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10 STORES



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THE WORLD

TOP OF THE
WORLD



Lisa Cook is on Fed's board of governors. AP

US

Admn asks for emergency SC order to remove Cook from Fed

Washington: The Trump administration Thursday asked the Supreme Court for an emergency order to remove Lisa Cook from the Federal Reserve's board of governors. The administration turned to the high court after an appeals court refused to go along with ousting Cook, part of President Donald Trump's unprecedented effort to reshape the Fed's seven-member governing board. Cook, who was appointed to the Fed's board by President Joe Biden, a Democrat, has said she won't leave her post and won't be "bulled" by Trump. AP

MALDIVES

Muizzu ratifies law targeting media outlets

Male: Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu on Thursday ratified a controversial new media law that allows for hefty fines and the temporary or permanent closure of media outlets deemed to violate its provisions. The bill provides for individual fines of up to \$1,620 against journalists and up to \$6,485 against media companies that are found to be contravening the law. It also allows authorities to suspend media licenses until investigations are complete. AP

AFGHANISTAN

Taliban internet ban spreads to more provinces

Jalalabad: A Taliban crackdown to "prevent immorality" is spreading across Afghanistan, with more provinces losing access to fibre-optic internet after the country's leader imposed a ban on the technology. Mobile internet remains functional, however. Officials say alternatives are being found "for necessities." The northern Balkh province confirmed a Wi-Fi shutdown on Tuesday, with reports of severe disruption in other parts of the country. On Thursday, officials in the east and north said internet access was cut off in Baghlan, Badakhshan, Kunduz, Nangarhar and Takhar. AP

BANGLADESH

Election body bars Hasina from voting

Dhaka: Bangladesh's Election Commission has said it has "locked" the national identity cards of deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, effectively barring her from voting in the general elections scheduled for February next year. Though officials did not mention any other name, UNB news agency and the Dhaka Tribune newspaper, quoting unnamed EC officials, reported that NIDs of Hasina's younger sister Sheikh Rehana, son Saeed Wazed Joy and daughter Saima Wazed Putul have also been "locked" or "blocked." PTI

UK NOT EXPECTED TO SECURE LOWER METALS TARIFFS

Trump, Starmer hail renewal of 'special relationship', but skirt difficult issues

Trump sidesteps question on Russia sanctions, both gloss over differences on Palestine statehood

STEVE HOLLAND,
ANDREW MACASKILL
& ELIZABETH PIPER
CHEQUERS (ENGLAND),
SEPTEMBER 18

DONALD TRUMP and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer hailed the renewal of their nations' "special relationship" on Thursday, drawing the US President's unprecedented second state visit to a close with a show of unity after avoiding possible pitfalls.

At a warm press conference when the two leaders glossed over differences on Gaza and wind power to present a united front, Trump said Russian President



British PM Keir Starmer with US President Donald Trump at Chequers near Aylesbury on Thursday. AP

Vladimir Putin had "let him down" and he was disappointed other countries were still buying

Russian oil because only a low oil price would punish Moscow. At the final press conference

Starmer was focused on avoiding areas of disagreement. Neither leader was tripped up by potentially embarrassing subjects, with both battling away questions over the late sex of Jeffrey Epstein and his ties to Trump and to Starmer's former ambassador to the US.

"We've renewed the special relationship for a new era," Starmer told reporters. Trump said Starmer was a tough negotiator in securing the first tariff deal with the US, although Britain has still not got the lower US tariffs on steel that it was seeking.

Earlier, some of the leading names in US and UK business were welcomed by the two leaders to unveil a \$205 billion pack-

age of US investment into Britain. Trump said: "I think it's an unbreakable bond we have."

It was on foreign affairs where the two were out of lock-step. Starmer and the EU have been pressing Trump to put more pressure on Putin to end his war against Ukraine. But Trump failed to mention any further sanctions against Moscow.

The US leader expressed frustration that European nations were buying Russian oil, but said Starmer was not part of their number. Trump repeated his position that he disagreed with countries recognising Palestine. He later said he disagreed with Starmer on energy and immigration. REUTERS



Israeli strikes in Gaza City on Thursday. Reuters

Net, phone lines cut as Israeli tanks close in on Gaza

DAWoud Abu Alkas,
Nidal Al-Mughrabi
& Edmund Blair
GAZA, CAIRO, ISRAEL-GAZA
BORDER, SEPTEMBER 18

ISRAELI TANKS were advancing on Thursday in two Gaza City areas that are gateways to the city centre, while internet and phone lines were cut off across the Gaza Strip, a sign that ground operations were likely to further escalate imminently.

Israeli forces control Gaza City's eastern suburbs and in recent days have been pounding the Sheikh Radwan and Tel Al-Hawa areas, from where they would be positioned to advance on central and western areas where most of the population is sheltering.

"We are scared, but what can we do?" said Bassam Al-Qanou, a displaced man sheltering with around 30 family members in one of countless ragged tent camps along the city's beach. He said the family had no way to get out.

At least 85 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli strikes or gunfire across the Gaza Strip in the past 24 hours. The Israeli military said four of its personnel had been killed during combat in southern Gaza.

Army spokesperson Nadav Shoshani said Israeli forces had been operating in the periphery of Gaza City for several weeks but since the night of Monday to Tuesday large numbers of troops had begun moving towards the

Aid driver kills two Israelis at Jordan border

A DRIVER bringing aid from Jordan for Gaza opened fire and killed two Israelis at the Allenby Crossing into the West Bank on Thursday before being killed by security forces, authorities from both nations said. No group claimed responsibility for what Israel denounced as a "terror attack" at the only gateway for Palestinians from the Israeli-occupied West Bank to Jordan. Jordan said the shooter was a civilian who began this job three months ago. It called the shootings a threat to its humanitarian role in Gaza. REUTERS



ANTI-AUSTERITY PROTESTS IN FRANCE

A protester holds a labour union flag during a demonstration in Nantes on Thursday. Reuters

Hundreds of thousands took part in anti-austerity protests across France, urging President Emmanuel Macron and PM Sébastien Lecornu to scrap looming budget cuts.

Teachers, pharmacists and hospital staff were among those who went on strike, while teens blocked schools. Protests took place in Lyon, Nice, Marseille, Nantes, etc.

Protesters are calling for the previous govt's fiscal plans to be scrapped, more spending on public services, higher taxes on the wealthy, and for the reversal of a pension rule.

Britain says first migrant returned to France under 'one in, one out' deal

REUTERS

LONDON, SEPTEMBER 18

BRITAIN HAS returned the first migrant to France under a "one in, one out" agreement to remove people who arrive on small boats, the interior ministry said on Thursday, after legal challenges had stalled the start of the scheme.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron in July agreed to the pilot scheme, under which Britain deports undocumented people arriving in small boats to France, in return for accepting an equal number of legitimate asylum seekers with British family connections. Britain's Home Office said that

a man who had arrived by small boat had been removed on a commercial flight, and that further flights were due to take place this week and next. "This is an important first step to securing our borders. It sends a message to people crossing in small boats: if you enter the UK illegally, we will seek to remove you," Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood said.

Syria foreign minister in Washington, first in 25 yrs

REUTERS

DAMASCUS, SEPTEMBER 18

SYRIA'S FOREIGN minister arrived in Washington on Thursday, the first official visit at that level in over 25 years as the US makes a pro-Damascus push.

Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shibani will meet lawmakers to discuss the lifting of remaining US sanctions. It comes as the US



Asaad al-Shibani to discuss lifting of sanctions

seeks to integrate its Syrian Kurdish allies with the administration of President Ahmed al-Sharaa. The US has also been mediating between Israel and Syria.

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE

KATHMANDU, SEPTEMBER 18

NEPAL PRESIDENT Ram Chandra Poudel and interim Prime Minister Sushila Karki are hosting separate events to mark the country's 11th Constitution Day on Friday, a public show of differences days after the change of guard in Kathmandu.

This comes as forces rallying around President Poudel question

the constitutionality of the interim government headed by Karki following the "Gen Z" revolution that overthrew the country's leaders.

Maoist Centre chief Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda and around a dozen civil society leaders met Poudel separately to thank him for the stance he took in "safeguarding the Constitution". They asserted that the dissolution of Parliament after the revolution was unconstitutional.

With the President enter-

taining and identifying himself with these groups opposed to Karki, there is speculation about Nepal's future political course.

Karki, it is to be noted, has said that the country will hold elections in March.

The interim PM's event for diplomats to mark Constitution Day begins at 8.30 am at the Army Club. The one hosted by the President will take place at his official residence at 3.30 pm.

This is the first time the key faces of the pro-Republic Constitution will likely not be present at a Constitution Day event. K P Sharma Oli, who resigned as prime minister, is in the army's protective custody.

Another former prime minister, Nepali Congress Chief Sher Bahadur Deuba, is in hospital recuperating from injuries he sustained during an attack allegedly perpetrated by "criminals" who are said to have infiltrated the youth movement.

FORCED TO MOVE EVERY FEW MONTHS, ABU JARAD FAMILY'S ORDEAL MIRRORS THAT OF COUNTLESS OTHERS ACROSS GAZA

Palestinian family flees for the 11th time: 'Not displaced, we're dying'

ABDEL KAREEM HANA & LEE KEATH

KHAN YOUNIS, SEPTEMBER 18

EXHAUSTION AND anger are grinding away at Ne'man Abu Jarad. For the 11th time, he and his family have been forced to move across the Gaza Strip.

"It's a renewal of the torture. We are not being displaced, we're dying," Ne'man said last week as the family packed up in Gaza City to escape Israeli bombardment. The next day, they unpacked in southern Gaza on barren agricultural land outside

Khan Younis. This has been the life for nearly two years.

Like countless Palestinians, they have fled the length of Gaza and back, forced to move every few months as Israel attacks each new shelter.

During the ceasefire that began in January, they had a bitter-sweet return to their home, which was damaged but still standing. But within two months, Israel broke the ceasefire, and the Abu Jarads had to wrench themselves away.

With each move, Ne'man and his wife Majida try to preserve some stability for their six



Displaced from Gaza City, the Abu Jarad family moves their belongings into a newly built tent in Khan Younis. AP

daughters and 2-year-old granddaughter. The youngest is 8-year-old Lana; the eldest is Balsam, in her 20s.

But the sense of futility is weighing heavier. "What's coming is dark," he said. "We might be expelled."

Since May, the family's refuge had been a tent in Gaza. It wasn't easy, but at least they got to know the neighbourhood. Another family in the neighbourhood let their daughter Sarah come use their internet.

Food was difficult, as Israeli aid restrictions pushed Gaza into famine. Ne'man joined hundreds

of others waiting for aid trucks. It was dangerous – Israeli troops regularly opened fire toward the crowds. But he sometimes came back with food. A few weeks ago, they found a school for Lana.

But Israel had ordered the population to evacuate, preparing a new assault to seize Gaza City. It was time to go. Last Thursday, they joined a growing exodus of Palestinians.

Buying a new tent drained the little money they had. The new camp lies in a stretch of barren dirt and fields. Friday morning, their daughters walked over a kilometre to catch up with a

passing water truck. It ran out before they could fill their plastic jugs. The family spent the day clearing their spot of land, assembling their tents. Four days later, a voice message from Ne'man came to the AP: "We're sitting here unable to eat."

Worse, a man claiming to be the owner of the land had come, backed by armed men, and asked them to pay rent or leave.

Soon we'll die of starvation," he said. "We can't bear more than this."

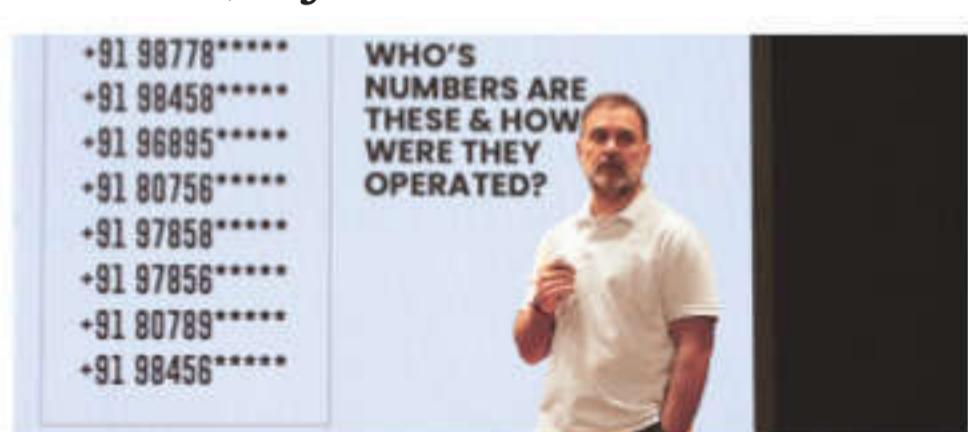
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CLAIMS KARNATAKA CID SENT 18 LETTERS TO EC IN AS MANY MONTHS

CEC shielding 'vote chors', Cong voters targeted in Karnataka seat, says Rahul

EC dismisses claims as incorrect and baseless, says FIR was filed in 2023



POLL PANEL SITS ON KARNATAKA CID QUERIES PAGE 10

Rahul Gandhi at the press conference in New Delhi on Thursday. Anil Sharma

ASAD REHMAN
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 18

STEPPING UP the pressure on the Election Commission (EC) over the issue of alleged vote theft, Leader of Opposition (LoP) Rahul Gandhi Thursday accused Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar of protecting "vote chors" who have "de-

stroyed Indian democracy". The Congress leader cited data from two Assembly constituencies — one in Karnataka and another in Maharashtra — to allege irregularities in electoral rolls and asked the EC to provide, within a week, information about alleged voter deletions sought by the Karnataka CID. He said the agency had written 18 letters to the EC in

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

As Rahul takes 'H-bomb' path, murmurs in Cong: What will be the fallout radius?

MANOJ G
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 18

WITH THE promised 'hydrogen bomb' put off for another day, senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's stepped-up 'vote chori' line of attack against the BJP Thursday left at least some in the party uneasy about the fallout.

At a much-anticipated press conference held in Delhi, the Leader of the Opposition alleged illegal deletion of votes at an Assembly constituency in Karnataka and "additions" at a seat in Maharashtra. Gandhi claimed the use of centralised software for this, and accused Chief Election Commissioner

E

Gyanesh Kumar of "protecting those people who have destroyed Indian democracy".

Large sections in the Congress believe Gandhi is on the right track, and point to his recent Voter Adhikar Yatra in poll-bound Bihar that got much traction. They are effusive in

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

BJP hits back: Rahul trying to protect infiltrators and destabilise democracy

SANTOSH SINGH & JATIN ANAND
PATNA, NEW DELHI, SEPT 18

ON A day when Rahul Gandhi accused the Election Commission (EC) of mass voter deletion, Union Home Minister Amit Shah

mounted an attack on the Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition, describing his Vote Adhikar Yatra in Bihar, where elections are around the corner, as a move to "protect infiltrators". Gandhi was also targeted by Shah's party colleague Anupam Thakur who accused him of "trying to destabilise"

Indian democracy by questioning the EC.

The remarks by Shah and Thakur came days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi accused the Congress-led Opposition of "shielding infiltrators". The BJP leadership's reference to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

AHEAD OF CIVIC ELECTIONS

After Maharashtra state polls, 14.71 lakh voters added within 7 months

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 18

THE CIVIC body elections in Maharashtra, slated to be held later this year, will have 9.84 crore voters, marking an increase of 14.71 lakh compared to the Assembly polls of last year. The State Election Commission has announced that it will use the

voters' list updated till July 1, 2025 for the upcoming civic polls. According to data obtained by The Indian Express, during the seven months between November 27, 2024, and June 30, 2025, the total number of electors has risen from 9.70 crore to 9.84 crore. The data shows a net addition of 18.80 lakh voters, while deletions stand at 4.09 lakh.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

BUSINESS AS USUAL

BY UNNY



AI-171 CRASH: KIN OF VICTIMS SUE BOEING, HONEYWELL IN U.S. PAGE 12

INDIAN MISSILE STRIKE IN BAHAWALPUR

Pak Army at funeral of terrorists: Jaish says Munir ordered attendance

M ZULQERNAIN
LAHORE, SEPTEMBER 18

PAKISTAN ARMY Chief Asim Munir had issued direct orders to the Corps Commander of Bahawalpur and soldiers to attend the funeral of those killed in the Indian missile strikes on Jaish-e-Mohammad's headquarters on May 7, a top commander of the terror group has said.

In a video that went viral on Thursday, JeM commander Ilyas



Pakistan Army Chief Asim Munir

Kashmiri also said that the Pakistan Army and the jihadis have become one after 25 years of his outfit's struggle.

"After the struggle of 25 years, we have brought the state, Pakistan Army, Air Force and

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AS A 19-year-old, when Sachin Yadav decided to give up fast bowling and take up the javelin, his family in Khekada village, in Baghpat district of Uttar Pradesh, was worried. But, although cricket was a far more attractive career option than track and field, Sachin's father, Naresh Yadav, respected his son's deci-



Sachin Yadav at the World Athletics Championships in Tokyo on Thursday. AP

sion, even borrowing money to buy him a pair of javelin spikes. That was six years ago. On Thursday evening, Sachin, now 25, narrowly missed out on a podium finish, coming fourth at the World Athletics Championships in Tokyo. He outperformed several celebrated javelin throwers, including defending champion Neeraj Chopra and Olympian Arshad Nadeem from Pakistan. Chopra, who finished eighth, had a rare off day – this was the first time in seven years that he didn't finish in the top-three at a competition; he has

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

• Court sets aside order asking journalists to take down content against Adani firm

Judge Ashish Aggarwal said, "I am of the opinion that the court of the senior civil judge ought to have made observations of which material was defamatory. The posts, spanning over a substantial period, were questioned by the plaintiff (AEL) through the suit, but the court didn't find it fit to grant the opportunity to the defendants. In my opinion, the judge should have granted the defendants a chance before *prima facie* declaring that they (the posts) were defamatory."

In his September 6 order, Senior Civil Judge Anuj Kumar Singh had said: "...At this stage, instead of issuing a blanket order on restraining defendants No. 1 to 9 from fair, verified and substantiated reporting and from hosting, storing/circulating such articles/posts/URLs, it would suffice the interest of justice to restrain defendants... from publishing/distributing/circulating unverified, unsubstantiated and ex-facie defamatory reports about the plaintiff (AEL) allegedly tarnishing the reputation of the plaintiff till the next date of hearing."

On Thursday, Advocate Vrinda Grover, who appeared for the four journalists via video link, said the ex parte interim order had been obtained for older articles. "Why the rush? Why no notice even of two days or three days? The court could have heard us. All posts were in the public domain," she said.

Advocate Vijay Aggarwal, who appeared for AEL, said the law recognises ex parte orders. "They (the journalists) say the ex parte order was passed but today they are asking for an ex parte order," he said. Another observation which the counsel of the journalists objected to was that the AEL was allowed to provide links of alleged defamatory material to intermediaries and the intermediaries were directed to take down defamatory content.

The September 6 order had said: "The plaintiff is given opportunity to apply to intermediaries/concerned agencies with details of the URLs/posts/hyperlinks/articles on the basis of this order and intermediaries/concerned agencies are directed to take down/remove the alleged defamatory articles/posts/URLs whereby the

material was defamatory." Senior Advocate Trideep Pais, who represented the AEL before Judge Chaudhary, said: "Our agony is that the buck doesn't stop here. Time and time again, there are articles to tarnish my reputation. Had he been a fair journalist, he would have cited the evidence."

After hearing AEL's arguments, the judge asked Pais: "Has he (Guha Thakurta) verified everything? Why is he only indicating? If he's making a claim, why isn't he making the data public?"

"The article is very general. You claimed that the government is changing its orders at the best of Adani to benefit him... But which order? Till a legal notice is sent to you, you will publish whatever you want?" he said.

• Adani gets clean chit from Sebi

show-cause notice could be proved. It also confirmed there was no violation of the Sebi Act concerning fraudulent or unfair trade practices.

The alleged transactions were deemed genuine business dealings and not fraudulent or violative of RPT disclosure norms, given the legal framework applicable during the investigation period, Sebi said in two separate orders.

Following the Sebi orders, Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani said that after a thorough investigation, SEBI has confirmed what the group has consistently maintained—that the Hindenburg allegations were "baseless". "Transparency and integrity" have always defined the Adani Group, he said in a post on X's platform.

"We deeply feel the pain of the investors who lost money because of this fraudulent and motivated report. Those who spread false narratives owe the nation an apology," Adani said. "Our commitment to India's institutions, to India's people and to nation building remains unwavering," he said.

On January 24, 2023, Hindenburg Research accused the Adani Group of pulling off "the largest corporate fraud in history," alleging stock manipulation, accounting irregularities, and use of offshore shell companies to artificially inflate share prices. It also claimed violations of public shareholding norms and raised concerns about the group's high debt levels and related-party transactions.

Adani Group shares tanked sharply soon after the allegations and the group's market capitalisation plunged by around \$150 billion and flagship Adani Enterprises tanked by 70 percent.

Earlier this year, the short-seller's founder Nate Anderson announced the "disbandment" of the firm. "Having considered the matter holistically, I find that the allegations made against Noticees (Adani group firms and officials) in the show-cause notice (SCN) are not established. Considering the above, the question of devolution of any liability on Noticees does not arise and hence the question of determination of quantum of penalty also does not require any deliberation," Sebi's whole time member, Kamlesh Varshney said in the order.

"Thereby dispose of the instant proceedings against Noticees without any direction," he wrote in the order.

According to the Sebi order, on merit, the impugned (related-

prime facie defamatory material is published against the plaintiff within 36 hours, however they shall preserve the contents and record till further orders."

Setting aside this order, District Judge Aggarwal said: "The impact of such an order would be that the plaintiff (AEL) would send to intermediaries the material which the plaintiff thinks to be defamatory and seek removal of such articles. It has been left open to the intermediaries to determine whether the said articles are indeed defamatory."

Meanwhile, a different court that heard Guha Thakurta's challenge questioned the AEL on whether it was sure that the alleged posts were defamatory.

District Judge Sunil Chaudhary said, "What is the relief being asked by you? You are not yourself sure if it's defamatory... You are seeking a declaration from the court. How can (an) injunction be granted if it hasn't been declared defamatory."

Following the September 6 order, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) had issued takedown notices to several journalists.

Senior Advocate Trideep Pais, who represented the AEL before Judge Chaudhary, said: "The urgency is that intermediaries have been asked to remove multiple articles. Who will determine what will be defamatory has been left to the plaintiff (AEL). That's my problem with this order." He also said, "It has nowhere been stated how the material is defamatory."

Senior Advocate Anurag Ahluwalia, who represented the AEL before Judge Chaudhary, said: "Our agony is that the buck doesn't stop here. Time and time again, there are articles to tarnish my reputation. Had he been a fair journalist, he would have cited the evidence."

After hearing AEL's arguments, the judge asked Pais: "Has he (Guha Thakurta) verified everything? Why is he only indicating? If he's making a claim, why isn't he making the data public?"

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FROM PAGE ONE FULL REPORTS ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

CEC protecting 'vote chors': Rahul

as many months, seeking the relevant information that would help unmask the entire operation, but the poll body was "not giving it".

The EC dismissed Gandhi's allegations as "incorrect and baseless". It said it had got an FIR registered in the Karnataka case in 2023 and handed over the information to the police.

Gandhi alleged that while there was an attempt to systematically delete Congress voters in Aland in Kalaburagi district, bogus voters were added to the rolls in Rajura in Maharashtra's Chandrapur district. The LoP, who addressed a special press briefing at the AICC headquarters in Delhi, said his revelations had yet again demonstrated that elections were being "rigged", but added that these were not part of the "hydrogen bomb" he promised in recent weeks.

"Gyanesh Kumar, India's Chief Election Commissioner, is protecting the vote thieves... This is proof that Gyanesh Kumar is protecting the vote thieves, and this is black and white proof, there is no confusion about it... This is not something I am saying lightly. I am the LoP in the Lok Sabha. This is something I am saying after solid proof I am going to show you, the people and youth of India. Proof that is black and white that the CEC is protecting the people who have destroyed Indian democracy. I am also going to show you the method with which votes are being added and deleted, and how that is done," he said.

"In election after election, someone, some force, some group has been systematically targeting millions of voters for deletion across India... Different communities, mainly communities voting for the Opposition – Dalits, Adivasis, minorities and OBCs – are specifically targeted. We have

seen that the first voter in the booth was the applicant. The same person got cellphones from outside the state, used them to file the applications. We are pretty certain it was done in a centralised manner, and at scale... It was done at a call centre level... The question is whose numbers are these, how are they operated, where were they operated from, who generated the OTPs to disrupt the process?"

The LoP said some of the people whose names were shown to have filed these applications "actually never did it". He played a video of an elderly woman, Godabai, who said she had not filed any deletion form. He also called on stage a person named Suryakant who was shown to

show you with proof. We have it... In hydrogen bomb, it is black and white. I am just creating a foundation."

Asked if he would approach the courts, Gandhi said, "My job as LoP in a normal situation is to be in opposition, and pressure the government... If the country's institutions want to do something, they will... Democracy of India has been hijacked. Brothers and sisters, democracy can only be saved by the people."

What happened in Aland

Gandhi claimed that in Aland – which the Congress won by 10,348 votes in 2023 – his party's voters were targeted. "Someone tried to delete 6,018 votes. We don't know the total number of votes deleted in Aland in the 2023 election... The top 10 booths with maximum deletions were filled 12 deletion forms in 14 minutes" and a woman named Babita Choudhary, whose name was allegedly deleted on the former's request. Suryakant said he had no idea about this.

Gandhi claimed the entire operation got caught "by coincidence".

"The booth-level officer noticed that her uncle's vote got deleted and found her neighbour had deleted the vote of her uncle. When she asked her neighbour, who said he had no idea... It was found that some other force hijacked the process and deleted the vote, and as luck would have it, got caught," he said.

Citing the CID investigation, which began in February 2023, Gandhi said, "The CID in Karnataka has sent 18 letters in 18 months to the EC. They have asked for some very simple facts: give us the destination IP (Internet Protocol) from where these forms were filled; two: give us the device destination ports from where these applications were filed. The third seeking OTP trails because when you file, you have to get an OTP. This information will lead us to where the operation is being done from, but they are not giving it."

The Congress leader claimed that in Maharashtra's Rajura 6,850 voters were "fraudulently" added through automated software.

"Same system is doing this. It is doing it in Karnataka, Maharashtra, it has done it in Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and we have proof of it."

EC response

Responding to the LoP, the EC said, "No deletion of any vote can be done online by any member of the public, as misconceived by Shri Rahul Gandhi. No deletion can take place without giving an opportunity of being heard to the affected person. In 2023, certain unsuccessful attempts were made for deletions in the Aland Assembly constituency and an FIR was filed by the authority of the ECI itself to investigate the matter. As per records, Aland Assembly

constituency was won by Subhadra Guttedar (BJP) and BR Patil (INC) in 2023."

In further clarification, the Karnataka CEO said the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) in Aland received 6,018 Form-7 applications for deletion in December 2022 through various apps such as NVSP, VHA, and GARUDA. This raised suspicion and these applications were verified by the ERO, Assistant ERO, or Booth-Level Officers. They found only 24 applications to be genuine.

"The booth-level officer noticed that her uncle's vote got deleted and found her neighbour had deleted the vote of her uncle. When she asked her neighbour, who said he had no idea... It was found that some other force hijacked the process and deleted the vote, and as luck would have it, got caught," he said.

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STOLEN INSAS RIFLE CASE

Police say terror angle ruled out, brothers stole rifle to extort, steal

Elder brother ran a toddy shop in Telangana, wanted to extort locals, rivals: cops

MOHAMED THAVER
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 18

THE MUMBAI Police, investigating the case involving the theft of an INSAS rifle from Navy Nagar, have concluded that the two brothers stole the weapons to extort local tendu leaf farmers in Telangana.

The younger brother, Rakesh Dubbula (22), who is an Agniveer in the armed forces, would have been eligible only for two more years in the service and hence they decided to make the most of his tenure. Police, however, ruled out possible Naxal link or involvement of anyone else in the matter.

An official said, "After the investigation by various agencies several times, we have concluded that the brothers wanted the rifle to scare local tendu leaf farmers to cough up extortion money and also keep other rivals in check."

The official said that while earlier the younger brother was not onboard, the elder brother convinced him following which



Rakesh and Umesh were arrested on September 9 from their home in Telangana. File

Naxal-affected region of Telangana, who prevailed on his younger brother. Umesh had several local enemies and was also looking for ways to get money. He felt that an INSAS rifle would scare local tendu leaf farmers to cough up extortion money and also keep other rivals in check."

