



2
'NATION SALUTES OUR BRAVEHEARTS':
SHAH PRIDES ON SECURITY
PERSONNEL OF OP MAHADEV



11
CHINA-BACKED
HACKERS TARGET
GLOBAL DIPLOMATS



16
AJITH, NIRUPAMA SECURE
GOLD AND SILVER IN
COMMONWEALTH C'SHIPS

41 DEAD AS FLOODS AND LANDSLIDES RAVAGE J&K

Death toll climbs to 41 as shrine route landslide and flash floods devastate J&K; PM assures Centre's support.

AJAY JANDYAL/TDG NETWORK
SRINAGAR

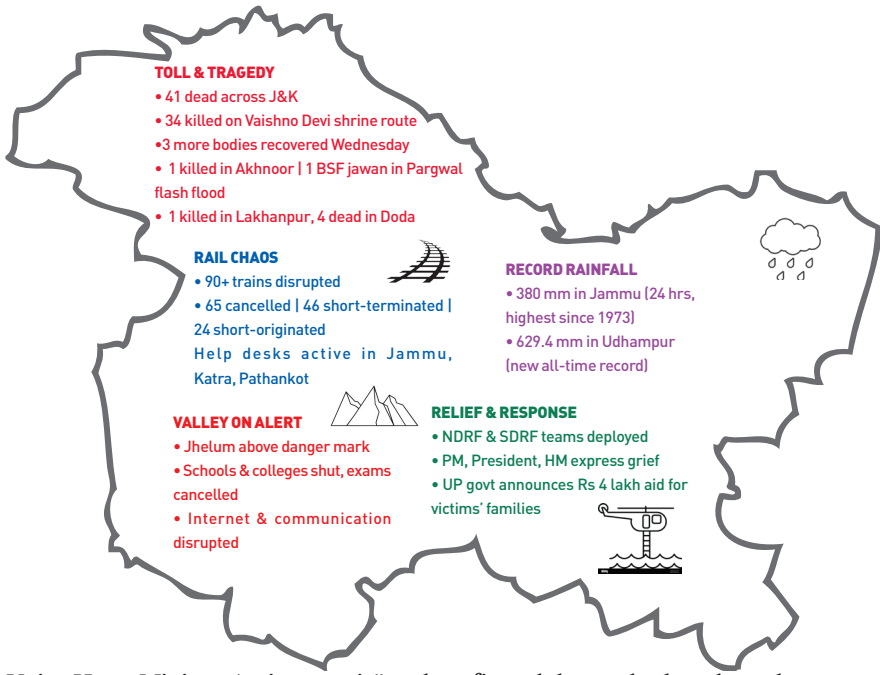
Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday briefed Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the escalating flood and landslide crisis across the Union Territory, which has now claimed 41 lives. Of these, 34 deaths were reported from the massive landslide near the Vaishno Devi shrine in Reasi district, where rescue and relief operations continue in difficult conditions.

Officials said three more bodies were recovered on Wednesday, while one person was killed in Akhnoor, a BSF jawan died in a flash flood at Pargwal, another victim was reported in Lakhanpur, and four people lost their

lives in Doda.

Abdullah, who toured several of the worst-hit areas along the banks of the Tawi River in Jammu, thanked the Prime Minister for assuring continued assistance from the Centre. "The scale of destruction is unprecedented, and we require urgent relief as well as long-term mitigation measures," he said, adding that the same bridge section damaged during the 2014 floods had again been washed away, raising questions about preparedness.

Prime Minister Modi expressed grief over the loss of lives, calling the incident "saddening" and confirming that the administration was providing help to all affected. President Droupadi Murmu said the tragedy was "extremely distressing," while



Union Home Minister Amit Shah described the Vaishno Devi landslide as "extremely

tragic" and confirmed that National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) teams were

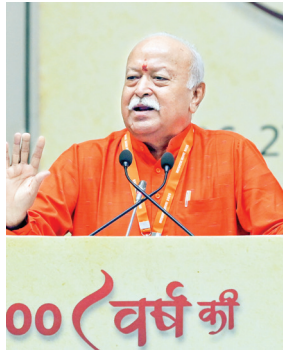
deployed on the ground. Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha

RSS calls for self-reliance as Oppn blames Centre over Trump tariffs

SANJAY SHARMA/
TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

As the United States' decision to impose 50 per cent tariffs on Indian imports came into effect on Wednesday, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) called for strengthening self-reliance and ensuring trade happens on India's own terms. Speaking at a centenary event of the organisation in Delhi, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat said India must embrace swadeshi from within and never succumb to external pressure in trade.

"Foreign goods can be ac-



RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat. ANI

cepted voluntarily but never under compulsion. Self-reliance must begin at home. This does not mean breaking ties with other nations, but trade must always be free of pressure," Bhagwat



Congress MP Jairam Ramesh. ANI

said. He emphasised that an aatmanirbhar Bharat should serve as an example to the world, with India setting benchmarks that even other nations would follow. Linking his remarks to

the ongoing tariff war with the US, Bhagwat said society must embrace domestic products and values, and India's neighbours too should benefit from peace and development, irrespective of religion or community. He underlined the importance of social harmony, cautioning against divisions, and urged that "inequality must not reside in our minds."

Bhagwat added that the Sangh's mission was to reach every village and every household across India, building a network of branches. He also warned that growing global un-

Kuki, Nepali (Gorkha) CSOs hold historic meet in Manipur

NIBIR DEKA
KANGPOKPI

In a rare show of solidarity, Kuki and Nepali (Gorkha) civil society organisations (CSOs) in Manipur's Sadar Hills held a historic get-together at Lhangkichoi village on Tuesday, pledging to strengthen ties and reaffirm their commitment to peace, coexistence, and mutual respect.

The event, organised by the Sadar Hills Chiefs' Association (SAHLICA), brought together leaders, elders,

Stalin joins Rahul's Bihar Yatra, slams EC over 'vote theft'

ANAND SINGH
MUZAFFARPUR/DARBHANGA

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK president M.K. Stalin on Wednesday joined Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's Voter Adhikar Yatra in Bihar, attacking the BJP and the Election Commission over alleged "vote theft". Stalin alleged that the removal of 65 lakh names from Bihar's voter list amounted to a "massacre of democracy" and accused the poll body of functioning as a "puppet" of the ruling party.

Addressing a rally alongside Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, RJD



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, Lok Sabha LoP and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi, party MP Priyanka Gandhi, party Bihar President Rajesh Kumar, LoP Bihar Assembly and RJD leader. ANI

leader Tejashwi Yadav, Kanimozhi, and other INDIA bloc allies, Stalin declared: "If elections are conducted fairly, the NDA will

lose. Removing people born and living in their own land from the voter rolls is nothing less than terror." He

PM Modi, Finnish President discuss Ukraine conflict, bilateral ties

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday held a telephonic conversation with Finnish President Alexander Stubb, during which the two leaders exchanged views on the recent Washington meeting involving European, US and Ukrainian leaders over the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

According to the Prime Minister's Office, Modi reiterated India's consistent support for a peaceful resolution and the early restoration of stability, while President Stubb stressed the need for a just and lasting solution.

The leaders also reviewed India-Finland ties, pledging closer cooperation in emerging sectors such as quantum technologies, 6G, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and sustainability. Stubb reaffirmed Finland's support for an early con-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Finland President Alexander Stubb (Photo: X/ @narendramodi, @alexstubb)

clusion of a mutually beneficial India-EU Free Trade Agreement and expressed backing for the AI Impact Summit India will host in 2026. Modi extended an invitation to the Finnish President to visit India soon, with both sides agreeing to remain in touch. The two leaders later echoed the discussion on X, describing the conversation as constructive and affirming commitment to deepen ties while working towards peace in Ukraine.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Finland President Alexander Stubb (Photo: X/ @narendramodi, @alexstubb)

Uddhav Thackeray deliberately left out of Rahul's Bihar Yatra: Sources

AJIT MAINDOLA
NEW DELHI

The Vote Adhikar Yatra in Bihar, led by Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, could not remain free from the politics of appeasement. The Shiv Sena (UBT), a key INDIA bloc ally, is deliberately keeping its distance from party chief Uddhav Thackeray.

Sources suggest that Thackeray was intentionally not invited, with Congress wary of sparking controversy over his past remarks targeting Muslim voters and North Indians. To avoid alienating Muslim support, both Congress and RJD preferred not to take the risk.

TMC supremo and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is also staying away from the Yatra. While



Lok Sabha LoP and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray. ANI

Congress leaders maintain she "might join," sources

insist she will not. The Patna rally was reportedly

postponed to avoid embarrassment, as the absence of both Thackeray and Banerjee would have provided the BJP with political ammunition.

Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK leader M.K. Stalin joined the Yatra on Wednesday, and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav is scheduled to participate on July

Every school-going child to get Aadhaar biometric update on campuses

MANOHAR KESARI
NEW DELHI

Every school-going child will now be able to get an Aadhaar number or biometric update easily on school campuses. The Unique Identification Authority of

India (UIDAI), in collaboration with the Department of School Education and Literacy, has integrated the Mandatory Biometric Update (MBU) status of children with the Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) ap-

plication – a move that will facilitate Aadhaar updates for crores of students.

The MBU in Aadhaar is required twice – once at the age of five and again at 15 – to ensure the accuracy and reliability of biometric data. Currently, around 17

crore Aadhaar numbers are pending mandatory biometric updates.

UIDAI emphasised that failing to update Aadhaar biometrics on time could cause difficulties for children later while availing benefits of government

schemes or registering for competitive and university examinations such as NEET, JEE, or CUET. Often, parents and students are forced to rush for last-minute updates, leading to anxiety that can be avoided through timely completion.

‘NATION SALUTES OUR BRAVEHEARTS’: SHAH HAILS SECURITY PERSONNEL OF ‘OP MAHADEV’

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday felicitated security personnel for their accomplishments during Operation Mahadev, in which all three perpetrators of the ghastly Pahalgam terror attack were eliminated.

“The nation salutes our brave hearts. Proud to have felicitated our valorous security personnel, who successfully carried out ‘Operation Mahadev’ and eliminated the perpetrators of the Pahalgam terror attack,” Shah posted on X.

On July 28, three terrorists were neutralised in a joint operation, which came to be known as Operation Mahadev. The operation was conducted by the Indian Army, CRPF and J&K Police that neutralised terrorists who were involved in the Pahalgam terror attack, which had claimed 26 civilian lives on April 22.

On July 29, the Union Home Minister confirmed that three terrorists who were involved in the killing of civilians were eliminated by the security forces during Operation Ma-



Union Home Minister Amit Shah speaks during the felicitation of personnel involved in Operation Mahadev, in New Delhi.

hadev. Shah said this while speaking in the Lok Sabha amid the ongoing debate on Operation Sindoor and informed that those who killed our citizens in the ghastly Pahalgam terror attack have been killed.

“In a joint Operation Mahadev, the Indian Army, CRPF, and J&K Police have neutralised three terrorists who were involved in the Pahalgam terror attack,” Shah said while addressing the lower house.

“Innocent civilians were killed in front of their families while asking about their religion. I condemn this barbaric act. I express my sympathies to the families who lost their

loved ones,” he added.

Prior to Operation Mahadev, the Indian Armed Forces had launched Operation Sindoor on May 7 as a decisive military response to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 people were killed.

The Indian Armed Forces targeted terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, leading to the death of over 100 terrorists. Meanwhile, Shah will attend the Panchayat Pratinidhi Sanmilan at the Veterinary College Field in Khanapara in Guwahati on August 29. The Union Home Minister will also inaugurate the Brahmaputra Wing of Raj Bhavan in Guwahati.

During his visit, the Union Minister will attend the inauguration ceremony of the celebration of the birth centenary of former Assam Chief Minister Golap Borbora at Srimanta Sankardeva Kalakshetra, Panjabari in Guwahati.

The Assam government and the State Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have made all arrangements to welcome the Union Home Minister. According to the Assam State BJP, around 20,000 newly elected panchayat representatives from the NDA will participate in the Panchayat Pratinidhi Sanmilan. Apart from this, earlier, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma stated that Prime

Minister Narendra Modi will visit Assam on September 8 and inaugurate a bio-refinery at Numaligarh.

Sarma, while addressing a press conference held at Lok Sewa Bhawan in Guwahati, said, “Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate a bio refinery at Numaligarh, which will convert bamboo to 2G ethanol. The plant has been established at a cost of Rs 4200 crore. The Prime Minister will also take part in a meeting at Numaligarh.”

CM Sarma said that at Mangaldoi, he will lay the foundation stone for several key infrastructure projects. He said, “Thereafter, he will go to Mangaldoi in Darrang district and he will lay the foundation stone for the ring road of Guwahati, a new bridge over the river Brahmaputra connecting Kurua and Narengi, and he will also lay the foundation stone for the Darrang Medical College.” Following these engagements, the Prime Minister will return to Guwahati to attend the inaugural ceremony of the year-long centenary celebrations of Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika, organised by the Assam government.

UP to enforce ‘No Helmet, No Fuel’ campaign from Sept 1

TDG NETWORK
LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath government will roll out a month-long road safety campaign, ‘No Helmet, No Fuel’, across Uttar Pradesh from 1 to 30 September, denying petrol to two-wheeler riders without helmets.

