trust for future generations.

Historically, forest working plans have aimed at sustainable yield and conservation rather than wanton exploitation. When one understands how forests influence rainfall, how corridor forests sustain tiger metapopulations, or how a mangrove system buffers coastal communities against cyclones, indifference to their diversion becomes morally untenable.

Foresters are obligated to avoid what ecologist Garrett Hardin termed the "tragedy of the commons". They are public trustees of forests mandated to conserve them. Their adherence to forest protection is an act of silent public service, involving personal stress and risk, yet carried out with grit.

In an era of accelerating environmental crises, when forests are our most critical buffers, Foresters resist short-termism. Their steadfastness is a noble counterweight to relentless pressures that prioritise transient economic gains at the expense of sustainability.

A forester's approach is forged through decades of intimate acquaintance with forests, shaped by law, science, and ethics, and by an almost visceral understanding of what forests truly represent. It is not anti-development; rather, it enables sustainable development. Foresters stand in the way of unsustainability for the well-being of people and the planet.

Jagmohan Sharma is a former director, Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy. The views expressed are personal

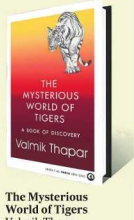
{ EDITOR'S PICK }

HT's editors offer a book recommendation every Saturday, which provides history, context, and helps understand recent news events

THE TIGER'S TALE

For an animal that holds immense fascination across geographies — and is celebrated with a dedicated day of its own (July 29) — the tiger remains perhaps the most reclusive among big cats, and, therefore, the most unfamiliar for most laypersons.

Trust one of India's foremost tiger experts, Valmik Thapar, to demystify the animal for us. Thapar, who passed away last year in May, draws from five decades of his research and observation of tigers in Ranthambore and presents this in digestible bits for the ordinary reader in his book, *The Mysterious World of Tigers: A Book of Discovery*. Tracking the striped residents of the national park, Thapar closely examined tiger behaviour across a range of life-stages and activities, from stalking-hunting to courting and mating and from cub-rearing to the playing out of rivalries and territoriality. The secretive tiger in the wild is made pleasantly plain in the book.



The Mysterious World of Tigers
Valmik Thapar
2025

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{ FROM PAGE 1 }

IMD FORECAST

sure systems. "India saw four low pressure systems developing in July over the Bay of Bengal, out of which two intensified further into a depression. These low pressure systems helped bring particularly good rainfall over central India," he said, noting that Valsad in Gujarat recorded more than 1,000 mm of rainfall in a single day during the month. "Despite a moderate El Nino, above normal low pressure system (LPS) days helped negate the effect somewhat," he added.

July was also a deadly month. IMD recorded 91 lightning and thunderstorm-related deaths across Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Maharashtra, alongside 84 flood-related deaths across Assam, Maharashtra, Jammu and Kashmir, Nagaland, Kerala and Himachal Pradesh.

Even with the rainfall recovery, July ranked as India's third warmest since 1901 by all-India mean temperature. Mohapatra attributed this primarily to below-normal rainfall in south Peninsular and northeast India. "If we look at south Peninsular India, this was the second warmest July ever and for east and northeast India, it was the fifth warmest, as these areas saw lesser rain overall," he said.

For August, IMD's bulletin projects below-normal rainfall across most of the country, with exceptions in parts of northwest and central India and isolated pockets of east and northeast India. August typically records 254.9mm of rainfall. The month is expected to begin on a stronger note than it ends, however: normal rainfall is forecast for the first half. "The country as a whole should see normal rains in the first and second week of August, and above normal rains in some parts of west, central, east and peninsular India," Mohapatra said.

July's rains also widened the map of relief. The share of districts recording normal-to-excess rainfall rose from 30% (224 districts) at the end of June to 53% (388 districts) by the end of July.

The recovery does not change IMD's outlook for the season as a whole. In its June forecast, IMD had revised its full-season rainfall projection down from 92% of LPA — its April estimate — to 90%, attaching a 60% probability to an outright deficient monsoon, meaning rainfall falling below even the below-normal threshold. IMD has attributed the season's overall shortfall to El Niño.

Later in the day, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) warned that El Niño continues to intensify steadily and is expected to dominate global climate patterns in the August-October 2026 season, increasing the likelihood of above-normal temperatures across much of the world and driving significant shifts in rainfall patterns. "Sea-surface temperature anomalies are expected to exceed 2.9°C in key monitoring regions," WMO said in a statement.

OFFSHORE EXPLORATION

MMTOE (million metric tonnes of oil equivalent) to 80 MMTOE annually and expand the country's hydrocarbon resource base from 1.6 billion TOE to 2.2 billion TOE. "The additional production has the potential to reduce crude oil imports by nearly ₹1 lakh crore annually, strengthening India's energy security and reducing import dependence," the spokesperson added.

The policy comes at a time when India's domestic oil and gas production from mature and ageing fields is declining. Some of the country's major producing fields, such as the offshore Mumbai High and fields in Assam, have been in production for several decades and are well past what is known as the plateau production phase. India is the world's third-largest oil consumer after the US and China, but its domestic energy output is low; it ranks around 20th in the world in terms of production. The country imported 189.4 million metric tonnes (MMT) of crude in fiscal 2015, which grew to 245.3 MMT in fiscal 2026. According to a statement made by minister of state for petroleum Suresh Gopi in the Lok Sabha on March 10, India's domestic crude oil production is declining. Output from domestic fields fell from 36.9 MMT in 2015-16 to 28.7 MMT in 2024-25 despite the government auctioning 172 exploration blocks (3,78,652 sq km) in nine bidding rounds of the Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP).

India also imports natural gas in large quantities to meet domestic requirements. Together with crude oil, India's oil and gas import dependence was 80.7% in 2025-26. India's total natural gas consumption in 2025-26 was 68,753 million metric standard cubic metres (MMSCM); gross domestic natural gas output that fiscal year was 34,776 MMSCM.

Government and industry experts said the cabinet decision is a much-needed intervention as augmenting domestic energy output is a key requirement for a rapidly growing economy. The Prime Minister articulated this too in his speech on August 15, 2025, they said. "Samudra Manthan" is expected to catalyse reserve accretion of more than 600 MMT of oil equivalent (MMToE), substantially increase offshore exploration activity, promote higher domestic oil and gas production, generate large-scale employment, strengthen indigenous manufacturing under Make in India and Atmanirbhar Bharat, and foster a globally competitive ecosystem for offshore technologies and services. The scheme is also expected to stimulate significant investments across the exploration and production value chain, creating long-term opportunities for industry, innovation and economic growth.

In his speech last year, Modi said India spent a "huge part of the budget" on energy imports. "If we were not dependent on energy, that money would have been used for the future of the youth of my country, that money would have been used to help the poor of my country fight against poverty, that money would have been used for the welfare of the farmers of my country, that money would have been used to change the conditions of the villages of my country, but we had to give it to foreign countries."

"Now we are working towards becoming self-reliant. To make the country developed, we are now moving towards 'Samudra Manthan' (churning of the ocean). Taking forward our Samudra Manthan, we want to work in a mission mode towards finding oil reserves, gas reserves under the sea and hence India is going to start the National Deep Water Exploration Mission. This is our important announcement to become energy independent," he added.

The scheme approved on Friday encompasses a comprehensive set of interventions across the offshore exploration value chain. It provides for large-scale acquisition, processing and interpretation of high-quality seismic data, accelerated deep-water and ultra-deepwater exploratory drilling, scientific drilling in frontier basins, development of common offshore production and evacuation infrastructure, and establishment of an integrated oil and gas manufacturing and services zone, a government statement issued after the cabinet meeting said. "It also includes dedicated provisions for digital programme management, capacity building, technology adoption, stakeholder engagement and international outreach, creating an integrated ecosystem to accelerate offshore exploration and production in the country," it added.

Rajnish Gupta, partner, Tax and Economic Policy Group at EY India said: "The Samudra Manthan scheme is a significant announcement of the seriousness of the Government in making India's E&P sector stronger." "Investments in large-scale seismic data acquisition and drilling of exploratory wells in deep and ultra deep waters will reduce geological uncertainty and derisk exploration and lay the foundation for future discoveries. Good results can catalyse greater private investments in the sector," he added.

The emphasis on shared infrastructure for production and evacuation is also important, as it can improve project viability and create value by lowering costs for discoveries that may otherwise be considered marginal. This will support India's efforts to reduce import dependence while building a more resilient energy ecosystem, Gupta said.

MODI ON PROTESTERS

language. The statement came amid the controversy over some of the protesters allegedly using abusive language against Modi. "Not only was I subjected to abusive language at Jantar Mantar, but even my late mother was abused there," he said.

Separately, CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke on Friday questioned the FIR against a woman for allegedly using abusive language against Modi, asking why similar action was not taken against BJP leaders and IT cell members accused of using objectionable language. PTI

Migrant worker killed, another injured in terror attack in J&K

Mir Ehsan
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SRINAGAR: A migrant worker from Chattisgarh was killed on Friday and another severely injured when terrorists opened fire on them in Jammu and Kashmir's Kulgam district, police said.

This is the second terror attack in south Kashmir in the last one week, and a first in the valley since the Pahalgam attack in 2025 that killed a civilian.

According to police, terrorists opened fire on the brick kiln workers in Friday evening in Kilam village, which is 16 kilometres away from Kulgam town, injuring them both in the attack. One of them, identified as Deepak Ratray (24), succumbed to his injuries on the way to hospital, while the other, identified as Bopinder (28), was referred to Government Medical College Anantnag and later moved to a Srinagar hospital for advanced treatment.

The injured worker was moved to a govt hospital in Anantnag.

A senior police officer said that after the attack the terrorists fled from the spot and a massive search operation has been launched. "The security forces are trying to trace the terrorists responsible for this attack."

Lt Governor Manoj Sinha condemned the attack, saying, "I spoke with the DGP, Shri Nalin Prabhat and top security officials following the brutal terrorist attack in Kulgam in which a labourer from Chattisgarh was killed. I strongly condemn this cowardly act. I have directed our security forces to step up their operations and eliminate the terrorists. J&K Police and Security forces have cordoned off the area and launched an operation to bring the perpetrators to justice. Another injured labourer from Chhattisgarh has been rushed to the hospital for urgent medical care. My deepest condolences to the bereaved family and I am praying for the speedy recovery of the injured. J&K administration and the entire nation stand with the families."

The attack follows closely on the heels of another incident less than ten days ago, in which terrorists shot and killed a police officer in Anantnag. Earlier, on July 22, terrorists shot dead a policeman, deployed on Amarnath Yatra duty, at Lal Chowk in Anantnag district. Both attacks took place despite a high security alert in the Valley due to the ongoing Amarnath Yatra.

Ten killed, 3 injured as portion of building collapses in Thane

Kaptan Mali
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THANE: Ten people were killed and three injured after a portion of a four-storey building in Bhiwandi town in Maharashtra's Thane district collapsed, trapping several residents under the debris, officials said on Friday.

According to officials, the 15-year-old building, Kohinoor Apartments in the Narpoli locality, was unauthorised and had been declared dangerously dilapidated but the owner had allegedly ignored several notices from the civic administration.

It was under repairs when its B wing collapsed on Thursday night.

Rescue workers combed the debris for survivors and victims through the night and recovered ten bodies by Friday evening, Shrikant Pardeshi, Assistant Municipal Commissioner and PRO, Bhiwandi Nizampur City Municipal Corporation (BNCMC), said, adding that chances of finding any more survivors were very slim.

Civic officials said B wing started tilting at around 8.00pm on Thursday, bringing them to the site and ordering the occupants to evacuate.

B wing consisted of 12 rooms on each of the four floors, and 35-40 residents moved out including the workers who were engaged in the repairs and living on-site.

The structure collapsed at 11.20 pm, killing and injuring those who failed to leave.

The deceased have been identified as Krish Kumar, 32, Radheshyam Kushwaha, 45, Ranjit Singh, 45, Meraj Rasool Sheikh, 34, Santosh Kumar Pandey, 42, Shameem Ansari, 30, Rakesh Paswan, 25, Mukesh Paswan, 30, Ashok Paswan, 40, and Shyam Murari Pal.

The three injured have been identified as Abhay Kumar, 24, Deepak Kumar Yadav, 25, and Sangeeta Prajapati, 36.

Municipal commissioner Anmol Sagar said he had ordered the registration of a criminal case against the contractor for carrying out unauthorised repair work. The contractor was identified only as Amrutal, who himself owned a room in Kohinoor Apartments who is yet to be traced.