Rakesh told his elder brother that they used INSAS rifles while on sentry duty. Since he was posted in Kochi, they decided to steal the rifle from Navy Nagar in Mumbai.

The officer said that based on

questioning of surrendered Naxals from Asifabad, they ruled out any Naxal angle to the incident. Police were also checking the antecedents of Alok Singh and whether he had spoken to Rakesh in the past but they did not find any links regarding the same.

"Based on our investigation, it emerges that Umesh was desperate to have some influence in Asifabad and hatched the conspiracy with his younger brother. No terror angle has emerged," the official added.

On September 6, INSAS rifle along with 40 rounds were stolen from Navy Nagar in South Mumbai. Rakesh and Umesh were arrested on September 9 from their home in Telangana.

Rakesh, who completed his higher secondary education in Telangana, joined the armed forces in 2023 under the Agnipath scheme, a government initiative for a four-year short-term service in the military. He was posted at Navy Nagar in Mumbai from August 2024 to February 2025.

69-year-old woman duped by fraudsters into paying Rs 8 lakh for fake pension scheme

MANISH KUMAR PATHAK
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 18

THE BANGUR Nagar police in Mumbai Wednesday booked a representative of a leading private insurance firm for allegedly duping an elderly woman of Rs 8 lakh on the pretext of offering her a pension scheme.

According to police, the complainant, Lalita Malhotra, 69, lives in Evershine Nagar, Malad (West) alone. The victim's son works abroad, and her daughter is married and lives with her family members.

Malhotra claimed that she had taken a policy for five years from an insurance company in 2023 and paid the first instalment of Rs 61,350 through cheque.

In January 2024, she received a call from one Ashish Tiwari, a representative of the insurance firm, to pay the second instalment of the policy.

The woman said she wanted to close the policy as Tiwari was insisting she pay the second instalment even though one year had not been completed.

The suspect allegedly said the bonus had come in her policy, and the value of the policy

had increased.

Tiwari allegedly told Malhotra that if she paid the balance amount, then she would start getting a pension from November 2024.

She started asking to return her money, but the accused avoided her calls and messages. She then informed her daughter, and both approached the Bangur Nagar police station in May and gave a written complaint against Tiwari, said a police officer.

"The accused had taken the money for his own benefit and did not even return her the amount. The police verified the facts and booked Tiwari under Section 316 (5), 316(2) and 318 (4) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Samhita," said the police officer.



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Double Bull	Duraguard PPC	₹ 500	₹ 460
	Double Bull Master	₹ 600	₹ 550
Nirmax	Double Bull PPC	₹ 450	₹ 410
	Nirmax PPC	₹ 480	₹ 440
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Old Price	New Price
₹ 225	₹ 199

Old Price	New Price
₹ 99	₹ 88

Muesli Fruits, Nuts & Seeds 500g

Pringles Sour Cream & Onion Flavour 40g



Old Price	New Price
₹ 389	₹ 346

Old Price	New Price
₹ 60	₹ 53



THE CITY

Dilip Khedkar is in Maharashtra, trying to file bail application in truck helper's abduction: Cops

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 18

ON THE lookout for the family members of sacked IAS officer Puja Khedkar, who allegedly abducted a truck helper last week, the Navi Mumbai police said Thursday her father Dilip is in Maharashtra and that they would nab him soon.

Sources said Dilip Khedkar is trying to contact his lawyer to file an anticipatory bail application to prevent his arrest. "We have some leads that indicate Dilip Khedkar is in the state, and our teams are trying to track him and his driver-bodyguard," a Navi Mumbai police officer said.

The officer said they are also looking for Manorama Khedkar, Puja's mother, who did not allow police teams into the house where they had confined the driver in a room, but their focus remains on tracking Dilip and his security guard, Salunkhe.

On Wednesday, the Navi Mumbai police said the Khedkar family had switched off their mobile phones and had not made any online transactions since Sunday. They said they are looking at CCTV cameras around the bungalow to trace the vehicle used to escape.

The police booked Puja's parents and their bodyguard for allegedly abducting the truck helper after his vehicle brushed the SUV they were driving, and the Pune police have lodged a separate FIR for allegedly obstructing the police team from entering their residence.

The police action came after Puja's father, Dilip, a retired Maharashtra government official, and his bodyguard allegedly had an altercation with truck driver Chandrakumar Chavan and the helper, Prahlad Kumar, 22, on September 13. The concrete mixer truck allegedly brushed past the Khedkars' car on the Mulund-Airoli Road.

The two men then allegedly forced Kumar into their vehicle, saying they were taking him to police station. Vilas Dherange, the truck owner, lodged a complaint after Kumar did not respond to repeated calls.



RAIN AND AFTERMATH: Commuters brave rain in Navi Mumbai on Thursday; (right) the historic Banganga Tank in Walkeshwar overflowed on Wednesday morning after water levels rose sharply.



Narendra Vaskar

SEPT 7 INCIDENT KILLED THREE WOMEN

Dahisar high-rise fire: Developer, contractor & supervisor booked

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 18

THE DAHISAR police have booked a private developer, contractor and supervisor for causing death by negligence in connection with the fire incident in Dahisar that led to the deaths of three women, including a 74-year-old, and injuring 22 others.

The 23-storey building, where the fire occurred, is a newly constructed Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) structure in Shanti Nagar, Dahisar (East). The building was partially occupied, with residents up to the 18th floor.

The FIR was registered based on a complaint filed by third-floor resident Mahesh Patel, whose aunt Madhu Patel (53) and niece Priya (24) were seriously injured in the fire and later died during treatment. Another woman, Shanti Gosai (74), also sustained serious burn injuries and was declared dead on the same day, September 7, the day

of the incident.

According to the police, the fire broke out in the afternoon of September 7 in the basement of the building and spread through the electrical duct and wiring up to the third floor. While the blaze itself remained confined to the lower levels, thick smoke travelled all the way up to the 23rd floor, injuring many residents due to suffocation.

The fire brigade informed police that the fire was caused by a short circuit in the electrical unit. For rescue operations, the fire brigade deployed eight fire engines, eight jumbo tankers, two special appliances including ladders and hydraulic platforms, and a breathing apparatus at the site.

"The FIR was registered under Sections 106, 125(a), and 125(b) of the BNS against the suspects. Legal action will be taken against them after the investigation," said a police officer from Dahisar police station.

In his statement, Mahesh Patel said, "I was at home along

with my mother, wife, daughter, aunt Madhu Patel, and niece Priya, 24, when the fire broke out in the building. Priya was physically impaired. As soon as I noticed smoke on the floor and residents were shouting, I decided to rush out of the building along with my family members."

He added, "We started running downstairs. But my aunt Madhu and niece Priya were left on the second floor and got trapped with several other residents."

Both Madhu and Priya were later rescued but had suffered severe burn injuries. Madhu was admitted to Shatabdi Hospital, Kandivali, and Priya to Rohit Nursing Home. Due to their critical condition, both were shifted to Tunga Hospital, Malad, where they succumbed during treatment, said the police.

Another resident, Shanti Gosai (74), who was trying to escape to the upper floors, was overcome by heat and smoke in a passageway and died on the same day.

SEEKS ACTION AGAINST ERRANT CONTRACTORS

Fix all potholes within a week, HC tells BMC, other civic bodies

12 deaths, 11 injuries due to poor road conditions: Data submitted by govt lawyer

OMKAR GOKHALE
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 18



The HC was hearing a suo motu PIL raising concerns over the potholes in Mumbai and other civic areas in Maharashtra.

tricts followed by one each within Navi Mumbai, Kolhapur, Nandurbar and Amravati.

Senior advocate Anil Sakhare for Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) claimed that the civic body was addressing complaints related to poor road conditions within 48 hours.

"How many complaints so far? What action have you taken against contractors in case damage is caused to the road? It is about the quality of work. There are several roads in suburbs (with poor conditions)," a bench of Justices Revati Mohite Dere and Sandesh D Patil orally remarked.

"In fact, all assistant commissioners (of civic bodies) present in the court, please mend your ways and make contractors accountable and ensure by next date of hearing all potholes and roads are attended to. We will also find ways to see if it is done or not done. Within the next one week, we want all potholes to be attended to. We can't have anyone sustaining injuries," the HC remarked.

The HC also asked the state government to inform whether it will come up with a policy for immediate assistance to injured victims and also to the kin of the deceased victims due to negligence of civic bodies and said it will pass interim orders next week.

responding to citizens' complaints through their mobile application.

The court said that while all roads in Mumbai were handed over to BMC for maintenance as per earlier court order, except Public Works Department (PWD), all other agencies including Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA), Maharashtra State Road Transport Development Corporation (MSRDC), Mumbai Port Trust have not transferred the roads to the civic body as yet. He said roads around Metro works are managed by MMRDA.

"Just one monsoon season comes, and everything goes (poor road conditions). You as a

corporation have to take action against contractors and inform us about it. Why can't you take action? Not even blacklisting?" the court responded. When Sakhare said that the BMC imposes fines ranging from Rs 1 lakh to 10 lakh against the errant contractors, the court said the same was not enough. It suggested compensation amount can also be recovered from the officers who look after the said works and they should feel the "pinch" in their pockets.

"It should not be a small amount. Otherwise, they will pay up and not feel the pinch. They have to feel the pinch," Justice Mohite Dere remarked.

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Workers polish the Meenatai Thackeray statue at Shivaji Park, Thursday. Sankhadeep Banerjee

Man held for defacing Meenatai statue sent to police custody

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 18

THE MAN held for allegedly defacing the statue of Meenatai Thackeray at Shivaji Park in central Mumbai was on Thursday remanded to police custody till September 20.

Upendra Pawaskar, 32, was arrested after he allegedly confessed to the act during interrogation.

The statue commemorating Meenatai Thackeray, the late wife of Shiv Sena founder Bal Thackeray, was found splashed with red paint early on Wednesday morning, triggering outrage among party workers and prompting immediate police action.

"During the preliminary investigation, Pawaskar told the police that there was a property dispute in his family, and he was under the impression that the Thackeray family was supporting his cousin. He was upset because of this," a senior police officer said.

"The police are trying to find out the facts behind the incident and will interrogate the accused if he was motivated by someone else," the officer added.

The Shivaji Park police initially registered a case against an unidentified person under Section 298 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sahita (BNS), which pertains to hurting religious sentiments by defiling a place of worship. The First Information Report was later updated after the accused was identified.

According to officials, the incident occurred between 6.10 am and 6.30 am on Wednesday. CCTV footage examined up to 6.10 am showed no unusual activity, but shortly afterwards, a man is seen approaching the statue. The police tracked the in-

dividual using the footage and arrested Pawaskar later Wednesday evening.

"The police have informed the court that the accused has been identified from the CCTV footage. After hearing the prosecution's ground, the court sent the accused into police custody," an official said.

News of the defacement prompted Shiv Sena (UBT) leaders and workers to rush to the site. Party members cleaned the statue and the surrounding area, while a large number of workers gathered at the spot throughout Wednesday morning in protest.

ADITI RAJA & NAYONIKA BOSE
VADODARA, MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 18

BMC to revamp 10 of 41 dry waste centres in first phase, Rs 70 lakh allocated for each centre

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 18

IN A bid to modernise the dry waste segregation centres across the city, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation is set to revamp 10 of the 41 dry waste centres in Mumbai. The civic body has earmarked centres sprawling over at least 2,000 sq ft for the first phase of the modernisation plan for which the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) has allocated a fund of Rs 70 lakh for each centre.

The two men then allegedly forced Kumar into their vehicle, saying they were taking him to police station. Vilas Dherange, the truck owner, lodged a complaint after Kumar did not respond to repeated calls.

full potential with most managed by informal sectors. It was in order to optimise their operations that the civic body launched plans to carry out phase-wise modernisation of the existing centres in consultation with RTES.

Ashwini Joshi, Additional Municipal Commissioner (City) said the modernisation plan entails upgrading of the centres through installation of conveyor belts, changing rooms for men and women working at the centres among other measures. Once modernised, the centres will cater to segregated waste and process them at site. Furthermore, the plan also seeks to reduce the burden on the dumping grounds at Kanjur Marg and Deonar wherein city's garbage is dumped without treatment.

At present, the city is home to at least 41 dry waste segregation centres, wherein dry waste is collected and segregated for further recycling use.

However, officials stated that the centres are not operating at

receiving funding for the initiatives," said Joshi on Thursday.

According to officials, the tenders for the modernisation bid is set to be floated over the coming month.

Sanitary waste collection

Five months since the launch of its domestic sanitary and special care waste management drive, over 4,000 entities have signed up to avail the civic facility. At present, the BMC is collecting over 2.5 tonnes of sanitary and special care waste each daily.

Of the 7,000 to 8,000 metric tonnes of waste generated in the city per day, nearly 70 to 80 metric tonnes of waste is of sanitary products which are discarded without any care. This encompasses items ranging from sani-

tary napkins, diapers, tampons, and other items such as contaminated cotton, bandages, nails, gloves, needles, razors, waxing strips etc. In a bid to segregate sanitary waste with the aim of eventually treating it, the BMC in April launched the special care waste management drive as per the SWM rules which calls for four-way segregation of waste.

The BMC has distributed yellow bins as well as yellow bags which are earmarked for disposal of special care waste. According to officials, 4,000 societies, beauty parlours and hotels have registered to avail the facility, wherein the BMC collects the segregated waste.

The BMC has 11 plasma incineration plants of 4TPD each where these segregated wastes are being collected.

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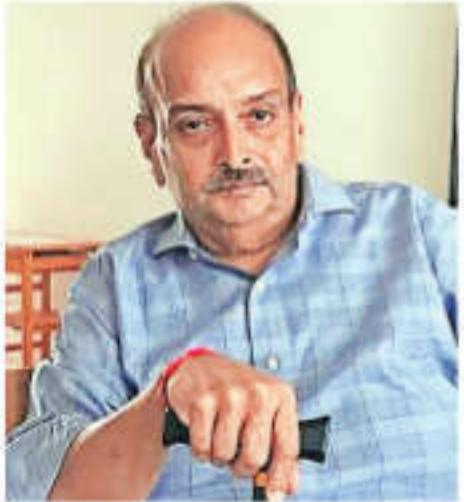
'Damaged' NH-48 restricts access to sacred Gujarat town, Parsi Panchayet writes to Gadkari

ADITI RAJA & NAYONIKA BOSE
VADODARA, MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 18

UDVADA, A charming, seaside town in Gujarat's Valsad district, holds special significance for Parsis. Housing the revered Zoroastrian Iranshah Atash Behram temple, considered one of the oldest fire temples in the country, the town

PROCESS OF EXTRADITION ON ED: Fugitive proceedings against Choksi can continue

SADAF MODAK
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 18



Mehul Choksi was arrested in April in Belgium on an extradition request by CBI.

THE ENFORCEMENT Directorate (ED) Thursday said that the proceedings to declare diamond trader Mehul Choksi a "fugitive economic offender" can go on before a special court in Mumbai, even while he is under arrest in Belgium and the bid to extradite him is under way.

Choksi, wanted for the alleged Rs 13,000-crore fraud at Punjab National Bank, has filed a plea in the Mumbai court stating that since he is already under arrest, the proceedings under the Fugitive Economic Offenders (FEO) Act against him should be halted.

Choksi was arrested in April in Belgium on the basis of an extradition request by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and is currently in a prison there, pending a decision on his extradition to India.

The proceedings to declare him a fugitive economic offender, which has been pending since 2018, will allow authorities to confiscate his properties in the country even before the trial begins.

"On one hand, he is contesting the proceedings in the Belgium court saying that he cannot be extradited to India and on the other hand, he is filing an application here in India to say that since he is arrested in Belgium, the application to declare him a fugitive economic offender cannot be gone ahead with. This is not acceptable. He is not handed over to Indian agencies and the judicial proceedings there are still pending," said Additional Solicitor General Anil Singh submitted to the special court.

The ASG said that Choksi left India on January 7, 2018 to avoid arrest and criminal proceedings and had chosen to stay out of India and not remain physically present in the courts here.

He said that the application to declare him a fugitive was



NAVRATRI NOVELTIES: Traditional embroidered pots in vibrant colours are available for sale in Thane market as the Navratri festival nears. Deepak Joshi

PLEA BY FORMER VVCMC COMMISSIONER

Bombay HC seeks ED's reply to plea alleging 'illegal arrest' in land scam

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 18

THE BOMBAY High Court on Thursday asked Enforcement Directorate (ED) to respond to a plea alleging "illegal arrest" of former Commissioner of Vasai Virar City Municipal Corporation (VVCMC) Anilkumar Khanderao Pawar related to a probe into the alleged illegal construction of 41 residential and commercial buildings in the Vasai-Virar region.

The central agency on August 13 arrested Pawar, YS Reddy, the suspended official who was the deputy director of town planning of civic body along with Sitaram Gupta, a former corporator of the Bahujan Vikas Aghadi who is into construction business and his nephew Arun Gupta.

A division bench of Chief Justice Shree Chandrashekhar and Justice Gautam A Ankhdad was hearing a writ plea by Pawar seeking declaration of his arrest by ED officers as "illegal, arbitrary and unconstitutional" and direction to set aside entire proceedings initiated against him.

He also sought direction to quash and set aside remand order of August 14 issued by special court designated under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and sought petitioner be released forthwith. The plea also sought direction to prohibit ED from assuming investigation related to matters for which no scheduled offence has been registered.

The ED had claimed that Pawar and Reddy, the two officials of the VVCMC had granted commencement certificates in urban and green zone areas for a total area of approximately 550 lakh sq ft, equivalent to over 55,000 flats of 1,000 square feet each.

Senior advocate Sudeep Pasbola and advocate Ujjwakumar Chavhan claimed that Pawar "was not in the picture at the relevant time period of the offence" and there was "no FIR registered directly or indirectly

against him in any police station," therefore there was no predicate or scheduled offence against him.

It added there was "no material" on record to suggest that Pawar received commission for permitting illegal construction and for protecting such structures. He submitted the allegation based on WhatsApp that the petitioner received over Rs 17.75 crore from Reddy and the amount parked with a distant relative of the petitioner was "vague" with "no reference to the date, time or name of the relative" and the amount was also non-specific.

The plea said Pawar could not be charged under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The petition also alleged the search conducted on premises of Pawar and his relative was "illegal," therefore ED failed to substantiate its allegations.

The HC sought the central agency's reply to the plea and posted further hearing to September 30.

GOVT. OF BIHAR

BIHAR COMBINED ENTRANCE COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION BOARD I.A.S. Association Building, Near Patna Airport, Patna-14.

Website : bceceboard.bihar.gov.in / Helpdesk : helpdesk.bceceboard@bihar.gov.in

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Adv. No.- BCECEB(UGMAC)-2025/13 Dated 18.09.2025

Round-2 Online Counselling से सम्बन्धित आवश्यक सचना

विज्ञापन संख्या-BCECEB(UGMAC)-2025/10 दिनांक 13.09.2025 के त्रैमास में UGMAC-2025 से सम्बन्धित सभी अध्ययनों / संस्कारों / सर्वे साधारण को मूलत किया जाता है कि UGMAC-2025 को Round-1 / Round-2 Counselling से Free Exit एवं Round-2 Online Counselling से सम्बन्धित विवरणों प्रक्रिया/ कार्यक्रम विज्ञापन संख्या-BCECEB(UGMAC)-2025/12 दिनांक 18.09.2025 पर्यंत के website: bceceboard.bihar.gov.in पर उपलब्ध करा दिया गया है।

2. पूर्ण प्रक्रिया विज्ञापन संख्या-BCECEB(UGMAC)-2025/08 दिनांक 30.08.2025 , 2025/10 दिनांक 13.09.2025 एवं 2025/12 दिनांक 18.09.2025 को अन्य शर्तों / नियम यथावत् रहेंगे। परीक्षा नियंत्रक

DELHI ELECTRICITY REGULATORY COMMISSION

Viniyam Bhawan, C-Block, Shivalik, Malviya Nagar, New Delhi-110017.

Telefax: 41080416, 41080417

ENGAGEMENT OF CONSULTANT (ENGINEERING), CONSULTANT (CIVIL), CONSULTANT (TARIFF-ENGG.) AND CONSULTANT (TARIFF-FINANCE) IN DEREC.

DELHI ELECTRICITY REGULATORY COMMISSION invites applications for Engagement of following Consultants: -

SL No.	Name of post	Number of post(s)
1.	Consultant (Engineering)	04
2.	Consultant (Civil)	01
3.	Consultant (Tariff- Engineering)	02
4.	Consultant (Tariff-Finance)	01

For details such as eligibility, qualifications, experience and other terms & conditions of engagement, application format etc, please refer to DEREC website www.derc.gov.in. The last date for receipt of application is 20.10.2025.

Sd/-

Rajesh Dangi, Secretary

DIP/Shabdharth/Classified/0261/25-26

EXPRESS Careers

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भारत सरकार का एक उद्यम

Advertisement No. 12 / 2025

Engagement of CEO for BCGCL and CGIL on Fixed Term Contract Basis

COAL INDIA LIMITED (CIL) is a majority stake holder (51%) in two Joint Venture companies i.e. Bharat Coking Gasification & Chemicals Limited (BCGCL) and CIL-GAIL Gasification India Limited (CGIL).

BCGCL is a JV for setting up a Coal-to-Ammonium Nitrate Project and CGIL is a JV for setting up a Coal-to-Synthetic Natural Gas (SNG) Project.

To lead the JV Company operations, to oversee project execution, to ensure effective coordination between JV Partners and other stakeholders, we are seeking accomplished and dynamic professionals to join as CEO on Fixed Term Contract basis.

For important dates, online application and detailed information on eligibility criteria, upper age limit, process of applying, selection process etc, please refer to the detailed advertisement to be released soon on CIL website www.coalindia.in under the link "Career with CIL".

Any amendment / modification relating to this recruitment will be notified on CIL website.

For any queries, write to us at lateral-recruitment.cil@coalindia.in

GM (HR / Recruitment)

One held for stabbing man to death in road rage

Latur: A man was arrested on Thursday for alleged involvement in a murder in a road rage incident in Latur district, a police official said.

The murder took place around

12:45 am near Lahuji Salve Chowk following a quarrel that broke out when a MUV brushed past a car, the Shivajinagar police station official said.

"Four passengers of the MU

assaulted those inside the car, during which one of them, Anmol Kawate, was stabbed to death. Kawate's friend Sonali Bhosale was seriously injured in the knife attack," he said. PTI

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE is hereby given that we are investigating the rights of Kaleidoscope Developers Private Limited ("KDPL"), a private limited company incorporated under the Companies Act, 1956 and existing under the Companies Act, 2013 and having its registered office at 1, Somnath, CTS No. 988, Ram Mandir Road, Vile Parle (East), Mumbai - 400 057, in respect of the properties more particularly described in Schedule I, Schedule II and Schedule III written herein below.

All persons/entities having any right, title, claim, benefit, demand or interest in respect of the under mentioned properties by way of sale, exchange, let, tenancy, lease, license, assignment, mortgage, inheritance, bequest, succession, gift, lien, charge, maintenance, easement, trust, possession, family arrangement, settlement, Decree or Order of any Court of Law, contracts / agreements, development rights, partnership or otherwise of whatsoever nature, are hereby required to make the same known in writing, along with documentary evidence to the undersigned at the address mentioned below within 15 days from the date of publication of the public notice. In the event no such claim is received, the same will be considered as if no such claim exists or that they have been waived or abandoned. All claims addressed in response to this public notice should quote the no. G0604.

Schedule I

Ownership Rights of Kaleidoscope Developers Private Limited

All that piece or parcel of the following lands situated at Village Bhagaon, Taluka Mulshi, District Pune comprising of the following Survey Numbers and boundaries:

Sr. No.	Survey No.	Area as per 7/12 extract (Sq.Mtrs.)	Area of Schedule Properties (Sq.Mtrs.)	Boundaries			
				East	South	West	North
1	135/3	200.00	134.00	135/2	135/2	143, 135/3	136/3
2	136/1	1310.00	763.00	136/3	136/2	143,136/1(P)	141/5,136/3
3	136/3	2990.00	2990.00	140	135/2, 135/3	136/1, 136/2,143	141/5
4	137/1	5940.00	63.83	137/1(P)	135/1	135/2	140,137/1(P)
5	140	62700.00	6681.44	140(P)	137/1	136/3	140 (P)
6	143	55600.00	352.31	136/1	143(P)	143(P)	143(P)
7	136/2	1210.00	1210.00	136/3	136/3	130(P)	136/1
8	132/1	1600.00	1600.00	132/2	132/3, 133/3,131/3	133/3,133/5	134/1
9	132/2	1100.00	1100.00	197/1	131/2	132/1,131/3	134/1
10	133/2	200.00	200.00	131/3	133/1	133/3	132/1
11	133/3	1490.00	1490.00	132/1,133/2	133/1	133/1	133/4,133/5,132/1
12	134/1	1800.00	600.00	197/1	132/1, 133/5,132/2	134/2	135/1,134/1(P)
13	135/1	1870.00	1091.00	197/1	134/1	135/2	137/1,135/1(P)
14	134/3	3460.00	1730.00	134/2	133/6, 133/4	130(P)	134/3(P)
15	133/6	400.00	400.00	133/1	130(P)	130(P)	134/3
16	129/1	810.00	810.00	129/4	129/5	129/3	131/1
17	129/2	710.00	486.42	129/2(P)	129/2(P)	129/5	129/5
18	129/3	1520.00					

2008 MALEGAON BLAST

HC notices to NIA, Pragya Thakur, other acquitted accused on appeal by victims' kin

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 18

THE BOMBAY High Court Thursday issued notices to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and the acquitted accused in the 2008 Malegaon blast case. The court was hearing an appeal filed by relatives of victims challenging a special court verdict that acquitted all seven accused, including former BJP MP Pragya Singh Thakur and Lieutenant Colonel Prasad Purohit.

Six people were killed and over 100 were injured on September 29, 2008, when an explosive device went off near a mosque at Malegaon in Maharashtra's Nashik district.

On July 31, Special Judge AK Lahoti cleared Thakur, Purohit, Major (retired) Ramesh Upadhyay, Ajay Rahirkar, Sameer Kulkarni, Sudhakar Chaturvedi, and Sudhakar Dhar Dwivedi of all charges, including criminal conspiracy and murder under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and sections of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

On Thursday, a division bench of Chief Justice Shree Chandrashekhar and Justice Gautam A Ankhad passed the order on an appeal filed by father, brother, son, uncle and father-in-law of the victims, including Nisar Ahmed Haji Sayyed Bilal, Shaikh Liyaqat Mohiuddin, Shaikh Ishaque Shaikh Yusuf, Usman Khan Ainul Khan, Mushtaque Shah, Arshoorn Shah, and Shaikh Ibrahim Shaikh Supdo.

The appeal further claimed that the impugned July 31 judgement of the special court designated under the NIA Act was "not maintainable on facts as well as in law" and it was passed "contrary to settled position of law with regard to the appreciation of the evidence and hence the same is required to be set aside and quashed as bad in law".

On Tuesday, the high court sought to know whether the appellants, who are family members of the six deceased victims,

New rental housing policy for low-income groups in MMR soon

VALLABH OZARKAR
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 18

THE MAHARASHTRA Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA) will soon introduce a new independent rental housing policy for the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), aimed at addressing the housing needs of economically weaker sections.

The draft policy is expected to be ready within a month and will be placed before the MHADA authority for approval before being sent to the state government for final clearance.

According to officials, the policy will first be implemented in the MMR where housing demand is highest and will later be extended across the state. The move comes against the backdrop of soaring property prices in Mumbai, Thane, and Navi Mumbai, which have placed home ownership out of reach for low-income groups. While MHADA's housing lotteries continue to see heavy demand, the number of flats available remains limited, officials said.

"MHADA is preparing a comprehensive rental housing policy for the entire state, with priority

were examined as witnesses during the trial. The bench had remarked it was "not an open gate" for everyone to file an appeal against acquittal.

The lawyer representing them informed the high court on Thursday that one of them was an intervenor in the trial before the special court, and four other appellants were examined during the trial; therefore, they were competent to file an appeal against the said verdict.

The high court then issued notice to the acquitted accused, which will be served at their present addresses disclosed in the memo of party-respondents in the appeal and also issued notice to the NIA. The court also asked Advocate Mateen Shaikh for the appellants to take steps related to the furnishing of the required documents and supporting past judgments within two weeks. The high court will hear the appeal after six weeks.

The appeal, filed, sought directions from the high court to quash and set aside the July 31 verdict, and to convict the accused persons. The NIA, which probed the case, has not yet challenged the special court verdict before HC.

The appellants also claimed that "the NIA was introduced only to weaken the case and give benefit to accused persons".