According to an official release, the initiative will be enforced under the leadership of district magistrates in coordination with road safety committees, Police, transport, revenue, and district administration officials will jointly monitor compliance, ensuring that riders follow Section 129 of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, which makes helmets mandatory for both drivers and pillion riders.

The government stressed that the campaign is aimed at promoting safe behaviour rather than punishment. While Section 194D prescribes penalties for violations, officials emphasised that the ‘No Helmet, No Fuel’ initiative seeks to encourage responsible road use in the public interest.

Transport Commissioner Brajesh Narayan Singh said the campaign reflects the state’s commitment to



Representative image

reducing fatalities and serious injuries from road accidents. The Department of Food and Civil Supplies has been tasked with coordinating and monitoring implementation at petrol pumps, while the Information and Public Relations Department will raise awareness.

The Supreme Court’s road safety committee has also urged states to prioritise helmet compliance. The government has appealed to citizens, petrol pump operators, and oil companies to fully support the drive.

“Make ‘Helmet first, fuel later’ a rule, because wearing a helmet is the simplest insurance to save lives,” Singh added.

Meanwhile, once overlooked by investors, Gorakhpur has transformed

into a significant industrial hub under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. Incentive-driven policies, ease of doing business, and improved connectivity have encouraged reputable national and multinational companies to invest in the city, according to a press release from the state government.

In the current financial year alone, the Gorakhpur Industrial Development Authority (GIDA) has allocated a record 182 acres of land for 54 new units, paving the way for Rs 5,800 crore in capital investment and creating 8,500 jobs. Over the last five years, GIDA has received proposals worth Rs 9,445 crore, generating nearly 23,000 employment opportunities.

Himachal floods cause Rs 1,400 cr loss to PWD, over 300 lives lost

TDG NETWORK
SHIMLA

Himachal Pradesh has faced severe devastation due to floods over the past three days, with significant damage reported along the Beas River.

The state has incurred an estimated loss of Rs 1,400 crore to the PWD department, including Rs 550 crore in the last three days alone.

Public Works Department (PWD) Minister Vikramaditya Singh, on Wednesday, said, “In the past 3 days, Himachal Pradesh has suffered significant damage, particularly along the Beas River, with an estimated loss of approximately Rs 1,400 crores to the PWD department, including Rs 550 crores in the last 3 days alone. Several bridges and roads have been washed away, especially in Kullu and Manali. The state government has deployed heavy machinery... and is in constant contact with NHAI officials.”

He further said that a special meeting, chaired by the Assembly Speaker, was convened to address the crisis and strategise efforts to restore normalcy.

“A special meeting chaired by the Assembly Speaker was held to discuss restoring normalcy... Despite challenges like disrupted connectivity and the tragic deaths of ground staff, the government is committed to providing support to affected families and ensuring the safety of its workers... I urge the public to stay safe, follow weather alerts, and adhere to local administration guidelines...” he added. The government is actively



Weather clears in Mandi after incessant rainfall in several parts of the state, in Mandi on Wednesday. IMD has issued a Red Alert for Chamba, Kangra and Mandi for two days.

Chamba district cut off from the country: Jairam Thakur

Shimla : Himachal Pradesh continues to face the brunt of Heavy rains. Leader of Opposition in the Himachal Pradesh Assembly and former CM Jairam Thakur, said that the Chamba region has been cut off from the rest of the country for the past four days.

“The whole state has been affected by the disaster... Chamba district has been cut off from the rest of the country for the past 4 days. There is no

network there, the roads have been damaged, and many houses have been washed away. Damage is also occurring in Kangra and Una districts,” said former CM Jairam Thakur.

“The current government should make efforts to save people’s lives... Himachal has been ruined since CM Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu’s government was formed. Due to the disaster, Himachal Pradesh has been set back by many years,” added Thakur.

working to provide relief and rebuild infrastructure in the flood-hit areas. The ongoing monsoon season has wreaked unprecedented havoc across Himachal Pradesh, leaving 310 people dead and causing massive damage to life, property, and infrastructure. According to the Himachal Pradesh

State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA), the toll from June 20 to August 27 includes 158 rain-related deaths from landslides, flash floods, cloudbursts, drowning, electrocution, and other weather-triggered incidents, and 152 fatalities in road accidents during the same period.

BJP hits back at Rahul, labels Gandhi family ‘chor’

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Wednesday called Prime Minister Narendra Modi “pure like the holy waters of the Ganga” while hitting out at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for his criticism of the ‘Gujarat model’ and accusing the Gandhi family of being the most corrupt and a “chor” family.

BJP national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia’s fierce attack on Gandhi came after he alleged that the Gujarat model, projected by the ruling party as a showpiece for growth when Modi was the state’s chief minister, was “all about vote chori” during his public meetings in Bihar.

“If there is one family that is the most corrupt and ‘chor’ (thief), then it is the ‘nakli’ (fake) Gandhi family. Sonia Gandhi, Robert Vadra and Rahul Gandhi are out on bail in corruption cases,” Bhatia alleged and reminded Rahul Gandhi how his “chowkidar chor hai” slogan against PM

Modi had backfired.

Modi is “pure like the Gan-gajal” as he is fully dedicated to the service of people, the BJP spokesperson said, charging Rahul Gandhi with level-ling an unfounded allegation and using tasteless language against the prime minister in his meetings. The Congress leader had run “chowkidar chor hai” campaign against the prime minister during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections but people handed Gandhi’s party a big defeat and he had to apologise to the Supreme Court for misquoting it, Bhatia said. “The Gandhi family is corrupt and liar,” the BJP leader said. Speaking to reporters, he accused the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha of using indecorous language against those holding constitutional positions like Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah and inviting to his campaign against alleged “vote chori” in Bihar leaders who have made in the past “derogatory” comments on people from the state.

HC seeks reply on PIL against education commercialisation

SAMBHAV SHARMA
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday has issued notices to the Delhi Government, CBSE, and NCERT in response to a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed against the commercialisation of education and the alleged exclusion of students from the Economically Weaker Section (EWS).

The Bench of the Chief Justice DK Upadhyaya and

Tushar Rao Gedela will hear the matter next on November 12.

The PIL has been filed by Jasmeet Singh Sahni, Director of Doon School, through advocate Satyam Singh Rajput.

The petition alleged that private schools are pressuring parents to purchase expensive books and study materials from private publishers, severely impacting the education of underprivi-

leged students. The petition also accuses private schools of violating the Right to Education (RTE) Act stating that EWS students are being forced to buy books costing Rs 10,000–Rs 12,000 annually, whereas the government provides only Rs 5,000 per year.

In an exclusive conversation with iTV network, Advocate Satyam Singh Rajput said that due to this many families are forced

to withdraw their children from schools.

Rajput said that private schools were ignoring CBSE guidelines, particularly the 2016–17 CBSE circular, which mandates the use of NCERT books.

Rajput said: “While NCERT books cost around Rs 700, private school versions of the same books are sold for over Rs 10,000.”

The petition says schools are not following the School

Bag Policy, 2020. This policy says a school bag should not weigh more than 10% of the child’s body weight.

The petitioner says there is no proper regulation or monitoring. Because of this, schools are doing as they please.

The PIL suggests implementing a Fixed Weight System for school bags and allowing private books only if necessary, at regulated prices.



An Indian Army helicopter flies above a building amid a rescue operation as the Ravi river flows in spate near Madhopur Headworks, at Madhopur, in Pathankot, Punjab.

including drinking water, filters, sanitation kits, medicines, tarpaulins, mattresses, mosquito repellents and nets, is being supplied to the flood-affected areas, the deputy commissioner said. A total

of 8,758 acres of farmland has come under flood water in the district -- 5,500 acres in Mukerian, 3,000 acres in Tanda, 256 acres in Dasuya and about 18 kanals in the Hoshiarpur subdivision.

Assam has pushed back 51 illegal Bangladeshi infiltrators: CM

NIBIR DEKA
ASSAM

A total of 51 suspected Bangladeshi nationals who had allegedly entered Assam illegally were detained near the international border in Sribhumri (formerly Karimganj) district between Sunday and Tuesday, and subsequently pushed back, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

According to Sarma, 30 infiltrators were detained on Sunday (August 24) and 21 were caught on Tuesday (August 26) near the Sribhumri border.

Around 1,000 evicted as Assam encroachers pre-empt forced demolition

Assam: In a rare instance during Assam’s ongoing eviction drives, encroachers in Nagaon district’s Jengoni Tiniali under Dhing revenue circle voluntarily demolished their own concrete houses and business establishments using bulldozers, before the administration carried out forced eviction.

Nagaon Deputy Commissioner Devashish Sharma had earlier issued notices to residents occupying government land in several parts of the district, setting a time limit for them to vacate. Two days before the expiry of the extended deadline, several encroachers at Jengoni Tiniali took matters into their own hands, pull-

ing down their permanent houses and shops to vacate the government land. Officials said that around 50 bigas of government land, on which a market with concrete houses and shops had mushroomed over the years at Mathauri, has now been cleared. Approximately 1,000 people were evicted in the process.

“In two separate instances, we PUSHED BACK 21 illegal Bangladeshi infiltrators from the Sribhumri sector, further bolstering our anti-infiltration efforts,” the Chief Minister posted on X (formerly Twitter) on Tuesday evening.

On Sunday, the Assam Police had detained 36 Bangladeshi nationals, who were later pushed back. Of them, 30 were caught in Sribhumri, while six others — including two children — were detained in South Salmara Mankachar district.

Sharing details on Monday, Sarma wrote: “Alert eyes, swift action. 36 illegal Bangladeshi infiltrators have been pushed back to Bangladesh from Sribhumri and South Salmara.”

He further said: “These illegal infiltrators change our demography and infringe upon the rights of the indigenous, and will be pushed back to where they belong.”

Police officials said the 30 people caught in Sribhumri on Sunday morning included several women and children.

Haryana govt waives stamp duty on PMAY houses, small plots

TDG NETWORK
CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Wednesday announced the waiver of stamp duty on houses allotted under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), Mukhyamantri Shahri Awas Yojana, Mukhyamantri Gramin Awas Yojana, and on residential plots up to 100 yards.

Making the announcement in the Assembly, CM Saini

said that the beneficiaries of all these housing schemes and holders of small residential plots would no longer be required to pay stamp duty.

A day earlier, during the ongoing Assembly session, the Chief Minister had defended his government’s record on law and order, asserting that the rule of law firmly governs the state and that no criminal, however influential, would be spared.

THE DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON INDIA-US TARIFF TENSION

89% believe that America is indeed trying to disrupt the balance of the global economy.

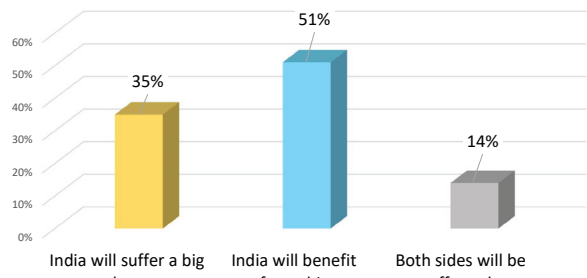
The survey on 27 August 2025, with 370 participants, reveals strong public concern over U.S. tariff policies. While 51% believe India may

benefit, 35% foresee losses. A vast 89% feel America is disrupting the global economy, and 74% say India anticipated this policy. Most (52%)

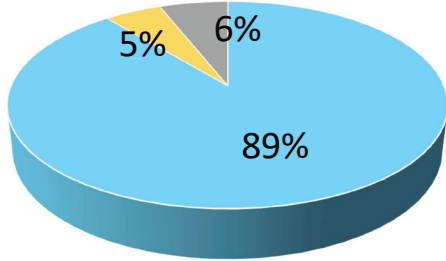
expect immediate economic impact, and 78% support India's government response.

Q1.▶

What is your opinion on India's strategy to deal with America's arbitrary tariffs?



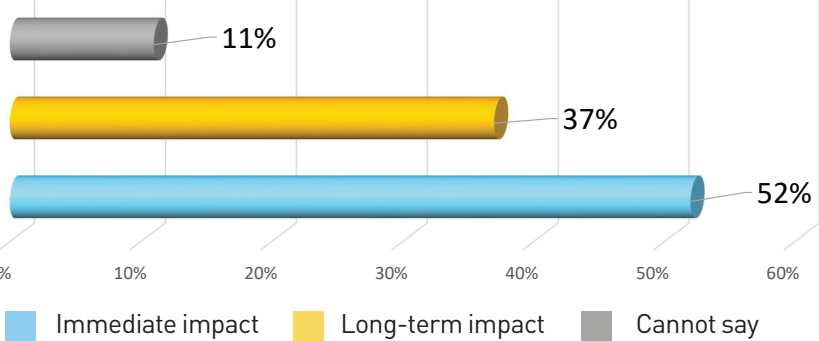
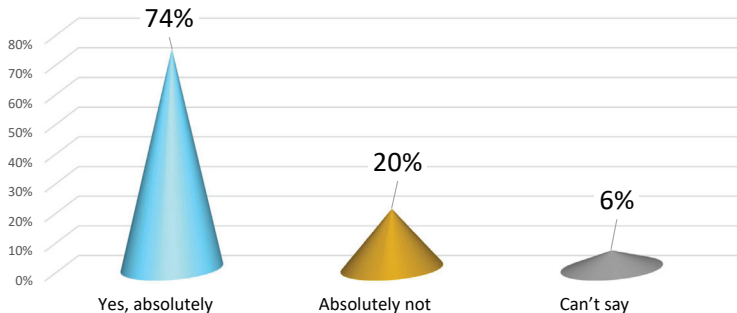
Yes, absolutely
Absolutely not
Cannot say



Q2.◀
Is America trying to disrupt the balance of the global economy?