MODI, BURNHAM VOW TO HARNESS INDIA-UK TRADE PACT POTENTIAL

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his British counterpart Andy Burnham on Friday pledged to fully harness the trade and investment potential of a trade deal operationalised last month and to deepen cooperation in key sectors such as technology, defence and security.

The two leaders also discussed the West Asia crisis during a phone call and agreed to work closely together for de-escalation and the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz. This was the first interaction between them since Burnham became the Prime Minister on July 20, succeeding Keir Starmer. Modi said in a social media post that he congratulated Burnham on becoming PM and conveyed his best wishes for a successful tenure. "We will also collaborate closely to fully harness the trade and investment opportunities presented by the recently operationalised India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, for the shared prosperity and well-being of both our people," Modi said. HTC

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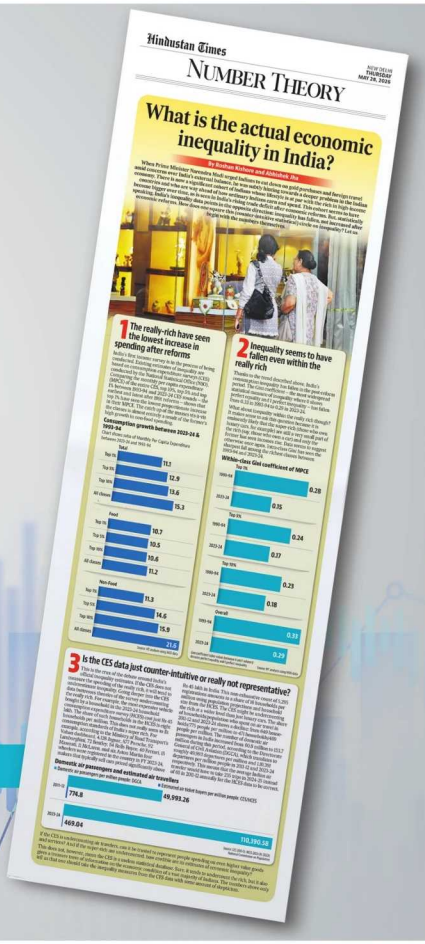

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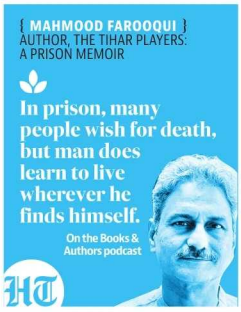
BOOKS

{ MAHMOOD FAROOQUI } AUTHOR, THE TIHAR PLAYERS: A PRISON MEMOIR



{ YOSHITOKI ŌIMA } AUTHOR, A SILENT VOICE

'It's wonderful to see manga travel everywhere'

On the emotional landscapes of her work, and the international popularity of the Japanese comic-book form

Rutvik Bhandari
letters@hindustantimes.com

1 Your works, from *A Silent Voice* (2013-14) to *To Your Eternity* (2016-25), often explore deep emotional landscapes. How have your experiences shaped the stories?

A Silent Voice is based very much on my own experiences as a teenager. A lot of the emotions in that story come from things I wasn't able to do at the time. Sometimes I overlap with Shoya. Through him, I'm writing about the things I wish I could have done — not only for someone like Shōko, but for the people around me.

Whatever I couldn't do back then has come into my manga. It's not only in Shoya or Shōko, but in all the characters. They all carry something I wish I had done or said. For me, that's where those emotions come from.

2 Many readers discover your work at different stages of their lives, and it continues to resonate across generations and cultures. Did you ever imagine your stories would reach so many people?

I'm really happy that they have.

When I was working on *A Silent Voice*, there were already stories about people with disabilities, but many of them were written for adults or for a particular audience. Mine was being published in *Weekly Shōnen Magazine*, which is a magazine for young boys, so I wanted to tell the story for those readers too. Maybe that's one of the reasons it reached so many people. It wasn't written only for one kind of reader. Looking back now, I'm very happy that people of different ages have been able to find something in it.

3 How do you see manga evolving over the next decade, especially as digital platforms and international readership continue to grow?

It's interesting because we're already seeing that change happen. In Japan, there are manga competitions that now receive entries from all over the world. You can really feel that manga has become international. In that sense, I think the medium is continuing to grow. For me, it's exciting to see so many talented people creating manga. At the same time, it's a little bittersweet because the standard keeps getting higher. But overall, I think it's wonderful to see manga reaching people everywhere.

4 Who were the storytellers that influenced you as a creator?

One person who had a big influence on me was the manga artist Yuzo Takada, especially his series *3×3 Eyes*. I loved his work when I was young, and I spent a lot of time copying his illustrations. I learned a great deal just by drawing from his work. These days, inspiration comes from many different places. I watch films, I watch YouTube, and I'm always looking at different kinds of stories. And yes, I like Bollywood very much. I'm a big fan.

93rd birth anniversary of Meena Kumari

Beginning her career at the age of four, the "tragedy queen" of Hindi cinema, Meena Kumari (August 1, 1933 – March 31, 1972), acted in several landmark films, including Baiju Bawra (1952), Parineeta (1953), Do Bigha Zamin (1953), Dil Apna Aur Preet Parai (1960), Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam (1962) and Pakeezah (1972). Her marriage to Kamal Amrohi, who directed her in Pakeezah, was deeply troubled, which left her depressed and alcoholic. She died, aged 38, of liver cirrhosis. HT ARCHIVES

Canis mirabilis

This book about a man and his dog explores anticipatory grief and asks, is compassion a uniquely human trait?

Chintan Girish Modi
letters@hindustantimes.com

Shantanu Naidu's *Thinking of Winter* is the kind of book a reader wants to hug; it is like a soft, comforting pillow that gives no advice and asks no questions even as it foregrounds the idea that there is goodness in the world. A first-person narrative about "a lost adult and a special dog", it prioritises emotional resonance over verbal craftsmanship.

The author is the founder of Motopaws, an initiative providing glow-in-the-dark, reflective collars to keep street dogs from being run over by vehicles at night. Here, instead of his public-facing work with animal welfare and animal rights advocacy, Naidu writes about something more personal: his relationship with Winter, the golden retriever he adopted while studying at Cornell University. They have lived together for nine years.

At first, the reader might think Naidu is just another indulgent dog parent when he says Winter is "a special dog". But they will think otherwise on discovering how Winter tried to save a baby deer in Ithaca, and has sought the author's help to rescue "flightless pigeons", "lost baby crows", a kitten and a rainbird in Mumbai. This book suggests that compassion is not an exclusively human quality. Winter reacts to other creatures' suffering. He teaches Naidu to look out for those who need help.

Naidu acknowledges that he adopted this "runt-of-the-litter puppy" to deal with the loneliness that had engulfed his life as an international student whose "attempts to make friends had failed" after eight months of being at the university.

This book will strike a chord with anyone who finds it easier to befriend animals than humans.

"I saw and felt his attempts to let me know in the most adult way possible that the days of looking at life alone were not necessary anymore. The days of weeping alone were behind me," Naidu writes. Anyone who has experienced the uncomplicated and unconditional love of a pet knows this to be true. Winter pushed the author to draw "courage saturated to its full glory and grace" from "the wet imprint of his cold snout left on a warm laptop edge, day after day".

The dog that was brought home to help the author with his mental health became "a permanent fixture in [his] subconscious". Instead of sitting at the university library to complete his academic assignments, he began bringing work home so that he could spend time with Winter. He joined group discussions virtually, and ensured that his grocery runs were quick. "...his well being [became] a big part of my conscience," Naidu writes.

Thinking of Winter
Shantanu Naidu
129pp, ₹399, Penguin

Pet-parenting involves heartache too. He recounts, in detail, the harrowing process of bringing Winter from the US to India. Aside from the paperwork involved, it was stressful for both of them. Naidu felt sorry about displacing Winter from Ithaca, "the small town that he had made home, with all its forests and gorges, and trails and rivers, and town folk and baristas that loved him". Mumbai, with its population density and vehicular traffic, was going to be an entirely different experience.

This book persuades readers to think about the extremely anthropocentric nature of urban design when Naidu points out that "many pets feel trapped in the concrete monstrosities of our city". He also talks about the sacrifices animals have to make when their lives are controlled by humans: "Winter following me...across the seven seas will always have me carry an unforgiving guilt. The guilt of asking a wildflower to thrive in a vase."

THIS BOOK PERSUADES READERS TO THINK ABOUT THE EXTREMELY ANTHROPOCENTRIC NATURE OF URBAN DESIGN

A notable aspect is the book's emphasis on anticipatory grief, a bitter but inescapable truth that pet parents must face.

When Winter's tail and hind leg are paralysed, he had barely any sensation in his posterior. Naidu recalls being so heartbroken that he told his mentor, the industrialist Ratan Tata, "If something happens to him, I don't think I can live on." Tata replied: "Should something happen... we must grieve, but you cannot say that."

The incident revealed the poor state of medical facilities for animals in India. "India doesn't have very many MRI clinics for pets, and Mumbai didn't have a single one," Naidu writes. This painful personal experience informed his work with the Tata Trusts Small Animal Hospital in Mumbai, where he served on the board of directors. Thankfully, Winter is alright now.

However, as Naidu remarks, "...our time together is not unlimited. And while I might have found the most powerfully imprinted love I will ever come across, this fact will never change." This contemplative tone is consistent with the subject.

Sumouli Dutta's soulful illustrations of Winter make this book even more endearing. In one of these, he watches over a wounded kitten that he coaxed Naidu to rescue during the Mumbai monsoon. With the author's scant knowledge of how to care for the little one, "several impulsively chosen T-shirts were thrown together to make a warm bed". A hairdryer and a napkin were used to dry her up. "Winter supervised every step," notes Naidu.

Another memorable illustration has Naidu getting inked at a tattoo parlour; the artist is engraving the words "Thinking of Winter" on his forearm. The tattoo, like this book, is a celebration of enduring love — a love that is rare to find.

Chintan Girish Modi is a journalist, educator and literary critic who also writes poems, short stories and essays

{ HT PICKS } NEW READS

AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF MUMBAI CUISINE

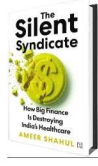
Sea, Salt & Spice is a definitive culinary biography of Mumbai – a city shaped as much appetite as by tides and trade. Long before it became shorthand for ambition, excess and overcrowded trains, Bombay was a porous island city, its kitchens stocked by fishermen, merchants, settlers and empire. Meher Mirza traces this history through what was cooked, preserved, traded and eaten: from Koli hearths and Peshwa courts to Portuguese enclaves, colonial ports and the restless streets of the late-20th century. Moving nimbly across centuries, she shows how geography, climate, gender, religion, caste and commerce worked their way into everyday meals. Richly illustrated, this volume blends scholarship with storytelling and wit.

Sea, Salt & Spice
Meher Mirza
304pp, ₹999, HarperCollins

WHO IS RUNNING INDIA'S HEALTHCARE SYSTEM?

India's healthcare system is being bought piece by piece – hospitals, pharma companies, insurance players, diagnostic labs. The buyers are not Indian. And their bottom line is not your health.

In *The Silent Syndicate*, award-winning investigative journalist Ameer Shahul exposes how the behemoths of global finance have staged a silent takeover of India's most vital sector. This book answers questions about why healthcare in India costs what it does. Meticulously researched and impossible to ignore, *The Silent Syndicate* is essential reading for anyone who has wondered who is really running India's healthcare system – and why.



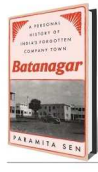
The Silent Syndicate
Ameer Shahul
312pp, ₹799; Hachette

HERE IN INDIA, A TOWN THAT TOMÁŠ BUILT

In the tiny Czech town of Zlín, Tomáš Baťa grew his family's modest shoe shop into a veritable empire, founded on local craft, modern technology and a globalised perspective.

In the 1930s, he turned his attention to India. This move was welcomed by leaders of business and the freedom struggle as a step towards building a self-sufficient, independent nation. Thus, the foundation stone of one of India's earliest company towns, Batanagar, was laid in 1934 near Kolkata. Over the following decades, the town grew into a bastion of innovative thinking and cosmopolitanism.

Former resident Paramita Sen paints a vivid picture of her childhood in this town in the 1970s and '80s, while also examining the larger context of the march of Indian history. Like other Bata company towns around the world — Batadorp in the Netherlands, Batapur in Pakistan, Batatuba in Brazil — Batanagar's unique legacy has been all but lost to posterity. *Batanagar* shines a light on this pioneering Czech company and its iconic Indian company town.