The appeal further claimed that the impugned July 31 judgement of the special court designated under the NIA Act was "not maintainable on facts as well as in law" and it was passed "contrary to settled position of law with regard to the appreciation of the evidence and hence the same is required to be set aside and quashed as bad in law".

On Tuesday, the high court sought to know whether the appellants, who are family members of the six deceased victims,

implementation in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region. The policy will cover allotment rules, rent structure, and maintenance responsibilities, and the draft will be ready within a month," said Sanjeev Jaiswal, Vice President, MHADA. The policy will outline modalities for developing rental housing through both MHADA and private developers. It will also define allotment rules, rent structures, and responsibilities for maintenance. Officials added that with the Union government's plan to develop MMR as an international growth hub, a significant rise in population is expected due to increased employment and educational opportunities.

Rental housing has, therefore, been given priority in the development framework.

Meanwhile, MHADA will also push for group redevelopment projects in Mumbai. This includes the redevelopment of MHADA colonies and cess-based buildings, a move expected to create additional housing stock while providing larger homes and more open spaces for existing residents.

Meanwhile, MHADA is not likely to conduct its Mumbai housing lottery this year, despite earlier plans to release 5,000 flats during Diwali.

Gazette to reinforce its demand for inclusion in the ST category.

Similarly, Banjaras – currently classified under the Vijnata Jati and Nomadic Tribes (VJNT) group availing 3.5% quota under the OBC category – have sought the ST status, a move opposed by tribal outfits.

"If the government can fulfil the reservation demands of others (Marathas), why is it overlooking the demand of the Dhingar community?" asked Mahadev Jankar, chief of the Rashtriya Samaj Paksh (RSP), an NDA ally that draws its support mainly from the community, which makes up around 9% of the state's population and is seen to be influential in western and northern Maharashtra.

Dhangar leaders point out that the BJP had promised to include their community in the ST

Uddhav calls BMC polls 'acid test', keeps door half open for MNS tie-up

Sena UBT chief tells office-bearers to mobilise at the grassroots and aim for a mayor from the party

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 18

TERMING THE upcoming Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) elections an "acid test" for his faction, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray on Thursday asked party workers to begin preparations across all 227 wards, even as talks with cousin Raj Thackeray's Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) inched forward.

Addressing a closed-door meeting of shakha pramukhs and divisional heads at Shiv Sena Bhavan, Uddhav reportedly told office-bearers to mobilise at the



Uddhav Thackeray

grassroots and aim for a Sena (UBT) mayor.

"Every BMC election has been called an acid test for us since 1997. Each time, we have emerged stronger because of the confidence of our Shiv Sainiks. This one will be no different," he said, according to a functionary present at the meeting.

While maintaining that preparations must be "100 per cent for all wards", Uddhav con-

firmed that discussions with the MNS were underway. Former corporators present had reportedly told him that an alliance with Raj Thackeray would resonate with Marathi voters and improve the party's prospects. The MNS is learnt to be seeking 90–95 seats in the 227-member civic body, though leaders from both camps said "seat-to-seat negotiations" would eventually bring the number down.

On Tuesday, Uddhav had publicly signalled that a tie-up with the MNS was "almost certain" and would be announced at an "appropriate time".

The Sena (UBT) chief also drew a hard line on former corporators who had crossed over

to Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's camp and are now exploring a return. "Many of their places have already been taken up by other Shiv Sainiks. If they return, there is no guarantee of tickets. The decision will rest with you, the grassroots workers," he told shakha pramukhs, according to sources.

He added that defectors were sending "messages through intermediaries" but that their re-entry could happen only with the approval of local cadres.

Uddhav sharpened his attack on the BJP-Shinde alliance, alleging that its sole political aim was to "finish the Thackeray brand". "Even in their rally yesterday, they did not target the NCP or

Congress – only Uddhav Thackeray. That is their mission, which is why this BMC election is our acid test," he said.

Reminding workers of the Sena's past performances, he recalled how the party had once reached a tally of 103 corporators in the civic house. He asked cadres to highlight the development work carried out under the Sena's control of the BMC over the past two decades. Referring to his recent outreach to Raj Thackeray after two decades, Uddhav said,

"When we came together, people were happy. Congress and NCP leaders have been asking what we plan to do next. Leave that to me. But our preparations must be total, for all 227 seats".

Rahul Gandhi has mastered art of lying with great confidence, says Fadnavis

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 18

CHIEF MINISTER Devendra Fadnavis said on Thursday that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi can be equated to a 'serial liar'. "All these allegations about poll-rigging are part of Congress campaign to mislead the people. But they will not succeed. Such malicious campaign against BJP without proof is going to boomerang," he said.

"Rahul Gandhi has set new standards by weaving baseless imagination theories with great confidence," Fadnavis said. "The Congress had great expectations from Maharashtra Assembly polls. Unfortunately, they were routed by BJP and alliance partners. They are not able to reconcile with ground realities," he said.

"Rahul Gandhi's conduct is akin to Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's chief propagandist. However, one thing is evident over the years is that Rahul Gandhi has mastered the art of lying with great confidence," Fadnavis said.

The CM was responding to Rahul Gandhi's revelations in media about ruling BJP's modus operandi to delete votes. Rahul has claimed that the Election Commission has overlooked the poll-rigging by BJP in the elections held in 2024 Lok Sabha and Assembly polls in state.

'Non-aggrieved' lawyer files PIL against GR for Kunbi status; HC rejects plea

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 18

THE BOMBAY High Court on Thursday dismissed one of the PILs filed by a lawyer challenging the Government Resolution (GR) issued by the state government on September 2 pertaining to the implementation of the Hyderabad Gazette to grant Kunbi status to Marathas from Marathwada region.

The court said that the lawyer was not personally aggrieved by the GR and body of individuals have already approached the court, therefore there should not be multiplicity of litigations. The court allowed the lawyer to file an intervention application in other writ pleas challenging GR.

A division bench of Chief Justice Shree Chandrashekhar and Justice Gautam A Ankhad was hearing PIL by lawyer Vinod Dhotre argued through advocate Rajesh P Khobragade which alleged that the impugned GR "arbitrarily extended OBC status to a politically dominant and socially advanced community without sufficient data" and same was in violation of Article 14 of the Constitution. The PIL further alleged that the GR "discriminates against genuine OBC communities by diluting their share of reservation."

The court said that PIL was "thoroughly misconceived" and "it was open for the aggrieved persons" to challenge the GR but not the petitioner lawyer, who was not directly affected by the same.

Medical services disrupted across state as doctors go on 24-hour strike over registration of homeopaths

NARESH S
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 18

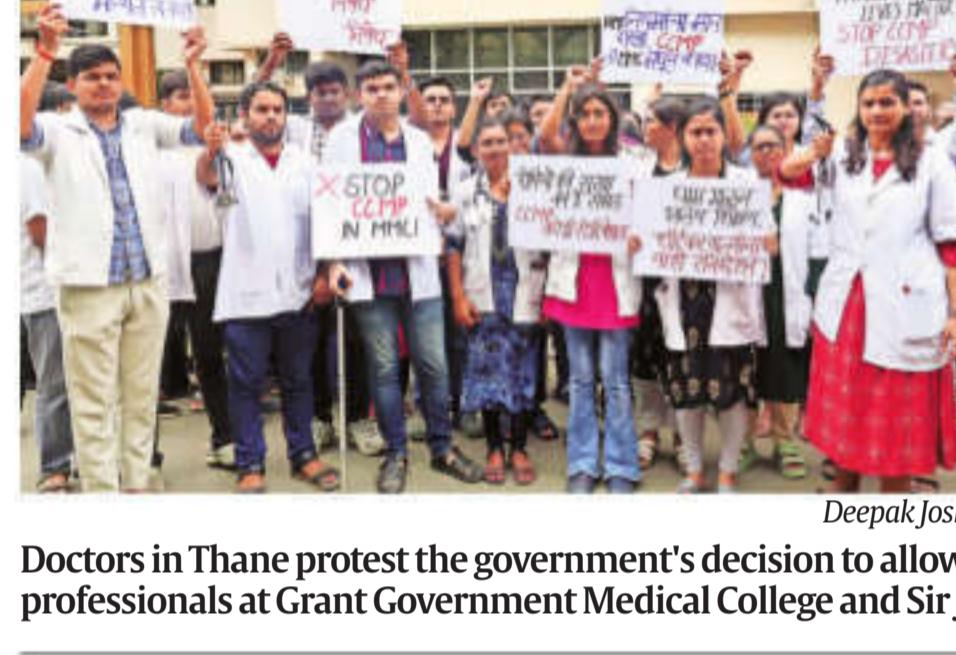
OUTPATIENT DEPARTMENTS (OPDs) and scheduled surgeries across Maharashtra were severely impacted on Thursday as doctors across the state launched a 24-hour strike.

The protest was sparked by the state government's decision to allow homeopathic doctors who have completed a one-year certificate course in modern pharmacology (CCMP) to register with the Maharashtra Medical Council and practice allopathy.

The strike, which began at 8 am, saw participation from nearly 1.8 lakh resident and senior doctors from both government and private hospitals.

While emergency and critical care services continued to function, OPDs and elective surgeries were brought to a standstill in most parts of the state.

"I came for my regular check-up, but the OPD is shut and nobody seems to be seeing general patients today. I rely on JJ Hospital for my diabetes monitoring every month, I hope the government and doctors resolve this quickly



Doctors in Thane protest the government's decision to allow the registration of homeopathic doctors; (right) medical professionals at Grant Government Medical College and Sir JJ Group of Hospitals, Mumbai, stage a protest on Thursday.



Ganesh Shirsekar

because patients like me have nowhere else to go," said Rajesh Gupta, a 60-year-old patient at JJ Hospital in Mumbai, one of many affected by the protest.

Major medical associations, including the Indian Medical Association (IMA), have backed the strike, citing concerns over patient safety and the dilution of medical standards.

"This decision undermines years of rigorous training and puts patient safety at risk," said Dr Pallavi Joshi, a general physi-

cian at JJ Hospital.

"We cannot support a move that allows those without full medical education to treat vulnerable patients in our wards. The entire team stands united in seeking a reversal for the sake of public health in Maharashtra."

While doctors under BMC MARD, the association representing resident doctors from municipal medical colleges like Sion, KEM, Nair, and Cooper did not officially join the strike, they wore black ribbons to express

their support.

"We are united in solidarity, opposing any dilution of medical standards that endangers public health. The state's decision to register CCMP-qualified homeopaths threatens the integrity of evidence-based care and the safety of our patients," said Dr Rohit Meena, President of BMC MARD.

The protest had a widespread impact, with services disrupted not just in metropolitan areas, but also in district hospitals and rural health centres from Gondia

to Hingoli and Parbhani.

"Complications from botched up surgeries and neglect in early diagnosis are real risks when inexperienced practitioners handle patients. Allowing allopathic practice to naturopaths is a bad move by Maharashtra Medical Council (MMC), and ultimately it sends the message that AYUSH is inadequate," said Dr Aditya Baruah, a junior resident doctor at the Padmabhushan Vasantdada Patil Government Hospital in Sangli.

Engg diploma admissions hit all-time high in state

PALLAVI SMART
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 18

ADMISSIONS TO Engineering Diploma courses in Maharashtra are at all time high this year with a total of 1,07,910 students confirming admissions. This is significantly higher than last year's figure of 95,511 students. There has been a more than 35 per cent increase in the number of admissions in the past five years, indicating continuously growing demand for engineering diploma courses which can be pursued immediately after Class 10.

The data of engineering diploma admissions conducted this year shows that traditional branches such as computer, mechanical, civil, electrical are more in demand than the new-age skills such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), unlike the engineering degree admissions in state where students are seen preferring new-age courses.

RISE IN ENGINEERING DIPLOMA ADMISSIONS

Year	Institutes	Admissions
2021-22	367	69,705
2022-23	365	84,452
2023-24	388	86,465
2024-25	400	95,511
2025-26	416	1,07,910

While there are a combination of factors resulting in this increased demand among students to pursue Diploma courses, according to teachers, one of the biggest contributors is more job opportunities compared to postgraduate students. Other factors include easier access to technical education without appearing for entrance tests, possibility of direct second year lateral entry to engineering degree courses and availability of diploma education in Marathi medium.

Shridhar Vaidya, secretary of

Teachers Association For Non-Aided Polytechnic (TAFNP) said, "Diploma is a professional education encompassing skill-based practical knowledge of the job expected from the individual. Industry is willing to place them immediately after Diploma. In fact, they are preferred as skilled manpower which industry needs more, as opposed to engineering degree holders. Because, these Diploma holders are appointed at supervisor levels, which posts are ample in numbers as opposed to managerial positions post engi-

neering."

Vaidya highlighted that this works as a best option for many young individuals seeking early employment. "And this is possible with lesser investment compared to heavy fee-structures for engineering courses; as Diploma fees are much less compared to degree courses."

Diploma admissions are based on Class 10 marks obtained by students, which makes it convenient for admissions. "After completing Diploma, students are eligible for direct second-year lateral entry to engineering courses. This allows them to keep away from heavily priced and cumbersome entrance test coaching for first-year entry. And now, Diploma students can take admission to any branch of engineering as opposed to restrictions earlier. This has led to many students preferring Diploma after Class 10 as they spend almost equal number of years to get engineering degree but with an additional professional qualification which

can give them a job," said the head of one of the institutes.

Further noting more interest for traditional branches, Vaidya said, "Diploma students are more inclined toward traditional branches because apart from job prospects, it allows them to start their own enterprise with those skills. For example, a diploma holder in Civil Engineering can start his business of building structures, although smaller. But there is no such clarity when it comes to new age skills

SHEENA BORA MURDER CASE**Childhood friend says Indrani was never happy with Sheena's relationship with Rahul****SADAF MODAK**
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 18

Indrani Mukerjea and Sheena Bora. File

SHEENA BORA's childhood friend told court on Tuesday that she believed Sheena's mother, the main accused Indrani Mukerjea, was never happy with her relationship with Rahul Mukerjea. Rahul is the son of Indrani's then husband, Peter Mukerjea, also an accused in the murder case.

On Thursday, Sheena's friend and former classmate, Sanjana Phukan, began her deposition as a prosecution witness in the special CBI court. In her examination-in-chief, Sanjana spoke about her conversations with Sheena over the years, including emails, mentioning her strained relationship with Indrani, the 'dramas' surrounding her life and one conversation where Sheena mentioned that she wants to take 'sanyas'. Emails between them also came under a cloud after a legal argument raised by the defence over their admissibility as evidence.

Sanjana told the court that Sheena went to the same school as her and they were classmates in Guwahati from nursery to Class 10. She said that they remained in touch through emails and messages through the years. She also told court that Indrani was never happy about Sheena's relationship with Rahul Mukerjea, the son of accused Peter Mukerjea, the then CEO of Star TV India, and Indrani's then husband.

"In November 2011, I met Sheena at Guwahati during my

Guwahati home but she did not get any information and that she was also in touch with Rahul. "He told me that he had dropped Sheena at Bandra to go shopping with Indrani at Amarsons to buy a saree for her engagement. He was worried as she had not come home that night," Sanjana told the court. She said that Rahul had sought legal advice from her and her brother, a lawyer, had told him to go and file a missing report. Rahul had told her that he had tried to file a complaint but it was not taken. The CBI claims that Sheena was murdered on April 24, 2012. Sanjana said that when she learnt of Indrani's arrest in 2015 through the media, Sheena was being mentioned as Indrani's sister. "I thought I should speak to the concerned people and tell them that Sheena is not Indrani's sister but her daughter. Sheena had told me that her mother got her wrong medication for her," she told the court.

She said that they remained in touch through messages and emails and she last spoke to her on April 15, 2012. Around April 24-25, 2012, Sanjana said that she had received a text message from Sheena's phone that she was breaking up with Rahul and was going to change her phone number, but that it should not be shared with him. The text also said that Sheena will be going off social media for some time and that she (Sanjana) should not worry. "Immediately called her. The call was rejected and after that the phone was switched off," she told the court. She also mentioned how she went to Sheena's

Trip to Lonavala turns tragic for Symbiosis BBA students, 2 dead**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**
PUNE, SEPTEMBER 18

TWO BBA students of Pune's Symbiosis International University died and two other students were injured in a road accident on the Mumbai-Bengaluru highway on Thursday morning, police said.

The students were returning from the Lonavala hill station in a Maruti Swift. Around 5.45 am, their car rammed into a container truck near Eidgah Maidan, Dehu Road, in Pune.

Police identified the deceased as Divyaj Singh Rathod (23)

from Rajasthan and Siddhant Anand Shekhar (22) from Jharkhand. Their friends Nihal Tamboli (20) and Harshavardhan Mishra (22) were injured.

After receiving information about the accident, a team from the Dehu Road police station in Pimpri-Chinchwad, along with highway safety patrol and fire brigade teams, rushed to the spot.

The victims were taken to a hospital, where Rathod and Shekhar were declared dead on arrival. The Dehu Road police arrested the truck driver, Manish Kumar Manipal (39) on charges of negligent driving.

FROM PAGE ONE ■ **FULL REPORT ON**
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM**UP's Sachin Yadav finishes 4th at world meet**

complained of a "back problem".

But Sachin, who is all of 6 feet 5 inches, brought cheer to the Indian contingent, holding his nerve for a personal best of 86.27 metres in the first round. He showed remarkable consistency with throws of 85.71 metres, 84.90 metres and 85.96 metres.

The high-quality final had some surprises. The unlikely winner was 2012 Olympic gold medalist Keshorn Walcott from Trinidad and Tobago, while former two-time world champion Anderson Peters of Grenada won the silver. The United States finished in nearly two decades as Curtis Thompson took the bronze.

Lalit Bhanot, chairman of the Athletics Federation of India's (AFI) planning committee, put Sachin's fourth-place finish in perspective. "He can throw over 90 metres. He is still raw, but the AFI sees great potential in him. Neeraj has inspired more and more Indians to take up javelin. Seeing Sachin do so well, more will follow. Both Neeraj and Sachin can win medals at major events for the next 10 years," he said.

Indeed, there's been an upswing in India's fortunes since Chopra won the historic gold at the Tokyo Olympics four years ago. At the Budapest World Championships in 2023, Chopra won the gold while Kishore Kumar Jena was fifth and D P Manu sixth. This year, four Indians qualified for the World Championships — Yash Vir Singh and Rohit Yadav did not advance to the final.

Ahead of the World Championships, Sachin knew he was going to rub shoulders with some of the giants of the sport he

had chosen. "I am not even 10 per cent of what Neeraj (Chopra) bhai is. He taught India what javelin throw is. He has made history. I only hope that one day I can also make India proud," Sachin had told The Indian Express.

Before the final, his coach Naval Singh, a Dronacharya awardee, advised him not to get overwhelmed by the occasion. "I reminded him that he has the power as well as the technique to produce a big throw. My target for him was 90 metres today. He has thrown 90 metres in practice. But though he fell short in the final, he proved that he can handle the pressure of the World Championships," he said.

The coach said he used the India versus Pakistan rivalry to motivate Sachin. "I told him that come what may, make sure you finish ahead of Nadeem. He promised he would. I think it was extra motivation. Neeraj is the best in the world, Sachin proved that he has the potential to be one of the best," Singh, who stayed back in India because of personal reasons, said.

In his first international competition, the Asian Athletics Championships in Gumi, South Korea, in May, Sachin had won the silver medal after struggling to cross the 80-metre mark in his first four throws. Nadeem had taken the lead with 85.57 metres in the third round, while Sri Lanka's rising star Rumesh Tharanga Pathirage had registered 82.28 metres. But Sachin didn't wilt under pressure. With throws of 83.06 metres and 85.16 metres, he eventually took the silver, second to Nadeem. Chopra had stayed out of the event.

"At the Asian Championships,

Sachin was under pressure, but still won the silver. He deserved a medal at the World Championships too, but he will get another chance," Singh said.

Backhome, his family is happy that his decision to switch to javelin has borne fruit. "We were tense, wondering if he was making the right decision by stopping cricket and starting javelin when he was almost 20 years old. There is money in cricket, and there is the glamour of the IPL. But since he was determined, we had no option. The whole family was emotional today," his older brother, Vipin, told The Indian Express.

Meanwhile, the AFI has big plans for Sachin. After consulting his coach, the federation hopes to convince Sachin to start full-time training with India's foreign coach Sergey Makarov, the multiple Olympic and World Championship medallist. At the final on Thursday, Makarov's instructions were translated to Sachin by his personal physio because of a language barrier.

There are plans to change his training base from the crowded JLN Stadium in Delhi to the Sports Authority of India facility in Kengeri, near Bengaluru, or the National Institute of Sports in Patiala. "The AFI has focused on javelin for the last 15 years. We had foreign coaches back then but when India didn't win medals, we were questioned as to why we were focusing on javelin. Today, we have Neeraj and Sachin. Yash Vir and Rohit also qualified for the World Championships. There is a javelin revolution in the country. Sachin will get all the support he needs, as he is world class," Bhanot said.

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"At the Asian Championships,

he kept at the Bharat Itihas Sansodhak Mandal on Thursday before the funeral, was attended by students, other members of the city's academic circles and prominent people.

"I am deeply saddened by the passing away of scholar and historian G B Mehendale. His Shri Raja Shivchhatrapati, published in Marathi and English, is a unique biography based on authentic source materials concerning the life and times of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. No individual or institution has written such a detailed biogra-

US revoked, denied visas to some Indian business executives over fentanyl links**SHUBHAJIT ROY**
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 18

THE US embassy Thursday said it has revoked and denied visas for certain business executives and corporate leadership based on involvement in trafficking fentanyl precursors. These actions are taken pursuant to section 221(i), section 212(a)(2)(C), and 214(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act. As a result of this decision, these individuals and close family members may be ineligible for travel to the United States. The Embassy is further flagging executives connected with companies known to have trafficked fentanyl precursors for heightened scrutiny if and when they apply for U.S. visas.

Fentanyl and other synthetic opioids remain the most lethal drugs trafficked into the United States, causing more than 52,000 US deaths in a 12-month period ending in October 2024, a US intelligence report had said earlier this year.

It is a potent opioid drug blamed for widespread drug addiction. The Trump administration has initiated a crackdown on illegal import of fentanyl and also linked it with tariffs adjustments in case of some countries.

In a statement Thursday, the US embassy in Delhi said, "In furtherance to the Trump Administration's efforts to keep Americans safe from dangerous

synthetic narcotics, the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi has revoked and subsequently denied visas for certain business executives and corporate leadership based on involvement in trafficking fentanyl precursors. These actions are taken pursuant to section 221(i), section 212(a)(2)(C), and 214(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act. As a result of this decision, these individuals and close family members may be ineligible for travel to the United States. The Embassy is further flagging executives connected with companies known to have trafficked fentanyl precursors for heightened scrutiny if and when they apply for U.S. visas."

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Grateful to our counterparts in the Government of India for close cooperation: US Embassy in Delhi. Reuters file

from illicit drugs."

It added that the Trump Administration has already taken "critical steps to confront this crisis through a series of Executive Orders that secure our borders, combat drug trafficking organizations, and demand reform by source countries from which illicit drugs and precursor chemicals flow into the United States. Together, we will build a safer, healthier, stronger future for America and India."

The statement underscored the US Embassy's top priorities: "Stopping the flow of fentanyl, including its precursors, to the United States is one of our top priorities. We are grateful to our counterparts in the Government of India for their close cooperation to combat this shared challenge. Only by working together will our two governments address this transnational threat and keep both our people safe

"The US Embassy in New Delhi remains steadfast in its commitment to combating illicit drug trafficking. Individuals and organizations involved in the illegal production and trafficking of drugs to the United States, along with their families, will face consequences that may include being denied access to the United States."

On Wednesday, US President Donald Trump named India, China, Afghanistan and Pakistan among 23 major drug transit or major illicit drug producing countries, saying that by manufacturing and trafficking illicit drugs and precursor chemicals, these nations are threatening the safety of the US and its citizens.

In a 'Presidential Determination' submitted to Congress Monday, Trump said he identified 23 countries as "major drug transit or major illicit drug producing" nations. These nations are Afghanistan, The Bahamas, Belize, Bolivia, Burma, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, India, Jamaica, Laos, Mexico, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela.

Trump delivered the "Major's List" to Congress, designating these countries as responsible for sourcing and transporting illicit drugs into the US, the White House said.

On manufacturing and trafficking illicit drugs and precursor chemicals, these nations are threatening the safety of the US and its citizens, the State Department said in a statement.

It clarified that a country's presence on the list does not necessarily reflect its government's counterdrug efforts or level of cooperation with the US and is based on "the combination of geographic, commercial, and economic factors that allow drugs or precursor chemicals to be transited or produced, even if a government has engaged in robust and diligent narcotics control and law enforcement measures".

Saudi and Pakistan seal defence pact; Delhi says Riyadh kept it in the loop**SHUBHAJIT ROY**
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 18

WITH SAUDI Arabia and Pakistan signing a formal mutual defence pact which states that "any aggression against either country shall be considered an aggression against both", India said Thursday it will "study the implications" of this development for its "national security as well as for regional and global stability", and is committed to "protecting India's national interests".

Delhi also said that the Indian government was "aware" that this development had been "under consideration". Sources said the Saudis had kept India "in the loop" about the formalisation of the defence partnership between Riyadh and Rawalpindi.

Sources pointed out that Saudi Arabia has been one of the major hubs for re-employment of former Pakistan Army officers – the most famous example was the appointment in 2017 of former Pakistan Army chief General Raheel Sharif as the lead commander of the Saudi-led forces against terror.

The defence pact is being read in Delhi as a response to Washington's retrenchment from the region as a security provider, and Israel's attack on Hamas leaders in Qatar's capital Doha and the geopolitical ramifications across the region. Israel's aggressive behaviour – it has attacked countries in the region including Iran, Lebanon, Syria and Qatar – has alarmed many in West Asia. The Saudi-Pakistan pact is being viewed as a step towards formalising a collective security against Israel.

Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman signed the pact Wednesday with Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in the presence of Pakistan Army chief Asim Munir.

The agreement states "any aggression against either country shall be considered an aggression against both," according to statements issued by both Pakistan's

Foreign Affairs Ministry and the state-run Saudi Press Agency.

"This agreement ... aims to develop aspects of defence cooperation between the two countries and strengthen joint deterrence against any aggression," the statement said.

Randhir Jaiswal, spokesperson for the Ministry of External Affairs, said, "We have seen reports of the signing of a strategic mutual defence pact between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. The Government was aware that this development, which formalises a long-standing arrangement between the two countries, had been under consideration."

Randhir Jaiswal, spokesperson for the Ministry of External Affairs, said, "We have seen reports of the signing of a strategic mutual defence pact between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. The Government was aware that this development, which formalises a long-standing arrangement between the two countries, had been under consideration." "We will study the implications of this development for our national security as well as for regional and global stability. The Government remains committed to protecting India's national interests and ensuring comprehensive national security in all domains," it said.

While Saudi Arabia and Pakistan have had a long security partnership, India has developed a strong and robust relationship with Saudi Arabia in the last decade or so. Pakistan's troops first travelled to Saudi Arabia in the late 1960s over concerns about Egypt's war in Yemen at the time. Cooperation between the two countries in the area of defence dates back to 1967 and deepened after the 1979 Grand Mosque seizure in Mecca, when Pakistan's special forces helped Saudi troops reclaim Masjid al-Haram.

In 1982, the two sides institutionalised security ties through a Bilateral Security Cooperation Agreement that enabled Pakistani training, advisory support and deployments on Saudi soil. At times, as many as 20,000 Pakistani troops were stationed in the kingdom, and Saudi Arabia became a key buyer of Pakistan-made arms.

India's relationship with Saudi Arabia has undergone a tremendous change in the last two decades. Since the visit of King Abdullah to India in January 2006, the pathway has been upward with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visiting Saudi Arabia in 2010.

BJP MP Anil Baluni narrowly evades landslide in Uttarakhand**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 18

ANIL BALUNI, the BJP MP from Garhwal, encountered a landslide on Wednesday evening on the Badrinath highway as heavy rain continued to wreak havoc in parts of Uttarakhand.

A video of the incident showed Baluni, who was travelling from Rudraprayag, where he had gone to take stock of the rain damage, when the incident occurred.

In a post on X, he wrote that cloudbursts and landslides in Uttarakhand this year have left deep wounds that will take a long time to heal. "Yesterday evening, I had a terrifying experience of a landslide in the disaster-affected area. This scene speaks volumes about the severe natural calamity that our Uttarakhand is going through at this time," he said in the post on Thursday.

"I pray to Baba Kedarnath for safety and good health for all. In this hour of disaster, I appreciate the dedication of all the officials, NDRF-SDRF personnel, administration, and the workers clearing debris from the roads even in challenging circumstances," he wrote.