Q3.▶

Was India already aware of this American policy?



Q4.◀
How do you see the impact of America's arbitrary tariffs on the Indian economy?

THE DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON BAGESHWAR BABA STATEMENT

51% respondents said speeches, saints, and preachers, under the guise of spirituality, are changing religion into business.

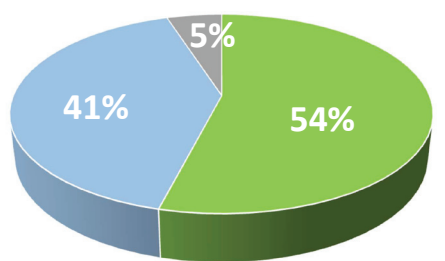
A recent India News survey on Bageshwar Baba's statement revealed sharp public divisions. While 54% said saints misuse religion for fame,

51% felt spirituality is being turned into business. On whether criticizing saints harms Sanatan Dharma, 53% disagreed. Notably, 52% saw large

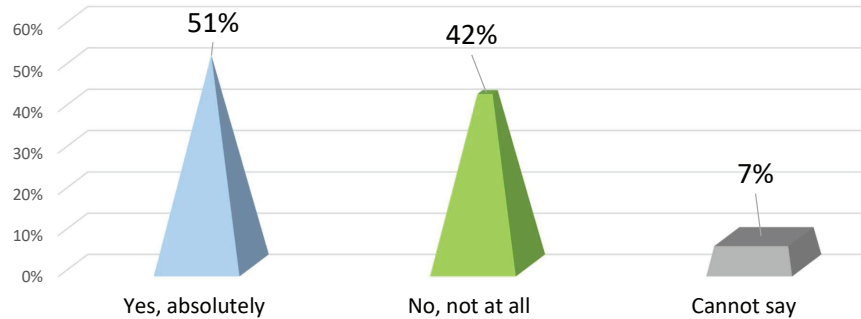
crowds at sermons as entertainment, and 51% rejected controversial saints as true.

Q1.▶

Are saints and preachers, in the race for fame, misusing religion?



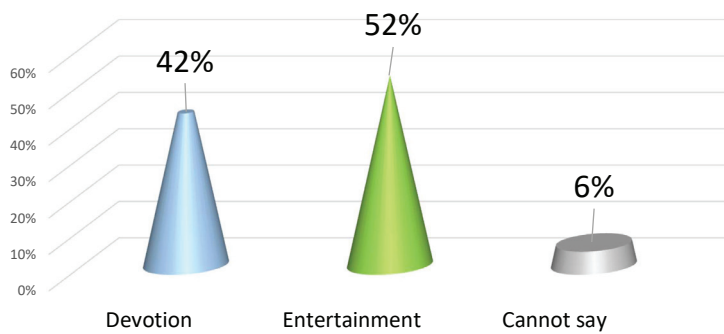
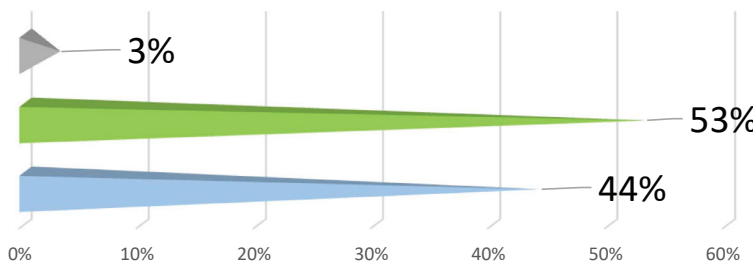
Yes, absolutely
Not at all
Can't say



Q2.◀
Are speeches, saints, and preachers, under the guise of spirituality, changing religion into business?

Q3.▶

Baba Bageshwar said that commenting on saints is harmful to Sanatan Dharma. What is your opinion?



Q4.◀
How do you view the crowds gathering in the court of saints and preachers?

41 dead as floods, landslides ravage J&K

CONTINUED FROM P1

also conveyed condolences and directed officials to provide immediate assistance.

The disaster was compounded by flash floods in the Neelgrath stream at Baltal, Sonamarg, late in the afternoon, which submerged a downstream camping site. Authorities also reported a sharp rise in the water level of the Sindh Nallah shortly after, intensifying fears of further flooding in the region.

Across the Kashmir Valley, heavy rainfall has triggered a flood alert, with rivers and tributaries including the Jhelum crossing danger levels. The administration has ordered the closure of schools, colleges and universities and cancelled all examinations to ensure student safety. Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Anshul Garg said flood control teams were monitoring the situation around the clock, with special focus on

LG Sinha orders swift rescue

ASHIQ MIR
SRINAGAR

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Wednesday chaired a high-level meeting to review flood relief operations in Jammu and Kashmir. He directed swift evacuation, restoration of power, water, healthcare, rations, and connectivity. Schools remain shut, 24x7 control rooms activated, and emergency teams pre-positioned to aid affected districts.



gauges at Sangam, Anantnag and Ram Munshi Bagh.

Rail traffic in Jammu and adjoining divisions has been severely disrupted, with soil erosion and flash floods in the Chakki river forcing suspension of services. More than 90 trains have been affected, with 65 cancelled and many others diverted or partially terminated. Northern Railway has set up help

desks at Jammu, Katra and Pathankot and issued emergency helpline numbers for stranded passengers.

The IMD reported record-breaking rainfall, with Jammu receiving 380 mm in 24 hours – the highest since 1973 – and Udhampur recording 629.4 mm, almost double its previous record set in 2019.

Abdullah, in a social media

post, drew a stark comparison between the destruction in the 2014 floods and the current disaster, noting that nearly identical damage had occurred at the same locations. He questioned what corrective steps had been taken over the past 11 years, describing the last 48 hours as a “shocking eye-opener” for governance.

Meanwhile, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced ex-gratia of Rs 4 lakh each for families of state residents killed in the Vaishno Devi landslide. He also directed officials to arrange for the return of bodies to Meerut, Muzaffarnagar and Baghpat, from where several victims hailed.

With rivers swelling, transport paralysed, and camps inundated, the authorities face the dual challenge of saving lives in the immediate crisis and addressing systemic vulnerabilities that have once again been laid bare by nature's fury.

RSS calls for self-reliance as Oppn blames Centre over Trump tariffs

CONTINUED FROM P1

rest could not rule out the possibility of a third world war, stressing that the RSS worked selflessly, without incentives, in the spirit of service. “It is everyone's duty to protect dharma. The world is not running on dharma today; that is why unrest and wrongdoing are increasing. Only India can offer this spiritual perspective to the world. India alone can provide the path to global peace,” he said.

Echoing concerns over the tariff war, Minister of State for External Af-

fairs Kirti Vardhan Singh denounced Washington's move as “unjustified, unreasonable and unfair,” asserting that India's economy is resilient enough to withstand the shock. He said New Delhi would protect its national interests while continuing to import energy, including from Russia, to meet domestic needs.

The Opposition, however, launched a scathing attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accusing him of mishandling relations with the US. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the tariffs would cost India

an estimated Rs 2.17 lakh crore across 10 sectors, leading to mass job losses in textiles, gems and jewellery, and marine exports. He charged that Modi's “smiles, hugs and selfies” had failed to secure a trade deal, leaving farmers and exporters exposed.

Senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh mocked Modi's “MAGA + MIGA = MEGA” formula, saying it had turned into a “MAHA headache” for India, while TMC's Sagarika Ghose accused the Centre of failing to shield exporters from the “crushing” blow. Congress

MP Manickam Tagore recalled Modi's slogan “Abki Baar, Trump Sarkar” at the Houston “Howdy Modi” event, calling the tariffs an “economic disaster.”

Industry stakeholders also expressed concern. Jaipur Jewellery Association president Raju Mangodiwala warned that the \$120 billion gems and jewellery trade with the US would take a severe hit, while Surat's diamond exporters predicted short-term disruption. Garment traders said they could not sustain business without the American market.

Uddhav Thackeray deliberately left out...

CONTINUED FROM P1

30. Leaders of the Left parties, already part of the Mahagathabandhan, are also present.

However, tensions persist between Congress and RJD over showcasing political strength. Congress is keen to display its clout by mobilising top leaders, but the move has handed the BJP opportunities to strike back. Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's presence, for instance, backfired after

the BJP highlighted his earlier “anti-Bihari” remarks. The Yatra also exposed rifts within the Karnataka Congress. While Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is set to attend on Thursday, his deputy and state party president D.K. Shivakumar joined on Tuesday but was sidelined by Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi. A day earlier, Shivakumar had controversially praised the RSS anthem, later issuing an apology after his Bihar visit. Observers believe the

Gandhis' cold shoulder reflected displeasure over his comments. Shivakumar, however, downplayed the incident, stating that he stood behind Rahul in the jeep during the Yatra.

Adding fuel to the fire, his supporter MLA H.D. Ranganath defended the RSS song again. The episode comes at a delicate time in Karnataka politics, where the “two-and-a-half-year power-sharing formula” looms large. With Siddaramaiah completing

his term in November, Shivakumar and his loyalists expect him to step aside, but the Chief Minister shows no inclination to vacate the chair. This internal tussle, coupled with the RSS controversy, has further weakened Shivakumar's position.

All eyes are now on Thursday, when Siddaramaiah joins the Yatra. It remains to be seen whether Shivakumar will be seen riding alongside him—or once again left in the background.

Stalin joins Rahul's Bihar Yatra, slams EC

CONTINUED FROM P1

hailed Rahul Gandhi and Tejashwi as “two brothers united to protect democracy”, asserting that their friendship would ensure victory in the upcoming Assembly polls.

The DMK chief invoked the legacy of RJD supremo Lalu Prasad Yadav, calling him “a symbol of social justice and secularism”, and drew parallels between the opposition's present strug-

gle and Jayaprakash Narayan's historic movement in Bihar. “Whenever democracy has been in danger, Bihar has raised the battle cry. That is history,” Stalin said.

Rahul Gandhi too sharpened his attack, questioning Union Home Minister Amit Shah's claim that the BJP would rule for the next 40 years. “How does he know? Because of vote chori,” he said, adding even children now call Prime Minister Narendra Modi a

“vote chor”. He also referred to a media report alleging that anonymous parties in Gujarat received donations of Rs 4,300 crore between 2019–24, demanding to know whether the Election Commission would probe the matter.

The Congress leader further claimed that Modi had halted Operation Sindoor under pressure from then US President Donald Trump. “Trump called him and asked to stop within 24

hours, and Modi stopped everything in five hours,” Gandhi alleged.

Stalin meanwhile accused the BJP of “treacherous politics” and said its “majority had turned into minority” after the INDIA bloc's performance in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

“Those who dreamt of 400 seats were pushed down to 240. Bihar must again prove that before people's power, dictators must bow down,” he said.

Greater Noida dowry murder case

CONTINUED FROM P1

charges against his family, asserting that his son Rohit never raised a hand against his wife. “Our doors are always open for her, but her claims are baseless. Does it ever happen that a family escorts their daughter-in-law home and then attacks her family?” he coun-

tered.

Police have already arrested all four accused in the dowry murder case. Nikki's husband, Vipin Bhati, was shot in the leg while attempting to flee and is now in 14-day judicial custody. Investigators say Vipin frequently assaulted his wife before allegedly setting

her on fire, leading to her death. He has denied the charges.

The case continues to attract nationwide attention amid growing outrage over dowry-related violence, with fresh claims from within the family adding new layers to an already complex investigation.

Kuki, Nepali (Gorkha) CSOs hold historic meet

CONTINUED FROM P1

women, and youth representatives under the theme “Get-Together of Kuki–Nepali (Gorkha) CSO Leaders.” Participants described it as both symbolic and practical, aimed at preserving the age-old friendship between the two communities.

Speakers recalled the long history of harmony and cooperation in Sadar

Hills, stressing that peace and brotherhood must continue despite external challenges. Leaders from both communities resolved to resist attempts by “outside forces” to sow discord and underlined the need to pass on the legacy of unity to younger generations. Beyond symbolism, the gathering explored avenues of cooperation in social, cultural, and developmental

initiatives for the welfare of all in Kangpokpi district. A symbolic handshake between leaders marked what many described as a reaffirmation of their shared destiny.

An elder from the Nepali (Gorkha) community said, “Our forefathers lived side by side, shared joys and sorrows, and supported each other in hardship. It is our duty to strengthen

this legacy for future generations.” He also proposed forming a coordinating committee to deepen cooperation. Another Gorkha leader offered to host the next such event, involving more community stakeholders. The occasion concluded with a communal feast, where members of both communities dined together in a symbolic gesture of unity and brotherhood.