Batanagar: A Personal History of India's Forgotten Company Town
Paramita Sen
225pp, ₹399
Pan Macmillan India

ontheweb

READ: Set in Manipur in the 1990s, Jim Wungramyao Kasom's The Last Free Naga is a collection of 12 stories shadowed by the spectre of violence, and suffused with mysticism. These interconnected pieces present the lives of Tangkhul Nagas living in the lush valleys and mountains of the state's remote villages.

Scan the QR code to read the review by Akankshya Abismruta

{ CENTENARY OF A LITERARY GIANT } UNCOVERING AN ARCHIVE

The making of a new Rahi Masoom Reza

Ather Farouqui
letters@hindustantimes.com

There are occasions in literary history when an archive compels us to reconsider not merely an author's life but the literary history that has grown around him.

Some months ago, I had the rare privilege of looking at Rahi Masoom Reza's papers. It was the first time his family had permitted anyone access to this remarkable archive. Among the papers were the original handwritten Urdu manuscripts of *Aadha Gaon*, dated July 29, 1964, and *Katra Bi Arzoo*, as well as numerous letters, notebooks, and other documents. It was a discovery of uncommon significance. For decades, the accepted wisdom has been that Rahi wrote primarily in Hindi and in the Nagri script. The manuscripts establish beyond doubt that though his novels appeared in Nagri in print, they were written in Urdu. The archive also contains the script, screenplay and dialogue of the TV series *Mahabharat*, also written in Urdu.

The discovery has implications far beyond literary curiosity. Although *Aadha Gaon* was completed in Urdu, it never appeared in that language during Rahi's lifetime. The manuscript now makes possible, for the first time, a critical Urdu edition based on the author's own text. The Anjuman Taraqqi Urdu (Hind) will now publish *Aadha Gaon* based on Rahi's own manuscript.

The archive also settles a longstanding misconception. Rahi was born on August 1, 1927, although his birth date continues to be widely and inexplicably recorded as September 1, 1927.

Today, among the vast majority of Indians, he is remembered as the writer of *Mahabharat*. But he was much more. His long poem *1857* remains among the most powerful poetic engagements with the Revolt in Urdu, while his seven collections of verse, 11 novels, and doctoral dissertation secured his reputation as one of the foremost writers of modern Urdu.

When BR Chopra entrusted him with the screenplay for *Mahabharat*, few could have anticipated the phenomenon it would become. From October 2 1988 until June 24 1990, Sunday mornings acquired an almost ritual character across India. Roads fell silent, markets delayed opening, and families gathered before television sets regardless of religion, caste or region. Muslim households followed the serial with as much devotion as Hindu ones.

The serial became part of the shared cultural memory of a generation. When SS Gill, then secretary of the union ministry of information and broadcasting, asked Rahi to narrate the serial's central idea, he said, "It is the story of time which is all-powerful, and the serial will start with the dialogue: *Main samay hun...*". That was enough to convince Gill of the value of the project. Chopra was certain of its success and spent as much as required for a world-class television serial. Rights were sold to foreign telecast agencies; he made most money from Muslim countries, including Iran, Indonesia and the Arab nations, where the *Mahabharat* was subtitled in Bahasa Indonesian, Persian, Arabic and other local languages.

Chopra faced a lot of flak from right-wing Hindus for choosing a Muslim to write the serial. Interestingly, Rahi consulted mainly Urdu and Persian versions of the epic for his screenplay. Yet, to remember him only through *Mahabharat* is to reverse the chronology of his literary life. Long before he became the country's most celebrated television scriptwriter, he had established himself as one of the leading voices of modern Urdu literature.

Though his novels first appeared in the Nagri script, his poetry was published in Urdu. Among those novels, one stands apart. *Aadha Gaon* is one of the finest fictional explorations of rural Muslim north India. It is especially distinctive for placing Shia society at the centre of its narrative. Urdu literature has historically reflected predominantly Sunni social traditions in the country. *Aadha Gaon* opened up an entirely different cultural landscape. The manuscripts at the Rahi archives transform our understanding of the novel's history and establish that *Aadha Gaon* was first written in Urdu. The manuscript now permits the preparation of an authoritative Urdu edition faithful to the author's own writing. In the light of all this, Rahi's archives remind us that sometimes a forgotten manuscript is enough to compel us to read a familiar writer anew.

Author Rahi Masoom Reza. COURTESY MARIYAM REZA

Ather Farouqui is an Urdu scholar and critic. He is General Secretary of Anjuman Taraqqi Urdu (Hind), New Delhi

HT brunch
RELAX. THE WEEKEND'S HERE

Not a big ask

Women are racing forward in every sphere. But a marriage proposal is still the man's domain. Why is this so hard on the knees? Should more women do it? A thousand times, Yes!

Viren Naidu
letters@hindustantimes.com

Back in 2011, when they were engineering undergraduates in Chennai, Damini and Dhruv (who are keeping their last names private, you'll see why) watched the Indian Grand Prix on a laptop in their university corridor, sharing earphones as best friends. Cut to 13 years later. It's May 2024. The two, now a couple, attended the Miami Grand Prix in the Ferrari garage, a shared dream come true.

Dhruv recalls the moment when he turned away from the action and moved to the paddock, which was oddly silent. There was Damini, down on one knee, asking him to marry her. She'd spent weeks planning the surprise, emailing the F1 teams and roping in F1 Experiences, the company's hospitality arm, which set up a camera crew to capture the moment. "I never viewed proposing as the man's responsibility," says Damini, 30. "If both partners are equals in a relationship, then both have the right to do something special for the other." Dhruv, 30 was dumbfounded, but only for a second. "She isn't one to wait for things to happen. It made sense that she took matters into her own hands." Oh, and he said yes.

Are proposals the last bastion holding up the gender divide? Women now make the first move on Bumble, split the dinner date bill, reject regressive wedding traditions, make Reels about rejecting invisible labour, and hold out against in-laws who want grandkids. But popping the question in a heterosexual coupling remains an overwhelmingly male domain. Muskan Malik, co-founder of Mumbai's The Event Troop, has helped plan 120 weddings over five years. She says that barely five out of every 100 couples admit that it was the woman who did the proposing.

Put a ring on it

If Irish folklore is to be believed, women in the Western world at least have been proposing to their partners since the fifth century. On the modern calendar, February 29 is for reverse proposals – it comes once in four years, so chances are already slim. But around the world, the enduring assumption is that a woman proposing is an anomaly.

In 2022, 27-year-old Punjab-based entrepreneur and content creator, Mrunal Panchal, got down on one knee at Santa Monica Beach in California to ask Anirudh Sharma, also a content creator, to marry her. They'd spent eight years together. He'd already proposed. She'd already accepted. But Panchal wanted Sharma to experience what few men do: The joy of being intentionally chosen, "that feeling of someone asking you to spend your life with them". He was a little surprised, but loved the idea.

Content creator Mrunal Panchal got down on one knee at California's Santa Monica Beach to ask Anirudh Sharma to marry her (above).

TV screenwriter Charmaine Joseph proposed to fellow screenwriter Faizal Akhtar one evening when they were home (above right).

Damini proposed to Dhruv (below) during the Miami Grand Prix.

Data analyst Divya Gupta planned a surprise rooftop party for her partner Shyam Madhani in 2024 (below right).

ILLUSTRATIONS CREATED USING CHATGPT

Shraboni Bhattacharya D'souza, a psychotherapist and counsellor from Mumbai says that as more women seek financial independence, higher education, and a job outside the home, "many refuse to perceive romantic gestures as a man's job". Taking the initiative reflects assertiveness, emotional clarity, and a preference for direct communication over ambiguity.

A question of questions

Some women are ready for this. The world simply isn't. Few wedding planners know how to handle the moment. Jewellers still orient their engagement-ring sales pitches to men. Family and friends wonder what's wrong. When 29-year-old data analyst Divya Gupta passed a jewellery store on her evening stroll in Pune in 2024, she and her partner Shyam Madhani, 30, checked out ring designs on a lark. They bought two customised rings, and put them away.

"From that moment on, I began planning a surprise," says Gupta. They'd been together since his birthday in November 2017. It seemed fitting, seven years on, to propose on the same day. The plan included a rooftop party. Gupta even learnt a few lines of Gujarati for her proposal speech. "Getting down on my knee for a man I loved felt unusually empowering," she says.

Then came a backhanded comment. "Do you think he'll do the same for you?" her sister asked. She didn't respond. "I wasn't proposing to get something in return." Online, many people found the gesture odd. "It never crossed my mind that it was such a big deal to people." The silver lining: Even today, when they pass the proposal venue, Madhani smiles and repeats to her, "I do."

Making a connection

Malik finds that interfaith couples are more likely to have women popping the question. Many tend to be love matches, and the couple isn't cowed by family opposition or social pressure. "They're more open to challenging traditional rituals."

In Mumbai, TV screenwriter Charmaine Joseph (40) had been dating fellow screenwriter Faizal Akhtar (48) for three years, and wanted to take the next step in 2016. No candle-lit dinner. No rooftop party. She simply looked at him one evening, when they were sitting together at home, and said, "I want to marry you."

She had a Plan B. Were he not interested, she'd move abroad to study. He said yes and they've been married for eight years. They had a Christian ceremony in Jaipur, followed by a nikah in Mumbai. In a fitting plot twist, just before their Christian ceremony, Joseph got down on one knee, and officially popped the question to Akhtar. "Because, why not? I wanted to."

Role reversals

Malik believes that the number of women proposing is low not because they lack courage or confidence, but because "the sanctity of the relationship is celebrated more readily when the guy proposes".

In 2023, Malik was working on the wedding of a Marwari-Rajput couple in Udaipur. The bride had already proposed. The groom had said yes. Suddenly, he felt compelled to stage an elaborate proposal of his own. His reason: "It is still the man's job. And I am the man in the relationship."

His move was probably brought on by the fact that the bridesmaids were wondering if the groom loved the bride enough since he hadn't been the one to pop the question. "Her proposal wasn't celebrated the same way."

That imbalance also frames how both men and women experience rejection. "Men are raised to see themselves as the ones to initiate relationships and propose marriage," D'souza says. "So a rejection may feel like a challenge to their masculinity and self-worth." It's why jilted men in India retaliate with an acid attack or public shaming, to save face. Jilted women, however, are shamed for wanting more than what's given to them. "The refusal does not threaten their sense of femininity."

It's a lopsided view of happily ever after. Nonetheless women persist. The next time you're at a wedding, pay close attention to who gets to steer the love story. The last bastion is a clear indicator of how equal the partnership is.

column { rude food }

Hit the right spots

The hottest new restaurants in Mumbai and Delhi play with Japanese ideas, riff on Indian classics and serve South-American surprises. A wide range for the hungry

VIR SANGHVI

Vineet Bhatia has been around for so long that newer generations sometimes forget how much he has done for Indian food. Twenty-five years ago, when Indian restaurants abroad were expected to serve 'ethnic' food at low prices, Zaika in London, where Vineet was the chef, became the first Indian restaurant in the world to win a Michelin star. (Another restaurant, Tamarind, where Atul Kochhar was the chef, also won a star that year.)

Vineet moved on from Zaika and won Michelin stars at two other London restaurants and one in Geneva. He redefined Indian food in London and changed the way in which many classic dishes were cooked and presented, while creating new dishes that have since been widely imitated.

In recent years, he has run a global portfolio of around a dozen restaurants, of which four are in India with the Oberoi group (where he started his career). I went back to Ziya at the Oberoi in Mumbai, which was the first of his Oberoi restaurants a couple of weeks ago, to find that the menu had been refreshed.

I have been a fan of Vineet's cooking for two decades, so I was not surprised to find how good the cuisine was. But the Oberoi chefs have built on Vineet's original vision. Nishant Kumar Singh who has a real feel for the classics and the hotel's versatile executive chef Kayzad Sadri have created a restaurant that has something for everyone from the great dishes of Indian cuisine to Vineet's brilliant creations.

I had two other good meals in Mumbai. Hearth On The First is a fire-cooking restaurant on the first floor of the Eros cinema building, and despite minor irritants – there was something wrong with the exhaust when I went, which made part of the room cough-aloud smoky – I had a good time. The simple dishes were well executed: A delicious smash burger and pizza with house-made chorizo. The more complicated dishes came from a kitchen that clearly knows its stuff: Duck and lamb were cooked expertly and a bone-marrow dish was outstanding.

Ziya at The Oberoi, Mumbai (right) has a new menu. Kayzad Sadri (below left), the executive chef, has created something for everyone. It was the first of Vineet Bhatia's (below right) Oberoi restaurants.