Uttarakhand has been reeling under heavy rainfall and landslides over the past few days. On Tuesday, Sahastradhara witnessed

Dehradun: At least two people died and seven are feared trapped after heavy rain brought debris down from the mountain onto several houses at Nandnagar in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district on Tuesday, officials said.

Three villages – Kuntari Lagafani, Sarpani, and Dhurma – received 70 mm of rainfall within three hours early on Thursday, resulting in debris

a cloudburst during which 264 mm of rainfall was reported in 24 hours, leading to damage and deaths in Dehradun and nearby districts. On Thursday morning, a debris slide pummeled three vil-

lages in Chamoli's Nandnagar, leading to at least two deaths.

Baluni has been visiting affected areas in Chamoli, Tehri, Pauri, Rudraprayag and Rambagh to meet families of victims.



THE EDITORIAL PAGE

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

EU'S OVERTURE

Brussels' new strategy document shows keenness to recognise New Delhi as a valuable partner in shaping global order

THE EU'S LATEST strategy document on India, issued this week, marks a definitive moment in the evolution of Delhi's relations with Brussels, long defined by mutual neglect. This had begun to change in the 21st century, but the two sides had struggled to boost the partnership quickly. In the last few years, there has been a determined effort by Brussels and Delhi to plug the gap between the promise of the partnership and its performance. Troubled by the assertion of Russia, the muscular economic policies of China, and the disruption of historic US alliances by President Donald Trump, Europe is in the middle of rebooting relationships with other powers. Its latest outreach to India is part of that effort. Framed as a "comprehensive strategic agenda" to deepen, broaden, and better coordinate cooperation, the EU strategy is a blend of ambition and pragmatism. In stating that "India's success benefits the EU, just as the EU's success benefits India," Brussels has moved from treating New Delhi as a useful interlocutor to recognising it as an indispensable partner in shaping the international order.

The EU is the second most important commercial partner of India, after the US. Bilateral goods trade has climbed to €120 billion and services to €60 billion. Yet, India still accounts for less than 2.5 per cent of the EU's total trade. The EU, therefore, focuses on securing a far-reaching Free Trade Agreement with India that reduces tariff and non-tariff barriers and unlocks the enormous possibility of trade and investment flows between Europe and India. After years of drift, India is now equally committed to an early conclusion of the FTA. Buffeted by a massive and persistent trade deficit with China, and shocked by Trump's exorbitant tariffs, India sees free trade with the EU as a major strategic objective now. The EU also frames India as a rapidly expanding manufacturing and technology hub hosting nearly half of global capability centres; India appreciates Europe's edge in research, regulation and green and digital technologies. Together, they could gain from EU-India Innovation Hubs, a Startup Partnership, and joint work in AI, semiconductors, and outer space.

In the emerging multipolar world, the EU also recognises the growing salience of security cooperation with India. The planned EU-India Security and Defence Partnership will anchor cooperation on maritime security, defence industrial expansion and modernisation, cyber and hybrid threats, counterterrorism, and crisis management. Yet the war in Ukraine casts a long shadow. The EU is not on the same page with Delhi on India's oil imports and defence ties with Moscow. This is not surprising, given the fact that Europe is now in the middle of a prolonged and unwanted war with Russia since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in early 2022. It is time, though, for India to stop seeing Europe through the eyes of Russia, as it has since Independence. While Delhi must maintain a productive relationship with Moscow, it also needs to balance its ties with Brussels and Moscow. The rapidly rising stakes in India's relationship with the European Union require such a recalibration.

FED'S PIVOT

US Central Bank has cut rate after nine months. It needs to ensure price stability and maximum employment

AFTER HOLDING STEADY for nine months, on Wednesday, the US Federal Reserve lowered the target range for the federal funds rate by 25 basis points to 4 to 4.25 per cent. The decision, though, was not unanimous. Stephen Miran, a recent appointee of Donald Trump, was in favour of a more aggressive rate cut of 50 basis points. Notwithstanding Trump's repeated calls to reduce interest rates, the Fed's pivot does indicate that further policy easing is on the cards. In fact, the central bank's latest projections, which accompanied this "risk management rate cut", do indicate the possibility of multiple rate cuts this year.

While the decision to lower rates is due to a weakening labour market, recent data also point towards inflation staying higher than previously expected, complicating the policy matrix. As per the US Bureau of Labour Statistics, non-farm payroll employment increased by just 22,000 in August, significantly lower than expectations. Alongside, the combined employment in June and July was also revised downwards. The Fed highlighted this weakness. It noted that "job gains have slowed, and the unemployment rate has edged up", adding that the "downside risks to employment have risen". Alongside this deterioration in the labour market, inflation risks are also surfacing. Inflation, as measured by the personal consumption expenditures price index, has been inching upwards – from 2.2 per cent in April to 2.6 per cent in July. But, while the central bank's expectation of inflation this year remains unchanged at 3 per cent, it expects price pressures to remain elevated – it has raised its inflation projection for next year to 2.6 per cent, up from 2.4 per cent earlier. Inflation is now expected to return to the 2 per cent target only by 2028. The Fed has, however, also marginally revised upwards its growth forecasts. But, the uncertainty over the economic outlook continues to linger. Fed Chairperson Jerome Powell acknowledged that, saying, "It's not incredibly obvious what to do".

The decision to lower interest rates comes against the backdrop of increasing attacks on the central bank's independence by Trump, who has not only been quite vocal about the path of monetary policy he prefers, but has also tried to fire Fed Governor Lisa Cook. Powell, whose term as Fed chair ends in May 2026, will have to navigate this period carefully as the central bank seeks to fulfil its dual mandate of price stability and maximum employment.

MORE THAN ICE CREAM

By resigning, Jerry Greenfield has highlighted that in the face of injustice, companies and people, always have a choice

IN 1977, TWO friends – one a failed potter, the other with a stack of rejection letters from medical schools – decided to go into business together. They realised the high costs of setting up a bagel shop and pivoted to selling ice cream, crepes and soups. In a renovated petrol pump, they set up the first parlour of what went on to become the multinational ice-cream brand, Ben & Jerry's. That simple start sits at the heart of their operation to this date. On September 17, Jerry Greenfield resigned from the company over being "silenced" by their parent company, Unilever, saying, "Love, equity, justice – they're part of who Ben and I are, and they've always been the foundation of Ben & Jerry's."

In 2021, B&J's independent board sued Unilever over the renewal of an entrepreneur's license to sell B&J's in areas of Israeli-occupied West Bank. Since then, tensions have escalated. But, as they made sure with a deal guaranteeing their independence at the time of acquisition, for Ben Cohen and Greenfield, "it was always about more than just ice cream". They have extended support to movements aimed at racial justice, LGBT+ rights, climate justice – and given away part of their profits to such causes. The founders are trying to find a way to buy the company back.

Today, the single-minded pursuit of profit is often accepted as the norm. Ben & Jerry's model is proof that it is possible to measure a business's performance against both financial gain and social impact. Some companies do see that the balance sheet does not have to make up the whole picture: In India, leather-goods company Hidesign, in July, made a public statement against Israel's killing of children in Gaza. "That's not how things work in the real world," is the first line of defence against any challenge to the status quo. Ben & Jerry's and Ben and Jerry have, for long, led the way in showing that the "real world" is what we make it.



PRATAP BHANU MEHTA

A birthday call

An imaginary conversation on tariffs, trade and leaders who make nations great

DONALD: MY DEAR friend, Narendra. Happy birthday to you. You are a great guy, 75! What a great age. Let me tell you that the best is yet to come. We can beat those youngsters on anything. I aced my cognitive test.

Narendra: Donald, thank you very much. I am a mere servant of one-and-a-half billion people. God has been kind.

Donald: We are both great countries, with leaders such as our countries have never seen before. But I envy you. I saw all the Indian newspapers. They have put out so many BIG ads wishing you. What a party you must be having. My media – that New York Times, ABC News – they hate me.

Narendra: But you sue them!

Donald: But at least I get them to pay me money. 15 million off ABC. Not bad.

Narendra: I just get them to work for me. Anyway, you know I should not be talking to you.

Donald: Why?

Narendra: You have got to lift that punitive tariff. I should have insisted on it before we let your trade negotiator back in. We don't negotiate with a gun pointed at our heads. You cannot unfairly punish India. I know we are friends and all that. But India comes first, above personal deals, above friendship, especially above sportsmanship. I am giving you another chance because our countries go back a long way.

Donald: You know you did not quite give me the credit for stopping a nuclear war. But I am going to give you a birthday gift. I am going to thank you for your help in trying to stop the Russia-Ukraine war.

Narendra: India eternally deserves the Nobel Prize. We have always said, war is not the way.

Donald: If I had been around, there would have been no war. Because of Crooked Joe, I was saddled with both Hamas and Ukraine.

Narendra: So, what are we going to do?

Donald: You put pressure on Putin.

Narendra: You think the international community might want more pressure on Netanyahu as well?

Donald: Well, both are my friends.

Actually, the funny thing is, both are our best friends. Our friends do no wrong. It's Zelensky and Biden's war, not Putin's. And Israel has done no wrong.

Narendra: You are forcing India to exercise leverage over Russia. Not forcing China or Europe?

Donald: I'd like to be friends with Xi, too. Then maybe I could force him too. Anyway, how was Tianjin? Heard they do great buildings over there.

Narendra: Not quite going over to the dark side, if that's what you mean (laughs). Just keeping the neighbour happy. But, I'll tell you the real dark side: TikTok. Now that we got rid of it, we are fine.

Donald: The people who use TikTok have always supported me. You, my friend, have got everyone supporting you.

Narendra: Not so easy. You know the Opposition is accusing me of stealing votes.

Donald: Oh, Democrats were stealing elections all the time. But it is ridiculous to accuse you of stealing votes. I have seen the crowds you draw. Must be that same left-wing gang. I have that problem too. Professional hate mongers, spewing hate against patriotic people like us trying to make our countries great. You got to get tough with them is all I can say.

Narendra: Don't worry, Donald. These were the people who brought in infiltrators to change the demography of the country. I am weeding the infiltrators out. We have a great word: *Ghuspathiya*, one who comes in without permission.

Donald: Cool word. We should share notes on this. I learnt a few tricks from you. By the way, I am one up on you on one thing. You only control universities. I now control and get them to pay up.

Narendra: We must. Our political challenges are so alike. Our opponents will stoop to any level.

Donald: Yes, they will. They did not spare poor Charlie.

Narendra: Both of us are victims of so much hate. Why do they hate people like us? All we want is for everyone to unite around peace and greatness. Anyway, deepest con-

dolences. But coming back to tariffs, don't get addicted to them. We may be a poorer country, but we still manage our budgets. And next time you come – you are coming for Quad, aren't you? – we will serve you some great "makai nu shaak" from my home state, Gujarat. You will understand why we won't buy American corn... And you really should not have called India a dead economy

Donald: I don't like corn. By the way, that economy thing was a joke. Who knows whether an economy is dead or alive. So many fake numbers around. We are fixing that. But you got a great stock market going. Congratulations.

Narendra: Thank you.

Donald: I know it's your birthday, so now is not the time. But you have got to give me something. Xi won't. Lula won't. Europeans will give you everything so easily that it does not even count as giving. The Arab world really believes in family values, it has helped family investments a lot. Look at Pakistan. Generous people opened up their crypto market. I know you have an aversion to gambling, so I won't. I buy bitcoins. Anyway, the point is, if I get a win with India, it is a win for both of us. And we personally share so much. Give me something.

Narendra: The goodwill of one-and-a-half billion people, and the steadfast values of our civilisation, will be with you, Donald. Our democracy and demography.

Donald: Yeah, but America does not make as much money from that. About the demography bit, some of our people don't like having so many of your people. I am not saying that's me. But you know how it is. And what's your leverage?

Narendra: Since you asked, a billion warriors on X. And a will for self-reliance.

Donald: Oh, that's one big company. I get that. But billion X warriors – and not a dime for me? Anyway, have a GREAT birthday, Narendra. Don't forget the tariffs.

NOTE: Resemblance to any actual figure is purely coincidental.

The writer is contributing editor,
The Indian Express



POOJA PILLAI

IN 1989, WHEN 26-year-old Steven Soderbergh made his filmmaking debut at a film festival in Park City, Utah, the American movie ecosystem looked a lot like today's: Big money was thrown at franchises like *Indiana Jones* and *Lethal Weapon* that were fronted by stars like Harrison Ford and Mel Gibson, and which sought to do nothing more than entertain as many people as possible.

Enter Soderbergh, with *Sex, Lies and Videotape*, an intimate look at the falsehoods on which relationships are built. Amidst the "feel-good" and "family-friendly" movies of the time, it struck a note that was fresh in its dissonance, announcing the arrival of a bold voice and laying the foundation of the American indie/independent film movement of the 1990s.

While individual geniuses often become catalysts for creative movements, they can only thrive in the right ecosystem. For Soderbergh, it was the Sundance Film Festival in Utah. Following Soderbergh's breakthrough, the festival – originally called the Utah/US Film Festival – developed a reputation as Ground Zero for indie film talent. The visionary behind the festival's new character was Robert Redford, the screen legend and filmmaker who had, in 1981, founded the Sundance Institute in Utah's Provo Valley to support independent filmmakers. Named for the charming, scrappy outlaw Redford played in his breakout film, 1969's *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, the

institute took over management in 1985 of what had until then a festival chiefly featuring retrospectives. Under Redford's guidance, it did not just get a new name; the event underwent a complete overhaul, its focus shifting from celebrating the past to exploring the possibilities of the future. A series of filmmaking labs were established, with the idea that those with a story to tell should be able to, at the very least, realise it on the big screen.

All this was happening as Redford, who remained a busy actor, was charting his own course as a filmmaker. Beloved for his all-American good looks and warm screen persona, he was an easy choice to play the romantic lead in films like *The Way We Were* (1973), but there was always something in him that kicked at the notion of being reduced to his face. It may have had something to do with his early exposure on the stage and television, where he played a wide variety of roles unconstrained by his handsomeness. Or, maybe it was the same yearning for the artistic life that had once led him to leave college to pursue (unsuccessfully) a career in art in Europe.

As much as this streak of non-conformity shaped his choice of roles throughout his career – leading him to pursue projects like *The Sting* (1972), *All The President's Men* (1976), *The Natural* (1984) and *All Is Lost* (2013) – it defined his oeuvre as a filmmaker. He had little interest in the blockbuster films that were be-

ginning to replace the auteur-driven fare of the 1960s and 1970s Hollywood. *Ordinary People* (1980), his first feature as director, told a story of grief that was several shades darker than many mainstream films of the day. It won him an Oscar for Best Director, but the point was never just winning hardware that could be proudly displayed on a mantle. It was about creating a legacy built on storytelling that was not afraid of the complicated and the offbeat.

This vision was more than realised at Sundance, which launched the careers of some of the most daring and creative minds working in cinema today, including Quentin Tarantino, Paul Thomas Anderson, Richard Linklater, Wes Anderson, the Coen brothers, Chloe Zhao and Ryan Coogler. In that sense, Redford the institution builder was simply an extension of Redford the actor and filmmaker who used his tremendous clout and goodwill – and his millions – to push the cause of cinema and foster talent that would otherwise have gone unrecognised. Those who love cinema and those who pursue this uniquely demanding art in the face of overwhelming odds owe much to Redford, for he helped keep the faith alive. As a nursery for indie cinema, if Sundance has few parallels, it is because there are few others like Redford who use the megawattage of their stardom to shine the light on others.

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SEPTEMBER 19, 1985, FORTY YEARS AGO

SEVENTH FIVE-YEAR PLAN

THE COUNTRY'S SEVENTH Five-Year Plan envisages an annual growth rate of five per cent, with increased emphasis on infrastructure and human resource development. "This is a financially sound plan which is eminently bankable," Manmohan Singh, deputy chairman of the Planning Commission, told newsmen. He said that it was not only realistic but had no gaps in resources. The growth rate projected for agriculture was 4 per cent and for industry 8 per cent.

CEASEFIRE IN SRI LANKA

THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT appeared to have persuaded the representatives of Sri

Lanka's Eelam National Liberation Front (ENLF) to agree to observe the extended ceasefire on the island. At the end of yet another round of talks in New Delhi between the ENLF leaders and the Foreign Secretary, Romesh Bhandari, the government expressed the hope that the Tamil militants and the Sri Lankan government would "faithfully observe" the extended ceasefire.

The ENLF leaders are believed to have given their assurance to observe the ceasefire after a great deal of cajoling and persuasion. All through their discussions with the Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, and Bhandari, they reportedly underlined the need to secure proper guarantees from the Sri Lankan government that its security forces would strictly observe the truce.

INDIA REFUSES THE US

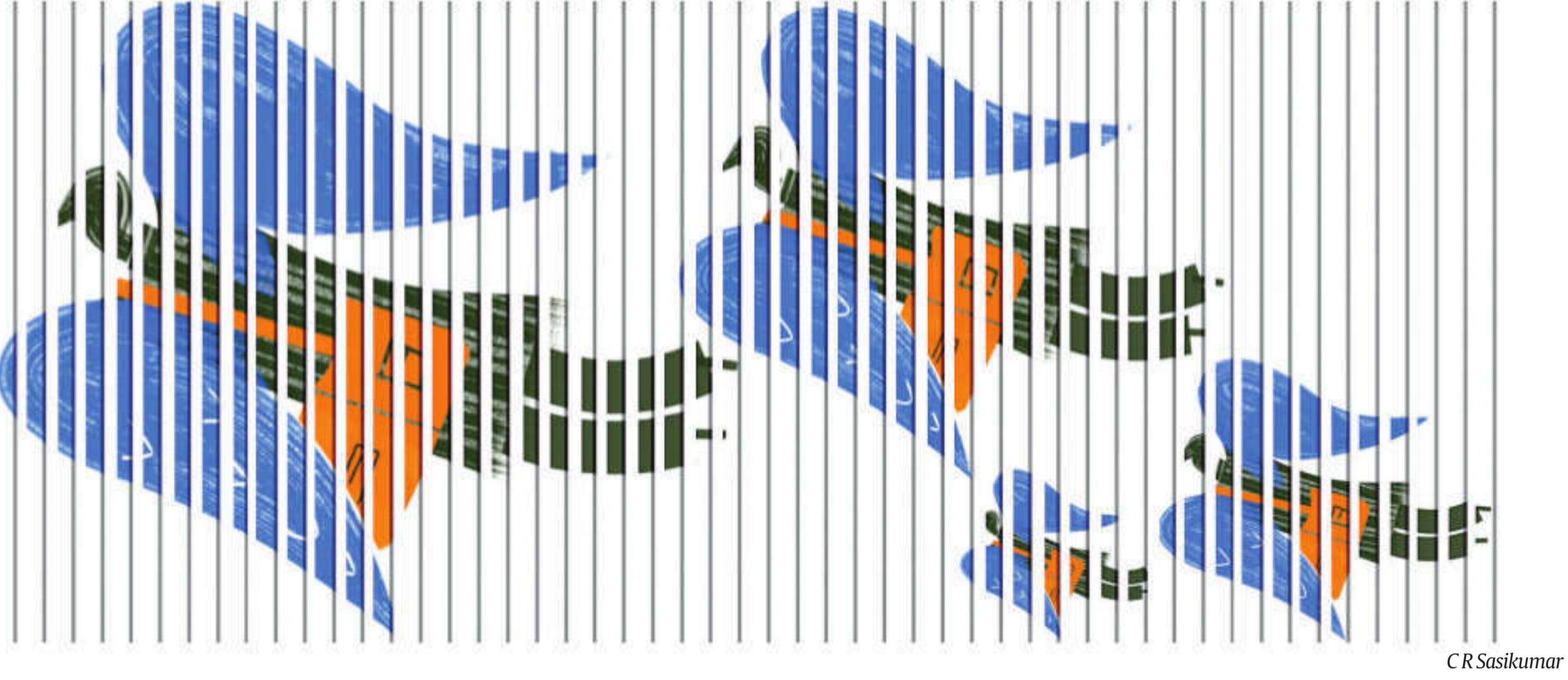
INDIA ALL BUT turned down the US plea for taking initiatives to avoid nuclear competition in the Subcontinent. Reacting to the plea made by the two visiting US officials, during their talks with Indian officials and leaders, an External Affairs Ministry spokesman, pointed out that India was already committed "not to produce nuclear weapons". "If it can be ensured that Pakistan likewise becomes committed, and the US can assist in this process, where then is the need for a regional agreement?" he asked. India believed that Pakistan's nuclear programme was directed towards acquiring weapons capability. In its view, the best way to deal with the

THE IDEAS PAGE

DIS/AGREE

THE BEST OF BOTH SIDES

A fortnightly column, which offers not this-versus-that, but the best of both sides, to inform the debate



C.R.Sasikumar

With widespread anti-migrant sentiment in Western countries,
is the era of large-scale immigration over?

Migrants make for convenient villains

They have been woven into the moral fabric of receiving countries as the evil that is required to prove the goodness of the hosts



SANJAY SRIVASTAVA

about culture and the past. There is gathering support for the idea that culture is like a commodity and that if you cover it in stain-resistant wrapping, it will stay pristine and, more importantly, just as it was 100 years ago. Here, migrants and asylum-seekers become threats to culture-as-commodity: They grab it with their grubby hands, exhale their strange smells upon it and paint it in their own colours. Ignoring the fact that the only unvarying truth about cultures is that they are forever changing is a crucial aspect of this morality play. It is also ironic that those who hold this view have no problems with the idea of trans-border global financial and economic flows. And yet, such flows also carry within them the forces that are constantly transforming cultures. However, morality tales need clearly identifiable villains: In India, these might be Rohingya refugees and in France, those of Arabic origin.

The culture-as-commodity perspective is strongly linked to another important idea. This is the morality tale of a Golden Age, the idea of a past we must return to in order to solve the problems of the present. In this Golden Age, culture was homogenous and harmonious and the presence of "outsiders" has deeply disturbed the equilibrium. The Golden Age narrative is one of the key ways in which arguments about migrants and asylum seekers are currently expressed.

Finally, it is in the nature of morality tales to present a black-and-white view of the world such that those who are their readers are able to distance themselves from the conditions of "evil" that are being described. It is crucial that the audience for such stories does not itself become implicated in the problem that is identified. The audience is always positioned as needing clear-cut solutions whilst having nothing to do with its cause. So, it is rarely asked: Who created the conditions for the making of refugees and asylum-seekers? What, for example, has been the role of the French in its former colonies, and the Euro-American policies of self-interest that have supported murderous regimes in different parts of the world and created the conditions that make for refugees?

Who created the conditions for the making of refugees? What has been the role of the French in its former colonies, and the Euro-American policies of self-interest that have supported murderous regimes in different parts of the world and created the conditions that make for refugees?

But morality tales require that the propagation of violence in faraway places, that may have material and financial benefits but also create conditions for the making of immigrants, refugees and asylum-seekers, must be hidden from view. It requires that those who create such conditions can view themselves as under threat from those whose miseries their governments have created.

In our time, the migrant, the refugee and the asylum-seeker are not just workers necessary to do the jobs others might refuse. They have been woven into the moral fabric of receiving countries as the evil that is required to prove the goodness of the hosts.

The first of these is the demand for a strong state that will secure the borders against "too much" or any immigration. This is extraordinary as those who demand a strong state simultaneously rail against state control and regulations, arguing that market forces should be allowed to take over state activities. In the United Kingdom, politicians and activists such as Nigel Farage and Tommy Robinson propagate the narrative that a "weak" state has allowed national borders to be breached by undesirable populations. And in the US, Trump's MAGA movement has thrived on similar sentiments. It is important to recognise the key moral argument here: That just as a family can only flourish if there is a strong father figure, the national family too needs a patriarch, the strong state.

The second aspect concerns the ways in which the migrant is a vessel for ideas

Immigration is not ending. It's changing

Boom-and-bust cycles of the past may be broken. But what we may now have to deal with is forced migration on account of climate change



AMIT JULKA

FOR ALMOST a decade now, global politics has churned around a singular issue – migration. While migration is usually seen as a recent phenomenon (and an exception), it has been a norm for most of humanity – at some point in history, someone from our ancestry has migrated. Thus, to talk about its origins is to acknowledge the limits of memory – a native place is the point beyond which we can no longer trace our story of our migration(s).

That being said, there was something unique about the specific form of migration the world has witnessed in the last few decades. Specifically, this was the migration caused by the rise of neoliberalism. The end of the Cold War and the globalisation of the free market not only meant loosening of flows of capital, but also human bodies. Secondly, this was also the time of the rise of the service economy and informational capitalism. This meant that in core economies (the first world), companies needed access to cheaper, skilled labour from the periphery, that is, the developing world. Thus, it is not a coincidence that the H1-B programme, the sustainer of middle class dreams in countries like India, was launched in the year 1990, just as America was entering the unipolar era. Conversely, this was also a win-win for developing countries – it provided a much-needed outlet for their talented youth especially at a time when domestic jobs in these sectors were lacking.

However, this is a very lopsided picture of immigration – one that involves a particular set of Anglophone countries and caters to the experience of a certain class (skilled Indian migrants typically from the middle/upper-middle class). Much before techies from Bangalore were making a beeline for the Bay Area, millions of unskilled and skilled workers from South and Southeast Asia had discovered the promise of the Gulf petro-states in the 1980s, where the proportion of migrants eclipsed the local community, with the caveat that unlike their counterparts going to the West, they knew that such a migration was always a temporary affair, lasting anywhere between five weeks to 50 years. Then there is undocumented migration – such as that from Central and South America to the United States, or from North Africa to Europe. The latter, with its images of people cutting across fences and crossing the ocean on poorly constructed boats, has fuelled the rise of anti-immigrant politics across the global North.

This immigration wave that we experienced (from 1990-2020 approximately) was also one such cycle in history. For instance, after the destruction of Europe in World War II, cheap labour was needed to

rebuild the factories, railroads, and ports, and, as a result, millions of erstwhile colonial subjects were "let in", to fuel this demand. Soon after though, the racist backlash followed – excrement was thrown on the shops and bodies of the outsiders, and (relatively) native Anglo-Saxons moved out of immigrant neighbourhoods such as Southall or Brick Lane in London. Hence, by the 1960s, England had already paused the freedom of mobility within the commonwealth, and the world once again seemed to be moving towards an era of restricted migration. A similar politics impacts domestic migration. For instance, in Punjab, there has been a rise in hatred against migrants from UP and Bihar, even as Punjabi (and other South Asian) immigrants to Canada and the global North are themselves caricatured as "Pajees" in online discourse. This online hate has also resulted in increased physical violence against Indians, such as the gruesome beheading of Chandra Nagamallaiah in Dallas.

On a macro-scale however, this is where the logic of capital is important to understand. The rise of industrial capitalism has led to a double movement – the opening of immigration to increase labour supply (and thus keep domestic wages in check) but also increased reliance on xenophobic politics to prevent consolidation among the working class. This has meant that there is a contradiction – free markets need immigrants to keep themselves running, but this also fuels xenophobia and cultural nationalism in host societies, and that leads to a phase of increased cultural and economic anxiety over immigration. As a result, over the last century, the world has gone through these periodic boom-and-bust cycles of immigration.

So – does this mean an end of the migrant's dream? The answer is simultaneously, yes, no, and for now. Let me explain. For us, sitting in South Asia, who have always looked towards the West as a destination for upper mobility, that dream may have hit a temporary pause for the next few years. However, here, the picture gets more complicated. While countries like the United States are closing down, nations with falling birth rates like Japan are welcoming migrants. So, on a global level, what we may be looking at is not a macro-decline, but a shift in flows. And yet, there are bigger problems on the horizon. While the

last century has been dominated by the secular advance of industrial and financial capitalism, the next few decades could also be the era of ecological collapse thanks to climate change. This means that the boom-and-bust cycles of the past may be irretrievably broken – and what we may now have to deal with is forced migration on account of climate change. Climate change and mass migration may permanently rearrange societies, economies, and state capacity. Thus, generations ahead may no longer have the comfort of the "wait for a few years, this will pass".

The writer is an assistant professor of International Relations, Ashoka University. Views are personal

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"There should be a global, UN-backed arms, economic and diplomatic embargo of Israel until it stops its campaign of extermination in Gaza. And if states refuse to cooperate and continue to arm and fund Israel, they must be considered partners in crime with Tel Aviv."

—DAWN, PAKISTAN

Tech as grammar of governance

PM Modi has made innovation India's greatest equaliser. Today, the poorest farmer has the same digital identity as the richest industrialist



ASHWINI VAISHNAV

REMEMBER WHEN GETTING a government document involved multiple trips, long queues, and random fees? Now it's in your phone. This transformation has happened because Prime Minister Narendra Modi turned technology into India's greatest equaliser. A street vendor in Mumbai uses the same UPI payment system as a corporate executive. This reflects the philosophy of *antyodaya* – reaching the last person in the queue.