GOVT WORKING TO MAKE NAVY EVEN STRONGER, MORE ROBUST: RAJNATH

India's Defence Minister says recent commissioning of INS Himgiri and INS Udaygiri will bolster the Navy’s capabilities

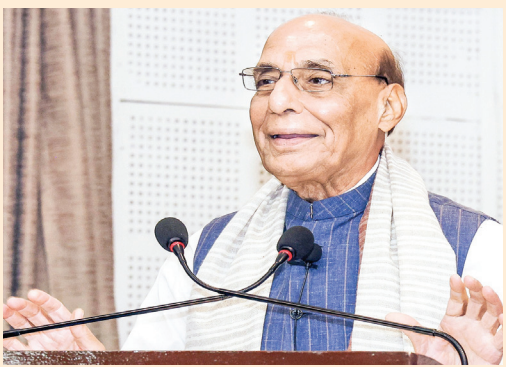
TDG NETWORK
MHOW

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday commended the Navy's performance during Operation Sindoor, where it effectively maintained strategic positions in the Arabian Sea.

He also mentioned the recent commissioning of INS Himgiri and INS Udaygiri, which will bolster the Navy's capabilities. Speaking at Ran Samwad 2025, a tri-service seminar at the Army War College in Mhow, he said, "During Operation Sindoor, the way our Navy maintained strategic positions, which limited the enemy's movement completely in the Arabian Sea. Our Navy's presence in the Indian Ocean ensures the complete security of our maritime borders. Our government is also fully

‘OP SINDOOR DEPICTED OUR DOMINATION’

- “During Operation Sindoor, the way our Navy maintained strategic positions, which limited the enemy’s movement completely in the Arabian Sea.”
- Defence Minister said that India’s Navy’s presence in the Indian Ocean ensures the complete security of our maritime borders.
- Defence Minister also emphasised the need for the Indian military to adapt to changing technologies and global circumstances



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh addresses the gathering during Ran Samvad 2025 at the Army War College, in Ambekar Nagar on Wednesday. (©PIB India X/ANI Photo)

prepared to strengthen and enhance the Navy. Just yesterday, witnessed the commissioning of INS Himgiri and INS Udaygiri in our navy.

According to the changing world and changing technology, such numerous infrastructures are not only being included in the Navy but

are also strengthening it.” Notably, the Indian Navy on Tuesday simultaneously commissioned the latest multi-mission stealth frigates INS Udaygiri and INS Himgiri at the Naval Base in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. The ceremony was presided over by Defence Minister

Rajnath Singh. This marks the first occasion when two frontline surface combatants, constructed at two different shipyards, commissioned simultaneously, underscoring the growing maritime importance of India’s eastern seaboard. Udaygiri and Himgiri are follow-on ships of the Proj-

ect 17 (Shivalik) class frigates. Both frigates were designed in-house by the Indian Navy’s Warship Design Bureau (WDB), and notably, Udaygiri is the 100th ship designed by the WDB, marking a milestone in five decades of indigenous warship design. The Ministry of Defence said that both these vessels incorporate significant improvements in design, stealth, weapon and sensor systems and are capable of executing a full spectrum of maritime missions in Blue Water conditions. Udaygiri, built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd. (MDL), Mumbai, and Himgiri, constructed by Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata, showcase the nation’s growing shipbuilding prowess, as well as, the synergy between India’s premier defence shipyards.

Telangana on high alert as heavy rains lash state

RAJ KIRAN BATHULA
HYDERABAD

With heavy rains continuing to lash several parts of Telangana, including Hyderabad city, Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Tuesday directed all departments to remain on high alert and ensure the safety of citizens during the ongoing monsoon and Ganesh festivities.

The Chief Minister chaired a high-level review with senior officials and instructed the administration to focus on preventive safety measures.

He specifically ordered officials to evacuate residents from old and dilapidated houses and shift them to safer shelters to avoid accidents during the incessant downpour.

Revanth Reddy also directed energy department officials to take all precautions in electricity supply, stressing that power safety was crucial as thousands of devotees visit Ganesh pandals every day during the festival season.



Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy. File photo

The CM asked the GHMC, HYDRABAD, SDRF, Fire and Police departments to work in close coordination and respond swiftly to emergencies.

He also instructed district administrations to be vigilant about flooding in low-lying causeways, culverts, rivers and streams, and to restrict vehicle movement in such areas to prevent mishaps.

The Irrigation Department was told to monitor ponds, tanks, and other vulnerable water bodies that could breach due to heavy inflows.

Officials were warned to take timely measures to prevent flooding in nearby habitations.

Pointing to the risk of epidemics and waterborne diseases, the CM directed sanitation staff of municipal corporations, municipalities, and gram panchayats to immediately clear stagnant water and maintain hygiene in flood-affected areas.

The Medical and Health Department has been instructed to stockpile adequate medicines across government hospitals and also to organise special medical camps in affected regions.

The aim is to curb the spread of communicable diseases and provide immediate relief to people in distress.

Revanth Reddy reiterated that the state government would remain vigilant round-the-clock until the rainfall subsides and assured citizens that all possible steps were being taken to safeguard lives and property.

Uddhav meets Raj on Ganesh Chaturthi amid alliance buzz

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray visited his cousin and Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) president Raj Thackeray at his residence in Mumbai on Wednesday on the occasion of Ganesh Chaturthi, amid talks of an alliance between the two parties for the upcoming municipal elections.

Uddhav was accompanied by his wife Rashmi Thackeray and son Aaditya Thackeray. Earlier in the day, the family offered prayers at Mumbai's Raja in Ganesh Galli and



Shiv Sena UBT chief Uddhav Thackeray and Navnirman Sena (MNS) Chief Raj Thackeray pose for a picture during Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations at the latter's residence, in Mumbai on Wednesday. (©AUThackeray X/ANI Photo)

at Lalbaugcha Raja. Speculation about an alliance between the Shiv Sena (UBT) and the MNS for the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) polls has been growing in recent weeks.

On August 15, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut had said, "Uddhav Thackeray and Raj Thackeray will contest municipal elections together and win. The combined strength of Uddhav Thac-

keray and Raj Thackeray, along with the unity of the Marathi people, is the key to victory in elections."

In July, Uddhav and Raj had shared a stage at the Worli Dome in Mumbai, holding a joint rally after the Maharashtra government scrapped two Government Resolutions (GRs) to introduce Hindi as the third official language.

The Thackeray brothers garlanded the statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj at a joint rally of their parties, the Shiv Sena (UBT) and the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS), at the Worli Dome in Mumbai.

2 dead in building collapse

TDG NETWORK
PALGHAR

In a tragic incident, a building collapsed in Virar, near Mumbai, late in the night, officials said on Wednesday. According to Virar Police, two people have died so far in the incident.

Nine others were rescued from the debris and admitted to a nearby hospital, where they are undergoing treatment.

Relief and rescue operations are ongoing at the site, with National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) teams, fire brigade, and local police actively engaged in recovery efforts.

‘Closed chapter’: Kharge post DKS apology after reciting RSS anthem

AGENCIES
BENGALURU

Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge said that Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar's recitation of the RSS anthem in the Karnataka Assembly a 'closed chapter' following his apology. "The matter is over after apologising.

You (media) should not latch onto it," the Congress chief said. He warned that such an act should not be repeated in the future. "He shouldn't have said that but he uttered it. Now he has apologised. I will not give much... i mean I



Cong chief Kharge with Karnataka Deputy CM. File Photo

will not reopen a closed case," the opposition leader in the Rajya Sabha said. The storm began brewing in the Congress party in Karnataka after Shivakumar, who is also Congress state unit president, sang the RSS anthem 'Namaste Sada Vatsale Matrubhoomi...' inside

the state assembly during a discussion on the stadium stampede that killed 11 people. The stampede occurred on June 4 near the Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru, when fans had gathered for the celebration of RCB's maiden IPL title.

Air power now primary force in modern warfare: IAF Chief

TDG NETWORK
INDORE

Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal AP Singh, has said that air power has moved from being a supporting element to a primary force in modern warfare, stressing that it is now being employed in an offensive role.

Speaking at the Army War College under the 'Ran Samvad' series, Singh cited Operation Sindoor as a strong example of joint operations, while underlining the importance of readiness, joint planning, and a balanced approach that looks beyond technology alone. At a session titled 'Fireside chat', Singh was in conversation with retired Lt. Gen Raj Shukla before an audience of veterans, officers, and media representatives. Explaining the shift in the



Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal AP Singh. File Photo

role of air power, the IAF Chief said, "Until now, it was believed that deploying the Air Force in any conflict amounted to escalating the situation.

But today, the Air Force has assumed a primary role in warfare. We are now employing air power in an offensive manner, and this role will continue to expand." He said Operation Sindoor showed how inter-service synergy could be

achieved without major structural changes. "Operation Sindoor is a perfect example that we can operate strongly together. Yes, what we do need is a joint planning and coordination centre in Delhi," Singh said. Emphasising preparedness in a changing security environment, the Air Chief added, "We have to be ready for tomorrow. Operation Sindoor has taken us from learning to preparedness."

Singh cautioned against limiting the focus of future warfare to technological tools alone. "Just manufacturing drones is not enough. We must also focus on other domains. But we must remember, we have always relied on a man in the cockpit," he remarked. Pointing again to lessons from Operation Sindoor, Singh said clarity of objectives was key.

Cabinet approves Rs 12,328 cr railway extension projects

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved four projects of the Ministry of Railways with a total estimated cost of Rs. 12,328 Crore (approx.), the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) said in a release on Wednesday.

In a post on X, Prime Minister Narendra Modi wrote, "Our focus on connectivity and next-gen infrastructure is reflected yet again in today's Cabinet decision pertaining to multi-tracking of 3 projects benefitting Karnataka, Telangana, Bihar, as well as Assam and for a new railway line in remote areas of Kutch in Gujarat." According to the CCEA release, these projects include the multi-tracking of three projects benefiting Karnataka, Telan-

gana, Bihar & Assam, as well as one new rail line to connect the far-flung areas of Kutch, Gujarat. The above projects aim to ensure seamless and faster transportation of both passengers and goods. These initiatives will provide connectivity & improve travel convenience, besides reducing logistic cost and decreasing dependence on oil imports. Additionally, the projects will contribute to lower CO2 emissions, thereby supporting sustainable and efficient rail operations.

The projects will also generate direct employment for approximately 251 lakh (Two Hundred and Fifty-one lakh) human days during their construction. The proposed new line will provide connectivity to the far-fetched area of the Kutch region. Besides

promoting tourism in the state of Gujarat, the new rail line will help in the transportation of salt, cement, coal, clinker & bentonite. The release said, "The strategic importance of the project is that it will provide connectivity to the Rann of Kutch. The Harappan sites of Dholavira, Koteswar temple, Narayan Sarovar & Lakhpat fort will also come under the rail network, as 13 new railway stations will be added, benefiting 866 villages and approximately 16 Lakh population".

In a major Connectivity boost, the approved Multi-tracking projects will enhance connectivity to approximately 3,108 villages and about 47.34 lakh population, benefiting one Aspirational District (Kalaburagi) in the states of Karnataka, Telangana, Bihar & Assam.

Rapper Vedan gets anticipator bail in rape case in Kerala

AGENCIES
KOCHI

The Kerala High Court granted anticipatory bail to rapper Hirandas Murali, known as Vedan, in a rape case, saying that while the charges against him were serious, his custodial interrogation was not necessary.

Justice Bechu Kurian Thomas granted the relief to the rapper who was accused by a lady doctor of entering into a sexual relationship with her on the promise of marriage and later withdrawing from the same.

She has also accused him of sexually harassing her multiple times between 2021 and 2023. The High Court said "it is prima facie discernible" that the acquaintance between the rapper and the



Hirandas Murali, known as Vedan. File photo

woman commenced in the year 2021 at her instance and continued till March 2023, when they broke up. "There were numerous occasions when they stayed together and had physical relationships.... In such circumstances, denying anticipatory bail to the petitioner (Vedan) would result in serious prejudice," it said.

Devotees offer prayers at Shree Siddhivinayak Temple as Ganesh Chaturthi begins

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Devotees thronged the Shree Siddhivinayak Ganapati Temple in Mumbai on Wednesday to offer prayers on the occasion of Ganesh Chaturthi.

The ten-day festival, starting today, will conclude on Anantha Chaturdashi. This auspicious ten-day festival starts with

'Chaturthi' and ends on 'Anantha Chaturdashi'. The festive period is also known as 'Vinayak Chaturthi' or 'Vinayak Chavithi'.

The festival celebrates Ganesha as the 'God of New Beginnings' and the 'Remover of Obstacles' as well as the god of wisdom and intelligence. For the festivities, people bring Lord Ganesh idols to their homes, observe fasts,



BJP leader Devendra Fadnis offers prayer at the Shree Siddhivinayak Temple ahead of his swearing-in ceremony, in Mumbai on Thursday. (ANI Photo)

prepare mouth-watering delicacies, and visit pandals during the festival. Celebrated across the country, the festival sees lakhs of devotees gathering in temples and mandals to seek blessings from Lord Ganesh. Earlier on Sunday, the first look of Mumbai's famous Lalbaugcha Raja was unveiled. Crafted with unmatched artistry, Lalbaugcha Raja

isn't merely an idol; it's a symbol of collective faith, artistic mastery, and the vibrant spirit of Mumbai. Every year, millions of devotees come here for darshan. The unveiling of the Lalbaugcha Raja, the iconic Ganesh idol, is another main attraction of the festival.