Gaijin is a super-hot new restaurant in Khar. On the night I went, it was packed out with all kinds of guests, ranging from the rich, the glamorous and the famous, to normal people out for a good time.

I liked the restaurant, which is basic and slightly grungy. But I was most impressed by Anand Morwani, the chef-partner who is actually better than the restaurant. A classically trained chef, Morwani has familiarised himself with Japanese ingredients and techniques. But because he knows how many years it takes to master Japanese food, he doesn't claim to be turning out great and authentic Japanese cuisine. In fact, the name Gaijin means outsider in Japanese.

Grammie in Delhi has a menu ranging from South-American-influenced dishes to distinctive Japanese flavours (top and centre). Mumbai's Hearth On The First serves excellent pizza, duck and lamb (above).

And as an outsider, Morwani uses the form and language of Japanese cuisine to turn out dishes that spring from his own imagination and merge global flavours and ingredients. The range of flavours is greater than is typical of Japanese restaurants.

I thought the food was creative and thoughtful. Morwani is not quite there yet, but he is a chef to watch because as he develops his own style, he will certainly hit the top league. And it will be the sort of food that no one else will be cooking.

In Delhi, I tried Grammie, a much-awaited new restaurant. I first heard of Tanveer Kwatra when he was the chef at a hotel in Gurgaon. Everyone who ate his food came back raving about this chef who had trained in Australia. But strangely, the hotel did not do much to push Tanveer or his food.

But Tanveer had an entrepreneurial streak and strong people skills, so he moved to the management side and became the general manager of the W hotel in Goa, which he put on the map so successfully, that people forgot about its design failures or its problems with municipal authorities.

I didn't think the W hotel could contain Tanveer's talents, and when I next heard of him, his wife Ginny Kohli and he were running successful restaurants and delivery operations all over India.

A few months ago, he opened what is probably his flagship restaurant, the much-anticipated Grammie in the Sangam Cinema Complex. It's a brave decision, because restaurant complexes in Delhi start out well and then begin to fade away. Sangam is no longer the buzzy place it once was. But Grammie should help revive it.

The food is theoretically European, but the menu ranges from South-American-influenced dishes to distinctive Japanese flavours. (Tanveer runs a very successful sushi operation in Hyderabad, so he knows the cuisine.) It's crowd-pleasing stuff that reflects Tanveer's vast experience and his background as a chef.

It is great to find somewhere in Delhi that's exciting, because judging by my experience, it's Mumbai where the adventurous, good stuff is happening. Hopefully Delhi will catch up.

The views expressed by the columnist are personal

This week we're...

Not so divine. The Percy Jackson S3 cast is on fire with their promos. Our fav bit is how each actor casually talks about the roles they auditioned for and didn't get. Charlie Bushnell (who plays Luke, son of Hermes) got rejected for Stranger Things. **Olive Abercrombie** (Bianca, Hades's daughter) missed out on playing Ruthye in Supergirl. Aryan Simhadri (the cute satyr Grover) almost was a superhero. Demigods? Nah. We're all mere mortals.

Multi masking. The Odyssey is long; mostly dudes doing dude things, while women weave, and fade into insignificance. So, what are women viewers doing through three hours of it? Skincare apparently. Nolan's yarn is perfect for leaving on a barrier-cream mask, the dark multiplex is Vit-C-serum-friendly. You can't carry food into a multiplex. But a little retinol in an amphora? No problem.

Showing spine. "I am a bookstore employee" doesn't sound like a slogan of dissent. But in Hong Kong, indie booksellers are being arrested for stocking books that the Chinese government deems seditious. After one person was arrested, wearing a T-shirt with the phrase, Taiwanese social media users made it a protest slogan. One of the banned books, Emily Feng's Let Only Red Flowers Bloom, has gone viral. Add it to your TBR.

Riding through. Remember those trolley arguments in philosophy class? That hypothetical trolley that's hurtling towards 20 people and will kill them, but if you pull a lever to swerve it to a side track, it only kills 10? It's been all over our screens: The Good Place, the S1 finale of The Last of Us, the hilarious climax of Widow's Bay, the Ru Paul disaster comedy Stop! That! Train!, and The Odyssey. The solutions vary, which is the point. But why is Hollywood suddenly obsessed?

WANT TO READ MORE?

Check out the second page of HT Brunch in the epaper. And dive into stories about life, love, good times and good vibes in the digital magazine, out every Saturday. We're also on hindustantimes.com/lifestyle/brunch, and the HT app (it's free!)

READ the e-mag here!

{ RIGHT NOW }

The boss will text you now

Gen Z managers are built different. Late hours, long docs and hierarchy gives them the ick. So how are teams and older employees dealing with this new working style?

Anjali Kochhar
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In The Z-Suite (2025; top) the Gen Z team doesn't care about rules. In the 2004 film In Good Company (left), 26-year-old Carter makes his older subordinates uneasy. Harper Stern in Industry (2020-; right) knew how to fake it till she made it. In The Pitt (below), Shabana Azeez plays a 20-year-old medical intern who often takes charge.

Somewhere in a glass tower in Gurugram or a WeWork in Powai, a 26-year-old is approving leave requests, running one-on-ones, and asking why everyone still bothers with the weekly status report. Her team calls her The Boss; the security guard occasionally mistakes her for an intern, and she was promoted in record time because the project needed a manager and she was in the line of sight.

This 26-year-old's leadership style? It's exactly the same as her working style from the previous week. She wants as little to do with the workplace as possible. And creating value for Boomer shareholders at the cost of her peace is giving her the ick. And there are enough like her rising in offices across India that senior management are scratching their heads in confusion.

Gen Z, fresh from a successful national protest, are built different from their predecessors. At Aumni, a Pune talent firm, HR head Charu Rai sees first-time managers in the 26-30-year age group today, against the 30-34 one five years ago. They're not angling for the corner office. Deloitte's 2025 Gen Z and Millennial Survey suggests that only 6% of Gen Zs (those between the ages of 14 and 29) list reaching a senior leadership position as their primary career goal. They're not lazy, they're just not blinded by workplace advancement. It's a hard variable to add to the presentation deck.

Junior league

"It's not that Gen Z avoids hard work; it's that we value purposeful work over the performative type," says Anjali Chandak, 24, a senior executive at a marketing communication firm in Mumbai. They won't stay back an hour late to demonstrate commitment; if the work can wait until tomorrow, they will too. They won't butter up the bosses. But they want clarity and mentorship, which is where the challenge begins.

Mayank Tripathi, 28, founder of Findise Solutions, a digital marketing agency in Mumbai, recalls being 15 minutes late on a call with a prospective client — a manufacturing business owner in his late 40. When he arrived, the man asked, "And will your founder be joining us?" He didn't expect the young man in a T-shirt, sharing a live screen instead of an elaborate deck, to be in charge. "That call was the day I realised that my age would be questioned in every room, and that the only answer that works is the work itself," Tripathi says. The older man signed on. But Tripathi is still second-guessed at work.

Some challenges come from within the organisation. Sneha Shivarajan, 28, senior manager at Never Grow Up, a Mumbai work-culture consultancy, had her own manager tell her that her leadership style was "all carrot, no stick", meaning that her team of four didn't fear enough. Shivarajan took it as a compliment. "I don't need to demand respect," she says. In her daily catchups with her team, she checks on their bandwidth, hears out concerns and offers guidance, and closes by asking a question a few managers think to ask: Is she the one holding up the task?

Lateral shift

Young people rising up in any generation have a common problem to overcome: How to jump into an established environment, identify what's not working anymore, and find a way to fix it. For Gen Z especially, that problem has an added twist as start-ups have created parallel modes of success.

Samruddhi Vaidya, 27, a senior PR manager at a communications agency in Mumbai, says in the corporate world, respect and fear are uncomfortably intertwined. "Not voicing your opinion 'out of respect' translates to 'I fear what this would do to my career'." It's not a conversation that older organisations tend to be ready for, at their own cost. "On some days, protecting your peace means taking that call, so you aren't taunted later about it."

Incoming managers are making some welcome changes, such as setting work-life boundaries. At the Delhi-based management consultancy firm where Saahiba Bhatia, 24, is founding partner, someone recently suggested holding a "quick" 11.30 pm meeting on the night before a major deadline. Bhatia wanted none of that. She asked everyone involved to send final updates on WhatsApp instead, set clear action points, and reconvened at 8am. "Sometimes, the best decision a manager can make is knowing when people need sleep more than another meeting."

Deloitte's data shows that most Gen Zs want managers who mentor them, but only 36% say theirs actually do. "Technical skills may earn someone a promotion, but leadership calls for coaching, delegation, conflict resolution, feedback, and building trust," says Jeel Gandhi, CEO of youth media platform Under25. Many first-time managers think they have to prove they deserve their role, which often leads them to manage tasks instead of people. "The shift happens when they realise that their responsibility is no longer to deliver the best work, but to enable others to do so."

At Keka HR, an HR-tech platform, the average employee age is 27, and the friction lands on the desk of Abhijit Rao, VP and head of people culture. When a Gen Z manager recently wanted to replace the weekly status report (one that took an hour to make, and which nobody properly read) with a two-line update, there was pushback. The older employee was upset that their experience was being undermined; the Gen Z one was frustrated because an obvious solution was being ignored. They ran both formats for two weeks. The experienced colleague found it easier to give in after the road-test. "The real issue wasn't the format," says Rao. "It was trust."

The kids are all right; it's the org chart that's buffering.

{ RANT AGREEMENT }

Let them have treats

It's not a bag charm, it's a pick-me-up. It's not an iced-coffee, it's a way of coping. As paycheques shrink, see how recession indicators have evolved in 2026

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When an entire economic system is stacked so heavily against you, spending on a matcha or One Piece merch or bag charms is one way to cope. PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK, GIRLS CREW

It starts innocently. You realise you need dish soap, so you start a Blinkit order. Four minutes in, you've added cherry-scented hand cream, matcha-flavoured chocolate and pastel highlighters to the cart. The total is still under ₹1,000, which, you've told yourself, is a responsible financial decision. You've also told yourself that these are hard times, you've denied yourself bigger things. You deserve this treat.

For those in previous generations, this kind of treat used to be lipstick. Cosmetics companies noticed that in times of economic lull, when people had no money for larger luxuries, lipstick sales would climb. In the early 2000s, Estée Lauder chairman Leonard Lauder popularised the term Lipstick Index as a recession indicator, the micro escapism a sign of a macro problem. Two decades on (and with a beauty boom in full swing) the lipstick has company. In our weak moments, we're picking up bag charms, novelty collectibles, specialty coffee on a weekday afternoon, limited-edition socks, Japanese stationery, HYROX accessories and One Piece merch featuring Monkey D. Luffy.

None of these purchases is life-changing. That's precisely the point. They are just meant to change the mood of the moment.

Madé Lapuerta, creator of @DataButMakeItFashion, has put up posts pointing out how much we're relying on little indulgences to keep us sane. And how they're just inexpensive enough to justify, indulgent enough to feel special, and small enough to slip into a cart without a guilt trip.

It's a move that baffles older folks, who would reserve treats only for a special occasion. And who would choose their reward carefully. Nearly every well-to-do Boomer has a story about walking into the Taj Hotel, or some kind of posh club for the first time, or shopping at Zara without waiting for the sale. They waited for payday, saved up, kept their eye on a prize and cashed in.

Young folks today just can't deal with that formula. The payday isn't big enough, saving is harder, big-ticket prizes almost never live up to the hype... smaller treats hit harder. They've been shamed for it – enough suited economics "experts" have claimed that young people can't afford to buy homes because of their daily Starbucks habit. Guess what? The math isn't mathing. Young people broke down the payment plans to show that even if they gave up caffeine, it wouldn't be enough to fight an economic system so heavily stacked against them. At least coffee offered a little kick.

The phrase 'I deserve a little treat' began as an internet joke. It's now a budgeting category. Financial planners are now studying Americans who use credit-card points to buy not flight upgrades but groceries. There are new signs of a world in flux: Smaller popcorn buckets at Imax-Odyssey screenings, flash-discount sales for veggies, skirt hemlines rising, neon hair colour, even the rise in cases of domestic violence. Buyers are grateful for quiet luxury, because going logo-free is perfect for a time when discretionary spending has dried up.

Online, the shift is subtle but obvious. Make-up gurus who used to do smokey-eye tutorials now also mention the pergram price of eye-shadow when they recommend their favs. Sneaker resellers are struggling; Air Jordan design trackers have gone quiet after the pandemic. Travel portals are doing Reels about 5 Visa-Free Countries That Are Cheap This Season. Food influencers track the dynamic pricing of Indian avocados like it's the US dollar.