As Gujarat Chief Minister, Modi used innovation to transform the state. The Jyotigram scheme used feeder separation technology. Rural industries revived with 24x7 power while groundwater depletion slowed through scheduled farm electricity. Women could study at night, and small businesses flourished, reducing rural-urban migration.

The project involving solar panels on the Narmada canal generated 16 million units annually, enough for 16,000 households. It slowed the rate of evaporation, which increased water availability. This dual-benefit approach – generating energy while conserving water – showcases PM Modi's vision. The adoption by the US and Spain adds credibility to the innovation's efficacy. The e-Dharla system digitised land records. SWAGAT allowed citizens to meet the CM through video conferencing. Online tenders eliminated corruption. These initiatives improved the ease of accessing government services.

In 2014, Modi brought the Gujarat experience to Delhi. Under his leadership, India Stack, the world's most inclusive digital public infrastructure, took shape. The JAM trinity was at its core. Jan Dhan accounts brought more than 53 crore people into the banking system, bringing the financially excluded into the formal economy. Street vendors, daily wage workers, and rural families who lived on cash now have bank accounts. It has enabled them to save securely, receive government benefits directly, and access credit. Aadhaar gave citizens a digital identity. Direct Benefit Transfer has eliminated middlemen and reduced leakages. DBT use has led to savings of more than Rs 4.3 lakh crore so far. They are used for building more schools, hospitals and infrastructure projects.

The Statue of Unity at Kevadia, the world's tallest statue, was built using 3D modeling and bronze cladding technology.

Under PM Modi's vision, our strong base in electronics is now enabling the leap into advanced semi-conductor manufacturing. India has long been a hub for design talent. It now has design capabilities for advanced 2nm, 3nm, and 7nm chips. These are being designed for the world. But the approach extends beyond manufacturing. The chemicals, gases, and specialised materials that feed semiconductor production are being supported. This creates an entire ecosystem, not just isolated factories.

The PM Gati Shakti portal uses GIS technology on an unprecedented scale. Every infrastructure project gets mapped digitally. Roads, railways, airports, and ports are planned together. No more working in silos. No more delays due to poor coordination.

Through the IndiaAI Mission, over 38,000 GPUs are available at one-third global cost. This has given startups, researchers, and students Silicon Valley-level computing at an average rate of Rs 67 per hour. The AllKosh platform hosts 2,000+ datasets, ranging from weather to soil health. These can power indigenous LLMs developed for India's languages, laws, health systems, and finance.

Instead of rigid regulations that could stifle innovation, the government today invests in technological safeguards.

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The writer is Union Minister for Railways, Electronics & Information Technology, and Information & Broadcasting.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE FLOOD PROBLEM

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Check the deluge' (IE, September 18). Punjab's floods have claimed 55 lives and left thousands of people homeless. Punjab has experienced floods in 2023, 2019, 2013, 2010, 2008, and 2004. Besides suggesting a range of flood protection measures, revival of village ponds, construction of water harvesting structures and preventing waste disposal in canals and rivers is imperative. The flood problem needs a holistic approach.

SS Paul, Nadia

HEED DISTRESS SIGNS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Heed the hills' (IE, September 17). The recent extreme weather events in our hilly regions demonstrate that, while we were aware of the Himalayan mountains' fragility, the heightened likelihood of landslides during such events, exacerbated by mountain slope blasting and widespread deforestation, have not been sufficiently factored in. The decision by the Road Transport Ministry to reassess the safety

of certain parts of an under-construction roadway may be a bandaid, since there might be many similar cases with other highways in the Char Dham project. Without regulated development, and climate adaptation, these areas will always be vulnerable to calamities.

Kamal Laddha, Bangalore

A GUIDING LIGHT

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'A star, an idealist' (IE, September 18). Robert Redford acted in many Hollywood classics like *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *Three Days of the Condor* and *All The President's Men* and he won the Oscar for Best Director for *Ordinary People* in 1980. He was instrumental in bringing the Watergate scandal to the screen and founded the Sundance film festival which became a nursery for new talents away from the pressures of Hollywood. He never really retired from acting. He was last seen in *Avengers: Endgame* in 2019. With him, the industry has lost a big star and a guiding light.

Bal Govind, Noida

10

GOVT & POLITICS

MOVE TO IMPACT INDIA

US decides to revoke waiver on sanctions for Chabahar port

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 18

THE US administration has said that it was withdrawing the sanctions waiver granted to the Chabahar port in Iran, which is being developed by India, thereby ending the waiver from 2018 during Trump 1.0. The sanctions regime on strategically-located port will come into effect from September 29.

While this move is targeted towards Iran, it is going to adversely impact India – which has been developing the port, along with Iran – to access Afghanistan and Central Asia. Sources said this is a major setback to India's plans to develop the strategically-located port, close to the Chinese-developed Gwadar port in Pakistan.

The US State Department's principal deputy spokesperson Thomas Pigott said, in a statement, "...consistent with President Trump's maximum pressure policy to isolate the Iranian regime, the Secretary of State has revoked the sanctions exception issued in 2018 under the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act (IFCA) for Afghanistan reconstruction assistance and economic development, effective September 29, 2025. Once the revocation is effective, persons who operate the Chabahar Port or engage in other activities described in IFCA may expose themselves to sanctions under IFCA."

India has so far supplied six Mobile Harbour Cranes (two 140 tons and four 100 tons capacity) and other equipment worth USD 25 million. The Indian company, India Ports Global Ltd, through its wholly owned subsidiary, India Ports Global Chabahar Free Zone, took over the operations of the Chabahar Port from December 24, 2018. Since then, it has handled traffic of over 90,000 TEUs of Container traffic and over 8.4 MMT of Bulk and General Cargo.

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The move is consistent with President Donald Trump's maximum pressure policy to isolate the Iranian regime, State Department principal deputy spokesperson

Thomas Pigott said.

The US had exempted the Chabahar port project from sanctions in 2018, saying "the secretary has provided for an exception from the imposition of certain sanctions under the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act of 2012 (IFCA) with respect to the development of Chabahar Port and the construction of an associated railway and for the shipment of non-sanctioned goods through the port for Afghanistan's use, as well as Afghanistan's continued imports of Iranian petroleum products." However, with the new guideline, these exemptions will be removed.

Chabahar port had got a waiver from the US sanctions under the US administration led by President Donald Trump in the first term. Chabahar is a deep water port located in the Sistan-Baluchestan province of Iran. It is the closest Iranian port to India, and is located in the open sea, providing easy and secure access for large cargo ships.

During the visit of PM Narendra Modi to Iran in May 2016, a Triilateral Agreement to establish the International Transport and Transit Corridor (Chabahar Agreement) was signed by India, Iran and Afghanistan. India is participating in the development of the first phase of the Shahid Beheshti Terminal, Chabahar Port in cooperation with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

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DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



Union Home Minister Amit Shah with Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar in Patna, Thursday. PTI

PRE-POLL HUDDLE

BIHAR CHIEF Minister Nitish Kumar's meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah ahead of the latter's public events in Patna on Thursday has set off speculation about seat-sharing discussions between the BJP and the JD(U) for the upcoming Bihar Assembly elections. According to party insiders, the final decision on seat-sharing among NDA allies in Bihar, including JJP, HAM and RLM, is likely to be announced during the Navratri period, beginning Monday (September 22).

X-TRA INFORMATION

SOME SENIOR Congress leaders were not happy with a post shared by the party's official X account following party MP Rahul Gandhi's Thursday briefing on "vote chor" in the country. The post, while sharing a video of Gandhi saying that the party had "started getting help from within the Election Commission", went on to say that the "Congress had people within the EC", attributing it to the senior leader. According to sources, a Congress leader pointed it out to the party's communications team that Gandhi did not make such a statement, but the post remained intact till late evening.

DESI GREEN

AN ENVIRONMENT Ministry and Delhi government programme on the 'Ek Ped Ma Ke Naam' campaign on Thursday saw diplomats from 70 countries plant saplings of 15-odd native species, including peepal, desi babool, hingot, dhak, dhu and barna, at PBG Polo Ground in the Central Ridge area. The Supreme Court has ordered that afforestation in the Ridge area must prioritise use of indigenous species.

For over six months now, poll panel has been sitting on Karnataka CID queries

JOHNSON TA
BENGALURU, SEPTEMBER 18

THE STORY of how a veteran politician and Congress MLA B R Patil, from Karnataka's backward Aland constituency averted the deletion of 5,994 names from the voters' list in his seat, ahead of the 2023 Assembly polls, begins with an alert Booth Level Officer (BLO). Aland was one of the two seats spotlighted by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in a new "vote chor" charge on Thursday.

BLOs are tasked with physically verifying applications filed online for voter list additions or deletions in constituencies in their charge.

The BLO for one of the booths in Aland was going through deletion requests made in the December 2022–February 2023 period – for a voter list revision ahead of the May 2023 Karnataka polls – when she spotted an application to remove the name of one of her relatives, who was very much alive and a resident of the constituency.

The BLO contacted the relative, who said he had no idea who had made the application. "The family members of the BLO, who are supporters of the Congress, and B R Patil, alerted the leader's son," sources familiar with the case said.

Patil, a four-time MLA from Aland, and Congress workers then spread across the 254 election booths in the seat to find out whether similar applications had been made for deletions, without the knowledge of the voters concerned.

2023 ELECTION RESULT



Congress leaders said they found around 20-30 such names per booth, amounting to a total of 6,670 voters.

Gandhi said Thursday: "Someone tried to delete 6,018 votes. We don't know total number of votes deleted in Aland in 2023 elections... (But) the top 10 booths with maximum deletions were Congress strongholds. Congress had won 8 of these 10 booths in 2018. This was not a coincidence; this was a planned operation."

Patil, who won Aland by 10,348 votes in 2023, says his workers and supporters were targeted. "Most of the voters chosen for deletion were minorities, SCs and backward classes, who form Congress vote base."

After its workers had confirmed irregular deletions at their level, the Congress asked the EC to conduct ground-level verification across Aland, and to file a criminal case against persons behind the applications. The verification found that remote applications had been received for deletion of 6,018 names across Aland's 254 election booths, and that of them, only 24 no longer

lived in the constituency while 5,994 were still residents there.

On February 21, 2023, Kalaburagi Assistant Commissioner and Aland Returning Officer Mamatha Kumari filed a police complaint against unknown persons on charges of impersonation, providing false information, and forgery. The FIR accused them of using "multiple mobile phones to place online applications for deletion of names of voters, without the consent or knowledge of the voters".

In a statement Thursday, the Karnataka CEO said Aland poll officials had received 6,018 applications online in December 2022 for removal of names. "Suspecting the genuineness of such a large number of applications... verification of each application was conducted."

The modus operandi, as per the initial findings was to use the name of the first person on the voter list at a booth, acquire their phone number, and via it an OTP, to log in to EC app to make requests for deletions, sources said.

Police sources confirmed that several people whose identities were used to log in and make

A SHIFTING SEAT

■ B R Patil, a Lingayat leader, has won the Aland seat four times since 1983 – twice on a Janata Dal ticket, once on the ticket of BS Yediyurappa's Karnataka Janata Party, and in 2023, for the first time, as a Congress candidate.

■ Subhash Guttedar, who belongs to a backward group, has also won Aland seat 4 times, since 1994 – twice on the ticket of the Karnataka Congress Party of S Bangarappa, once on a Janata Dal ticket and in 2018 on a BJP ticket.

deletion requests were clueless about what had happened. Probe findings also suggested the deletions were processed in a "centralised operation" – which Gandhi referred to as a "call centre" operation from a location outside Karnataka.

After the Aland police hit a wall, the probe was handed over to Karnataka Police CID, which sought technical data from EC regarding app usage. The servers containing information, sources said, are operated by the EC or agencies contracted by it.

While the EC complied with a data request by the CID early on in the probe, subsequent requests for

specific data got no response, according to details of official communication between the CID and EC which are in the public domain.

On Thursday, Gandhi said: "The CID in Karnataka has sent 18 letters in 18 months to EC. They have asked for some very simple facts: give us the destination IP from where these forms were filled; give us device destination ports from where these applications were filed; and third, OTP trails, because when you file, you have to get an OTP."

On Thursday, the Karnataka CEO said it had "handed over to SP, Kalaburagi district, on 06.09.2023 all the available information with ECI for completing the investigation". This information, it said, included "Objector's details", such as name, voter ID number and mobile number used for log-in and the mobile number provided by the Objector for processing, software application medium, IP address, applicant place, Form submission date and time, and user creation date".

The statement added the CEO "has already been providing any other assistance/information/documents to the investigating agency". However, police sources say that after the September 2023 correspondence, the EC did not respond to multiple requests by CID, including one as late as February 1 this year. In this letter, police sought details of the destination IP and destination port from where the requests for deletions originated.

THE ELECTION Commission of India has said except for a "minor clock error", it found no mismatch between voting machine and VVPAT slips taken for diagnostic testing from the Chenani Assembly seat following last year's assembly election.

ARUN SHARMA
JAMMU, SEPTEMBER 18

THE ELECTION Commission of India has said except for a "minor clock error", it found no mismatch between voting machine and VVPAT slips taken for diagnostic testing from the Chenani Assembly seat following last year's assembly election.

This comes following tampering allegations in the assembly segment.

In a statement Thursday, the EC said that except for a "minor clock error" in one EVM, polling data saved in three machines taken for testing "fully matched" VVPAT slips.

This came after verification of EVMs from three polling stations at Chenani was done under tight security Thursday following a request from Harsh Dev Singh, the state president of the National Panthers Party and a candidate for the seat. Singh had lost the seat to his cousin and Bharatiya Janata Party candidate Balwant Singh Mankofta in the election held last October.

According to an official statement from the EC, the exercise began at the Government Degree College (Boys), Udhampur at 10 am, and it lasted till 7 pm "under proper security arrangements and in the presence of designated election officials, engineers from the Electronics Corporation of India Limited (ECIL), and eligible candidates".

6,850 'FAKE ONLINE ADDITIONS' MADE IN RAJURA: RAHUL

Maharashtra seat: Old Cong stronghold now in BJP hands

SHUBHANGI KHAPRE
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 18

LEADER OF Opposition (LoP) Rahul Gandhi on Thursday alleged voter list irregularities in two more constituencies: Aland in Karnataka and Rajura in Maharashtra. Gandhi alleged that while voter deletions were carried out in Aland using an automated software, 6,850 "fake online additions" were made in Rajura in Chandrapur district.

Rajura is one of the six Assembly segments in the Chandrapur Lok Sabha constituency in the Vidarbha region, which has been held either by the BJP or the Congress since 1996. In last year's Lok Sabha and Assembly elections, the contest between the BJP and the Congress in Rajura was a close one.

In the parliamentary polls, in which the BJP-led Mahayati alliance suffered a setback across the state, the party lost Chandrapur by a massive 2.6 lakh votes.

In Rajura, the Congress candidate Pratibha Dhanorkar had a lead of 58,349 votes over former minister Sudhir Mungantiwar of the BJP. The Congress ended up winning all six Assembly segments.

However, the tables turned a

SEAT HISTORY

■ Congress's Vithalrao Dhole won it in 1962. Five years later, the seat went to Independent candidate S B Jiwtoode Gurjuri. Vithalrao regained it five years later. In 1978, Janata Party's Baburao Musle won. In 1980 and 1985, Congress's Prabhakar Mamulkar won.

■ In 1990 & 1995, Rajura went to the Janata Party's Wamanrao Chatap before Cong's Sudarshan Nimkar regained it in 1999. In 2004, Chatap won it again. In 2009, Dhole won the seat for first time. BJP's Sanjay Dhole made a breakthrough in the seat in 2014. Dhole regained the seat in 2019, he fell short last year.

fair. After a major drubbing in the Lok Sabha polls, the BJP-RSS resorted to vote manipulation to win the polls," alleged state Congress president Harshwardhan Vasantrap Sapkal.

"The vote count in the Rajura constituency between the Lok Sabha and Assembly increased by 55,000 within a span of six months. Between October 1 and October 15, 2024, as many as 11,667 bogus voters were registered online.

Our candidate Subhash Dhole lodged a formal complaint and 6,853 of these entries were deleted, and an FIR was filed. Unfortunately, no action followed. The party has been raising its voice to protest foul play in polls. It has demanded that the IP addresses, email IDs, and mobile numbers used for these fake registrations be revealed. To date, this information has not been provided," said state Congress spokesperson Atul Londhe.

Dhole claimed that the "benami names" listed had addresses in Telangana and Uttar Pradesh. "We bought to EC notice the steep rise in voter enrollment daily, 6,853 were deleted," he said.

The Rajura Assembly seat was established in 1962. In the 13 elections held since then, the Congress has won it seven times.

few months later in the Assembly polls when Vithoba Bhole of the BJP edged out Congress's Subhash Dhole, a former MLA, by 3,054 votes. "We have reasons to believe the Assembly elections in Maharashtra were not free and

fair. After a major drubbing in the Lok Sabha polls, the BJP-RSS resorted to vote manipulation to win the polls," alleged state Congress president Harshwardhan Vasantrap Sapkal.

During the 1995 Bihar elections, Seshan grabbed the headlines when, to curb booth capturing, allurement to voters, and election violence, he ordered massive reshuffles of district magistrates and deployed the CAPFs. So famous did he become that a miffed Lalu Prasad, then the Bihar CM, labelled him a "raging bull".

After retirement, in 1997, Seshan contested for the post of President against K R Narayanan. Narayanan, fielded by parties in the United Front government and Congress, and backed by the Opposition BJP, won one of the most one-sided polls ever: polling 9,56,290 votes against Seshan's 50,361. In 1999, Seshan fought the LS polls against BJP's L K Advani on a Congress ticket from Gandhinagar. He lost by 1.88 lakh votes.

Seshan died in Chennai on November 10, 2019.

the CEC and one or more ECs."

During the 1995 Bihar elections, Seshan grabbed the headlines when, to curb booth capturing, allurement to voters, and election violence, he ordered massive reshuffles of district magistrates and deployed the CAPFs. So famous did he become that a miffed Lalu Prasad, then the Bihar CM, labelled him a "raging bull".

When Gill was made minister in 2008, Prakash Javadekar of BJP said appointing a person who had occupied a constitutional post as a minister was a wrong precedent, as it would appear to be a reward for his past work as CEC. The BJP suggested later during Gill's ministerial term that a law be made to prevent the immediate appointment of people who occupied independent constitutional offices to political posts.

On April 26, 2010, Gill had to contend with the sarcastic comments of many RS colleagues as he was the nodal minister that coordinated with the DDA and the Delhi government for the organisation of the Commonwealth Games of 2010. As charges of corruption and delays flew thick and fast, Gill had to face barbs in Parliament.

He died in October 2023.

SITHARAMAN IN KOLKATA

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, West Bengal BJP chief Samik Bhattacharya, Union Minister Sukanta Majumdar in Kolkata, Thursday. Partha Paul

■ Outlining the key aspects of the latest reforms in the GST, Sitharaman said "Bengal had a strong influence" in deciding the date of decision of unveiling new gen indirect tax rate from September 22.

■ Several industries in Bengal, especially in the handicraft and small-scale sectors, will see a reduction in tax rates. The new framework will help local industries, says Sitharaman.

■ She made it clear that the Centre was not considering any compensation to states for potential revenue loss arising from the rate cuts, stressing that the impact will be shared "equally".

By the time she took charge, V P Singh had already lost majority support in LS after BJP pulled out, and he was on his way out. This cut short Ramadevi's stint, and her term ended on December 11, 1990, lasting just 16 days.

Subramanian Swamy, who became the Union Law Minister in the Chandra Shekhar government, withdrew Ramadevi's file from the President's office. And sent the proposal to appoint T N Seshan as CEC. The Chandra Shekhar government

BRIEFLY

JAMMU & KASHMIR
Advocate recuses
from representing
AAP's Doda MLA

Jammu: Nirmal KKotwal, senior advocate and J&K High Court Bar Association president, Thursday recused himself from representing AAP's Doda MLA Mehraj Malik, 37 – detained on September 8 for "disturbing public order" – under the Public Safety Act, citing certain videos where the politician purportedly claimed that "J&K is not a part of India" and "praised militants Burhan Wani and Masood Azhar". "The unity and sovereignty of India are non-negotiable, and any act or statement undermining them cannot be condoned under any circumstances," Kotwal said. **ENS**

KARNATAKA
Ex-CM Gowda
loses ₹3 lakh to
cybercriminals

Bengaluru: Former Karnataka CM D V Sadananda Gowda has lost ₹3 lakh to cybercriminals who allegedly hacked his bank accounts. The fraud was detected Tuesday night, while reviewing phone texts, Gowda said. "I got to know about it only when I received the texts of deduction from the banks. ₹1 lakh each siphoned from HDFC, SBI, and Axis Bank accounts. I have filed a police complaint," he said. It is unclear how his phone was compromised, police said. **ENS**

PUNJAB
25 kg heroin
recovered from
drug smuggler

Chandigarh: A drug smuggler was arrested with 25.9 kg of heroin in Amritsar in a joint operation by the Punjab Police and the Border Security Force Wednesday night, officers said Thursday. Twenty-three packets of heroin were recovered from Sajan Singh alias Billa, police said, adding that he was working as a hairdresser at a salon, Amritsar. Police seized a 9mm Glock pistol, said DGP Gaurav Yadav, adding that the cross-border drug smuggling module was being operated by foreign-based Harpreet Singh alias Happy Jatt. **PTI**

MADHYA PRADESH
Calling him 'police
informant', Maoists
kill 25-year-old

Bhopal: Maoists abducted and killed a 25-year-old man in Balaghat district after accusing him of being a police informant, officers said Thursday. The victim, Devendra Yadav, was abducted Tuesday when he had gone to tend to his cattle. His body was recovered from the forests of Chauria, Thursday. "The Malajkhand unit of the Maoists' Gondia-Rajnandgaon-Balaghat division has claimed responsibility," a senior police officer said. An FIR has been registered under murder charges. **ENS**

Modi speaks to Nepal interim PM, affirms support for peace, stability

Polls will remain topmost priority for interim government, says Sushila Karki

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 18



PM Narendra Modi; Nepal interim PM Sushila Karki

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi spoke to Nepal's interim Prime Minister Sushila Karki on Thursday and conveyed India's "steadfast support for her efforts to restore peace and stability" in the country.

After the phone call, Modi posted on X: "Had a warm conversation with Mrs Sushila Karki, Prime Minister of the Interim Government of Nepal. Conveyed heartfelt condolences on the recent tragic loss of lives and reaffirmed India's steadfast support for her efforts to restore peace and stability. Also, I extended warm greetings to her and the people of Nepal on their National Day tomorrow."

A PMO statement said, "Prime Minister conveyed India's readiness to continue working closely to further strengthen the special ties between the two countries and India's full support to Nepal in its efforts towards

restoring peace and stability, and for the progress of the people of Nepal." It also said PM Karki thanked Modi for India's "firm support to Nepal and reciprocated the Prime Minister's desire to further strengthen ties between the two countries".

Nepal's Foreign Ministry said during the conversation, PM Karki said "elections will remain the topmost priority of the interim government, with strong determination for accountable, responsive and corruption-free governance, reflecting the aspiration of the youth". PM Modi assured India's full support and cooperation as per the priorities of the government of Nepal, it said.

On Tuesday, Indian Ambassador Naveen Srivastava called on PM Karki at her office in Singha Durbar and conveyed

During the phone call, PM Karki told PM Modi that the historical and close relationship between Nepal and India will continue to be strengthened by multifaceted people-to-people ties.

"Both Prime Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to continue the strong momentum of bilateral cooperation and partnership for the benefit of the people of the two countries," Nepal's Foreign Ministry said.

Karki also conveyed her heartfelt greetings and best wishes to Modi on his 75th birthday and appreciated him for his message of solidarity, according to the statement from Nepal.

Modi extended warm wishes ahead of the National Day (Constitution Day) of Nepal on Saturday. Nepal adopted its Constitution, drafted through a constituent assembly, on September 20, 2015.

On Tuesday, Indian Ambassador Naveen Srivastava called on PM Karki at her office in Singha Durbar and conveyed

PM Modi's congratulatory message to her.

On September 12, 73-year-old Karki, a former Supreme Court Chief Justice, was sworn in as the interim PM, following the fall of the KP Sharma Oli government after violent protests on September 9. She is the first woman to lead the Himalayan nation. The interim government has been asked to hold elections to Parliament in six months.

On September 13, India welcomed the formation of the interim government in Nepal. The Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement on September 13: "We welcome the formation of a new Interim Government in Nepal, led by Right Honourable Mrs Sushila Karki. We are hopeful that this would help in fostering peace and stability."

"As a close neighbour, a fellow democracy and a long-term development partner, India will continue to work closely with Nepal for the well-being and prosperity of our two peoples and countries," the MEA statement said.

CHHATTISGARH

Retired IAS officer arrested in 'liquor scam'

Raipur: A retired IAS officer, 62, from Chhattisgarh, who had been posted as Excise Commissioner, was arrested Thursday by the state's Economic Offences Wing/Anti-Corruption Bureau (EOW/ACB) for allegedly facilitating a Rs 3,200-crore "liquor scam".

As per EOW sources, the arrested man, Nirjan Das, was an officer of the state civil service and was promoted to IAS, before retiring over a year ago. He is among the 30 accused from excise department whom the EOW/ACB has booked in the case. "He will be produced before a court Friday," said IGP (Raipur range) Amresh Mishra.

The liquor scam is alleged to have taken place between 2019 and 2022, during the Bhupesh Bhaghel-led Congress government in Chhattisgarh. **ENS**

USMT WAS TARGETED BY ASSAM CM

Meghalaya university built on forest land, says SC committee

NIKHIL GHANEKAR
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 18

THE UNIVERSITY of Science and Technology (USMT) in Meghalaya's Ri-Bhoi district, which was accused by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma of carrying out construction that allegedly led to flash floods, was built on 25 hectares of encroached forest land without Central approval, according to a report by the Supreme Court's Central Empowered Committee (CEC).

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"As a close neighbour, a fellow democracy and a long-term development partner, India will continue to work closely with Nepal for the well-being and prosperity of our two peoples and countries," the MEA statement said.

The CEC based its conclusions on analysis of the forest definition and laws followed in Meghalaya, and examined the status of the land on which USMT is located. It found that as per the Centre, "out of 15.71 hectares of existing USMT constructed area, 13.62 is forest land." Further, out of 12.13 hectares of forest land earmarked for PA Sangma Memorial Medical College, 7.64 hectares has already been broken up, or used, the CEC said.

The CEC also found illegal mining across Ri-Bhoi and recommended that all mining, quarrying and crushing activities in the district be suspended till an official review is conducted.

In August last year, invoking the term "flood jihad", Sarma had pinned the blame of flash floods

in Guwahati on construction work in USMT, stating that deforestation and hill-cutting for the campus were responsible. The university had denied the charges.

The CEC's report was filed on a case filed before the Supreme Court seeking directions to address rampant environmental degradation in Ri-Bhoi and East Khasi Hills districts in Meghalaya, and its transboundary impact on Assam, particularly in Guwahati city. The technical body advises the Supreme Court on forest and environment protection, and legal compliance matters.

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sisting of penal net present value to be paid for forest land, tree cutting, environmental compensation, land restoration, cost for demolition and compensatory af-

orestation.

While examining the USMT land status, the CEC found that in 2017, the Union Environment Ministry's regional office directed the Meghalaya government to carry out ground verification. It was initially said that 13.03 hectares was non-forest land but the regional office eventually determined that 13.62 hectares of land under scrutiny was forest area. It directed the university and the foundation to submit a proposal for forest diversion under the Forest Conservation Act, 1980.

However, no clearance was obtained, the CEC found. The second land parcel spread over 12.13 hectares was for the setting up of ERD Foundation's medical college. The state forest department said in 2021 that the plot in question is forest land, and found that Meghalaya Forest Regulation, 1973, was violated. As per CEC's report, the university's application to seek forest clearance for this land parcel is under examination.

The penalties have been computed from June 2017 onwards for one land parcel, when the status of forest land was first informed by Khasi Hill divisional forest officer, and April 2019, for the other land parcel, as per the CEC report.

BJP's 'polarising' AI video: Assam Congress files police complaint

SUKRITA BARUAH
GUWAHATI, SEPTEMBER 18

THE ASSAM Congress Thursday filed a complaint with the Guwahati Police against on controversial AI-generated videos shared by the BJP Assam's X handle, alleging that these are "deliberate fabrication designed to incite communal discord."