The history of the Lalbaugcha Raja is quite famous, as it is the popular Ganesh Idol of Lalbaugcha

Raja Sarvajani Ganeshotsav Mandal, located at Putlabai Chawl, a worship place founded in 1934. The Lalbaugcha Raja Ganapati idol has been taken care of by the Kambli family for over eight decades. Earlier in July, the Maharashtra government declared the public Ganeshotsav as the 'Maharashtra State Festival'.

The announcement was made in the Legislative As-

sembly by Cultural Affairs Minister Ashish Shelar, who said the tradition of public Ganeshotsav was started in Maharashtra in 1893 by Lokmanya Tilak. "This festival is deeply rooted in social, national, freedom, self-respect, and linguistic pride. It continues in the same spirit today. It is a matter of pride and honour for Maharashtra," Shelar had told the Assembly.

CM REKHA MAKES OFFICERS' ATTENDANCE AT PUBLIC HEARING CAMPS COMPULSORY

CM Rekha has directed strict action against officers skipping public hearings without permission

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi CM Rekha Gupta has issued new orders to make the weekly public hearing camps, held under district revenue offices, more effective and meaningful, according to a press release.

According to a state government statement, attendance of designated officers at public hearing camps has now been made compulsory, and if a designated officer is unable to attend, they must obtain prior permission from the concerned District Magistrate. Absence without such permission will invite disciplinary action.

The Divisional Commissioner has issued an order in this regard. Copies have also been sent to all Department Heads, as well as

CM ISSUES STRICT ORDERS

- Attendance at weekly public hearing camps made mandatory for all officers
- Prior permission from District Magistrate required for unavoidable absences
- Divisional Commissioner orders departments to nominate regular senior representatives
- Rekha Gupta emphasises hearings as direct channel with citizens, not formality



CM Rekha Gupta issuing new orders on Wednesday. ANI

to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), Delhi Development Authority (DDA), New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) and the Delhi Cantonment Board.

On April 7, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, in a meeting with the Divi-

sional Commissioner and all District Magistrates, had directed that at least one public hearing camp be held every week in each revenue district. She had also instructed that inter-departmental coordination committee meetings be convened regularly in various

sub-divisions.

The Chief Minister had made it clear that designated officers must attend these forums for direct dialogue with the public. Sending representatives or subordinate staff would not be acceptable under any circumstances.

Delhi launches sterilisation, vax drive for stray dogs post SC order

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government will launch a sterilisation and vaccination drive campaign under the Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules 2023 after the Supreme Court orders on stray dogs. The SC ordered that the stray dogs must be released after sterilisation and immunisation, except those infected with rabies or exhibiting aggressive behaviour.

According to the sources, out of 78 government veterinary hospitals, 24 will be converted into vaccination centres. The Supreme Court has recognised the Lucknow ABC programme as India's national benchmark for humane and effective stray dog management.

The Lucknow model is based on a 'capture, sterilise, vaccinate, and release' model hailed as humane, scientifically grounded, and effective. The Supreme Court directed municipalities nationwide to create dedicated feeding zones and



Dogs in process of vaccination and sterilisation. ANI

helplines for strays, both of which have been integral to Lucknow's approach for years.

It also expanded the scope of the case to all states and union territories, with the intention of creating a uniform pan-India policy for managing the stray dog population.

Moreover, NGOs, private veterinarians, and volunteers will participate in the campaign, with an emphasis on humane solutions, according to the sources.

According to the 2016 survey, Delhi has approximately 8 lakh (800,000) stray

dogs, the sources informed.

Meanwhile, a three-judge bench of Justices Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta, and NV Anjaria ruled that stray dogs must be released after sterilisation and immunisation, except those infected with rabies or exhibiting aggressive behaviour.

The court stated that infected stray dogs shall be sterilised and immunised, but under no circumstances shall they be released back into the streets. As far as possible, they shall be kept in separate shelters or pounds after sterilisation and immunisation.

Bhardwaj's family being harassed, says AAP MLA after ED raid

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday conducted searches at Delhi AAP president Saurabh Bhardwaj's residence, with AAP MLA Sanjeev Jha accusing the agency of harassing Bhardwaj's family in what he described as "political revenge."

Jha said that the searches had been ongoing for 17 hours and questioned the purpose of the investigation. Speaking to ANI, Sanjeev Jha said, "...It has been 17 hours and the ED team is carrying out the search... What is the ED investigating?... They want to scare us... Family of (Delhi AAP president Saurabh Bhardwaj) is being harassed only out of political revenge..."

Delhi AAP State General Secretary Adil Ahmad Khan



AAP MLA Sanjeev Jha ANI

questioned the purpose of the investigation and accused the BJP of plotting against Saurabh Bhardwaj. Khan said the party will not be intimidated, and said that they will never be able to suppress the voice of AAP.

"ED has been raiding the residence of Delhi AAP president Saurabh Bhardwaj for the last 16-17 hours... What are they investigating?... Is BJP plotting against Delhi AAP president Sau-

rabh Bhardwaj?... We will not be afraid... They will never be able to suppress the voice of AAP," Khan said. Earlier, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Atishi also alleged that the "ridiculous" raids by the Enforcement Directorate on party leader Saurabh Bhardwaj's residence were "100 per cent fake" and a strategy to divert attention from the row over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's education degree. "These raids are 100%

fake because at the time when this matter pertained, Saurabh Bhardwaj was not even a minister. He became a minister two years later. This is ridiculous... These raids are fake and a strategy to divert attention from PM Modi's fake degree issue. This is to threaten the AAP. The AAP has not committed a single rupee of corruption... No matter how many raids are conducted, AAP is 'Kattar Imaandar'... We are not scared of these raids..." Atishi said while addressing a press conference in the national capital. Earlier, on Tuesday, the Central Agency conducted searches at the residence of former Delhi Health Minister Saurabh Bhardwaj in connection with a money laundering probe linked to alleged irregularities in hospital construction projects in the national capital.

Raids carried out just to divert attention: Atishi

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi Leader of Opposition and AAP leader Atishi on Wednesday alleged that the Enforcement Directorate's 20-hour search at the residence of Delhi AAP president Saurabh Bhardwaj was aimed at diverting attention.

She added that the BJP is "scared" of AAP.

Speaking to media, Atishi said, "ED carried out a search at the residence of Saurabh Bhardwaj for 20 hours. Why was a raid carried out at the residence of Saurabh Bhardwaj?... These raids were carried out just to divert attention... The strength of AAP is that it never bows down, and



AAP leader Atishi ANI

that's why the BJP is scared of AAP."

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) concluded its search at the residence of Delhi AAP president Saurabh Bhardwaj on Wednesday morning, a day after launching raids in connection with a money laundering probe into alleged irregularities in hospital construction projects in the national capital.

Sisodia hails Bharadwaj's 'courage, bravery'

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Manish Sisodia on Wednesday hailed the "courage and bravery" of party leader Saurabh Bhardwaj for being "steadfast" even after "18-hour-long" Enforcement Directorate (ED) raids at his residence.

In a social media post on X, Sisodia posted a video of both leaders meeting each other following ED raids.

The video was captioned, "My brother Saurabh Bhardwaj, steadfast even after 18 hours of E.D. raid and conspiracies... his courage and bravery are an example for us. We are one family, and as long as we



AAP leader Manish Sisodia ANI

stand together, no lies or conspiracies can bend us."

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) concluded its search at the residence of Delhi AAP president Saurabh Bhardwaj on Wednesday morning, a day after launching raids in connection with a money laundering probe into alleged irregularities in hospital construction projects in the national capital.

CM Rekha prays Ganpati blesses every city home

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta visited the Shri Ganesh Temple in Connaught Place on Wednesday and offered prayers on the occasion of Ganesh Chaturthi.

CM Gupta performed worship rituals at the temple and said that Lord Ganesha, revered as Mangalmurti, bestows wisdom, prosperity, and success upon devotees.

In a post on X, CM Gupta wrote, "On the sacred occasion of Ganesh Chaturthi today, I performed worship and darshan at the Shri Ganesh Temple located in Connaught Place and received blessings. The many forms of Mangalmurti



CM at Shri Ganesh Temple in Connaught Place on Wednesday ANI

Ganpati bestow the boons of wisdom, discernment, success, and prosperity in life. Such is His glory that wherever Vinayak resides, there dwells joy, good fortune, and auspiciousness."

Extending her greetings

to the people of the national capital, Delhi CM added, "O Ganpati Bappa, may You illuminate every home and courtyard in Delhi with your blessings and fill everyone's life with new successes and new joys. Gan-

pati Bappa Morya!"

Earlier today, CM Gupta offered prayers at the revered Pracheen Shiv Mandir in the national capital on the occasion of Ganesh Chaturthi.

CM extended heartfelt greetings to the nation and expressed her wishes for obstacle-free development and prosperity for Delhi, invoking the blessings of Lord Ganesh.

Speaking to reporters, CM Gupta said, "My greetings to the countrymen on the occasion of Ganesh Chaturthi.

May all the development works be completed without any obstacles and may Delhi progress. May Lord Ganesh bless us..."

Yamuna River continues to flow near danger mark

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Yamuna River continues to flow near the danger mark in the national capital, prompting heightened alert along vulnerable areas.

Visuals from the Old Yamuna Bridge show the river's water level just below the red "danger level" marking.

According to a report issued by the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) on Tuesday, active monsoon conditions are likely to prevail over Delhi during the next 4 days. Generally cloudy sky, very light to light rain/thundershowers at a few places with moderate rain at isolated places during night/



The Yamuna River continuing to flow near the danger mark ANI

early hours on 26 Aug 2025, and possibility of very light to light rain thereafter.

The weather forecast for August 27 remains as generally cloudy sky with the possibility of one or two spells of very light to light rain/thundershowers towards afternoon/evening. Meanwhile, in Punjab,

continuous rain and rising water levels in Pathankot, caused by downpours in Jammu and Kashmir, have led to waterlogging in several areas.

The administration has set up the Radha Swami Satsang Beas premises as an evacuation centre, and proper arrangements for

food are also being made.

The district authorities are coordinating with Jammu and Kashmir officials regarding water levels.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued an alert for widespread thunderstorm activity across Jammu and surrounding areas on Wednesday morning, August 27, 2025.

According to IMD, the Jammu DWR imagery at 5:10 AM showed severe convection with heavy rain, thunderstorms, and possible hail is occurring over Jammu, RS Pura, Samba, Akhnoor, Nagrota, Kot Bhalwal, Bishnah, Vijaypur, Purnamandal, and parts of Kathua and Udhampur.

HC Bar Association calls for 'Black Ribbon' protest

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court Bar Association (DHCBA) has strongly condemned the notification issued on August 13, 2025, by Delhi's Lieutenant Governor V.K. Saxena, which designates video conference rooms in police stations as official venues for recording evidence of police personnel and officers.

In a notice dated August 27, 2025, the DHCBA's Executive Committee de-



Protesting lawyers in New Delhi ANI

scribed the move as unacceptable and unanimously resolved to oppose it.

The Association has asked its members to wear black ribbons while

appearing in court as a symbolic mark of protest until the notification is withdrawn.

"The notification declaring police station video

conference rooms as 'designated places' for recording evidence undermines the sanctity of judicial proceedings," the notice, signed by Joint Secretary Kunal Malhotra, stated. The Association appealed to all members to cooperate in the protest.

The DHCBA's move comes amid a larger agitation by lawyers across Delhi. Bar associations from district courts have been on strike since August 22, demanding the withdrawal of the Lieutenant Governor's

order. On August 26, the Coordination Committee of All Delhi Bar Associations decided to extend the strike for another day.

Lawyers from Patiala House Court staged a march at India Gate Circle, while their counterparts from Rouse Avenue Court held demonstrations near the court complex.

The Bar Council of India (BCI) has also sided with the Delhi lawyers, calling the LG's directive a blow to the principles of natural justice.

32-year-old man killed after being hit by vehicle driven by juvenile

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

A 32-year-old man was killed after being hit and dragged for 600 metres by a vehicle driven by a minor in the Samaypur Badli area of Delhi.

According to the Delhi Police, the incident occurred on the evening of August 23 in the Badli Industrial Area.

The victim has been identified as Sujet Mandal, who was a resident of Raja Vihar. He was recognised by his brother-in-law, Jitesh, who stated that the deceased was working at a PVC pipe factory in M-2, Phase 1, Badli Industrial Area. Harehsvar, the Dep-



CCTV grab of the accident

uty Commissioner of Police, Outer North District, said that the victim was hit by a red car around 7 PM near his workplace. CCTV footage revealed the horrifying sequence in which the deceased got entangled beneath the bonnet/front boot of the car, was dragged for 600 meters and was dumped near the NDPL office, gate number 5.

BIHAR ELECTION 2025

RAHUL RESUMES YATRA IN MUZAFFARPUR

TDG NETWORK
MUZAFFARPUR

Lok Sabha LoP Rahul Gandhi, along with RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav and CPI (ML) leader Dipankar Bhattacharya, held the 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' in Muzaffarpur on Wednesday. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin and DMK MP Kanimozhi joined them.

Vikassheel Insaan Party (VIP) founder Mukesh Sahani, who is a part of the yatra, said that lakhs of people are joining it to bring change in the state.

"Lakhs of people are joining the yatra to bring change. We are getting a very good response," he said.