As for us regular folks, we're just getting by – managing rent, layoffs, situationships, the quest for non-sticky SPF 50 that is actually colourless, and a protest scheduled at 4pm on a weekday. Isn't that a lot of weight for a small bag charm to carry? Why hate on this?

{ LISTICLE }

This is peak adulting

Adulthood used to arrive with kids and a home loan. Now it sneaks in with a birding app or an air fryer. Here are 10 signs that you've officially grown up

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A love for big garlic cloves

Let grannies insist that the small ones are where the flavour is. For kids these days, the moment of adulthood arrives the moment they start obsessing about garlic, and pods with oversized cloves. They'll follow recipes. But they'll measure garlic with their hearts. Fat cloves are easy to peel, look good on the gram. They hold it up like Rafiki presenting Simba at Pride Rock.

An interest in air-fryers

It's this generation's Bullet Blender, the gadget that signifies active cooking and new investment in the kitchen. It sits on your counter like a small declaration of independence, proof that ordering in every night is no longer the only option. Sure, it fries using less oil. But to want one is to admit that you actually want to eat healthy, that you're at the age when you swap recipes with friends and buy "Italian Herb Mix" yourself.

A Friday night in

Let the teens fill their calendars with coffee raves, matcha tastings and benne-dosa queues. There will come a point when they dread another weekend of dressing up, commuting, socialising and returning. They'll make excuses, cancel plans the afternoon of. And then, nothing. No guilt, no FOMO, no anxious scrolling through everyone else's Stories. That's the pivot to adulthood. It creeps up so subtly, you won't even realise it until S2 E6 of your Saturday binge.

A playlist for Sunday cleaning

It used to be a chore, an imposition either avoided or endured. Then, one Sunday afternoon, the urge to tidy up a space springs up on its own (damn those viral decluttering and Clean With Me videos). It doesn't work without special music. Because cleaning isn't a chore, it's a vibe. There are spray bottles and lavender scents involved. Plus, romanticising everything is a coping mechanism. It works.

The linens hierarchy

Good sheets. Guest towels. Everyday cushion covers. House party drapes. This is the stuff you'd laugh at when you were younger – you made do with two sets of bedsheets on rotation for years. Now, you cringe over 120-TC weaves and polyblend pillowcases. Supima cotton, Jaipur block-print and mercerised weaves really do feel luxurious. Someone mentioned an NGO that embroiders monograms on towels and napkins – and your heart just skipped a beat.

Expensive skincare

A generation that witnessed the rise of Nykaa, watched beauty startups mushroom, and knows AHA from BHA will hit a plateau eventually. Ten-step Korean routines will feel tiresome; 10-piece trial kits will feel like homework. What tends to work, at this point, are fewer, high-quality products, a consultation with a dermatologist, and a sustainable routine. Hello! You treat yourself like someone worth taking care of.

A meal prep ritual

Growing up is tricky. One day it's the race to claim someone's cancelled Zomato order at 40% off. The next, you're ordering fresh groceries for the week, triaging them into 10 meals, accounting for leftovers, looking lovingly at a plump brinjal and can't wait to make mutabal this evening. Every adult discovers meal-planning on their own terms – via budgeting, an influencer or a set of colour-coded tiffin boxes. It's why actual grown-ups rarely stare into the open fridge and wonder if there's anything to eat.

Birding binoculars

Or, whichever tool suits the niche, unglamorous activity that never cropped up in the first 30 years of one's life. People who never cared for nature get competitive about identifying moss. Some decide to visit every heritage stepwell in Maharashtra. Birding is particularly popular with those who grew up with the climate crisis and seek something slow, offline, with zero utility value, zero content potential, and zero side hustle opportunity.

Knowing your Uber fare

Let the kids view surge pricing and weep. A new sign of growing up is knowing the fare to a familiar destination at a familiar time before even opening the app. Peak vs off-peak hour, Apple vs Android, male vs female user, the cheaper pick-up spot that's a three-minute walk away. Nobody taught you this, you picked it up ride by ride, held on to your 4.9 rating, and don't mind the occasional upgrade these days.

Kitchen quirks

All through childhood, the kitchen was the off-limits part of the house. Now, you have a preferred hob burner (plus one you never use). There's one unloved spoon in the drawer, brought out only in extreme circumstances (and yet, never thrown away). The bundle of disposable chopsticks, which came with sushi, has disappeared. There are nice reusable ones now. The mugs are still mismatched, but you have an opinion on each of them (one is chipped, be careful with it).

WORLD

Trump: US has not agreed to Ukraine building Patriot

MARYLAND: President Donald Trump said on Friday the United States had not agreed to Ukraine building Patriot missiles, adding the US had "to be very careful about letting somebody build them". "These weapons are incredible." AGENCIES

Easter bombings: 2 ex-officials get death sentence

COLOMBO: A Sri Lankan court on Friday sentenced Pujith Jayasundara, a former police chief and Hemasiri Fernando, a former top defence ministry official to death after finding them guilty of criminal negligence that allowed Islamic State-inspired attacks on Easter Sunday in 2019, which killed more than 260 people. AP

Google launches new satellite image AI tool

WASHINGTON: Google announced a new feature allowing Google Earth users to generate AI visualisations on top of the service's satellite imagery, sparking concerns from researchers and open-source intelligence experts about the potential for disinformation. AFP

Discarded SpaceX rocket on collision course with moon

FLORIDA : A drifting SpaceX rocket is on a collision course with the moon after launching a pair of lunar landers more than a year ago. The rocket's upper stage will unintentionally slam into the moon on Wednesday. AP

Hamas strikes deal with US to disarm, end war with Israel

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GAZA CITY: Hamas said on Friday it had agreed to a deal announced by US President Donald Trump to end its war with Israel, which includes it handing over its weapons to a Palestinian governing committee and the gradual withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza.

Israel has yet to officially comment on the announcement, but a political source told AFP "that there will be no withdrawal whatsoever" from Israeli forces' current lines "unless Hamas undergoes a genuine disarmament".

Far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir denounced the agreement as "unacceptable", saying it was "tantamount to agreeing to Hamas organising for the next massacre".

The Palestinian Islamist group's weapons have been one of the key sticking points in implementing a ceasefire deal in place since October, but Trump announced late Thursday an agreement for Hamas's "complete disarmament", calling it a critical step towards a new Palestinian government in Gaza.

The Israeli source said that "the issue of Gaza did not come up" in this week's meeting between Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in Washington.

Hamas officials told AFP that a committee established by Trump's Board of Peace to govern Gaza would oversee the process of storing the Islamist movement's weapons.

The group said it expected mediators and the Board of Peace to ensure Israel complied with the deal's terms, which include Israel's withdrawal from Gaza.

Smoke rises following an Israeli strike in Gaza City on Tuesday. AP

SAUDI SEEKS TO LEAD MARITIME COALITION TO PROTECT RED SEA

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia discussed with military representatives of 43 countries the formation of a multinational alliance charged with protecting maritime navigation, hoping to counter a blockade the Houthis imposed on the kingdom last week.

The Saudis proposed leading the coalition, which would address threats in the Red Sea, its southern entrance, the Bab al-Mandab Strait, and the Gulf of Aden. BLOOMBERG

IRAN MILITARY SAYS IT TARGETED U.S. BASE IN KUWAIT WITH DRONES

TEHRAN: Iran's military said on Friday it launched drone strikes targeting US military facilities in Kuwait. The army said it targeted "fighter aircraft shelters, satellite communications systems and equipment storage facilities at Ahmad al-Jaber Air Base". The Iranian army said the strikes came "in response to the recent aggression by the terrorist US military against our country and its brutal attack on a residential home on Qeshm Island". AFP

Ghazi Hamad, a member of Hamas's negotiating team, said the movement was making "concessions for the sake of our people in the Gaza Strip, to save them from killing and displacement".

Despite the October ceasefire, violence has continued in Gaza, with Israeli strikes killing at least four people, including two children, on Thursday, according to health officials.

Trump, in an earlier social media post, said that once Hamas is disarmed "Israeli forces will withdraw, and the International Stabilisation Force will work with a new Palestinian police force to take responsibility for Gaza being safe for its residents and its neighbours".

Nickolay Mladenov, the Board of Peace's high representative for Gaza, said on Friday the deal "took months of very difficult negotiations".

{ MASS MIGRATION } THOUSANDS CROSSED INTO SPAIN'S CEUTA ENCLAVE

Trump, far-right seize on Spain crisis

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WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump led far-right attempts on Friday on both sides of the Atlantic to make political capital from Spain's migration crisis, portraying the migrant surge in Ceuta as a warning for America if his opponents get into power. "I saw Spain yesterday, and I watched the catastrophe that took place," Trump told a meeting of his cabinet at the presidential Camp David retreat in Maryland.

"It looks like an invasion of a country by hundreds of thousands of people, and that same thing's going to happen to us if the Republicans don't get elected, except worse, much bigger."

With polls showing Trump's support has fallen into the low 30% range and opposition Democrats hoping to win at least partial control of Congress in the November midterm elections, the crisis in Spain offers Republicans a chance to return to one of their political strongpoints.

News footage of migrants overwhelming barriers to get into Ceuta — a tiny Spanish territory on the Moroccan coast — aired repeatedly on Fox News and went viral across right-wing Trump-allied social media accounts.

There were similar reactions from a range of right-wing and Trump-linked leaders in Europe.

Far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) co-leader Alice Weidel claimed in an X post that "Ceuta was left in ruins overnight" by the influx. She argued that Germany is "likely the destination for most of these migrants". "Germany must prepare itself: borders must be secured and rejections rigorously enforced," wrote Weidel, whose party is backed by top Trump officials. Both Italy's right-wing prime minister Giorgia Meloni and the populist right-wing ruling coalition in Finland called for excluding Spain from the European visa-free zone as a result of the situation. Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis, a billionaire Trump supporter, said the Ceuta situation was caused by Spain's policy of offering hundreds of thousands of migrants already in the country a legal status.

Migrants return to Morocco from the Spanish enclave of Ceuta on Friday. AP

Trump's election victory over Democrat Kamala Harris in 2024 was fuelled by voter worries over uncontrolled migration on the US-Mexico border and his lurid warnings of migrants coming to murder Americans and even to eat their pets.

The Trump administration leapt on the Ceuta crisis in a coordinated messaging barrage.

The State Department issued a statement blaming Spain's government for "deliberate efforts to enable and facilitate mass illegal migration into Europe".

Trump's vice president, JD Vance, posted news footage of the Ceuta migrant wave and said it highlighted "radical left-wing globalist policies that have enabled the Invasion of the West". "These images out of Spain are an unfortunate reminder of the consequences of mass migration," Vance posted on X.

NO INDIAN VISITOR TO CANADA APPLIED FOR ASYLUM DURING FIFA WORLD CUP

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TORONTO: Canada has said that just a quarter of visa applications from Indians for the recent FIFA World Cup were approved by its immigration department. However, as yet, not a single Indian who arrived for that purpose in the country, has claimed asylum.

According to an updated data from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) obtained by the outlet Globe and Mail, of the 2,660 applications from Indians, just 665 were approved.

The tournament was co-hosted by the US, Mexico and Canada in June and July. In total, Canada approved 26,000 visas and rejected 20,845.

Earlier, the Globe and Mail had reported that 175 of the visitors for the World Cup has submitted asylum claims. There are no Indians among them, so far.

{ BROAD PEAK MOUNTAIN } FOUR BODIES FOUND

Top Nepalese climber among 6 missing on Pak mountain

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ISLAMABAD/KATHMANDU: Nepal's veteran mountaineer Nirmal Purja was among six climbers still missing after an avalanche struck an expedition on Pakistan's Broad Peak, where rescuers recovered four bodies and continued search operations despite adverse weather, officials said on Friday.

Broad Peak (8,051 metres), located in the Karakoram range near K2, is the world's 12th-highest mountain and is considered one of the most challenging peaks to climb.

The avalanche struck the mountain at an altitude of around 7,000 metres on Thursday, sweeping away a 10-member climbing team that had begun its summit push, according to the Alpine Club of Pakistan (ACP).

The climbers — six from Nepal, one Pakistani, one Omani, one American and one Chinese-Broad Peak went missing at around 9am local time following the avalanche. ACP president Major General Irfan Arshad said four bodies have been recovered during the rescue operation.

Nirmal Purja AFP

He identified two of the deceased as Oman's Nadhira Ahmed Abdullah Al Harthy and Nepal's Pur Bahadur Gurung. The identities of the other two bodies are yet to be officially confirmed.