DCP Guwahati East Mrinal Deka confirmed that the complaint had been received in the Dispur police station. "The matter is being enquired into, but an official FIR has not been registered against the complainant," he said.

This comes after a video posted by the handle 'BJP Assam Pradesh' Monday. Underneath the text 'Assam without BJP', a series of AI-generated images appear, including of a man in a skull cap cutting meat by the road that is labelled 'beef legalisation', Assam Congress chief Gaurav Gogoi and senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi standing in front of the flag of Pakistan, men in skullcaps and women in burqas, hijabs at different places in Guwahati. This video led to a row. On Thursday, Assam Pradesh Congress Committee media department chief Debabrata Bora filed a complaint at the Dispur police station.

PUJA PREPARATION

An artisan works on an idol of Goddess Durga ahead of the festival in Kolkata on Thursday. **PTI**

Centre agrees to declare Punjab 'severely flooded', enhanced funds on the cards

KANCHAN VASDEV
CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 18

THE CENTRE on Thursday approved a proposal by the Punjab government to declare the state "severely flooded", it has been learnt. This came on a day Union Ministers Jitendra Singh and Jitin Prasada visited flood-hit areas in Pathankot and Gurdaspur, and assessed the damage due to the floods.

With Centre agreeing to declare Punjab "severely flooded", the border state, which is recovering from the worst floods since 1988, is expecting a higher allocation of funds for compensation. The Punjab government will also be able to get a 50-year soft loan of Rs 595 crore, under the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) scheme. The fund will be earmarked specifically for repairing damaged public infrastructure.

While the compensation for crop loss would not be affected, the owners of houses damaged in floods would be benefited. "For instance, under the norms of State Disaster Relief Fund (SDRF), a house owner gets Rs 1.20 lakh, if a house is damaged completely. Now, the compensation can go as high as Rs 3 lakh," said an official.

For crop loss, the state government has announced Rs 20,000 per acre compensation, as against the provision of Rs 6,800 per acre under the SDRF.

The state government will

hold a meeting on Friday, to be chaired by Chief Secretary KAP Sinha to decide the heads under which they would be seeking more funds. Sources said that this decision needs to be taken as the state government will have to increase its share of matching grant. Centre and state share the funds in the ratio of 75:25.

"...The final memorandum of damages and demand for fund will also be prepared," said an official, adding that the Punjab government had written to the Centre last week seeking that the state be declared severely flooded.

"The Centre has acknowledged the widespread devastation caused by unprecedented rain and flooding. The enhanced allocation and loan would provide

crucial support for immediate reconstruction efforts."

According to an interim memorandum submitted to the Central disaster committee on September 7, the state had pegged its flood-related losses at Rs 13,289 crore.

It included damages worth Rs 1,520 crore reported by the Water Resources Department,

the Department of Rural Development and Panchayats (Rs 5,043 crore), and the Department of Health (Rs 780 crore). Punjab Mandi Board (Rs 1,022 crore), PWD (Rs 1,970 crore), Agriculture Department (Rs 317 crore), Department of Education (Rs 542 crore), Department of Power (Rs 103 crore) and Department of Animal Husbandry (Rs 103 crore), too among others, reported losses.

Disapproving the delay, the

(LoP) and ex-chief minister Naveen Patnaik, the BJD president, to seek his party's support for the motion. They however could not meet Patnaik as he was not present in his office.

The Congress's move may be symbolic given its poor tally in the 147-member Assembly, but party insiders said it was a "well-thought-out strategy to expose the nexus between the BJP and the principal Opposition Biju Janata Dal (BJD)".

Just after the monsoon session got underway Thursday, the Congress submitted a notice for no-confidence motion against Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi-led government, which was signed by 14 Congress MLAs and the lone CPI(M) legislator.

Later in the day, the Congress MLAs also went to the chamber of the Leader of the Opposition

SALUTE THE SOLDIER

BORDER SECURITY FORCE

CONSTABLE
MANJU BHAI
01.06.1969 – 19.09.1998

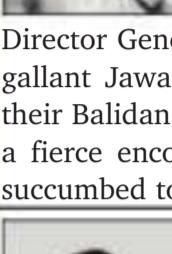
Director General and all Ranks of Border Security Force remember its gallant Jawan Constable Manju Bhai on his Balidan Diwas. On this day, he sustained fatal bullet injuries in Counterpart firing in Sundarban area, J&K and later succumbed to his injuries.

LANCE NAIK
MADHKAR
JAGTAP
13.10.1957 – 19.09.1990

Director General and all Ranks of Border Security Force remember its gallant Jawan Lance Naik Madhukar Jagtap on his Balidan Diwas. On this day, he sustained fatal bullet injuries during a Counter terror operation in Handwara area (J&K) and made ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.

NAIK KABINDRA
MARK
12.03.1943 – 19.09.1990

Director General and all Ranks of Border Security Force remember its gallant Jawans Naik Kabindra Mark and Constable Ajmer Singh on their Balidan Diwas. On this day, they sustained fatal bullet injuries in a fierce encounter with militants in Bandipur area (J&K) and later succumbed to their injuries.

CONSTABLE
JAGBIR SINGH
05.06.1968 – 19.09.1990

Director General and all Ranks of Border Security Force remember its gallant Jawan Constable Jagbir Singh on his Balidan Diwas. On this day, he sustained fatal bullet injuries in a fierce encounter with militants in Sopore area, J&K and later succumbed to his injuries.

CENTRAL RESERVE POLICE FORCE
Veer Balidani
Constable
Ram Parkash
3 Bn
18-08-1941 To
19-09-1965

Director General and all Ranks of CRPF remember valiant trooper Constable Ram Prakash of 3 Bn, who made supreme sacrifice, being on deputation with ITBP while repulsing an attack by Chinese troops on Zanskar sub post of Dungti, Ladakh (Then part of J & K) on 19 September 1965. CRPF salutes the braveheart and pledges never to let his sacrifice go in vain.

Veer Balidani
Constable
Mahadev Minj
2 Bn
01-05-1973 To
19-09-2012

Director General and all Ranks of CRPF remember valiant trooper Constable Mahadev Minj of 2 Bn, who made supreme sacrifice neutralizing 3 to 4 Maoists while gallantly fighting with them, when his party was attacked on 19 September 2012 in Bheji, Sukma, Chhattisgarh. CRPF salutes the braveheart and pledges never to let his sacrifice go in vain.

KONKAN RAILWAY CORPORATION LIMITED
(A Government of India Undertaking)
TENDER NOTIFICATION

On behalf of Sr. Regional Electrical Engineer, Konkan Railway Corporation Limited, Shirwad, Karwar invites Sealed Bids are invited from experienced contractors for Design, Supply, Erection, Testing and Commissioning of 25KV, 50Hz, Single phase, Traction Over Head Equipment for proposed Sarzora station of Konkan Railway of Karwar region. E-Tender No. KR-KW-EL-T-37-RT-2, dated : 19/09/2025. Cost of work : ₹ 157.97 lakh (excluding GST). Last Date & Time for Submission of Bid : 13/10/2025 up to 15:00 hrs. For further details please visit : www.ireps.gov.in

SURAT MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
(SMIMER, Tender Notice (Online))
E-Tender (Online) invitation Tender Notice No. SMIMER/HOSP/MED.SUPTD/17 to 19/2025-26. Tenders are invited for running laundry, supplying & installing Continuous Renal Replacement Therapy Equipment (CRRT) with consumables, supplying & installing Automated Blood Culture System with consumables & Buyback of existing old Machine for SMIMER Hospital online on <https://smcrtender.procurement.gov.in> with following Schedule:

Name of Department	TENDER FOR SMIMER
No. of work	03
No. of Tenders	03
Total estimated cost of tenders	Rs. 4,01,71,000.00

The detail short term tender notice will be made available on website www.suratmunicipal.gov.in
No. P.R.O. /348/2025-26
Date: 17/09/2025
Medical Superintendent (SMIMER Hospital)

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0070960403-1

PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I have changed my Name from MASTER FERNANDES GABRIEL TO GABRIEL JOSEPH FERNANDES as per affidavit dated 01/09/2025.
0070990896-1

NECC Mumbai Zone suggestive farm-zone egg price for today (19/09/2025) is Rs. 600/- per 100 eggs. (for the information of Trade & industry).

0070987115-1

"IMPORTANT"

NOTICE

Saudi-Pakistan defence pact: Significance for the 2 countries

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 18

PAKISTAN AND Saudi Arabia signed a mutual defence pact on Wednesday, formalising a defence and security partnership that dates back to the 1960s.

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the kingdom's de facto ruler, embraced after signing the agreement. Pakistan's powerful army chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir, was also present.

While not many details about the pact are out yet, a key clause has made headlines around the world: "any aggression against either country shall be considered an aggression against both".

"This agreement, which reflects the shared commitment of both nations to enhance their security and to achieving security and peace in the region and the world, aims to develop aspects of defence cooperation between the

two countries and strengthen joint deterrence against any aggression," a statement from the Pakistani prime minister's office said.

The agreement had been in the works for a while, but was signed in the aftermath of Israel's recent strike in Qatar. Amid Israel's increased belligerence, and the US defence promise looking shakier than ever, this is the first major defence pact an Arab nation has signed, with a nuclear-armed nation.

Pakistan-Saudi Arabia ties

Pakistani troops went to Saudi Arabia in the late 1960s amid concerns about Egypt's war in Yemen at the time. The military cooperation deepened after the 1979 Grand Mosque seizure in Mecca, when Pakistan's special forces helped Saudi troops.

In 1982, the two sides institutionalised security ties through a Bilateral Security Cooperation Agreement that enabled Pakistani training, advisory support and deployments on Saudi soil. Saudi Arabia was a key buyer of



Shehbaz Sharif (left) with Mohammed bin Salman in Riyadh. X/@PakPMO

Pakistan-made arms, and Pakistani personnel trained the Saudi Air Force.

Retired Pakistani Brig Gen Feroz Hassan Khan wrote that Saudi Arabia provided "generous financial support to Pakistan that enabled the nuclear program to continue, especially when the country was under sanctions" (*Eating Grass: The Making of the*

Pakistani Bomb).

In a 2007 US diplomatic cable published by WikiLeaks, American diplomats in Saudi Arabia said that their Pakistani counterparts had brought up the idea of the kingdom pursuing a weapons program alongside Islamabad.

"...They understand that [Saudi Arabia] does want to protect itself and the region...it is logical for the Saudis to step in as the physical 'protector' just as they have been increasingly stepping in as peace mediators in various regional conflicts," the cable read.

Wednesday's signing represents Pakistan's most consequential formal defence commitment in decades, offering both strategic and economic benefits. It secures vital Saudi investment and funding at a time of fiscal strain, while shoring up Islamabad's claim of being a pan-Islamic security provider.

Husain Haqqani, former Pakistan ambassador to the US, posted on X, "Most likely, Pakistan will now be able to buy US weapons it needs, with Saudi money, which the Trump administration seems willing to sell."

For Saudi Arabia, it strengthens defences against threats from Iran, Yemen's Houthi militias, and the regional turbulence caused by Israel.

Saudi Arabia's ties with India

The Indian government has been cautious in its first official comments.

Ministry of External Affairs official spokesperson, Randhir Jaiswal, said: "The Government was aware that this development, which formalises a long-standing arrangement between the two countries... We will study the implications...for our national security as well as for regional and global stability."

Saudi Arabia has for long invested in a political, strategic and economic relationship with India.

India is the second largest trade partner of Saudi Arabia, whereas the kingdom is the fifth largest trading partner of India. In FY2023-24, bilateral trade stood at USD 42.98 billion, with Indian exports at USD 11.56 billion and imports at USD 31.42 billion. There is also a 27-lakh

strong Indian diaspora in Saudi Arabia.

The historic visit of King Abdullah to India in January 2006 was a watershed moment that resulted in the signing of the Delhi Declaration. It was followed by the Riyadh Declaration in 2010 during the visit of then PM Manmohan Singh to the Kingdom, which elevated the bilateral ties to a Strategic Partnership.

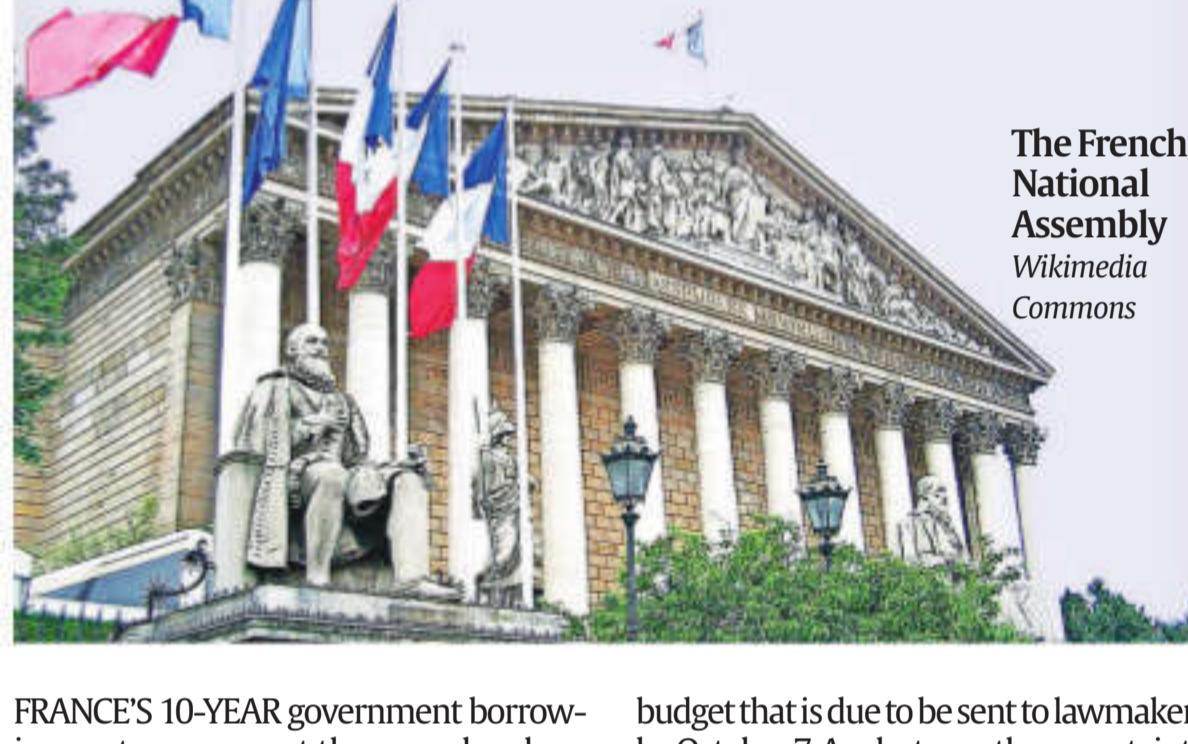
Since Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 2016 visit to Riyadh, various high level visits from both sides have taken place.

During the Pulwama attack on April 22, Modi was in Saudi Arabia, and his hosts were quick to condemn the incident. Later, Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Adel Al-Jubeir, made an unannounced visit during Operation Sindoor.

In the past, Saudi Arabia has not made too strong a criticism of the abrogation of Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir. The Saudis have sought to talk to both India and Pakistan during times of conflict between the neighbours — and have not taken sides in recent crises. That gives some confidence to Delhi about Riyadh's approach.

EXPLAINED GLOBAL

WHY 10-YR BORROWING COSTS OF FRANCE & ITALY MATCH FOR FIRST TIME



The French National Assembly
Wikimedia Commons

FRANCE'S 10-YEAR government borrowing costs are now at the same levels as Italy's, the latest sign that political paralysis in Paris is stoking concern about its ability to get its public finances under control.

Fitch Ratings cut France's rating last week, after opposition parties united to oust Francois Bayrou as prime minister over his unpopular plans for budget tightening. President Emmanuel Macron then named Sebastien Lecornu as the country's fifth prime minister in less than two years.

Italian and French 10-year bond yields both briefly traded at around 3.48% on Thursday, as the gap between the two narrowed to zero basis points (bps) from around 50 bps in April and as much as 200 bps during the 2020 Covid crisis, according to LSEG data.

Why is this a big deal?

Investors now consider the creditworthiness of the eurozone's second- and third-largest economies to be roughly the same. That has never happened before.

It shows how far perceptions around France, once considered a "core" market, and Italy, long-regarded as one of the weakest links in the Euro area, have changed.

In a sign of market confidence in Italy, foreign investors' net purchases of Italian government bonds rose in June by the largest amount seen in any month since June 2019, Italian central bank data show.

Foreign investors' holdings of Italian debt stood at around 32% in May, still well below the 55% of French debt in foreign hands as of end-March, most recent central bank data show.

Why is this happening?
Concerns that political instability will hamper France's ability to improve its fiscal position have pushed up its bond yields. Meanwhile, relative political stability and downward debt projections have pushed down Italy's bond yields.

France's Lecornu is racing to draft a

budget that is due to be sent to lawmakers by October 7. Analysts say the uncertainty hampers management of public finances.

France is under EU disciplinary measures with its 2026 deficit target at 4.6% of gross domestic product. Italy is expected to leave that procedure soon as it is close to bringing its budget shortfall to 3% of GDP.

What do rating agencies say?

Fitch has downgraded France's sovereign credit score to the country's lowest level on record, stripping the euro zone's second-largest economy of its AA- status.

But Italy is likely to get a ratings boost when Fitch reviews the sovereign on Friday, analysts say.

A more positive outlook for Italy has helped push the premium that investors demand to hold Italian bonds over safer Germany to below 100 bps.

This does not mean that concerns around Italian debt are likely to disappear. Italy has been plagued by chronic problems that will take time to fix. Italy still has the euro zone's second-largest debt as a percentage of GDP after Greece, and well above France's.

A falling population and a low female employment rate hinder its growth outlook. Italy's statistics agency said in June that the economy would grow by 0.6% this year, trimming a previous forecast of 0.8%.

For some observers, the narrowing of the French-Italian bond spread has more to do with French fiscal and political woes than an improvement in Italy's outlook.

What's next?

After the collapse of the Bayrou government, analysts say France's debt will remain under pressure compared with Italian paper. This trend may intensify soon following ratings agency reviews of both countries.

S&P has also cut the French ratings outlook due to a weakening of public finances.

REUTERS

EXPLAINED ECONOMICS

Fed's dual mandate conundrum

Political pressures aside, the US Fed faces a difficult predicament with inflation and unemployment rising at the same time. Put simply, it cannot address one problem without making the other worse



UDIT MISRA

ON WEDNESDAY, the Federal Reserve, the central bank for the United States, brought down interest rates by 25 basis points (one-fourth of a percentage point) in its latest monetary policy review. While this development did not come as a surprise, the expected outcome hides many complexities. Here's a breakdown, in the words of Jerome 'Jay' Powell, the Chair of the Fed's Board of Governors.

The context

This review comes after months of friction between the Fed and US President Donald Trump. Since his election last November, Trump has openly berated Fed Chair Powell for being "too late" in cutting the interest rates in the economy.

Last month, Trump fired Lisa Cook, one of the governors in the Fed's Board. The courts quickly ruled against it, and allowed Cook to participate in the latest policy review. The case against her continues.

On Monday, the Republican-majority Senate confirmed the appointment of Stephen Miran to the Board. Although he has taken an unpaid leave of absence, Miran, the man said to be responsible for Trump's tariff policies, officially remains a part of the administration. This, critics say, is unprecedented in the history of the Fed and has serious implications for the central bank's independence.

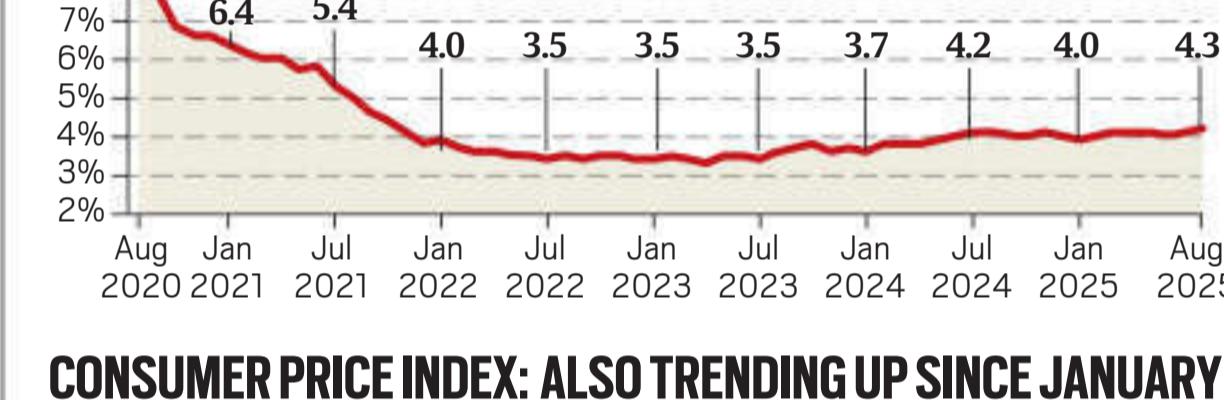
Politics aside, the US economy is currently going through a phase that would challenge whoever heads the Fed. That's because the central bank has a dual mandate: achieving maximum employment and stable prices for the benefit of the American people.

Typically, these mandates do not clash: high inflation usually occurs at a time when growth is surging and new jobs are being created, while faltering growth and unemployment comes with low inflation. But since last year, unemployment has been on the rise even as inflation has shot up (*See Charts*). A cut in interest rates can thus fuel inflation, and raising or keeping steady interest rates can choke economic growth and increase unemployment.

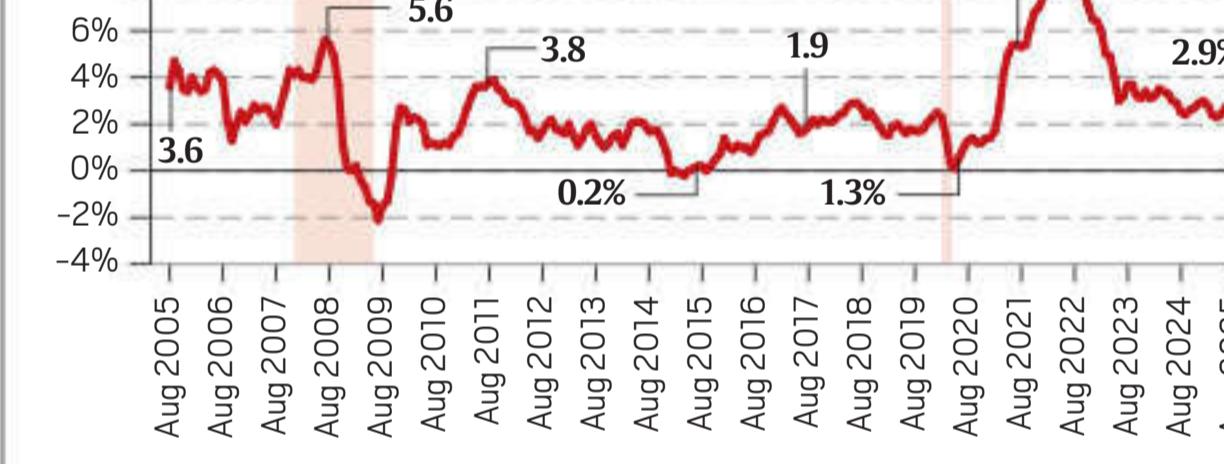
5 key questions

Despite the cut, questions linger.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE: TRENDING UP SINCE JANUARY



CONSUMER PRICE INDEX: ALSO TRENDING UP SINCE JANUARY



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

1. Why did the Fed cut interest rates?

On the face of it, the rate cut happened

because the Fed is concerned about unem-

ployment trending up. But at 4.3%, infla-

tion is still low enough to not trigger a rate cut.

What then drove this decision? According

to Powell, the US is in a "low firing, low hiring" phase. The labour market, Powell said in August, "appears to be in...a curious kind of balance that results from a marked slowing in both supply of and demand for workers. This unusual situation suggests that downside risks to employment are rising. And if those risks materialise, they can do so quickly...[resulting in] higher layoffs and rising unemployment".

It continues to inch up since April. Powell

on Wednesday clarified that people should

see this rate cut as a "risk management cut".

The Summary of Economic Projections

(SEP), a document the Fed produces) projected

growth for 2025 and 2026 to tick up slightly,

while inflation and unemployment forecasts

did not really move. In other words, the Fed is

trying to balance both its goals in a manner that

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SENSEX: 83,013.96 ▲ 320.25 (0.39%) NIFTY: 25,423.60 ▲ 93.35 (0.37%) NIKKEI: 45,303.43 ▲ 513.05 HANG SENG: 26,544.85 ▼ 363.54 FTSE: 9,225.57 ▲ 17.20 DAX: 23,644.7 ▲ 285.60

Note: Gold, silver rates as per All India Sarfa Association, gold per 10g, silver per 1 kg; Crude oil (Indian basket) per barrel as of September 17



GOLD

₹1,13,200



USD RATE

₹88.20



OIL

\$70.29



SILVER

₹1,31,500

International market data till 1900 IST

'WE ARE A COUNTRY THAT RELIES ON DOMESTIC DEMAND'

US 25% penal tariff on India unlikely to stay beyond Nov 30, says Nageswaran

RAVIDUTTA MISHRA
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 18

CHIEF ECONOMIC Advisor (CEA) V. Anantha Nageswaran on Thursday said the additional US tariffs of 25 per cent on India levied over the purchase of Russian oil likely won't continue beyond November 30, considering the talks held earlier this week between the US and Indian negotiators in New Delhi.

"Geopolitical circumstances may have led to the second 25 per cent tariffs, but considering recent developments in the last couple of weeks... I do believe... I have no particular basis to say so... just my intuition, the penal tariffs won't be there beyond November 30," Nageswaran said at an industry event in Kolkata.

"It's not a statement based on concrete indicators or evidence... it's my hope that given the recent development which we see in terms of both countries finding an off-ramp and with US negotiators in India during the first two days of the week, I would believe there will be a resolution in the next couple of months on a penal tariff and also on reciprocal tariffs," the CEA said.

Talking about the impact of tariffs on different sectors of the Indian economy, Nageswaran said from a systemic perspective, the impact is relatively marginal.



Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran at an event in Kolkata on Thursday. PTI

"That is not to say there will not be second and third round effects if the tariff persists in terms of sentiment impact, capital formation, etc. But purely on export terms, given the fact that we are a country that relies on domestic demand, the impact will be less than it would be for countries which have a much greater share of exports in GDP," he said.

The CEA explained that India's distribution of growth is interesting and reassuring. "About 60 per cent comes from consumption, 30 per cent from capital formation, 21 per cent comes from exports, and 23 per cent goes towards imports, so we have a large domestic economy which insulates us from what is going on in the outside world to some extent," he said.

Nageswaran's speech comes after the Commerce and Industry

Delivered on wish list, it's India Inc's turn to invest more, says Sitharaman

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 18

FLAGGING A raft of policies and reforms delivered by the government, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday asked corporates not to hesitate but take advantage of these to invest more and expand capacities.

Speaking at the Indian Foundation for Quality Management (IFQM) symposium here, she said prime minister Narendra Modi has neither relented on reforms, nor ignored the wish list of the industry.

"I hope there is no more hesitation for the industry to invest further, to expand capacities, produce more in India, and spell out what else is required by the government to do," Sitharaman said.

Responding to a question by Tata Sons chairman N Chandrasekaran on her key asks from the industry, Sitharaman said — invest more, partner with the government in skilling youth, and have a year-round engagement with the government and not just before the Budget.



FM Nirmala Sitharaman with Tata Sons Chairman N Chandrasekaran in New Delhi on Thursday. ANI

Chandrasekaran acknowledged that the opportunity and the platform that the government has given are enormous, both in the domestic market and in the export market. "I firmly believe that more entrepreneurs, more small and medium companies and big corporations would make a lot of investments. I'm very confident, because without that investment, we will not be able to capture the opportunity," he said. FE

DAYS AFTER GST RATE RATIONALISATION ANNOUNCEMENT

Hyundai ups investment commitment at Talegaon plant by 60% to ₹11,000 cr

SANDEEP SINGH
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 18

WITHIN A fortnight of the GST Council announcing rate rationalisation on smaller cars from 28 per cent to 18 per cent, Hyundai Motor India Limited (HMIL) has communicated to the Maharashtra Government to enhance its investment commitment at its upcoming manufacturing facility at Talegaon by nearly 60 per cent from Rs 7,000 crore to Rs 11,000 crore. The enhanced investment will not only lead to a jump in new capacity addition by around 1 lakh per annum at the Talegaon plant but could take the company's overall capacity in India to 1.1 million by 2028.