Earlier today Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Pradeep Bhandari accused the Congress and Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) of insulting Bihar's "pride and Swabhiman," alleging that both parties have repeatedly invited leaders who have mocked Biharis to participate in the 'Voter Adhikaar Yatra' campaign



Rahul Gandhi leads Bihar voter rights march, BJP slams opposition over controversies.

RAHUL GANDHI'S YATRA IN BIHAR

- Gandhi, Stalin, Tejashwi, Kanimozhi join yatra across 20 districts
- VIP leader Sahani says lakhs joining to bring political change
- BJP accuses Congress, RJD of "insulting Bihar's pride and dignity"
- Yatra covers 1,300 km, ends in Patna on September 1

in the state.

In a post on X, BJP leader Bhandari wrote, "Rahul Gandhi and Tejasvi Yadav are insulting Bihar's pride and 'Swabhiman' by getting those who abuse people of Bihar to campaign in the state!"

He further recalled controversial remarks made by Congress leaders, stating, "After Revent Reddy, Priyanka Vadra now they get Stalin! - Revanth Reddy, who mocked Bihari DNA - Priyanka Vadra, who shamelessly clapped when

Charanjit Channi abused Biharis."

Bhandari also targeted DMK chief and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin, whose party had once courted controversy with the remark. "MK Stalin's DMK, which said "People

of Bihar clean toilets" This is not an accident. This is the RJD Congress mindset 'Illegal Bangladeshis are "vote bank," he said.

"Hardworking Biharis are abuse targets," Bhandari added on X.

The 16-day 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' in Bihar, involving Congress MP Rahul Gandhi and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, aims to raise awareness about alleged irregularities in the voter list, which opposition leaders have termed a case of 'vote chori' (vote theft). Covering over 1,300 km across 20 districts, the yatra is scheduled to conclude in Patna on September 1.

Bihar Assembly elections are expected later this year, although the Election Commission of India (ECI) has not announced an official date.

While the NDA, comprising the BJP, JD(U), and LJP, aims to continue its tenure in Bihar, the INDIA bloc, comprising the RJD, Congress, and left parties, seeks to oust Nitish Kumar.

Should apologise for gathering people who abuse Bihar: Giriraj

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Union Minister Giriraj Singh on Wednesday launched a scathing attack on Congress MP and Lok Sabha LoP Rahul Gandhi over his 'Voter Adhikar Yatra', asking him to apologise for gathering people who "abuse" Bihar and its people.

Notably, the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister participated in the 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' today in Darbhanga, while his Telangana counterpart, Revanth Reddy, had joined the yatra on Tuesday.

In December 2023, Revanth Reddy, who was sworn in as the Chief Minister of Telangana, allegedly stated that their "DNA is better than Bihar's DNA."

Union Minister Singh further called Rahul Gandhi a "liar."

"Rahul Gandhi is a liar... Yes, we will stay in power for 50 years, but on the strength of our work. You keep lying, the public will sideline you just like that..."



Union Minister Giriraj Singh ANI

For the way they (Rahul Gandhi) are gathering people who abuse the people of Bihar, including MK Stalin, Revanth Reddy in Bihar, they should apologise. Otherwise, they will have to pay the price for it in the coming elections," Giriraj Singh told ANI.

Meanwhile, Bharatiya Janata Party leader Syed Shah Nawaz Hussain slammed Congress MP Rahul Gandhi, stating that the "vote chori" phrase is imaginary and cannot be found in dictionaries.

The BJP leader said that the Congress party have fallen in love with words "chor" and "chori".

"Congress has no issue to raise against the government. So, they focus only

on one issue, which is an imaginary word 'vote chori,' not even found in the dictionary. They fell in love with the words 'Chor' and 'Chori.' Using these words, they are making allegations against PM Modi." Shahnawaz Hussain told ANI.

The former Bihar minister stated that during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the Congress party gave the slogan "Chowkidaar Chor Hai," but the people gave it a befitting reply. He further accused Rahul Gandhi of making nonsensical statements and mentioned that he is misleading the country.

"During the 2019 elections, they raised the slogan of 'Chowkidar chor hai,' and people gave them a befitting reply. Now, they are disrespecting the people's mandate by alleging vote theft... By making such nonsense statements, Rahul Gandhi is misleading the country and inciting people to revolt against the government.

Full form of NDA is Nahi Denge Adhikar: Tejashwi

TDG NETWORK
DARBHANGA

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav on Wednesday took potshots at the ruling (National Democratic Alliance) in Bihar, terming it "Nahi Denge Adhikar", stating that the alliance will fail to secure a majority in the forthcoming Bihar assembly elections.

Speaking to ANI, Tejashwi Yadav said, "The full form of NDA is 'Nahi Denge Adhikar'... People are supporting us. The way 'vote chori' is occurring, the public is aware and will protect their votes. BJP-NDA will fail in the upcoming elections..."

The ongoing Voter Adhikar Yatra will be conducted in Gangwara Mahaveer Sthan, Darbhanga, to Sitamarhi via Muzaffarpur today.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin will also participate in the 'Voter



RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav ANI

Aadhikar Yatra'.

Earlier on Tuesday, Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi, along with Lok Sabha LoP Rahul Gandhi, Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Tejashwi Yadav, undertook their 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' in Supaul.

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra launched a scathing attack on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), accusing it of conspiring to steal votes across the country. The remarks came amid the ongoing

ing 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' in Bihar.

In a post on X, Gandhi said that the ruling alliance in Bihar has been unable to address pressing issues, including inflation, unemployment, migration, and economic crisis. "The BJP, which has lost the trust of the people, is hatching conspiracies to steal votes across the country. In Bihar, the BJP-JDU government, which has failed on every front, including inflation, unemployment, migration, and economic crisis, wants to remain in power by stealing the votes of the people."

The 16-day 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' in Bihar, involving Congress MP Rahul Gandhi and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, aims to raise awareness about alleged irregularities in the voter list, which opposition leaders have termed a case of 'vote chori' (vote theft).

Over 1.62 lakh claims and objections filed by electors on draft rolls

TDG NETWORK
PATNA

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has received 10 claims and objections from a single state political party - the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (Liberation) in Bihar for the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) 2025 of the electoral rolls. With just six days left for filing claims and objections, the process will conclude on September 1.

According to the daily bulletin issued by the ECI on Tuesday, political parties have submitted a total of 10 claims and objections regarding the draft electoral roll published on August 1.

Exactly 1,62,453 claims and objections were filed directly by electors, of which 17,516 have been disposed of after verification. The Commission



Representative image

also noted that 4,33,214 new forms were received from individuals attaining the age of 18 years or above, including six forms submitted through Booth Level Agents (BLAs).

The ECI emphasised that all claims and objections will be processed only after the mandatory seven-day notice period and proper verification of eligibility by the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) or Assistant ERO. It further clarified that no names will be deleted from the draft list without a formal speaking order and due inquiry.

Jaandaar, shaandaar aur ekta wali yatra: Bihar Congress chief

TDG NETWORK
MUZAFFARPUR

Bihar Congress President Rajesh Kumar on Wednesday lauded the 'Voter Adhikar Yatra'-led by Lok Sabha LoP Rahul Gandhi, terming it as "Jaandaar" and "Shaandaar".

Earlier today, the 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' resumed in Muzaffarpur, where Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin and others joined Lok Sabha LoP Rahul Gandhi.

"This yatra is Jaandaar, shaandaar aur ekta wali," Rajesh Kumar told ANI.

The 16-day 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' in Bihar, involving Congress MP Rahul Gandhi and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, aims to raise awareness about alleged irregularities in the voter list, which opposition leaders have termed a case of 'vote chori' (vote theft). Covering over 1,300 km across 20 districts, the



Bihar Congress President Rajesh Kumar ANI

yatra is scheduled to conclude in Patna on September 1. Earlier today, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Pradeep Bhandari accused the Congress and Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) of insulting Bihar's "pride and Swabhiman," alleging that both parties have repeatedly invited leaders who have mocked Biharis to participate in the 'Voter Adhikaar Yatra' campaign in the state. In a post on X, Bhandari wrote, "Rahul Gandhi and Tejasvi Yadav are insulting Bihar's pride and 'Swabhiman' by getting those who abuse

people of Bihar to campaign in the state!"

He further recalled controversial remarks made by Congress leaders, stating, "After Revent Reddy, Priyanka Vadra, now they get Stalin! - Revanth Reddy, who mocked Bihari DNA - Priyanka Vadra, who shamelessly clapped when Charanjit Channi abused Biharis."

Bhandari also targeted DMK chief and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin, whose party had once courted controversy with the remark. "MK Stalin's DMK, which said "People of Bihar clean toilets" This is not an accident. This is the RJD Congress mindset 'Illegal Bangladeshis are "vote bank," he said. "Hardworking Biharis are abuse targets," Bhandari added on X. Bihar Assembly elections are expected later this year, although the Election Commission of India (ECI) has not announced an official date.

Assam Rifles seize opium worth Rs 1.25 lakh in Mizoram's Lawngtlai, two held

TDG NETWORK
LAWNGTLAI

In a joint targeted operation, Assam Rifles on Wednesday recovered opium worth Rs 1.25 Lakhs from the Shitlangpui village of Mizoram's Lawngtlai district, officials said. Two individuals were apprehended during the joint operation.

According to the Headquarters Inspector General Assam Rifles (East) [HQ IGAR (E)], the operation was based on specific intelligence inputs.

Officials said, "Based on specific intelligence, Assam Rifles launched an Area

Domination Patrol along with persons of the Excise and Narcotics Department, Lawngtlai, in the general area of village Shitlangpui, Lawngtlai district on 27 Aug 25."

"The party conducted a search in a house, which led to the recovery of 247.65 grams of Opium worth Rs 1,25,000/- and apprehended two individuals", said the officials.

The recovered contraband items and apprehended individuals have been handed over to the Excise and Narcotics Department, Lawngtlai.

Earlier, in a series of joint operations across Manipur from August 18 to 23, the Indian Army and Assam Rifles formations under Spear Corps, in close coordination with Manipur Police, carried out precise, intelligence-driven operations across Jiribam, Pherzawl, Bishnupur, Thoubal, Imphal West, and Imphal East.

The operation led to the apprehension of 08 cadres from hill- and valley-based groups and the seizure of 10 weapons, grenades, ammunition, and other warlike stores.

Feel pity for SP's thinking: Expelled MLA Pooja Pal

TDG NETWORK
LUCKNOW

Expelled Samajwadi Party MLA Pooja Pal on Wednesday lambasted the party and accused its women leaders of making derogatory comments about her personal life to "increase their numbers" in front of the party chief Akhilesh Yadav.

The expelled SP MLA said that the criticism only reflected their "lack of self-respect" and questioned their understanding of women's dignity. She also added that her family background had never allowed her to engage in such



Expelled Samajwadi Party MLA Pooja Pal ANI

politics.

While speaking to ANI, Pooja Pal said, "The way women of the Samajwadi Party are criticising another woman, I feel pity for their

thinking... They lack self-respect, so how can they respect others?... To increase their numbers in front of Akhilesh, comments are being made about my personal life... Before setting up PDA Pathshala, they should go to school themselves and learn how to respect a woman. My family members have not taught me to do such cheap things that I should talk like them..." The former MLA said that she had written to the government and the Director General of Police (DGP) and action would be taken against any misleading or incorrect statements made about me

NHRC takes suo motu cognisance of death of gang rape victim in Ghaziabad

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has taken suo motu cognisance of a media report on the death of a speech- and hearing-impaired gang rape victim at her home in Uttar Pradesh's Ghaziabad, on August 21.

Reportedly, she was subjected to gang rape by two men in the Loni area of the district on 18th August, 2025.

The Commission has observed that the contents of the news report, if true, raise serious issues of violation of human rights. Therefore, it has issued notices to the Director General of Police (DGP) of Uttar Pradesh and the District Magistrate of Ghaziabad, calling for a detailed report on the matter within two weeks.

The NHRC has issued a notice to the DGP, Uttar Pradesh and DM, Ghaziabad, calling for a detailed report on the matter within two weeks. The report is expected to include the status of the investigation and com-



NHRC building ANI

pensation, if any, granted to the victim's family.

According to the media report carried on 22nd August, 2025, the victim was undergoing treatment at the Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences, Delhi. The two alleged perpetrators have been arrested, who had abducted her when she was walking alone on an isolated stretch and sexually assaulted her.

Earlier in the day, the NHRC took suo motu cognisance of media reports on the death of a 22-year-old Zimbabwean student, who succumbed to injuries at AIIMS Bathinda after being allegedly assaulted by a group of men in Punjab's Bathinda district.

West Bengal Govt most corrupt government in country : BJP's Ghosh

TDG NETWORK
WEST MEDINIPUR

Bharatiya Janata Party leader Dilip Ghosh on Wednesday launched a scathing attack on the Mamata Banerjee-led West Bengal government, terming it "the most corrupt" in the country.

Ghosh was responding to West Bengal CM Mamata



Bharatiya Janata Party leader Dilip Ghosh ANI

Banerjee's allegations, saying her government's ministers and MLAs are in jail and implying they are involved in corrupt activities.

Ghosh claimed that there are over 1 crore fake voters in West Bengal, which he believes will be removed once the Special Investigation and Registration (SIR) process begins. He accuses the TMC of trying to create

a voter base through these fake registrations.