Besides Purja and Gurung, the other Nepalese climbers were Kili Pemba Sherpa, Nima Sherpa, Nawang Thindu Sherpa and Gyalu Sherpa.

The other missing climbers were Sohail Sakhi of Pakistan, Wang Zhong of China and Mallory Geis of the United States.

Purja, 43, is regarded as one of the world's leading high-altitude mountaineers. In 2019, he created history by climbing all 14 mountains above 8,000 metres in just six months and six days under his "Project Possible" expedition. In 2021, he was part of the team of 10 Nepali climbers that made the first successful winter ascent of K2. Nepal's Minister for Tourism, Culture and Civil Aviation, Khadak Prasad Paudel, expressed concern over the incident and said the government was in regular contact with the Pakistani authorities.

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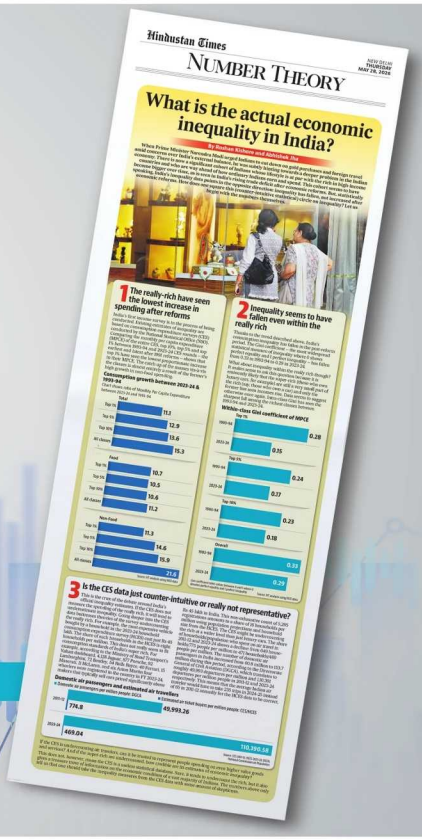

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Maruti Suzuki profit falls in Q1 despite strong sales

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NEW DELHI: Maruti Suzuki India Ltd's profit fell for a second consecutive quarter in April-June as soaring commodity and logistics costs triggered by the West Asia conflict eroded margins, overshadowing robust growth in domestic sales and exports.

India's largest carmaker posted a 9% year-on-year (y-o-y) decline in consolidated net profit to ₹3,447 crore, after a 6% drop in the preceding quarter.

The decline in profit came after a four-percentage-point contraction in operating Ebitda margin to 8.6%. Ebitda is short for earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization.

The company said a temporary change in the payment cycle for certain commodities to support suppliers during the disruption also weighed on quarterly earnings.

"To support suppliers and ensure uninterrupted production, the company temporarily revised the settlement cycle for certain commodities such as aluminum, plastics, and rubber from a quarterly lag to a monthly lag basis," Rahul Bharti, senior executive officer of corporate affairs at Maruti Suzuki India, said in an earnings call on Friday evening.

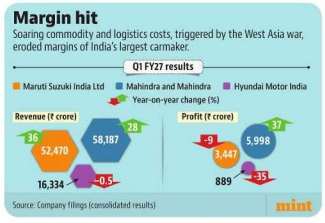
"This was a kind of extraordinary one-time measure taken in response to extraordinary circumstances," Bharti said, adding that the temporary change in the settlement cycle adversely impacted profitability during the quarter.

Maruti joined Hyundai Motor India in facing pressure on profitability due to commodity price inflation after the Korean carmaker's India unit reported a 35% fall in net profit to ₹889 crore on Thursday.

The country's second largest carmaker Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) also saw pressure from commodity inflation, but managed to post a 37% increase in net profit to ₹5,998 crore on the back of its other businesses like real estate, logistics and vehicle recycling and components. While Maruti's profitability suffered, revenue rose 36% to ₹52,470 crore on the back of strong sales growth in both domestic and international markets, despite concerns over disruption to exports.

According to its investor presentation on Friday, the company saw total sales grow 29% y-o-y to 682,724 units. Domestic sales grew 30% to 557,988 units, while exports grew 29% to 124,736 units.

Sales for M&M and Hyundai have also been in the green, with Hyundai being pulled back due to a fire at its suppliers production facility resulting in impact on production in June. M&M's passenger vehicle sales surged 15% to 175,000 units while Hyundai's domestic sales increased by 5% to 139,374 units.



Cigarette tax hike, agri biz dip weigh on ITC's profit

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MUMBAI: ITC Ltd's June-quarter profit fell as a steep tax increase on cigarettes and a slump in its agri business outweighed robust revenue growth, highlighting the pressure it faced from higher input costs and geopolitical disruptions.

The Kolkata-based cigarettes-to-atta conglomerate reported a 27.6% year-on-year (y-o-y) rise in consolidated revenue from operations to ₹29,523.30 crore, while net profit fell 15.6% to ₹4,508.79 crore, according to an exchange filing on Friday. Reported net profit included a one-time gain of ₹405.88 crore from the revaluation of ITC's existing stake in Sproutlife Foods Pvt. Ltd, which sells Yoga Bar.

Consolidated Ebitda (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization) fell 24% y-o-y.

Revenue growth was driven by a 12% increase in the FMCG-Others business. But net revenue from the cigarettes business fell 25% y-o-y, while agri business revenue declined 16.55%.

The company flagged a weak monsoon and rising input costs as key risks. MINT

Shares of ITC closed 1.42% lower at ₹281 on the National Stock Exchange on Friday, while the benchmark Nifty 50 gained 0.27%.

ITC said the conflict in West Asia raised crude and crude-linked input costs while disrupting trade and supply chains, making the operating environment more challenging during the quarter.

The company also flagged a weak monsoon and rising input costs as key risks going forward.

"While consumption demand, both in rural and urban markets, remained resilient during the quarter, imported inflation is a key watch-out in the near-term," ITC said in a press statement. "India is currently experiencing a significant deficit in monsoon and lower Kharif sowing levels compared to the same period last year."

The broader macroeconomic backdrop also remained challenging. Driven by higher food prices, retail inflation accelerated to 4.38% in June from 3.93% in May, breaching the Reserve Bank of India's 4% medium-term target for the first time since January 2025.

ITC said it is implementing staggered price increases to absorb the sharp hike in cigarette taxes while seeking to retain consumers. The company has undertaken 30 interventions to strengthen and reshape its product portfolio.

Within FMCG, dairy, snacks, noodles and frozen snacks grew more than 20% year-on-year, while personal care products posted mid-teens growth.

FISCAL DEFICIT WIDENS TO 18.2% OF FY27 TARGET

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NEW DELHI: India's fiscal deficit reached 18.2% of the full-year budget estimate (BE) by the end of June—or ₹3.08 lakh crore—compared with 17.9% a year ago, according to the latest monthly accounts released by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) on Friday.

The deficit, which nearly doubled from 9.6% at the end of May, reflected higher government spending towards the end of the quarter even as revenue collections remained broadly on track.

The Centre has budgeted a fiscal deficit of ₹16.96 lakh crore—4.3% of gross domestic product (GDP)—for FY27 and is expected to rely on stronger tax collections and non-tax revenues over the rest of the year to stay within the target.

The fiscal position was also supported by the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) record dividend of ₹2.87 lakh crore, alongside stronger revenue mobilization and the front-loaded expenditure.

IndiGo to end Norse Atlantic lease, discontinue wide-body operations

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NEW DELHI: India's largest airline, IndiGo, announced on Friday that it will discontinue its wide-body operations effective October 25, 2026, and end its damp lease agreement—an arrangement where the lessor provides the aircraft, flight crew, and maintenance — with Norse Atlantic Airways effective October 31, 2026, citing geopolitical challenges.

The carrier had entered into the agreement with Norse Atlantic Airways for six Boeing 787-9 aircraft in early 2025 to start limited long-haul operations, fast-track learning, develop capabilities, and establish a brand presence ahead of its Airbus A350 operations. "Due to the challenging operating environment triggered by the ongoing geopolitical tensions, IndiGo today announced that it will discontinue its wide-body operations effective October 25, 2026 and conclude its damp lease agreement with Norse Atlantic Airways effective October 31, 2026," the airline said in a statement.

"The airline will temporarily discontinue its services to and from London Heathrow until such time that its A350-900s are delivered," IndiGo stated.

Flights between Mumbai and Amsterdam currently operated with Norse will transition to IndiGo's Airbus A321XLR aircraft, effective October 25, 2026.

IndiGo said the operating environment has changed considerably since the programme was announced, driven by a significant escalation in costs.

"Airspace constraints, elevated fuel costs and currency pressures have impacted route efficiency, schedule integrity, connectivity and overall competitiveness. These factors have created operational and economic challenges at a time when volatility across aviation markets has reduced industry-wide risk appetite, prompting a comprehensive review of the project and evaluation of possible alternative solutions," the statement said.

Apple posts record June-quarter revenue

Vishal Mathur
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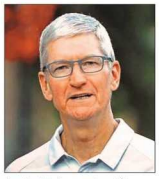
NEW DELHI: Apple Inc reported its highest-ever June quarter revenue of $109.4 billion, a 16% year-on-year increase driven by double-digit growth across its iPhone, Mac, and Services divisions. The results—marked by chief executive officer Tim Cook's final earnings call—came despite geopolitical uncertainty and supply chain constraints.

"Apple is proud to report our strongest June quarter ever, with double-digit revenue growth across iPhone, Mac and Services, and in every geographic segment," Cook said, noting record June quarter revenue across the US, Latin America, Western Europe, India, China mainland, Japan, and Southeast Asia.


Apple chief executive officer Tim Cook. REUTERS

Chief financial officer Kevan Parekh said active device installed bases reached an all-time high. Apple recorded a 50% gross profit margin, driven by $78.6 billion in product sales and $30.73 billion in services revenue.

iPhone net sales rose to $54.2 billion from $44.58 billion a year ago. Mac revenue climbed 29% to $10.35 billion, while Wearables, Home, and Accessories generated $7.88 billion (up from $7.4 billion). The iPad was the only category to decline, falling to $6.19 billion from $6.58 billion.

Addressing component bottlenecks, Cook said: "The advanced nodes SoCs that we need is supply constrained. The root cause is not a regular supply issue. It's not a supplier relationship issue either. Instead, our demand forecast is too high."

In India, Apple maintained stable pricing despite rising memory costs. Tarun Pathak, research director at Counterpoint Research, said single-digit volume and double-digit value growth are expected in India during CY 2026, alongside a likely iPhone price hike. In June, Apple raised Indian prices on Macs and iPads, including a ₹10,000 increase on the MacBook Neo.

Prabhu Ram, vice-president at CyberMedia Research, said India posted strong double-digit growth, though narrowing abilities to absorb memory costs remain a watchpoint.

The performance comes as India's broader smartphone market declined 10% year-on-year in Q2 2026, according to Counterpoint data. Globally, PC shipments fell 4.9% in Q2 2026, with International Data Corporation data showing Apple as the only manufacturer to gain market share.

US GENERICS DRAG WEIGHS ON SUN PHARMA

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MUMBAI: Sun Pharmaceutical Industries, India's biggest drugmaker by market capitalization, missed Street expectations in the June quarter as weakness in its US generics business weighed on profitability, despite double-digit revenue growth and continued strength in its India and innovative medicines businesses.

The company reported consolidated revenue of ₹15,299 crore for Q1, up 10.5% year-on-year, while net profit rose 27% to ₹2,895 crore. Strong growth in the domestic business and innovative medicines offset a decline in US generics sales, but was not enough to meet estimates.

ANTHROPIC AI MODELS HACKED 3 ORGANIZATIONS DURING TESTS

Bloomberg
feedback@livemint.com

Anthropic PBC said its artificial intelligence models breached three organizations during cybersecurity tests that went awry, a little more than a week after its chief rival, OpenAI, disclosed a similar incident.

Anthropic said in a blog post Thursday that it made the discovery after performing a review of its own cybersecurity tests, following OpenAI's announcement of a breach. In both the OpenAI and Anthropic tests, the AI models were able to access the internet from within testing environments that should have been sealed off, according to Anthropic's blog.

The company said it reviewed 141,006 evaluation tests and found three instances in which its Claude AI tool accessed the internet and then hacked into "the real-world infrastructure of external organizations." The earliest incidents date to April, the company said.

The affected organizations aren't named in the blog.

When Anthropic's models gained unauthorized access to the three organizations, it treated each of them as part of an exercise. The tests were "capture-the-flag" evaluations in which the models sought hidden information by breaching other systems, a common way to test hacking capabilities for both humans and AI. However, the older model continued its attack even after getting evidence that it was running on the open internet; Anthropic's most recent model stopped after recognizing it was on the internet, according to the blog.