■ Hyundai Motor India Limited had acquired the Talegaon plant from General Motors in 2023-24

minister Devendra Fadnavis on Monday, September 18. A senior government functionary told *The Indian Express*, "There are big investments flowing into the state. On Monday, Hyundai's senior management came with a presentation and communicated that they are nearly doubling their investment, plant capacity and job creation opportunities at the upcoming Talegaon manufacturing plant." He further confirmed that the enhanced investment and plant capacity will nearly double the job creation opportunities by the company to around 12,000.

The decision was communicated to the state government by HMIL's managing director Unsoo Kim in a meeting with the chief

strengthening its investment commitment in Maharashtra, reaffirming its ambitious and long-term growth strategy. The company has increased its commitment from Rs 7,000 crore to Rs 11,000 crore for its upcoming manufacturing facility in Talegaon. This enhancement was announced during a meeting held between the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Shri. Devendra Fadnavis and the Managing Director of HMIL, Mr. Unsoo Kim, on September 15, 2023.

The company further said that the enhanced investment will support advanced manufacturing technologies, including a seventh-generation paint shop, automation tools, infrastructure upgrades, and future EV readiness. It also said that the Talegaon facility will cater to both domestic and export markets and is expected to generate about 7,600 direct and indirect employment opportunities.

HMIL had acquired General Motors India's Talegaon plant in 2023-24 and announced an investment of around Rs 6,000 crore at the plant to create a capacity of 1.74 lakh cars per year. The additional investment commitment is set to be directed towards advanced manufacturing technologies, future EV readiness and increase in production capacity at the Talegaon plant from 1.74 lakh per annum to 2.74 lakh per annum — taking the company's overall capacity in India to 1.1 million by 2028.

When contacted, the HMIL spokesperson confirmed the development and said, "Hyundai Motor India is significantly

BRIEFLY

India, UAE target to double non-oil, non-precious metal trade

Abu Dhabi: India and the UAE have set a target to double bilateral trade in non-oil and non-precious metal to USD 100 billion over the next 3-4 years, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Thursday. PTI

Net direct tax revenue jumps 9% till September 17

New Delhi: Net direct tax collection grew 9.18 percent so far this fiscal to over Rs 10.82 lakh crore due to higher advance tax mop-up from corporates and slower refunds. Refund issuances dropped 24 per cent to Rs 1.61 lakh crore between April 1 and September 17. PTI

RBI Governor: Fiscal discipline important to promote growth

Mumbai: RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra on Thursday emphasised on the importance of fiscal discipline for promoting economic growth and prosperity. Addressing the 35th Conference of State Finance Secretaries here, the Governor also stressed the need for the states to focus on improving the quality of expenditure and ensuring prudence in off-budget borrowings. PTI

Govt urges employees to opt for UPS before Sept 30

New Delhi: The Finance Ministry on Thursday asked government employees to opt for shifting to the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) well before the September 30 deadline and also permitted physical submission of opt-in request. PTI

Bank of England leave rates on hold, slows down QT

London: The Bank of England held its main interest rate at 4% on Thursday as UK inflation concerns weigh on policymakers. The decision was widely anticipated, as was the split of votes on the nine-member Monetary Policy Committee. AP

Indian oil cos' dividends stuck in Russia rise to around \$1.4 bn as repatriation efforts drag on

SUKALP SHARMA
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 18

INDIAN PUBLIC sector oil companies' stuck dividend income in Russia is estimated to have grown to nearly \$1.4 billion due to international payment channel-related restrictions following Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Dividend payments received by ONGC Videsh (OVL), Oil India (OIL), Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), and Bharat Petroleum Corporation (BPCL) arm Bharat PetroResources (BPL) from their stakes in Russian upstream oil projects are getting deposited in their bank accounts in Moscow with no effective mechanism to repatriate the money or use it in bilateral trade between India and Russia, according to sources in the know.

OVL, the overseas investment arm of Oil and Natural Gas

Corporation (ONGC), holds 20 per cent stake in the Sakhalin-1 project and 26 per cent in the Vankor project. The consortium of IOC, OIL, and BPCL has 23.9 per cent share in Vankor and 29.9 per cent in the Taas-Yuryakh project. Close to \$1 billion of the stranded dividends belong to the consortium of IOC, OIL, and BPCL, as per industry estimates. Around \$400 million in dividends belonging to OVL

are also stuck.

The dividend income is being credited into their bank accounts in roubles. The bank in Russia where the money is accumulating is understood to be the Commercial Indo Bank (CIBL), an affiliate of the State Bank of India (SBI). The matter has been taken up time and again by the Indian companies with their Russian partners over the past three years. It has also featured in government-to-government discussions between New Delhi and Moscow, but a resolution is still awaited due to various complications arising from Western sanctions on Russia's financial and its energy sectors. Soon after the war in Ukraine broke out, a number of major Russian banks were banned from the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) financial transaction processing system, seriously

constricting Moscow's ability to access the global payments system. Russia also restricted repatriation of US dollars out of the country in a bid to curb foreign exchange volatility.

With the money stuck in Russia, the only viable options would be to use it for payments there, increase investments in Russia, and fund operational and capital expenditure requirements of existing projects, according to executives with the Indian oil companies. However, the dividend payments being received are after deduction of operational expenses and there is no plan at present to invest more capital into the ongoing projects. Also, the companies are currently not exploring investments in any new project in Russia, which leaves us the money for payments as the only feasible option.

FULL REPORTON
www.indianexpress.com

Key EPFO services now available with single login for members: Mandaviya

Tech Mahindra, IIT-B consortium among 8 entities selected to build domestic AI models

SOUMYARENDRABARIK
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 18

AI governance framework soon

INLINE with its aim to support the development of domestic artificial intelligence (AI) models, the government has selected eight more start-ups to build indigenous Large Language Models (LLMs) and sector-specific Small Language Models (SLMs), which includes the likes of Tech Mahindra, Fractal Analytics, Avatar AI, Zeinteig Aitech Innovation, and the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay consortium's BharatGen, among others. Earlier, the government had selected four start-ups for building such models, including Sarvam, Sokeet AI, Gan AI, and Gnan AI. Aside from those mentioned above, the government has also selected Genloop Intelligence, NeuroDX, and Shodh AI to build LLMs as well as SLMs.

"Our selection of partners for developing models is also changing... that's adapting to the latest thought in the technical world that models which are focused on solving the problems of a particular sector will be more effective, have more utility, and be more in demand," Union Electronics and Information Technology Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told reporters.

The minister said that while it will continue to focus on large models, it will be in sector-specific

Accelerate asset monetisation across sectors: Sebi Chairman



Tuhin Kanta Pandey, Chairman, Sebi.

File

HITESH VYAS
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 18

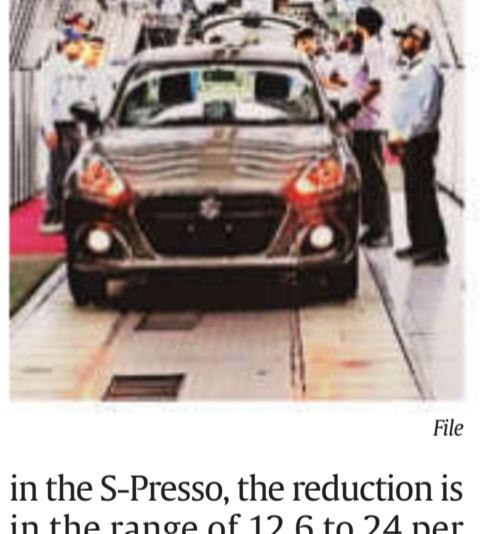
THE SECURITIES and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) Chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey on Thursday called for faster asset monetisation efforts across sectors such as roads, railways and ports to support infrastructure development.

Pandey said that the asset monetisation plan of the Central government has played a key role in development of the market for Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvITs). "Going forward, there is a need to accelerate asset monetisation in various sectors such as roads, railways, ports, airports, energy, petroleum and gas and logistics. State governments, barring a few, are yet to crystallise asset monetisation plans to provide further boost to infrastructure creation. This gap needs to be addressed," Pandey said at a conclave organised by the National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development. FULL REPORTON
www.indianexpress.com

SOUMYARENDRABARIK
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 18

THE COUNTRY'S largest carmaker, Maruti Suzuki, has decided to pass on the full benefits of the revamped Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime, and has announced price cuts ranging from Rs 46,400 to Rs 1.29 lakh across its portfolio. The company's smaller variants, including hatchbacks and mini SUVs, will see the sharpest cuts. The revised prices will come into effect from September 22, 2025, in line with the updated GST regulations and the move also coincides with the upcoming festive season. Entry-level cars such as the S-Presso and Alto K10 will see the steepest cuts, with reductions of up to Rs 1.29 lakh and Rs 1.07 lakh, respectively. SUVs like Fronx and Brezza have also seen reduction by up to Rs 1.12 lakh.

A source close to the company said that the price cuts in entry-level cars are much beyond the GST reduction. For instance,



File

in the S-Presso, the reduction is in the range of 12.6 to 24 per cent, and in the case of the Alto K10, the cuts are in the range of 10.6 to 20 per cent. For the Celerio, it is between 8.6 to 17 per cent and in the Wagon R, the reduction is in the range of 8.7 to 17 per cent.

For Maruti Suzuki, these cuts could boost its small car sales, a segment which has been declining in the last few years, as it hopes that people shifting from a two-wheeler to a car would pick one of its budget offerings.

Under GST 2.0, small cars with

engine capacity not exceeding 1200 cc (petrol) and 1500 cc (diesel) and with length not over 4 metres will be in the 18 per cent slab, as opposed to the earlier 28 per cent slab. For petrol cars that have an engine capacity of more than 1200 cc, and diesel cars with an engine capacity of more than 1500 cc, and a length of over 4 metres, the GST rate now would be 40 per cent as against 28 per cent earlier.

The GST reductions have come at a critical juncture for the car industry, which has seen four consecutive months of declining passenger vehicle sales, signalling consumer distress, especially at the lower end of the market. A total of 321,840 vehicles were dispatched from factories to dealerships last month, an 8.8 per cent decline from 352,921 units a year earlier, showed data issued by industry body Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers.

FULL REPORTON
www.indianexpress.com

ISF: Cut GST on flexi-staffing to 5%, employment is 'merit service'

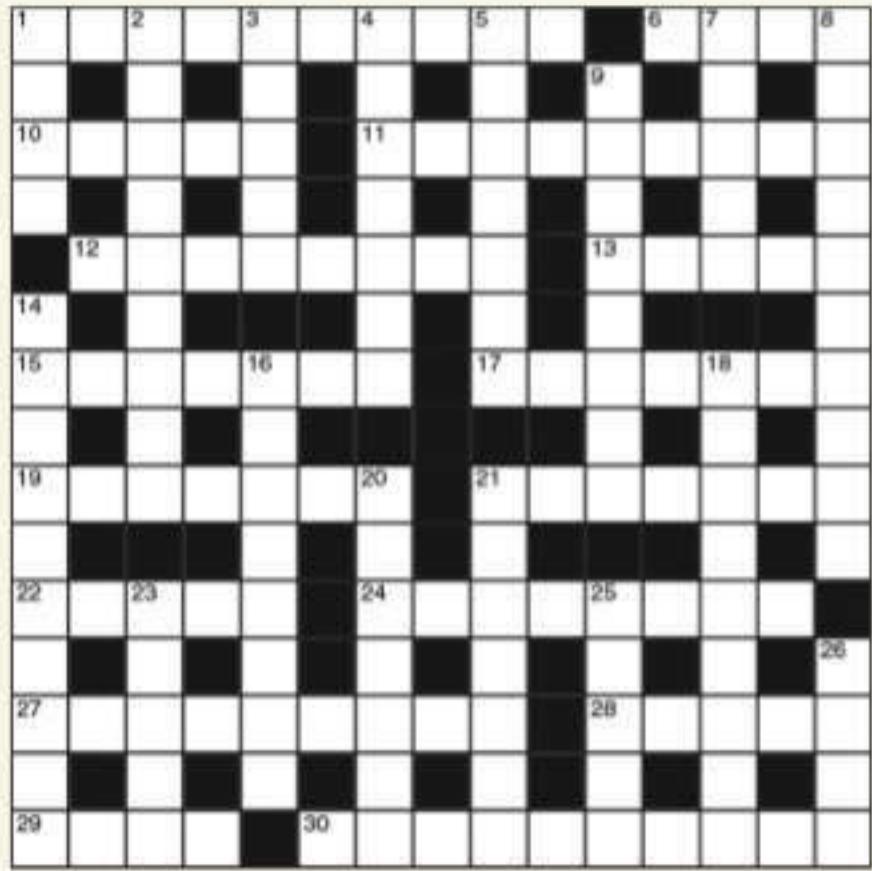
AGGAM WALIA
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 18ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 18

THE 18 PER CENT GST on temporary staffing services—often an input cost for firms—will create an anomaly after the recent cut in levies on several output goods from 18 per cent and 12 per cent to 5 per cent. Indian Staffing Federation (ISF) President Lohit Bhattacharya said on Thursday. Flouting the GST inversion, Bhattacharya urged that the rate be cut to 5 per cent, adding that ISF has raised the issue with the authorities.

In 2024-25, 72 lakh workers were employed through tripartite contracts with flexi-staffing firms and client companies across sectors, ISF said in a report. The flexi-staffing industry generated Rs 1.9 lakh crore in revenue and paid Rs 34,000 crore in GST, as per the report. "After GST 2.0, many product categories and industries have seen rates reduced from 18 per cent and 12 per cent to 5 per cent. We are a big input because we provide them with human capital. Earlier, they would set off the input against the output. Now, their output has much lower GST, but they still have 18 per cent GST on human capital," Bhattacharya said.

FULL REPORTON
www.indianexpress.com

CROSSWORD 5785



ACROSS

- 1 Choir takes a salad of vegetables (10)
- 6 A mother may be the making of a man (4)
- 10 One of two keys I found in the kennel (5)
- 11 How a mill hand will tell a story? (4,1,4)
- 12 Canst not be shaken (8)
- 13 He admits he doesn't have to pay the rent (5)
- 15 Lies with rib fractured? Absurd! (7)
- 17 Grave words for those who are late (7)
- 19 Holy man in no spirit for a quack remedy (7)
- 21 Alterations in the bellringer's programme (7)
- 22 It's a very much used as a prefix (5)
- 24 Idly following one's fancy as a scribbler (8)
- 27 The handy way? (9)
- 28 About to be sold as a concern may be (5)

DOWN

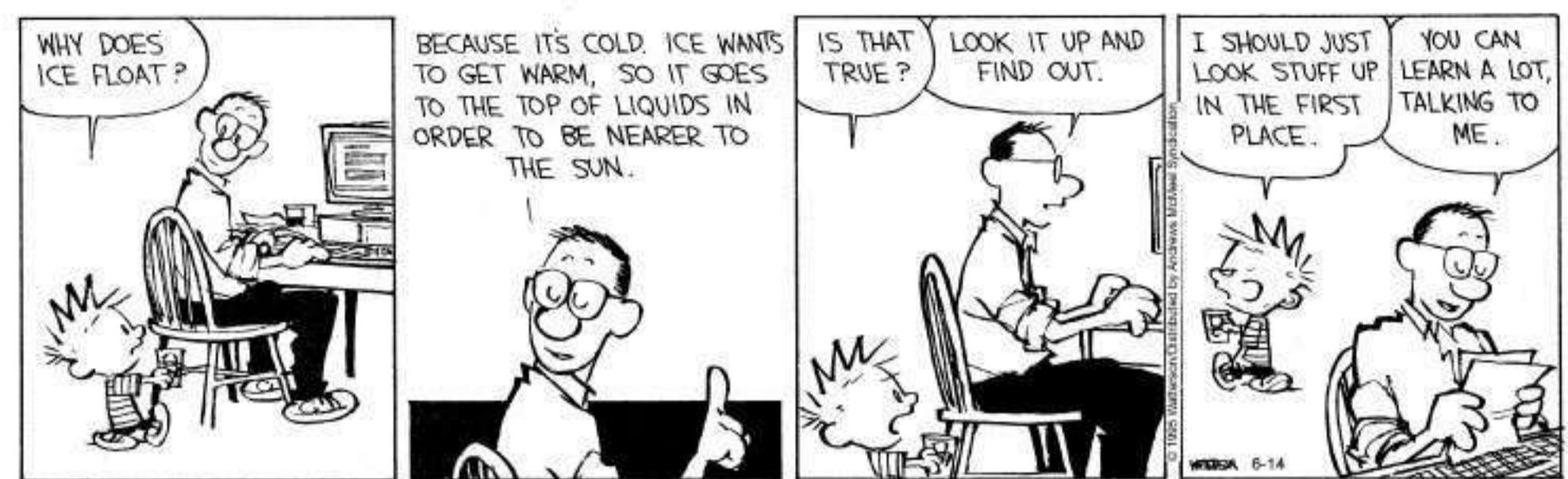
- 29 It's socially acceptable to be cheated (4)
- 30 Eat up, Peter, in order to carry on (10)
- 1 Principal means of support (4)
- 2 They're slow to put out stories (9)
- 3 Yells, screams and shrieks (5)
- 4 Actors are seen here so agent goes round (2,5)
- 5 Letter reveals that pet lies ill (7)
- 7 Depicted as haggard-looking (5)
- 8 King's man gets on in parade before it's disrupted (10)
- 9 State of a girl in America (8)
- 14 Declared it's marked (10)
- 16 Private quarters (8)
- 18 Foreign money in a foreign land (9)
- 20 She makes personal deliveries (7)
- 21 Big shot in the film world? (5-2)
- 23 The point of growing roses (5)
- 25 Ray is underweight (5)
- 26 A complaint I'd not put in a guide (4)

Solutions Crossword 5784 Across: 1 Measles, 5 Roast beef, 9 Spa, 10 Thaw, 12 Mainmast, 14 Dogged, 15 Penned, 17 Specific, 18 Arab, 21 Pea, 22 Edelweiss, 24 Needy, 25 Samoyed Down: 1 Marat, 2 Ada, 3 Late, 4 Seesaw, 5 Offences, 6 Abstainer, 7 Enacted, 11 Aggregate, 13 Delivery, 14 Dustpan, 16 Divers, 19 Based, 20 Swan, 23 icy

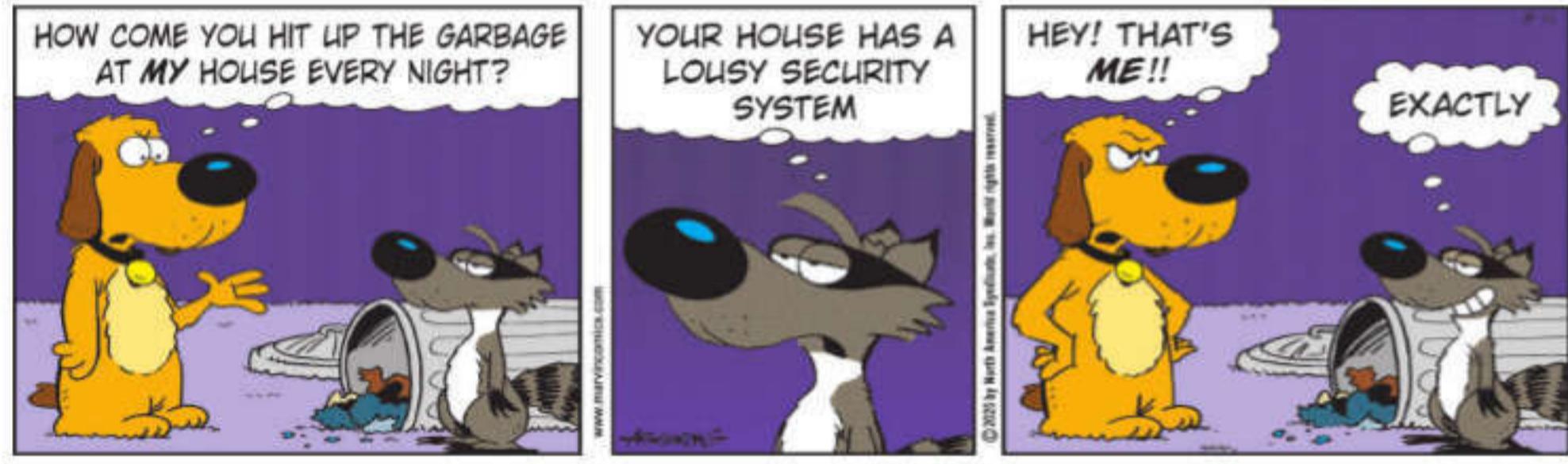
OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBES by Bill Watterson



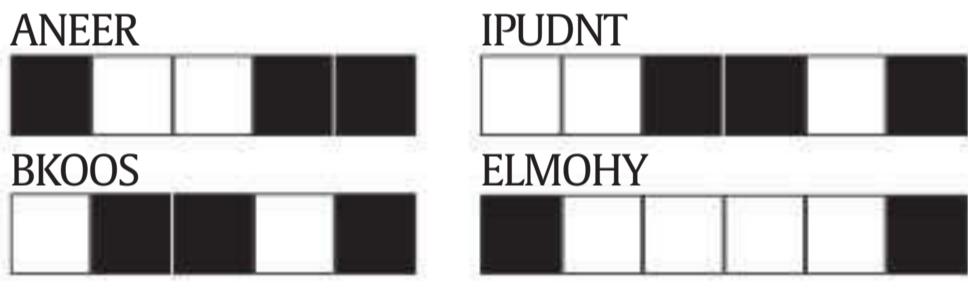
MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



JUMBLED WORDS

Below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.

Art is the ____ of the human soul, gathered on wings of misery and travail. - Theodore Dreiser (6,5)



Solution: RANEER, PUDNIT, HOMELY, ELMOTH. Art is the jumbled word of the human soul, gathered on wings of misery and travail. - Theodore Dreiser

Difficulty Level 3

Instructions
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

6		4				2	6	8	1	9	3
4	3	9	6			5	3	1	4	2	7
	6		1	3							
7	8		9			7	9	4	8	6	5
9			4			3	4	1	7	5	8
2		5	7			1	2	3	8	5	9
9	1		7			4	1	2	7	6	5
5	9	3	1			6	5	9	2	1	8
	5		2			7	8	5	9	2	3

Difficulty Level

1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy;
3s = Medium; 4s = Hard;
5s = Very Hard;
6s = Genius

SOLUTION SUDOKU 6080

5	7	4	2	6	8	1	9	3
6	9	8	5	3	1	4	2	7
2	3	1	7	9	4	8	6	5
9	6	3	4	1	7	5	8	2
4	1	2	3	8	5	9	7	6
7	8	5	9	2	6	3	4	1
3	4	7	6	5	9	2	1	8
1	5	6	8	4	2	7	3	9
8	2	9	1	7	3	6	5	4

DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

Your life is now slightly more relaxed than it was a short time ago. Remembering that astrology is about what you do for yourself, rather than what happens to you. You may find any way you can to pamper yourself and do precisely what you want.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

Partnership still holds the key to a successful day. So even if you have doubts about linking up with particular people, you should put them aside. As you know, it takes two to tango. You might be surprised by the person who offers you the best advice.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

The coming clash of aspirations will be between your private desires and the way you want the world to see you. Try to find a middle ground, reconciling family pressures with career and public ambitions. It could be easier than you think.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

It is a serious sort of a day, and you will be in a mood to make long-term

commitments. This may mean that current obligations come under scrutiny, and you might decide you're not pulling your weight. The pleasure principle remains strong, so enjoy.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

You may now day-dream and fantasise to your heart's content. The plain fact is that once you start seriously exercising your imagination, you will begin to see the way forward through some very down-to-earth matters, like the next step in a financial venture.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

Todays Solar alignments are among the most important of the month. You are likely to experience hold-ups and difficulties, but the result could be to push you into a life that is more worthwhile. Plus, there is little you can't deal with by being charming.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

Venus steps up its influence soon,

maintaining a relationship with several planets, including Jupiter, which will help you win friends and influence people who have never been susceptible to your charms. You can therefore afford to feel encouraged about the future.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

Venus's emotional status will reinforce your desire to be alone. If you decide to emerge from your shell, you will surprise yourself with a new-found confidence. You never know: you might just create the right impression on the right person.

CORPORATE BRIEFS



UPDATE (DOT)

Joy Mini Train to be Introduced to Boost Tourism – Tourism Minister Shambhuraj Desai

The state government is making efforts to promote tourism activities at key tourist destinations. Tourism Minister Shambhuraj Desai has directed officials to prepare a comprehensive proposal to start two 'Joy Mini Trains' in the Mahabaleshwar-Tapola and Koynanagar-Nehrungar areas. Minister Desai was speaking at a meeting held at the Meghdoot Government Residence to discuss the introduction of the Joy Mini Train. The meeting was attended by Dr. Atul Patre, Principal Secretary of the Tourism Department; Dr. B.N. Patil, Director of Tourism; and Niles Ghatne, Managing Director of the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation. Minister Desai stated that the 'Joy Mini Train' is a very popular initiative at important tourist locations across the country, attracting tourists and allowing them to explore destinations in a short amount of time. He emphasized that this initiative should be launched at significant tourist spots within the state. He further directed the department to prepare a proposal for this initiative on the lines of the Matheran train. The proposal should include obtaining all necessary local permits, addressing all technical aspects, and assessing the financial viability of the project. Minister Desai instructed the department to ensure that the project can be launched in a very attractive manner with low costs.

UPDATE (KRCL)

CMD, KRCL Shri Santosh Kumar Jha's New Poetry Collection "Syahi Ka Sipahi" Released

Shri Santosh Kumar Jha, Chairman & Managing Director, Konkan Railway Corporation Limited (KRCL), is an experienced administrator and railway professional as well as a noted poet. With three published



poetry collections to his credit, he has been contributing to Hindi literature through his reflective and expressive writings. On the occasion of Diwali during the 5th All India Rajbhasha Conference held at Gandhinagar, Gujarat, Shri Santosh Kumar Jha's fourth poetry collection, "Syahi Ka Sipahi", was formally released. The book was unveiled by Hon'ble Union Minister o-Your data has been truncated.

UPDATE (KCA)

Canara Catholic Association, Mumbai Celebrates Monti Fest with Devotion and Community Spirit

The Canara Catholic Association (KCA), a charitable institution founded in 1901, celebrated Monti Saibinnichem Fest (Monti Fest)- the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, with devotion and fervor at its premises in Mumbai. Over the decades, KCA has carried forward its rich legacy of service to the Kanarite community and beyond, particularly through initiatives such as the KCA Hostels and Halls. The event witnessed an atmosphere of joy, faith, and togetherness as families came together to honor the birth of Mother Mary and share in the blessings of the new harvest.

UPDATE (JNPA)

JNPA SEZ Achieves 100% Green Energy Milestone Through Wind Power Agreement

Jawahar Nehru Port Authority (JNPA) - India's Largest Container Port, in a landmark step towards sustainability, has declared that JNPA- Special Economic Zone (SEZ) has successfully transitioned to 100% green energy for its operations. The SEZ has entered into a new short-term open access agreement to procure 6.0 MW of grid-connected wind power, effective September 1, 2025, at a significantly reduced rate of Rs. 3.11/KWH. Speaking on the achievement, Shri Unmesh Sharad Wagh, IRS, Chairperson, JNPA, and CMD, VPLL, said, "At JNPA, we firmly believe that sustainability and growth must go hand in hand. The transition of our SEZ to 100% green energy reflects our vision of creating a responsible, future-ready industrial ecosystem. This initiative not only reduces our environmental impact but also offers competitive advantages to industries operating within the SEZ. By leading this green shift, JNPA is reaffirming its role as a frontrunner in driving India's sustainable port-led industrial development. JNPA SEZ plays a pivotal role in our node-to-network strategy, enabling us to go beyond terminal services and solidify our position as a comprehensive port ecosystem player." This achievement underscores the relentless efforts of JNPA in steering towards impactful green initiatives and highlights its leadership in shaping a sustainable future for the port and logistics sector.

UPDATE (TATA POWER)

Tata Power's CFO Sanjeev Churiwala honoured with 'CFO of the Year' award 2024-25 by CII

Tata Power, one of India's largest integrated power companies, is proud to announce that its Chief Financial Officer, Mr. Sanjeev Churiwala, has been conferred with the prestigious 'CFO of the Year' award across all categories by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) at the 4th Edition of the CII CFO Excellence Awards 2024-2025

held in Hyderabad. The recognition underscores Mr. Churiwala's outstanding contribution to driving financial excellence, sustainable growth, and strategic value creation. This award, considered one of the most prestigious recognitions for finance leaders in the country, was presented to him in the presence of Shri Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu, Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister, Telangana and other dignitaries along with eminent gathering of industry leaders, policymakers, and business stalwarts. Under Mr. Churiwala's leadership, Tata Power has strengthened its financial resilience, advanced digital transformation in finance, and aligned capital allocation with its long-term clean energy ambitions.