"Ministers and MLAs of Mamata Banerjee's government are in jail. Everyone knows who the thieves are. After SIR starts here, the more than 1 crore fake voters here will also be weeded out, so their (TMC) government won't be formed here either. They are scared of this, that's why they are making such

senseless statements. The most corrupt government in the country is in West Bengal," Dilip Ghosh told ANI.

Earlier on Tuesday, West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee had accused the Central Government and Prime Minister Narendra Modi of withholding funds for crucial welfare schemes in the state. She further alleged that PM Modi insulted the

West Bengal people.

She alleged that the Central government had failed to release funds for key schemes, including the 100-day MGNREGA work program, Nirmal Jal Yojana, and the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. Despite this, Mamata Banerjee asserted that the state government has continued all these projects using its own funds.

US TARIFFS MAY HIT GDP BY 50 BPS, RAISE INFLATION: SBI

New US tariffs on Indian goods may stoke inflationary pressures significantly, but trade negotiations will restore confidenc: Report

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The recent move by the United States to impose steep tariffs on Indian goods is expected to weigh on the US economy, pushing up inflationary pressures and impacting growth, according to a report by the State Bank of India (SBI).


The report said that US GDP could be affected by 40-50 basis points due to the new tariffs, while the economy is also likely to face higher input cost inflation.

"We believe that U.S. tariffs are likely to affect U.S. GDP by 40-50 bps along with higher input cost inflation," the report noted.

The report highlighted that signs of renewed inflationary pressure have already started emerging

TARIFFS TO DENT US ECONOMY, SBI REPORT WARNS

- US GDP may fall 40–50 basis points due to tariffs
- Inflation expected above 2% until 2026, fueled by input costs
- Textiles, gems, jewellery most exposed; pharma, steel relatively safe
- India's trade surplus with US could flip to deficit scenario



Representative image.

in the US, mainly due to the pass-through effects of the recent tariffs and a weaker dollar. It also flagged that import-sensitive sectors such as electronics, automobiles, and consumer durables are feeling the impact most sharply.

The report stated that inflation in the US is now expected to remain above the 2 percent target through 2026, driven by supply-side factors arising from higher

tariffs and exchange rate movements.

The US has imposed tariffs on about USD 45 billion worth of Indian exports. Labour-intensive sectors such as textiles and gems, and jewellery are expected to face moderate pressures.

However, exports of pharmaceuticals, smartphones, and steel are relatively insulated due to exemptions, existing tariff structures, and steady domestic de-

mand in the U.S. The report also noted that if all USD 45 billion worth of exports are hit by the new 50 percent tariffs, India's trade surplus with the U.S. could turn into a trade deficit in the worst-case scenario.

"However, we believe trade negotiations will restore confidence and improve exports to the U.S.," the report added.

The report also pointed out that while tariffs on Indian

goods have been raised to 50 percent, duties on Chinese exports stand at 30 percent, on Vietnamese goods at 20 percent, Indonesian exports at 19 percent, and Japanese products at 15 percent.

The US is India's largest export destination for textiles, a sector where India has steadily gained market share over the past five years, even as China's share has declined. This underscores India's growing role in the U.S. supply chain.

Similarly, the US remains the biggest market for India's gems and jewellery sector, accounting for nearly one-third of its USD 28.5 billion annual shipments.

With tariffs on these products being raised from 25 percent to 50 percent, the report outlined that exporters are preparing for significant disruption.

India's huge domestic demand can offset export losses to US: GTRI

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Ajay Srivastava, founder of the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), noted that India can offset the loss of US trade to some extent through increased domestic consumption.

The 50 per cent Trump tariffs on India come into effect starting today, posing challenges for the country's US-oriented exporters.

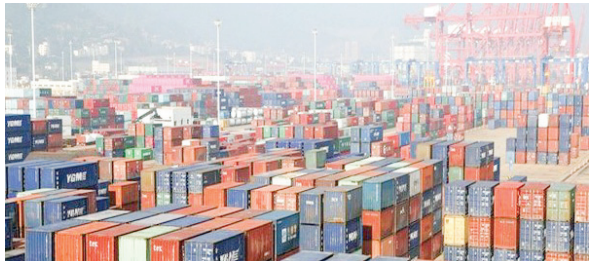
India broadly has two options to offset some of the US challenges, Srivastava, founder of trade think tank GTRI, noted.

"We have two broad options. One, the bigger option is that local markets. Our exports are just 20 per cent of Indian economy and Indian market is very big. It absorbs 80 per cent of Indian production and there is scope for further absorption of this because Indian economy is growing at 6 to 7 per cent annually," Srivastava told ANI.

"Domestic consumption can 'happily absorb' some of the shocks," he said.

The second "great option" is to search for other countries to divert some of the exports that India cannot export to the US.

"And for this, the government is making an effort to expedite FTAs with the European Union. And we already conclude signed an



Representative image.

agreement with the UK. So efforts are on to implement that quickly. Few more FTAs like with Peru and other countries are on the line," he stated. GTRI hopes that, in a few months, India will largely mitigate the adverse impact of US tariffs.

Labour-intensive sectors, such as diamonds, gems, jewellery, textiles, garments, and shrimp, will be significantly impacted due to their high dependency on the US market and increased competition from countries with lower tariffs, he said. Srivastava said that other competitor countries may replace most of Indian exports.

India's nearest competitors in the US market for textiles and garments are China, Bangladesh, and Vietnam. All these countries face relatively lower tariffs than India.

"Most of the Indian products will be phased out from the US market until some tariffs are brought down," he noted.

However, there is a silver lining. The share of small and

medium-sized exporters is distinct but relatively low in the US. Developed markets require stringent certifications before making a purchase.

"All the small or medium-sized factories can afford the price of those certifications, and they generally export to low-end markets. Very few medium or small-scale industries in the garment or textile sectors export to the US," Srivastava said.

Asked whether he sees any scope for negotiation now with the US, he responded in affirmation.

"Negotiations are not terminated. They have just been paused. So there is always a negotiation. No countries are open. No country has said, neither India nor the US, that they are terminating the negotiations. So we hope that soon they may resume," he said.

Finally, the think tank suggested long-term solutions include improving product quality and reducing manufacturing costs to enhance export competitiveness.

US tariffs threaten lakhs of jobs in India, says CTI

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Chamber of Trade and Industry (CTI) has written a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi stating that the 50 per cent tariff imposed by the US could devastate key Indian industries and threaten the livelihoods of lakhs of Indians.

"The 50 per cent US tariff will have a devastating impact on India's textiles, leather, gems and jewellery, auto components, chemicals, pharma, seafood, electronics and other sectors," CTI Chairman Brijesh Goyal said.

He explained that because of the increased tariffs, Indian goods will be up to 35 per cent costlier in the American market compared to competitors, prompting buyers to look elsewhere.

According to CTI, the hike could affect more than USD 48 billion worth of Indian exports. Sectors like engineering goods, which saw exports of Rs. 1.7 lakh crore last year, are expected to take a sharp hit. Similarly, gems and jewellery exports worth Rs. 90,000 crore, and India's booming electronics shipments are also under severe threat

Products that earlier faced a 10 per cent tariff will now



Representative image.

carry a 50 per cent tariff, drastically raising costs for US buyers.

Pharmaceutical exports, valued at Rs. 92,000 crore last year, will also face hurdles. Medicines that previously entered the US duty-free will now cost 50 per cent more, placing Indian pharma firms at a disadvantage compared to other suppliers, such as Vietnam.

However, despite these losses, Goyal advised the government that India should respond firmly to the United States' steep tariff hike by imposing retaliatory tariffs on American goods. "India must not be afraid of this pressure. We should reduce our dependence on American imports and simultaneously explore new markets in countries such as Germany, the U.K., Singapore and Malaysia, where demand for engineering goods is rising. We must teach the US a lesson with counter-tariffs."

Cabinet approves extension of PM SVANidhi scheme

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the restructuring and extension of the Prime Minister Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) scheme, extending its lending period from the earlier deadline of December 31, 2024, to March 31, 2030.

As per a press release by the Cabinet, the move comes with a total financial outlay of Rs. 7,332 crore and is expected to benefit around 1.15 crore street vendors, including 50 lakh new beneficiaries.

Implementation of the scheme would be the joint responsibility of the Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA) and the Department of Financial Services (DFS), with DFS being responsible for facilitating access to loans/credit cards through banks/financial institutions, as well as their ground-level functionalities.

Under the restructured scheme, the loan slabs have been revised. The first tranche loan has been increased to Rs. 15,000 from the earlier Rs. 10,000, and the second tranche enhanced to Rs. 25,000 from Rs. 20,000, while the third tranche remains unchanged at Rs. 50,000.

A UPI-linked RuPay Credit Card will be introduced for vendors who successfully repay their second loan, giving them quick access to credit for both personal and business needs.

In addition, to encour-



Representative image.

age digital adoption, street vendors will now be able to earn cashback incentives of up to Rs. 1,600 for retail and wholesale transactions carried out digitally. The coverage of the scheme is also being expanded beyond statutory towns to include census towns and "peri-urban" areas in a phased manner. Capacity-building measures form another important part of the restructured scheme. Street vendors will receive training in entrepreneurship, financial literacy, digital skills, and marketing. For those in the food business, standard hygiene and food safety training will be offered in collaboration with the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).

The Cabinet release further stated that the 'SVANidhi se Samridhhi' component would be reinforced through monthly Lok Kalyan Melas. These events are designed to ensure that street vendors and their families are linked to multiple government welfare

schemes in a saturation mode.

Since its inception, the PM SVANidhi scheme has already made a considerable impact. As of July 30, 2025, more than 96 lakh loans worth Rs. 13,797 crore had been disbursed to 68 lakh street vendors.

Nearly 47 lakh digitally active vendors have together carried out 557 crore digital transactions valued at Rs. 6.09 lakh crore, earning cashback worth Rs. 241 crore.

Additionally, 46 lakh beneficiaries across 3,564 urban local bodies have been profiled under the 'SVANidhi se Samridhhi' initiative, leading to over 1.38 crore sanctions under other government schemes.

The scheme has also won national recognition, including the Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Administration in 2023 and the Silver Award for Excellence in Government Process Re-engineering for Digital Transformation in 2022.

Personal income tax collection overtakes corporate tax: Report

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Personal income tax collections have surpassed corporate taxes for the first time in India's history, signalling a structural shift in the country's direct tax architecture driven by formalisation, digitisation and stronger compliance, according to a report by JM Financial Institutional Securities.

The share of personal income tax in total direct taxes rose sharply from 38.1 per cent in FY14 to 53.4 per cent in FY24, while corporate taxes declined from 61.9 per cent to 46.6 per cent over the same period.

India's direct tax compliance has seen major changes over the past decade. The number of individual income tax return filers surged 2.3 times, from 30.5 million in FY14 to 69.7 million in



Representative image.

FY23. When including those who pay tax through TDS without filing returns, the taxpayer base nearly doubled from 53.8 million to 99.2 million.

This growth has been underpinned by robust upfront compliance. Tax Deducted at Source (TDS) collections more than doubled from Rs 2.5 trillion in FY14 to Rs 6.5 trillion in FY24, while advance tax payments nearly quadrupled from Rs2.9 trillion to Rs 12.8 trillion. TDS and advance tax payment

now account for more than half of total direct taxes.

The introduction of Goods and Services Tax (GST) in 2017 has further strengthened direct tax compliance through invoice-matching and data integration. The number of active GST taxpayers rose from 12.4 million in 2019 to 14.7 million in 2024, formalising many previously unregistered businesses. This digital trail has allowed tax authorities to cross-verify income declarations, curbing tax evasion.

Retail loan shift driving rise in consumer leverage: Report

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The ongoing shift in the financial markets towards retail loans is leading to an increase in consumer leverage, according to a report by JM Financials.

The report highlighted that the transformation in lending trends has evolved over several phases in the last two decades, with both banks and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) playing a significant role.

It stated, "Ongoing shift to retail loans is leading to an increase in consumer leverage."

Between 2000 and 2010, the Indian banking sector



Representative image.

experienced a decade of strong growth and product innovation.

This period marked the emergence and expansion of retail banking. Products such as housing loans (HL) and business loans (BL) became widely available, with ICICI Bank playing a pioneering role in making

these products accessible to a wider customer base.

The following years, between 2010 and 2015, were marked by challenges. The sector experienced a slowdown as a significant portion of corporate loans were converted into non-performing assets (NPAs). This weighed heavily on

the balance sheets of banks, limiting fresh lending.

The report shared that, post-2015, demand for funding picked up strongly across various sectors, including retail, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), as well as agriculture loans.

Financial institutions once again began expanding their lending portfolios to capture these markets. This growth, however, has also led to higher leverage for consumers.

The report also pointed out key differences in lending approaches between NBFCs and public sector banks (PSBs), particularly in the MSME segment.

India's IT sector outlook cautiously optimistic despite headwinds

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The medium-term outlook for the information technology (IT) industry in the country remains cautiously optimistic despite persisting macroeconomic headwinds and continued client spending caution, according to a research outlook report on the IT sector by Mirae Asset Sharekhan.

The report highlighted that while the industry is facing delays in client decision-making, the overall sector remains supported by strong deal pipelines and rising adoption of artificial intelligence (AI).