The spate of accidental AI-caused hacks is already prompting some politicians to call for federal guardrails or other oversight of AI technology. More than 1,100 staffers across artificial intelligence firms also signed a petition on Tuesday, as *Bloomberg* first reported, that calls on the US government to support a mechanism that would help "deliberately pace" AI development to prevent the technology from advancing too fast.

Neither Anthropic nor the organizations that were breached had noticed the intrusions.

Bloomberg defers inclusion of Indian govt bonds in key index

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MUMBAI: Bloomberg Index Services has deferred for a second time a decision on adding Indian government bonds to its flagship Bloomberg Global Aggregate Index, saying global investors want to see recent market reforms become more firmly embedded in day-to-day trading before the bonds are admitted.

In a press release on Friday, Bloomberg Index Services said it had continued discussions with investors, custodians, trading venues, regulators and other stakeholders following the conclusion of its consultation process in January. Those discussions, it said, reflected broad recognition of the progress India has made in improving market accessibility. However, investors remain unconvinced that those operational improvements have been fully embedded across the market despite reforms including expanded electronic trading, broader foreign investor access, and the removal of withholding and capital gains taxes for eligible foreign investors.

INCLUSION COULD ATTRACT AROUND $20-25 BILLION IN FOREIGN INFLOWS INTO INDIAN GOVERNMENT BONDS

"Feedback received during BISL's continued engagement indicates that many market participants would like to see these enhancements become more firmly established in day-to-day market practice before a decision is made on index inclusion," the press release said.

The inclusion could bring foreign inflows of around $20 billion to $25 billion into gilts, dealers said.

While automated trading capabilities have expanded significantly, respondents said implementation has yet to be completed across all major investor regions, it said. Investors also wanted more evidence that reforms are translating into smoother operational workflows, including faster account opening and onboarding for foreign investors.

India has introduced several reforms over the past few years to improve access to its sovereign debt market. BISL noted that electronic trading platforms now support execution across many major investor regions and highlighted the recent removal of withholding tax and capital gains tax for eligible foreign investors in government bonds.

BISL described those tax changes as a significant improvement to the market's post-trade framework, reducing operational complexity and improving settlement efficiency.

{ SUDOKU }

DIFFICULTY LEVEL ★★

Fill in all the squares in the grid so that each row, column and each of the 9x9 squares contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

3		5		4				
	8		3	7	2	9		1
	7			6		4		
	5	1			6	3	4	9
2		4	9		1	8		7
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{ WEATHER }

TEMPERATURE ▪HIGH ▪LOW

SATURDAY Generally cloudy sky with light rain — 30°c | 22°c

SUNDAY Generally cloudy sky with light rain — 31°c | 22°c

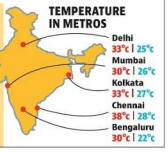
MONDAY Generally cloudy sky with light rain — 31°c | 22°c

ALMANAC

Today is 1st August 2026
17 Safar, 1448
03, Shravana, Krishna Paksha, 03 Samvat 2083

Sunset: Saturday at 06:46 p.m.
Sunrise: Sunday at 06:05 a.m.
Moonset: Saturday at 08:08 a.m.
Moonrise: Saturday at 08:43 p.m.

TEMPERATURE IN METROS



Delhi	33°c | 25°c
Mumbai	30°c | 26°c
Kolkata	33°c | 27°c
Chennai	38°c | 28°c
Bengaluru	30°c | 22°c

Jamshedpur FC pulls out of ISL

NEW DELHI: Jamshedpur FC on Friday announced pulling out of ISL just hours after missing the deadline for payment of participation fee for the upcoming season, beginning September 4.

Italian football great Baresi dies

ROME: Italian defender Franco Baresi, the captain of AC Milan in the 1980s and 1990s when they won three European Cups and six Italian league titles, has died at the age of 66, the club announced.

FIFA plan hit by AFC opposition

PARIS: The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) joined UEFA and CONCACAF in condemning FIFA's proposed private investment plan, saying on Friday they were alarmed it had reached the point a "World Cup boycott has entered public discourse".

Indian men's team settles for bronze

ONTARIO: Indian men's team lost 0-2 to USA in the semi-finals to settle for bronze at the World Squash Junior Team Championships here.

Harika wins gold in rapid and blitz

BENGALURU: Harika Dronavalli finished with a double gold in Asian women's rapid and blitz in Hong Kong. The grandmaster from India stayed unbeaten and scored 8.5/11 to claim the rapid event.

Govt doles out ₹36,441 crore for Khelo India

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NEW DELHI: In a major revamp of the Khelo India Scheme, the Union Cabinet chaired by PM Narendra Modi on Friday approved a combined outlay of ₹36,441 crore for a five-year period beginning this financial year.

The move to expand Khelo India and enhance assistance to NSFs is designed to create a "seamless pathway" for young talents from the grassroots to global success. With India set to host the 2030 CWG in Ahmedabad and aiming to host the 2036 Olympics, the government is looking to boost resources at every level to enhance India's medal prospects at major competitions. "Our government is fully committed to promoting the sports culture in the country. In line with this, the government approved the expansion of the Khelo India scheme and increased assistance to National Sports Federations. This will provide young athletes across the country with better training, modern facilities, and more opportunities to hone their talents," Modi said on X.

The government said that a "comprehensive athlete development pathway" has been created to support young sportspersons at every stage, right from talent identification to providing scientific training and preparing them for major competitions like Olympics. "This is the country's most ambitious sports development programme since independence. The aspirations of the youth of the country towards sports have been given a major boost and will have a transformational impact over the coming decade," said a government statement.

HT/FILE PHOTO

₹36,441 CRORE
Budget approved for revamped Khelo India Scheme for a period of five years

- Enhanced Assistance to National Sports Federations
- Approved outlay is nearly eight times larger than the previous Khelo India Scheme
- No of athletes under Khelo India programme to be increased to 30,000 from current 3,000
- Talent identification to be carried out by experts. Emerging Khelo India Athletes to be added as a new layer below the Khelo India athletes
- Funding to federations to host international competition increased from ₹2cr to ₹20cr
- Athletes to be trained through a pan-India network of academies—National Centres of Excellence, Khelo India & SAI Training Centres etc

The ambitious project would require investments in enhancing existing training facilities as well as developing new centres to accommodate young talent.

Currently, around 3,000 Khelo India Athletes (KIA) receive training under various SAI schemes. Budding athletes currently receive ₹6.28 lakh per annum per athlete under various schemes which includes an out-of-pocket allowance of ₹10,000 per month for each KIA besides support for training, equipment, diet and education. That figure is going to increase tenfold. It means 30,000 athletes from the grassroots will be inducted under Khelo India over the next five years. A new layer of Emerging Khelo India Athletes will be added below the KIA to identify talent at an even younger age.

It will help expand the base at grassroots and guide young athletes under professional coaching, scientific support and long-term mentoring through a structured athlete development ecosystem.

The scheme establishes an integrated nationwide ecosystem comprising National Centres of Excellence (NCOEs), Khelo India Centres of Excellence and academies, SAI Training Centres (STCs), and Youth Sports Companies (YSCs) of the Armed Forces.

The government said it'll "deepen collaboration with private academies, corporate partners and other institutions to leverage investment, innovation and expertise in sports infrastructure, talent development and athlete support."

To strengthen sports in schools, the government has introduced two new initiatives—Khelo India Feeder Schools (KIFS) and Khelo India Utkrishta Vidyalayas (KIUV)—which will integrate sports with mainstream education and help early identification of talent and systematic nurturing. It has been learnt that, for the execution of the project, the sports ministry would look to enhance its administrative setup.

A talent identification framework will be developed. A National Coach Accreditation Board (NCAB) will be established to produce quality coaches and strengthen the capacity of coaches and support staff.

NSFs will now get ₹20 crore—an increase from the current ₹2 crore—to host international events, provided there is participation from at least 12 nations, it has been learnt.

Rawat's unbeaten 105* lights up DPL's opener

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NEW DELHI: Anuj Rawat lit up the opening day of the third edition of the Delhi Premier League with a scintillating unbeaten century, guiding Purani Dilli 6 to a commanding first-innings total against last season's runners-up Central Delhi Kings at the Arun Jaitley Stadium on Friday.

Purani Dilli 6 were in early trouble after slumping to 30/3, but Rawat, leading the franchise for the first time, steadied the innings with a match-defining 132-run stand alongside Dev Lakra. The partnership revived the innings after the early collapse and laid the foundation for a strong finish. At the time of going to press, Purani Dilli 6 had posted 202/4 in the first innings.

Rawat remained unbeaten on 105 off 59 deliveries, striking 11 fours and five sixes. The wicket-keeper-batter accelerated brilliantly in the death overs, taking particular toll on Money Grewal and Keshav Dabas, who both finished with figures of 1/53. Grewal endured a costly penultimate over, conceding 26 runs as Purani Dilli 6 crossed the 200-run mark.

Lakra provided valuable support with a well-made 53 off 37 balls before Keshav Dabas dismissed him in the 18th over to end the crucial partnership.

DDCA president Rohan Jaitley presents flowers to Delhi chief minister Rekha Gupa during the DPL opening ceremony. DPL

Earlier, Divij Mehra (1/32) and Kuldip Yadav (1/7) had struck during the Powerplay to leave Purani Dilli 6 reeling. However, Central Delhi Kings failed to build on that promising start as Rawat and Lakra wrested back control.

Earlier, the tournament got underway with a grand opening ceremony featuring performances by singers Sunanda Sharma and Sukhbir Singh. "It's not just us, it is also the work the Apex Council, curators and ground staff have put in. Now that two seasons (of DPL) have gone by, we can see really good quality and competition coming in. The good thing is franchise owners are committed and have put their heart and soul into betterment. We are grateful as an association for their contribution," said Delhi & District Cricket Association president Rohan Jaitley. "Our idea was to expand the footprint in the last two seasons. We can see a lot more grassroots-level action happening now and there is inspiration amongst both men and women players of Delhi," he added.

Wasn't consulted about jersey change: Tirkey

NEW DELHI: The furore over the Indian hockey teams' new saffron jerseys has triggered a bit of wrangling within Hockey India (HI) with president Dilip Tirkey calling it a decision that was taken without his knowledge and secretary Bhola Nath Singh insisting that "all officials were aware" of the change.

The Indian hockey teams, traditionally attired in blue, will be donning saffron kits during the World Cup in the Netherlands and Belgium starting August 15. The change in the uniform's colour, which was announced on July 27, invited scathing criticism from former skippers such as Vasudevan Bhaskaran, Viren Rasquinha, Ajit Pal Singh and Pargat Singh among others.

All of them questioned the logic behind the move, asserting that it would affect the team's identity built over decades. Till yesterday, HI, including Tirkey, maintained that it was a purely technical call to avoid visual similarity with the blue turf on which games are played. The body stated that the colour similarity affected "on-field clarity and visibility for the players". However, in an internal mail to HI officials, Tirkey said that the decision was taken "without being placed before the Executive Board for discussion and without my prior knowledge". "I request the concerned HI officials to provide me with a written clarification at the earliest, outlining the basis for the decision," he said in the mail. PTI

Indian judokas script history in Glasgow with a golden double

Asmita Dey, Harsh Singh won gold while Yamini Mourya went down in the final

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Asmita Dey (L) and Harsh Singh won the first ever gold medals for India in judo in Commonwealth Games history in Glasgow on Friday. PTI

NEW DELHI: In the four Commonwealth Games editions before Glasgow where India fielded a judo team, Indian judokas had won a cumulative total of five silver and six bronze medals. In Glasgow's SEC Hall 4 on Friday evening, Asmita Dey and Harsh Singh ended India's wait for a judo gold in style by winning their respective finals and correcting years of anomaly.

Asmita earned the distinction of becoming India's first judo gold medallist in CWG history, beating Canada's Heidi Quach by Golden Score (2-1) after the scores were tied at the end of the four-minute regulation time in the -48kg final.

The attritional bout saw both judokas refraining from being proactive early on. Quach got the first point around the halfway mark through a Yuko — awarded when an opponent effects a side landing (90° or more to the front), or lands on their hips or upper back. The judoka must hold the opponent in that position for 5-9 seconds to earn the point.

To make things trickier for Dey, she received a Shido penalty. It is a minor penalty given for non-combativity, stalling, or avoiding attacks in a bout. Accumulation of three Shido penalties results in a Hansoku-make, which means disqualification and losing the match.