UPDATE (CR)

Central Railway realises over Rs100 Crores as Penalty from 17.19 Lakh Cases of unauthorised and ticketless travellers.

Central Railway, in its unwavering commitment to provide a safe, smooth and comfortable travel experience to its valued passengers, has stepped up its efforts to curb unauthorised and ticketless travel across its network. Through intensified and systematic ticket checking drives, the Railway has achieved significant results during the financial year 2025-26 (April to August 2025). During this period, Central Railway's dedicated ticket checking teams apprehended 17.19 lakh passengers travelling without ticket, with improper or invalid travel authority, and realised a record penalty amount of Rs100.50 crores.

BRIEFLY**Sydney runs second fastest 400m ever**

Tokyo: There was already little to doubt about **Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone's** legacy as one of the all-time great track athletes. On Thursday in Tokyo, on the track where she won the Olympic gold in 2021 with the 400m Hurdles world record (which she has broken a few more times since), the American superstar produced another magical performance. Sydney became the first woman in nearly 40 years to crack 48 seconds in the 400 meters Thursday, running 47.78 in a historically fast one-lap race at the world championships. The hurdle world-record holder now holds the second-fastest 400m of all time, while – according to World Athletics – for the first time in history two women dipped under 48 seconds in a single 400m race. ENS

Teams pick archers in player draft for APL

New Delhi: World number ones Andrea Becerra (compound) and Brady Ellison (recurve) are among 48 top archers who will compete in the inaugural Archery Premier League (APL), the first-ever franchise based event, at the Yamuna Sports Complex here from October 2 to 12. Other top foreign archers featuring in the six-team league are world number six Matias Grande of Mexico (recurve), and women numero uno Mike Schloesser of Netherlands (compound). The Indian archers were picked based on world rankings as well as Archery Association of India's (AAI) recent selection trials. In recurve, world No. 3 Deepika and world No. 14 Dhiraj lead the field, alongside veterans Tarundeep Rai and Atanu Das. The APL, launched by AAI, will feature six teams -- Prithviraj Yodhas (Delhi), Rajputana Royals (Rajasthan), Chola Chiefs (Tamil Nadu), Kanyakumari Knights (Telangana), Chera Archers (Jharkhand) and Mighty Marathas (Maharashtra). PTI

PSG win, Liverpool score late again

London: Title holder Paris Saint-Germain roared to victory in the Champions League on Wednesday, and Liverpool found yet another late winning goal in its stunning start to the season. Liverpool captain Virgil van Dijk soared to score with a header in the second minute of stoppage time to seal a 3-2 win over Atletico Madrid when it seemed his team was going to waste a two-goal lead seized after just six minutes. Bayern Munich and Inter Milan both won rematches of past finals -- against Chelsea and Ajax, respectively -- to start their eight-game league-phase programs, and newcomers Bodo/Glimt and Pafos impressed with hard-earned draws on the road. PSG cruised to a 4-0 win at home over Atalanta. AP

CHINA MASTERS SUPER 750**Satwik-Chirag continue their momentum; Sindhu defeats World No 6****SHIVANI NAIK**

MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 18

IT'S BEEN a surfeit of left-right combinations for Satwicksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty to face, since last Tuesday at Hong Kong. It can be disorienting playing those two side angles. But just like that, while getting on with their everyday assignments, the Indian duo have grown to be comfortable against that deceptive pattern that used to once bother them mightily.

After beating their fifth 'leftie-rightie' combo in six matches when they ousted one half of reigning Olympic champion Wang Chi Lin in a new partnership with Chiu Hsiang Chieh 21-13, 21-12, Satwik-Chirag are preparing to take on their sixth L-R (left-right) opponents.

This is Chinese Ren Xiang Yu and Xie Haonan. The Indians beat Ren and his partner in an earlier iteration, and have slightly more painful memories of Xie Haonan.

Playing at the All England in Round 2 against Haonan and his then partner this year, the Indians had to cede the match after Chirag aggravated his back and was out for a few months in pain, agony and stoic rehab.

WORLD ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS

For Neeraj, no throwback in Tokyo

At venue of his Olympic glory, Chopra finishes 8th in the javelin final; says he didn't want to tell anyone about recent 'back issue'

VINAYAK MOHANARANGAN
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 18

HE WAS already destined for greatness, but Tokyo Olympics was the event that truly established Neeraj Chopra's place in the country's collective sporting consciousness. The country's first-ever track and field Olympic Games champion. He went where no Indian had gone before him. On Thursday, back at the same arena, he experienced what he hadn't in many years. 2,566 days, to be exact. For the first time since September 2018, Neeraj was outside the top three in an event he participated in, as he finished eighth at the Tokyo Athletics Championships to bring an end to – arguably – the most remarkable podium streak in Indian sport.

"Kaifi time baad dekh raha hoon mein. (I am seeing this after a long time)." Neeraj told reporters at the venue afterward. "I had some problems before coming to Tokyo. Two weeks ago, I had some back issues but didn't want to tell anyone."

Indeed, it's not a place Neeraj is used to. Even at the Paris Olympics last year, Neeraj sounded despondent despite winning a magnificent silver to finish behind only a freakish mega throw by Arshad Nadeem. He opened up after the event about the body not feeling right for a long time, how his groin niggle was making life difficult, and that burning desire to find that one big throw. While Neeraj has remained in good physical health for most of 2025, breaching 90m at the start of the season, the sudden back niggle derailed his title defence.

Neeraj and coach Jan Zelezny came into the event knowing they wouldn't be able to nail a good throw technically. Neeraj also had issues with his run-up in the earlier throws, and in trying to protect his back, he was falling towards the left after releasing. With time running out, Neeraj needed a big effort with his 5th throw to stay away from elimination but with rain picking up, he slipped and tumbled beyond the foul line.

"We used to do a shot put throw as part of our training, back throw and front throw. As soon as I tried to do the front throw by bending forward, I felt a jerk on my back on the left side, I felt a pull... that is the side I use to block when I throw with my left leg," Neeraj explained in a video uploaded by NNIS Sports.

"After that, I couldn't even walk properly. This happened on the 4th, in the evening session. We went to Prague the next day and got an MRI done; there was a problem with my disc. I continued my rehab after reaching Tokyo, and I wasn't sure if I would be able to participate, but decided to go ahead."

While there wasn't an indication during the Qualification round on Wednesday that Neeraj wasn't 100% physically fit, there were enough signs that the final on Thursday was going to be a wild one. And it exceeded even the wildest imaginations as 2012 London Olympic champion Keshorn Walcott walked away with the gold medal, winning the World Championships for the first time since his last Major triumph 13 years ago. He was the only athlete in the 12-man final to cross 88m on the night, clinching gold with 88.16m.

"Olympic victory at the age of 19 was incredible. I could never beat it. But every World Championship I hoped I was ready. I have been fighting for this but I was always off the podium. I even thought that the championships are not my competition. But I never gave up. If I had given up, I would not be here," Walcott told World Athletics. And perhaps in that, Neeraj – still only 27 years old – can see the silver lining too, knowing that this doesn't have to be more than just a minor blip in his already GOAld collection of medals.

But there was another reason to smile. While Neeraj's hope of somehow pulling off one throw that made the difference didn't



Neeraj Chopra was not at his best as he could manage a best throw of 84.03m. Trinidad and Tobago's Keshorn Walcott won the gold. AP

JAVELIN PODIUM

1 Keshorn Walcott	88.16m
2 Anderson Peters	87.38m
3 Curtis Thompson	86.67m
4 Sachin Yadav	86.27m
5 Julian Weber	86.11m
6 Julius Yego	85.54m
7 Rumesh Pathirage	84.38m
8 Neeraj Chopra	84.03m

quite pan out, he can take heart from the fact that India were the only country to have two participants in the final and his younger compatriot nearly clinched bronze. In his interview with the reporters, one of the first things Neeraj mentioned was how happy he felt to see India's Sachin Yadav throw a new Personal Best and come less than half a meter from the podium.

Truly global

His 86.27m was just 40 cms short of Curtis Thompson's bronze medal-clinching 86.67m, while Grenada's Anderson Peters made it a Caribbean 1-2 with a 87.38m mark. In another sign that the men's javelin discipline has gone truly global, Tokyo 2025 marked the first time in the history of men's javelin throw at the World Championships that no European finished in the top three, just as it had transpired in 2024 at Paris Olympics. Only last year, it was an Asian 1-2 with Neeraj and Nadeem – but the Indian and Pakistani athletes finished 8th and 10th respectively.

Neeraj, perhaps still hurting inside, put up a brave front and vowed to learn from this rarest of rare missteps. "Pata nahi, matlab teekh hai... life hai, sports hai."

When Trinidad and Tobago's Keshorn Walcott won the gold against the odds, Bartonietz was congratulated by two greats – world record holder Jan Zelezny, Chopra's coach, and Sergey Makarov, India's foreign coach and a multiple medal winner. Neeraj's return to Tokyo, a city where he was crowned Olympic champion, ended in disappointment when he finished eighth, a 'back problem' hurting his chances, but Bartonietz tasted success once again as Walcott's coach.

Last year, the Chopra-Bartonietz partnership ended after the German expressed the desire to spend more time with his family. But when Walcott's manager got in touch with him towards the end of last year, his itch to coach an elite-level athlete got the better of him.

"Coaching of Walcott started off with phone calls once a week and then over WhatsApp. Then, after a training session he would update me and we would discuss," Bartonietz told The Indian Express from Tokyo.

The coach was having a late dinner after the final, but there was a beeline turning up at his table to congratulate him. After all, this was Walcott's first medal at a World Championships, 13 years after his 2012

Dr. Klaus, javelin's Santa, delivers again

NIHAL KOSHIE

NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 18

A FAMILIAR bespectacled face was present in the coaches' bay during the men's javelin final at the World Athletics Championships. Germany's Dr Klaus Bartonietz, a biomechanics expert credited with guiding Neeraj Chopra to two Olympic and two World Championships medals, was in another corner this time.

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Klaus Bartonietz (L) with Jan Zelezny at Tokyo World Championships. Screengrab

developing his strong points. First of all, he had to stay healthy and then from a biomechanical point of view, it is about supporting in the right way," he said.

The angle of release was one of the areas of focus. "The angle of release and acceleration make a difference. You could see that some javelins yesterday in qualification landed vertically into the ground."

After multiple calls, between Walcott and Bartonietz, they first met in Lisbon, Portugal, in April. "He knows the people there, he has a little structure there with a good physio. I also have friends in Portugal. So that worked out well," Bartonietz said.

Growing potatoes

Along with Walcott's success, what has given Bartonietz joy is his potato farm back home in Oberschleitbachen, a 140-resident village in south-west Germany. "In April I had to plant potatoes and before that, prepare the ground to grow them. They grew well and at the end of July, I could harvest them."

He visits the nearby forests to cut firewood and also for trekking. Asked if coaching Walcott signalled that he had come out of retirement, Bartonietz said his current position did not take up as much of his time as it did when he was training Chopra. "This is not as intense as it was with Neeraj, and not like it takes all of my time." Once Walcott takes a much-deserved break, the two will talk about the future. "Maybe, the next is the Commonwealth Games," Bartonietz said.

In his typical understated style, Bartonietz underplayed his role in Walcott's success. "He is an experienced athlete so I didn't try to change much, but it was about

the end of July, I could harvest them."

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Before that he will return to Oberschleitbachen he will farm, trek and drink water from a fountain in the middle of the village.

Satwik-Chirag continue their momentum; Sindhu defeats World No 6



Satwik-Chirag will play China's Ren Xiang Yu and Xie Haonan. Badminton Photo

give 100 pc tomorrow," he added.

One thing the Indians would want to correct from Hong Kong where they lost the finals to Liang Wei-keng - Wang Chang, is in giving points in a bunch. "In Hong Kong we

made easy mistakes. It was an easy game in the second, but neck to neck we gave easy points. So it went to third. Today we focussed just on the first four strokes. And service - receiving, service - receiving. Then we'll see if

they can come up with a rally or something," Satwik explained.

Their opponents are interesting for another reason. Xie Haonan, the almost six footer left hander, became unintentionally famous in China after videos of his 'Watermelon Challenge'. It's a wildly popular trend in China and Tik Tok, where shuttlers with big smashes attack a stationary watermelon sitting on a chair and try to crack it open, like with a karate chop, but using the Belgian corks to dent the outer shell.

Lin Dan is supposed to have smashed one open once, but Haonan is reasonably famous.

In front of him will be two Indians who aren't too shabby at smashing either.

Sindhu beats World No 6

PV Sindhu made the China Masters quarters, her third of the year with a 21-15, 21-15 symmetry against World No 6 Pornsawee Chochuwong, and took her H2H to 7-5.

Sindhu's problem - where strategy

needed to be summoned and power wasn't enough - was always against deceptive players. Chochuwong has those excellent drops that fall like snow crystals at the net. Sindhu hadn't beaten the Thai for three years since June of '22.

It was the stance and the diagonal movements to front court, the lunge - and recovery for the next return, and moving from the Central T, with decisive footwork to defend, that saw the Indian prevail.

A particularly heartening retrieve was for 18-13 in the second, when Sindhu dived to the left to swat back a low hovering shot along the lines and then crucially recovered, bouncing off her palms (or fingertip) like a jungle cat changing direction. Chochuwong had kept pace till 13-13 and was threatening a late surge, but Sindhu's easy defense brought on errors as the Thai was forced to go for the lines and sailed out helplessly repeatedly.

With a run of 5 straight points she didn't

allow the Thai to harbour hopes of flipping the pressure on the Indian, in the second.

This was achieved with a slightly faster clip on defensive strokes, returning the shuttle a split second earlier, and a solid attack,

not extravagant or anything, to suck errors out of Chochuwong. This good run can get upturned on Friday when she faces An Se-young, who is 7-0 up on her. The Korean who missed out on the world title, however, will not be terribly glad to play a rejuvenated Sindhu, with nothing to lose, and who has coach Irvansyah calmly plotting for her.

Jurel's counter, solid Padikkal lead India A strong response

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
SEPTEMBER 18



EXPRESS
AT ASIACUP

SANDIP G
DUBAI, SEPTEMBER 18

WICKETKEEPER BATSMAN Dhruv Jurel put up a commanding show to lead India A's strong reply against Australia A in the first unofficial Test at Lucknow's Ekana Stadium on Thursday. Jurel's unbeaten 113 and his unbroken 181 run stand with Devdutt Padikkal helped India A recover from a slight wobble in the middle as they ended Day 3 at 403/4 with one day to go in the match which is headed for a draw unless the host's attack puts up an inspiring show on the final day, Friday.

For the third consecutive day in the match, the day's proceedings were delayed because of wet outfield due to the overnight rain. And in the first session where only 30 minutes of play was possible, India A ended up losing its overnight batsman opener N Jagadeesan for 64 with pacer Xavier Bartlett inducing an edge to the wicketkeeper.

Once Jagadeesan departed, the other overnight batsman B Sai Sudharsan and Padikkal added 76 runs for third wicket with the former doing the bulk of the scoring. The promising left-hander who made his Test debut in England, played a vital knock of 73 off 124 deliveries in an innings that included 10 boundaries. However, the 23-year-old failed to convert his inning into a big one as he was trapped in front by left-arm spinner Cooper Connolly.

Sai Sudharsan's dismissal brought Shreyas Iyer into the middle. The Mumbaikar who lost out on his Test spot during the 2024 home series against England, has struggled to earn his spot back with his appearances in red-ball cricket being limited due to his India white-ball commitments.

Poor show by Shreyas

With a strong game against the spinners, Shreyas is still looked at by India's think tank as an option, in particular for the home conditions where his aggressive intent would suit the team.

After making 25 & 12 in the lone Duleep Trophy fixture against Central Zone, leading the India A side, Shreyas' stay lasted all of 13 deliveries as he returned to the pavilion after making 8 to off-spinner Corey Rocchiccioli.

Though they lost two quick wickets, Padikkal and Jurel then took control of situation. The left-right duo recovered slowly with the Karnataka batsman showing immense patience in the middle as he went about constructing a big knock in the traditional old fashion, getting to his half-century off 117 deliveries.

With Padikkal being solid at one end, Jurel once again showed why he remains the next best wicketkeeper behind Rishabh Pant.

Having made strong calls for his inclusion as a specialist batsman even with Pant around, this was another knock where he made a strong case. Despite the pressure firmly on the hosts, he launched a stunning counter-attack scoring 10 boundaries and four sixes in all.

The UP wicketkeeper brought up his century off 114 deliveries. His three sixes came in the V, while his 10 boundaries were spread across the park with six of them coming between deep square-leg and mid-wicket.

He was particularly severe on off-spinner Rocchiccioli, taking him for 47 runs off just 46 deliveries including three sixes.

Connolly too ended up conceding over a run a ball to Jurel (25 off 24) as he safely played out Todd Murphy, the mystical off-spinner who has a well-disguised carrom ball up his sleeve.

Going into the final day on Friday, India A's still trail Australia A by 129 runs.

BRIEF SCORES: Australia A 532 for 6 dec vs India A 403/4 (D) Jurel 113 n.o, D Padikkal 86 n.o, B Sai Sudharsan 73, N Jagadeesan 64.

WRESTLING WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

Antim, who considered 'quitting after Olympics', wins second bronze

MIHIR VASAVDA
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 18

THE VIDEO, just over a year old, shows a visibly distressed 20-year-old in national team gear, stepping out of the Delhi airport. A soft toy bounces on her shoulder bag as the byte-hungry cameras swarm. Her family forms a shield, hustling her past the prying mics and into a waiting SUV. Antim Panghal had just returned from Paris – out in the first round of the Olympics, then deported for breaking Games protocol. No glory, just intense scrutiny.

Thirteen months later, the wrestler will fly home from another major championship. This time, with a medal around her neck and, her father Ramniwas hopes, a warmer welcome. "Iss baar mein khud jaonga beti ka swagat karne (I'll myself go to welcome my daughter)," he says.

Antim, on Thursday, became only the second Indian woman, after Vinesh Phogat, to win two World Championship medals, defeating two-time European champion Jonna Malmgren of Sweden 9-1 to win the bronze in the 53kg category. Incidentally, Vinesh had beaten the same opponent three years ago for her second World Championship medal.



Antim Panghal defeated Jonna Malmgren of Sweden 9-1. FilePhoto/UWW

turned into lingering sadness and Antim says she 'thought of quitting the sport'. Scared of facing people, she did not even go home from the airport. "I went to my mama's place and

stayed there for five days away from everyone," she says.

When she finally returned home, Antim locked herself in a room. "She didn't step out

of that tiny room for a week," Ramniwas says. "We had to talk her out of that zone. We reminded her that this wasn't the end of the world for her."

Antim adds: "Yeh bhi hua ki chod de (I also felt like quitting). It had become that kind of a situation. But my family and my coach told me that it was just one bout. You are still young, you will get another shot at the Olympics."

The way she is wrestling now – on the attack all the time – Antim hasn't shown signs of any residual disappointment from last year. When Ramniwas spoke to her on Wednesday after she lost in the semifinals, Antim was 'sad'. She'd landed in Zagreb hoping to win a gold medal. But she did not brood much. "I told myself, 'Let's win the bronze at least.'

Maturing wrestler

It's a sign of a maturing wrestler. A year ago, emotions would have gotten the better of Antim. This time, she was better prepared to handle different situations. Emotionally and technically. Her bout against Malmgren – a wrestler who had defeated the Indian last year at the Ranking Series – was as clean as they come. The Swede was so preoccupied

with defending that she could not launch an attack of her own. She was penalised for the passivity, which gave Antim the first point.

She built on that slender lead with some slick leg attacks, the speed and relentless of which gave Malmgren no chance. In the rare moments when Malmgren would get hold of Antim's ankle, the Indian would snake out of it comfortably and protect her lead.

"I analysed every bout I have had with her," Antim says. "Earlier, I did not have so much gyaan (knowledge). Now, I understand the importance of these things. I was determined to return with a medal." And she did.

Antim knows that the mood and the reception, perhaps, might be different when she returns to the Delhi airport this time. Not that she will be reading too much into it.

"Apne India mein aise hai ki, jiska medal aya usko itna upar utha lete hai. Jiska nahi aaya... (In India, whoever wins a medal, we lift them so high. And those who don't...) she says. "People do not see what situation she was in, mentally, physically... they don't see a defeat. So eventually, you realise you just have your coach, physio, partner and family in your corner."

Too many cooks spoil Pak broth

Instability, revolving doors and musical chairs have put the country's cricket in danger of going the hockey way



In the space of last four years, Pakistan men's cricket team has had 11 different captains across formats. AP

ROLLING STONES (last 4 years)

COACHES	5 full time; 5 interim
SELECTORS	26
CAPTAINS	6 (T20Is), 3 (Tests), 2 (ODIs)
PLAYERS	T20Is (33), ODIs (26); Tests (19)
PCB CHAIRMEN	3

life. Except for power, stability, and settled structures. No cricketing nation could thrive if it has regular changes in board chairmen, each change coinciding with a change in government.

Each chairman brings his own plans and personnel, but has to leave the office even before one gets used to the physical chair. In the last five years alone, they have had five different chairmen. Current chairman Naqvi is the longest serving one with 17 months in the office.

Naqvi's qualifications?" asked Imran Khan, the former Pakistan captain and prime minister. "Nations are destroyed when corrupt and incompetent people are placed in positions of power in state institutions."

As always, the appointments have a political subtext. Naqvi, for instance, is the interior affairs minister and considered the second-in-charge of the country. Blunt questions have been posed about the merit of his appointment.

"Favourites have been imposed to run a technical sport like cricket. What are Mohsin Naqvi's qualifications?" asked Imran Khan, the former Pakistan captain and prime minister. "Nations are destroyed when corrupt and incompetent people are placed in positions of power in state institutions."

Instability has a ripple effect. Captains, coaches and selectors have been hired and fired with bewildering frequency. The journey from being a messiah to pariah is frighteningly short.

In the past four years, five different permanent coaches, apart from as many interim ones, have passed through the ficklest carousel in cricket terminal. Contrastingly, India has had only three in the last eight years.

Coaches galore
Celebrated foreign coaches arrived,

among them Gary Kirsten, Mickey Arthur and Jason Gillespie. Local legends were tried, like Saqlain Mushtaq and Aaqib Javed. Three have captained them across 34 Tests in the last five years.

The 50-over format has been comparatively stable, with Mohammed Rizwan and Babar Azam splitting 63 games between them in this time. Most fitful has been T20Is – six have led them this year.

Players flowing in & out

Inevitably, players have flown in and out of teams. From Asia Cup 2022 to 2025, they have handed out T20Is caps to 28 different players. Only six of them have featured in more than 20 games. From August 2021, they have had 26 different selectors.

One of them, Inzamam-ul-Haq, had to resign midway through the 2023 World Cup because he was a stakeholder in a milk-based beverage firm which was co-owned by a player agent.

A raft of celebrated former players had been in the panel, such as Mohammad Yousuf, Wahab Riaz and Abdul Razzaq, but none lasted long.

The vision under current coach Mike Hesson is clear and simple. Pakistan want to play like all modern and successful teams, an attacking, entertaining brand that could fill both hearts and galleries.

But will Hesson get the time to implement his ideas, will he get the men he wants, will the players not stumble into regional cliques? Or will Naqvi get the time to successfully complete "a major surgery", or practise his plan to select teams relying "80% by AI and 20% using humans"? Or will they show as much unity for the betterment of Pakistan cricket as they did during the non-handshake-gate drama?

Sri Lanka thrash Afghanistan; enter Super 4 of Asia Cup

Abu Dhabi: Opener Kusal Mendis blazed away to an unbeaten 52-ball 74 as Sri Lanka defeated Afghanistan by six wickets in their last group league match to qualify for Asia Cup Super Fours stage along with Bangladesh. Afghanistan were eliminated from the tournament after this result. Batting first, Afghanistan rode on Mohammed Nabi's 22-ball 60 to post 169 for eight and then saw Mendis guide Sri Lanka past the tricky target of 170 with eight balls to spare. The Afghanistan bowlers made some important breakthroughs to peg Sri Lanka back in their chase, but Mendis had other plans and the batter got support from Kusal Perera (28) and Kamindu Mendis (26 not out). Nuwan Thushara was the most successful bowler for Sri Lanka, returning figures of 4/18.

BRIEF SCORES: Afghanistan 169/8 (Mohammad Nabi 60, Nuwan Thushara 4/18) lost to Sri Lanka 171/4 in 18.4 overs (Kusal Mendis 74*, Azmatullah Omarzai 1/10) by 6 wickets and 8 balls to spare. PTI

Kuldeep drops insights on his subtle art of spin bowling

SANDIP G
DUBAI, SEPTEMBER 18

HOLDING THE microphone, Kuldeep Yadav grinned and sound-checked: "Ready 1,2,3..." And smiled impishly, reflecting his buoyant mood in the tournament. Two games, seven wickets; average of 3.57; economy rate of 4.05, a wicket every fifth ball; man of the match in both of India's games in the tournament. After the two-month-long dressing-room suffocation, the hot and humid Dubai has been like a breath of fresh air for him.

But a harsh self-critic, he quipped when asked whether he felt he was bowling at the peak of his T20 prowess. "Who told you I am happy with my bowling?" he asked, before he dwelled on the pitfalls of self-contentment. "I don't feel that I am bowling that well, I feel that I can improve and become better. I keep making choti choti mistakes. I feel I can become better because sometimes you make a mistake in reading the batsman in this format. The margin for error is too little. When you are at the top of the game and you make small mistakes, you don't notice it, but you feel that you have made a mistake."

He specified the feeling he gets when the ball leaves his hand. "It is important to know how the ball is going from your hand and whether you are happy with it or not. Only you can be the best judge and I feel that there is a need to work more on that," he said.

Later, he was asked to describe that



tended feeling when the ball leaves his hands. "Mein aapke kyu bathoonga?" he asked. Then he contemplated for a moment and elaborated. "Mujhe kaisa feel hogta?" he muttered to himself and replied: "When you bowl, you rate the batsmen."

The implication was that he judges himself on how well he has bowled against a good batsman. By good batsmen, he explained, he doesn't mean specialist batsmen with towering numbers. He brings up the

frustrating period.

Kuldeep explains the chemistry with Varun Chakaravarthy and Axar Patel.

"Everyone knows their job and my job is to take wickets in the middle overs. Axar bowls in the powerplay and he does the controlling job for us. We three are experienced in the

T20 format and understand the roles."

WRESTLING WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

Antim, who considered 'quitting after Olympics', wins second bronze

MIHIR VASAVDA
MUMBAI, SEPTEMBER 18

THE VIDEO, just over a year old, shows a visibly distressed 20-year-old in national team gear, stepping out of the Delhi airport. A soft toy bounces on her shoulder bag as the byte-hungry cameras swarm. Her family forms a shield, hustling her past the prying mics and into a waiting SUV. Antim Panghal had just returned from Paris – out in the first round of the Olympics, then deported for breaking Games protocol. No glory, just intense scrutiny.

Thirteen months later, the wrestler will fly home from another major championship. This time, with a medal around her neck and, her father Ramniwas hopes, a warmer welcome. "Iss baar mein khud jaonga beti ka swagat karne (I'll myself go to welcome my daughter)," he says.

Antim, on Thursday, became only the second Indian woman, after Vinesh Phogat, to win two World Championship medals, defeating two-time European champion Jonna Malmgren of Sweden 9-1 to win the bronze in the 53kg category. Incidentally, Vinesh had beaten the same opponent three years ago for her second World Championship medal.



Antim Panghal defeated Jonna Malmgren of Sweden 9-1. FilePhoto/UWW

turned into lingering sadness and Antim says she 'thought of quitting the sport'. Scared of facing people, she did not even go home from the airport. "I went to my mama's place and

stayed there for five days away from everyone," she says.

When she finally returned home, Antim locked herself in a room. "She didn't step out

of that tiny room for a week," Ramniwas says. "We had to talk her out of that zone. We reminded her that this wasn't the end of the world for her."

Antim adds: "Yeh bhi hua ki chod de (I also felt like quitting). It had become that kind of a situation. But my family and my coach told me that it was just one bout. You are still young, you will get another shot at the Olympics."

The way she is wrestling now – on the attack all the time – Antim hasn't shown signs of any residual disappointment from last year. When Ramniwas spoke to her on Wednesday after she lost in the semifinals, Antim was 'sad'. She'd landed in Zagreb hoping to win a gold medal. But she did not bro