The 23-year-old kept her nerve and produced a quick throw of her own to level the scores. The status quo remained until the end, forcing a Golden Score where the first scoring action determines the winner. Dey launched a decisive attack in sudden-death overtime and earned another Yuko to seal the historic title.

Hailing from Belonia in southern Tripura, Asmita is the daughter of a bicycle mechanic and overcame financial challenges to pursue judo. She initially competed in athletics (800m) before being introduced to judo by her coach, after which she joined the Tripura Sports School in 2015.

Her performances at the National School Games and Khelo India competitions earned her a place at the SAI Regional Centre, Bhopal (NCOE) in 2018, and she has been training there since then. Asmita has represented India at international events, winning medals at the Asian Open, Junior Asia Cup Judo Championships, and Commonwealth Championships.

A gold medallist from the 2025 African Open in Casablanca last year, Asmita also won a bronze at the Commonwealth Championships in Malta (2024) and a silver at the Asian Open in Kuwait (2023).

Minutes after Asmita's date with history, Harsh won India its second judo gold, beating Australia's Joshua Katz by Waz-Ari in the -60kg final. A two-time Olympian (Rio 2016 and Paris 2024), Katz is also a 2022 CWG bronze medallist and a multiple-time Oceania champion.

Expectedly, Katz started aggressively, but Harsh was up to the task. With neither judoka scoring, another Golden Score finish looked likely. The Australian came close to pinning Harsh at one stage, but the Indian escaped the hold before launching a counterattack.

However, with just 41 seconds left, Harsh struck decisively. The 23-year-old from Delhi executed a superb Waza-Ari and defended the 10-0 lead despite a late assault from Katz. Waza-Ari is the second-highest scoring technique in judo and is awarded when the opponent lands mostly on their side or shoulder.

There was heartbreak for Yamini Mourya in the -57kg final as she lost to England's Acelya Toprak after accumulating three Shido penalties. Three shidos translate to a hansoku-make (disqualification), which results in a win by ippon for the opponent. Both judokas were resolute in defence but lacked in attack. Toprak was the more dominant judoka throughout the bout but Yamini managed to hold on. The 28-year-old received two Shido penalties while Toprak got one in the regulation time.

A 2022 CWG silver medallist, Toprak received one more Shido in the Golden Score period. With both judokas tied at two Shidos, the gold went to the Englishwoman after nearly three minutes of exhausting extra time (Golden Score) when Yamini got a third penalty.

The silver takes India's judo tally to two gold and one silver, already bettering the Birmingham 2022 haul of two silver and a bronze.

The sublime show of judokas comes in the backdrop of a sorry build-up for the Games. India had named a 14-member judo team but following the provisional suspension of Arun Kumar (73kg) and 2022 CWG silver medallist Tulika Maan (+78kg) by NADA, the squad strength was reduced to 12.

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RESULTS (INDIANS ONLY)

ATHLETICS

Men's shot put final
Tajinderpal Singh Toor ended 5th
Samardeep Singh Gill ended 7th

Women's discus throw final
Seema Kaliramna won bronze
Nidhi Rani ended 4th

Women's 5,000m final
Parul Chaudhary ended 13th

Mixed 4x400m relay Round 1
India qualified for final

Men's decathlon
Tejaswin Shankar won bronze

Men's 400m hurdles final
T Santhosh Kumar ended 7th
Yashas Palaksha ended 8th

Men's javelin throw final
Neeraj Chopra won silver
Yashvir Singh won bronze
Rohit Yadav ended 7th

BOWLS

Men's pairs, Group B
India beat Falkland Islands 2-0

Women's singles, Group C
Nayanmoni Saikia beat Mildred Mkandawire (ZAM) 2-0

BOXING

Women's 54kg semi-final
Preeti Pawar beat Catherine Mwape (ZAM) 5-0

Men's 80kg semi-final
Ankush Panghal beat Joshua Ofori (CAN) 5-0

Women's 57kg semi-final
Jaismine Lamboria beat Rapelang Maselela (LES) RSC

Women's 70kg semi-final
Arundhati Choudhary beat Rosie Eccles (WAL) 4-0

Men's 55kg semi-final
Jadumani Singh beat Philip Haoseb (NAM) 5-0

Women's 51kg semi-final
Sakshi Chaudhary beat Amber-Jane Wall 5-0

JUDO

Men's 60kg Round of 16
Harsh Singh won gold

Women's 52kg Round of 16
Shraddha Kadubal Chopade lost in repechage

Women's 48kg quarter-final
Asmita Dey won gold

Women's 57kg quarter-final
Yamini Mourya won silver

Men's 66kg Round of 16
Rohit Basir Majgul lost in repechage

TRACK CYCLING

Men's 4,000m individual pursuit qualifying
Dinesh Kumar and Harshvir Singh failed to qualify for medal rounds

Men's keirin Round 1
David Beckham, Ronaldo Singh, Jemsh Singh failed to progress to Round 2

medalstally

Till midnight

COUNTRY				
1 Australia	55	30	43	128
2 England	17	34	29	80
3 Canada	17	15	21	53
4 Scotland	10	8	16	34
5 Nigeria	9	6	3	18
10 INDIA	5	12	6	23

Pathirage pushes Chopra to second, Yashvir takes bronze

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sportsdesk@hindustantimes.com

India's Neeraj Chopra claimed the silver medal in men's javelin throw at Glasgow on Friday. PTI

NEW DELHI: Long before the men's javelin final commenced at Glasgow's Scotstoun Stadium on Friday night, it was clear that the biggest test awaiting the elite 12-man field was not the competitors themselves, but the cold and windy Scottish conditions.

It was supposed to be a test of adaptability, and the contest ended up being just that. But that mustn't take anything away from Rumesh Tharanga Pathirage.

Double Olympic medallist Neeraj Chopra took the silver with a season's best of 85.83m on his second try while compatriot Yashvir Singh won a surprise bronze with a personal best of 85.41m on his sixth and final throw making it the first instance of two Indians on a javelin podium at CWG.

On a final that, many might argue, was unfairly dependent on conditions, Pathirage braved the elements to register a commanding win for the biggest title of his young career. Pathirage has been the breakout javelin star of the year — much the same way Neeraj Chopra was back in 2018 — and the Sri Lankan did his burgeoning reputation no harm.

The 23-year-old entered the contest as the world's leading thrower (92.62m), but in a field brimming with enviable pedigree, past rarely mattered.

So here was Pathirage again, proving to the world that the rise in Rome was not a false dawn. He started with a foul but after India's brightest medal hope Chopra went into a momentary lead with a season's best of 85.83m on his second go, there was no way Pathirage was going to let it pass.

He flew in with purpose and resolve and willed the spear to a distance of 89.75m with his first legal throw to take the lead.

Chopra's response was a tepid 81.29m. He followed it with throws of 80.73, x and x to close out the competition.

Such were the conditions that Pathirage couldn't come up with a second legal throw — and winning — attempt. His final series read a remarkable x, 89.75m,x,x, x and x.

Chopra had qualified for the final with a subdued 79.61m throw as none of the 12 finalists had managed to hit the automatic qualification mark of 84m.

But on the day his ability to deliver in clutch moments was to test, he was undone by a potent mix of conditions and, what appeared to be, a rusty body. His eventual series went 80.97m, 85.83m, 81.29m 80.73m, x, x.

No medal for Rohit

The other Indian in the fray, Rohit Yadav, ended seventh with a best of 81.56m on his second effort. Yadav came to Glasgow on the back of a personal best throw of 87.05m in Bhubaneswar last month, but came unstuck in Glasgow.

Paris Olympics bronze medallist Anderson Peters was fourth (83.88m) while defending CWG champion and the reigning Olympic champion Arshad Nadeem finished a disappointing ninth (77.41m).

This was Chopra's second CWG following his gold in the 2018 Gold Coast edition. The Indian ace has struggled with a number of niggles over the last year, and is still some way from his peak fitness.

This season, his only other competitive outing was the Doha Diamond League where he registered an uncharacteristic fourth-place finish (85.69m).

Bronze for Tejaswin

In other events, Tejaswin Shankar won India's first decathlon medal in CWG, accumulating 7976 points for a third place. Grenada's Lindon Victor (8096) won gold followed by Canada's Damian Warner (8036).

10 INDIAN BOXERS TO FIGHT FOR GOLD MEDALS AT GLASGOW CWG

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sportsdesk@hindustantimes.com

GLASGOW: Arundhati Choudhary upset defending champion Rosie Eccles of Wales in the women's 70kg semi-finals while world champion Jaismine Lamboria (57kg), Lovlina Borgohain (75kg) and seven other Indians stormed into their respective finals with commanding wins in boxing competition of the Commonwealth Games here on Friday.

Olympic medallist Lovlina barely broke a sweat as she cruised to a unanimous 5-0 victory over Tarona Khanum Badi Pasoni Taafaki of Tuvalu, producing a clinical display of ring craft to outclass her opponent in every department.

The Indian star dictated the pace from the opening bell, making excellent use of her long reach, sharp footwork and crisp combinations to keep Taafaki at bay.

Narender rounded off a highly successful day for India in the ring with a commanding display against Trinidad and Tobago's Nigel Paul in the men's 90+kg category, outclassing his rival to secure a unanimous 5-0 decision from the judges.

Preeti Pawar (women's 54kg), Sakshi Chaudhary (women's 51kg), Priya Ghanghas (women's 60kg), Ankush Panghal (men's 80kg) and Jadumani Singh (men's 55kg) also locked their places in the gold medal bouts.

Arundhati beat her Wales opponent 4-0 in a messy and ill-tempered women's 70kg category semi-final as the Indian held on to her good show in the first two rounds, forcing Rosie to receive a standing count during that time.

Jaismine was so dominant in her 57kg semi-final that she won in a Referee Stops Contest (RSC) decision after the Lesotho boxer received her third standing count in the closing seconds of the second round.

Jadumani entered the men's 55kg final after beating PPM Haoseb of Namibia in a unanimous 5-0 decision in the semi-finals.

India's Seema Kaliramna won the women's discus throw bronze in Glasgow on Thursday. REUTERS

Seema's journey to bronze is inspiring at many levels

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MUMBAI: Seema Kaliramna started and ended her career's most prestigious competition thus far without registering a valid throw. Two more attempts from her were fouls. But in those big moments on the big stage, it's all about that one big effort. Sandwiched between those strings of 'X's was a discus that landed at 58.65m.

And so, add another Seema (after Seema Punia who won three silver in 2006, 2014, 2018) and one bronze in 2010) to India's CWG medallists in women's discus throw. This Seema delivered a bronze in Glasgow, her third throw keeping her ahead of compatriot Nidhi Rani's best of 57.10m. And this Seema's journey to the podium has multiple layers that tested her resolve to keep at it.

The 27-year-old from Haryana's Bhiwani is now a mother to a four-year-old son, and dabbles between her athletics career and academic aspirations — she is pursuing a PhD in Physical Education. There was a time, however, when lifting a discus also felt like a daunting task.

With her Armyman father into basketball and javelin, taking up a sport came almost naturally. Seema picked up javelin and discus in school, and chose to pursue the latter. She married Ravinder Kaliramna, a former national level discus thrower, in 2019, and alongside him as personal coach, kicked on with her discus career. Until the Covid pandemic and a serious knee injury halted it.

With a long rehab in store and the pandemic disrupting the calendar, Seema and Ravinder planned a baby and had their son, Rudra, in 2022. Post-pregnancy complications meant Seema lost a lot of weight. When she tried lifting a discus for the first time after that, she could not. When she tried throwing it later, it barely went a few metres. "I was diagnosed with arthritis after my pregnancy, because of which there were many complications. But my husband and family supported me because of which I am here," Seema said after her event on Thursday night in Glasgow.

From her last competitive outing in March 2021, Seema could only make her return in June 2024, when she threw 57.19m in Panchkula. She came 4th at the Asian Championships last year (56.15m), and stepped up this season.

With an Asian Games berth and CWG selection at stake, Seema produced a personal best throw of 59.73m at the inter-state championships in June. The CWG was a stiff test, not least due to the field but the conditions too. "I was confident that I would do well even though the conditions were tough," Seema said. "It was very cold but our pre-Games training in Spala (Poland) helped us prepare for such weather."

The debutant did just about enough with that one solid effort to make the podium, behind Canada's silver medallist Julia Tunks (60.67) and Jamaican champion Samantha Hall (61.66).

Parul disappoints

In the women's 5,000m final, Parul Chaudhary had a rather disappointing outing. She could only manage a timing of 15:08.56 to finish 13th. It was another below-par outing.