This combination, it said,



Representative image.

will ensure moderate but steady growth, even though short-term performance continues to reflect challenges.

"We believe the medium-term outlook remains cautiously optimistic, backed by strong deal pipelines and increasing AI adoption, though tempered by macroeconomic headwinds

and client spending caution leading to delayed decision making," the report said.

The report also stated that it continues to have greater comfort in Tier-1 IT companies and a few select Tier-2 companies because of their steady performance and relatively better valuations.

It reiterated a positive stance on the sector and advised investors to consider the brokerage's preferred picks within the IT space.

On the performance front, Tier-1 IT companies reported muted revenue growth, ranging from around -3.3 to 2.6 per cent on a quarter-on-quarter constant currency basis.

Meanwhile, Tier-2 IT firms

under coverage showed mixed results, with some delivering stronger performance than others.

In terms of market performance, the Nifty IT Index has underperformed significantly over the past year, falling by nearly 13 per cent, compared to a 2 per cent rise in the Nifty 50 index.

The underperformance has largely been driven by macroeconomic uncertainties, subdued client spending, and muted Q1 results across the industry.

Looking ahead, IT services companies continue to provide cautious but positive revenue growth guidance for FY26, underpinned by robust deal pipelines.

CTRL + ALT + DELETE: THE OTT BAN AND THE HYPOCRISY OF CONTENT REGULATION IN INDIA

OPINION

DIYA SHER &
DR. ALISHA VERMA



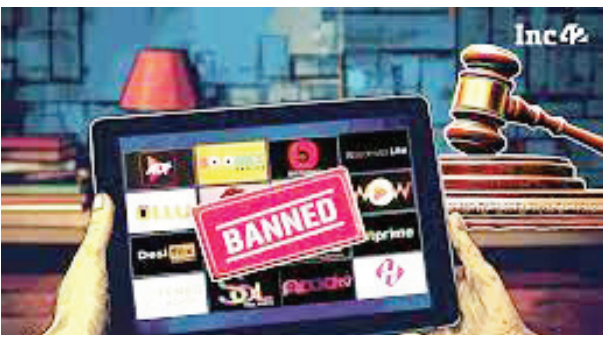
ULLU subscribers woke up last month to find their favourite shows gone, courtesy of a government ban. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting's made the decision in July 2025 to restrict access to over 20 OTT platforms, such as ULLU, ALTT, Prime Shots, and many others. It has sparked a debate in the legal and media sectors about the direction. These platforms were accused of broadcasting pornographic and obscene

content, which prompted the government to pursue them under the Information Technology Act and other relevant laws. Aim of the action is claimed to safeguard public morality and prevent children from viewing inappropriate content. However, it raises important concerns regarding the future of creative freedom in India's digital space, regulatory excess, and selective enforcement. In recent years, India's OTT ecosystem has experi-

enced rapid growth. These platforms cater to a diverse population in both urban and semi-urban areas. It was reported in September 2023, that ULLU has over 2.1 million paying subscribers and was next in line to go public through SME IPO in 2024. Although such platforms are not as significant as Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, they have established a market by providing explicit and regional content to viewers who subscribe to it by choice. Experts are questioning the fairness and proportionality of the government's decision to prohibit them entirely, rather than merely specific categories of content.

REGULATIONS AND STATUTES

The government has implemented sections 67 and 67A of the Information Technology Act to prohibit the transmission of sexually explicit and profane material electronically. The ban has also been justified by Section 4 of the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act and Section 294 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. Numerous legal professionals believe that these regulations are being implemented in a man-



ner that could potentially be challenged for a lack of due process, despite their legitimate intent. The IT Rules of 2021 have already established a three-tier system of regulations, which consists of platforms self-regulating, industry authorities monitoring the situation, and the government intervening only as a last resort. Many of the prohibited sites were already members of self-regulatory organizations, such as the Digital Publisher Content Grievances Council (DPCGC), and had already removed content in response to previous warnings.

WHAT THE GOVERNMENT SAYS

The government has stated that the content being streamed frequently lacks a plot and depicts inappropriate sexual situations, even in family contexts,

and that there are insufficient methods to verify an individual's age. According to Hindustan Times, the decision was reached after consulting with numerous ministries and civil society organizations. The primary concern was that juveniles were being exposed to adult content without any restrictions. Despite the validity of this concern, the absence of explicit public guidelines or a transparent review process for the ban has resulted in allegations of moral policing.

THE HYPOCRISY

The debate has become particularly acrimonious due to the apparent hypocrisy in enforcement. Despite the prohibition of websites such as ULLU and ALTT, Netflix continues to distribute content that is arguably more explicit. Netflix features the Bengali film "Gandu," which

includes graphic sexual sequences, including oral sex, and full-frontal nudity. However, it is still accessible without any government supervision. The legal experts are currently pondering whether the issue is truly related to obscenity or to the control of the narrative, as only smaller Indian platforms are being targeted, while comparable content on global services is untouched.

One commentator succinctly stated, "Something cannot be classy on Netflix and sleazy on ULLU or ALT Balaji." This sentiment is a component of a more extensive concern regarding the class divide in content regulation. Platforms that cater to semi-urban audiences are being penalised, while those that cater to privileged or international audiences are not. Khaitan's legal experts have also expressed concern that the Ministry's actions may constitute moral surveillance, even though they follow the law. According to them, the concept of proportionality is violated by the prohibition of entire platforms due to the actions of a few individuals, as the rules should be applied uniformly.

LET VIEWERS DECIDE

The consequences of these types of prohibitions extend beyond the realms of law and ethics. The OTT industry has emerged as a critical component of India's digital economy. It generates employment opportunities, fosters innovative concepts, and conveys narratives in numerous formats. This growth could be impeded by an excessive number of regulations, which could result in the content being pushed underground, where it would be more difficult to monitor and regulate. The television industry serves as a cautionary tale: DTH subscriptions have experienced a significant decline in the past decade as a result of licensing and censorship. Over-regulation and rising costs drove viewers away from DTH. As the repetitive, censored content lost out to the cheaper, fresher, on-demand choices of OTT, the same fate now looms over streaming if blanket bans replace smarter regulation. OTT presented itself as a fair alternative; however, it is currently at risk of becoming overly regulated by the government.

It is crucial to safeguard children; however, this should not necessitate

the suppression of novel concepts or the establishment of moral standards. Smarter and more detailed regulations are preferable to broad prohibitions. Parental controls, age-based filters, and content warnings as implemented by Netflix and Prime Video serve as a safe alternative. These instruments empower spectators to make informed decisions without restricting the autonomy of artists. Rules and regulations that safeguard vulnerable groups, respect cultural distinctions, and safeguard creative expression are required in India.

Ultimately, it is the individual who should have the ability to determine what they watch, not the government. The recent restrictions may be justified by legitimate concerns; however, the manner in which they were implemented reveals deficiencies that could potentially undermine India's digital future. In a democracy, censorship should never be the default option, therefore, regulations must be equitable and reasonable. If India isn't careful, the next thing we stream might be only what the government approves, and that's not entertainment, that's propaganda.

Prolongation of criminal case for unreasonable period amounts to mental incarceration: Supreme Court

OPINION

SANJEEV SIROHI

It is entirely in order and so also definitely in the fitness of things that while most firmly sticking to logic and displaying pragmatism, the Supreme Court in a most learned, laudable, landmark, logical and latest judgment titled *K. Pounammal v. State* Represented by Inspector of Police in Criminal Appeal No. 1716 of 2011 and cited in Neutral Citation No.: 2025 INSC 1014 in the exercise of its criminal appellate jurisdiction that was pronounced as recently as on August 21, 2025 while upholding the conviction of a former Inspector of Central Excise who is a 75-year-old woman in a 22-year-old bribery case, has reduced her sentence to the period already undergone, citing mitigating factors including her advanced age and the "mental incarceration" caused by protracted legal proceedings. We need to note that the criminal appeal before the Apex Court was filed against the order of the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court confirming the judgment of the Special Judge, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) convicting the appellant for the offences under Section 7, Section 13(2) read Section 13(1)(d) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988. Most commendably, the top court also underscored the relevance of the reformative theory of justice holding that, "Amongst these theories, reformative approach has become increasingly acceptable to the modern jurisprudence... The focus would be on the crime, and not on the

criminal." Very rightly so! At the very outset, this brief, brilliant, bold and balanced judgment authored by Hon'ble Mr Justice NV Anjaria for a Bench of the Apex Court comprising of himself and Hon'ble Mr Justice Atul S Chandurkar sets the ball in motion by first and foremost putting forth in para 2 that, "This criminal appeal by the appellant-convict is directed against judgment and order dated 4th August, 2010 of the Madras High Court, Madurai Bench, in Criminal Appeal No. 1750 of 2003, whereby the High Court confirmed judgment and order delivered by the Special Judge, Central Bureau of Investigation (for short "CBI"), Madurai in Criminal Case No. 2 of 2003 dated 5th November, 2003, convicting the appellant for the offences under Section 7, Section 13(2) read Section 13(1)(d) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and sentencing her to undergo rigorous imprisonment for 6 months and with fine of Rs 1000/- with default clause in respect of the offence under Section 7, to undergo rigorous imprisonment for one year and with fine of Rs 1000/- with default clause for the offence under Section 13(2) read with Section 13(1)(d) of the said Act." To put things in perspective, the Bench while elaborating on the facts of the case envisages in para 3 disclosing that, "The appellant had been serving as an Inspector of Central Excise. The complainant (PW-2) who was a supervisor at Parani Match

Factory at Sengamalapatti of Sivakasi Taluka, made an application for grant of fresh central excise registration certificate for its factory. The application was to be dealt within the Thiruthangal - II Range which was under the jurisdiction of the appellant-accused. It was the case of the prosecution that on 16.09.2002 the appellant demanded illegal gratification of a sum of Rs 300/-. The complainant did not pay the bribe amount although was pressurised and threatened. For want of payment of said amount by the complainant, delayed release of the certificate. It led to lodging of the complaint on 21.09.2002. 3.1 The Competent Authority - Commissioner of Central Excise and Customs (PW-1), Thiruthangal - II Range granted sanction to prosecute the appellant on 26.03.2003. The charge-sheet came to be filed on 07.05.2003. At the end of the trial, Special Judge, CBI convicted and sentenced the appellant as above, which was upheld by the High Court. 3.2 While recording the conviction and sentence against the appellant, the trial court as well as the High Court concurrently held that the essential elements of demand and payment were proved against the appellant to constitute and establish the offence under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988. From the depositions of the complainant (PW-2), accused (PW-3), and the Officer (PW-4) as well as from documentary evidence [Ex. P-2 and P-4], the offence was established. The brother of the complainant (PW-3) saw the accused accepting Rs 300/- under the file. It was recorded that the information regarding the demand made by the accused was conveyed to the CBI office at Chennai.

3.3 The aspect of result of sodium carbonate phenolphthalein test was also noticed and it was a clear finding recorded that when the sodium carbonate test was conducted on the right and left hands of the appellant-accused, the result was positive. When the accused was asked to dip her hands, it turned into pink colour. The defence case of non-probability of accused having demanded the money was not accepted in light of the outweighing evidence in that regard. The High Court endorsed to the view taken by the trial court." As it turned out, the Bench enunciates in para 4 revealing that, "In course of hearing today, learned advocate for the appellant stated before the Court upon instructions from the appellant that he gives up the challenge to the conviction recorded against the appellant and that confines the appeal in respect of the sentence part only. He requested the court for reduction of the sentence to further submit that the period of sentence already undergone may be treated as adequate sentence while maintaining the conviction. He submitted that the complaint was filed as back as on 23.09.2002 and 23 years have passed by since the occurrence of the incident where appellant-lady was alleged to have asked for the illegal gratification of Rs 300/-." While citing relevant case law, the Bench observes in para 5 that, "In *M.W. Mohiuddin vs. State of Maharashtra*, [(1995) 3 SCC 567] this Court maintained the conviction of the appellant for the offences under Section 13(1)(d) read with Section 13(2) and Section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, however in the final analysis, reduced the sentence noticing that the offence had

taken place in the year 1981. The Court observed, "..... All these years the appellant has undergone the agony of criminal proceedings uptill now and he has also lost his job and has a large family to support. It is also stated that he has become sick and infirm. He has been in jail for some time. For all these special reasons, while confirming the conviction of the appellant, we reduce the sentence of imprisonment to the period already undergone. However, we confirm the sentence of fine with default clause....." (Para 10)." Adding more to it, the Bench points out in para 5.2 that, "Gulmahmad Abdulla Dall vs. State of Gujarat, [(2015) 15 SCC 506] is yet another precedent. This Court in the facts of the case before it reduced the substantive sentence and enhanced the fine or compensation. While doing so, following pertinent observations were made, "The incident, in question, took place as back as on 29-6-1987. Almost 27 years have passed by. All these years, the appellants must have suffered tremendous mental trauma and anguish. The appellants have lost their jobs and all their benefits. The appellant Jujarsinh is, as of today, about 76 years old. We are informed by the learned counsel for the appellant Gulmahmad Abdulla Dall that Gulmahmad is suffering from gangrene and has undergone surgery. Both the appellants are in jail. We are informed by the learned counsel for the appellants that the appellants have undergone about more than two months' imprisonment." (Para 5)." While citing yet another relevant case law, the Bench then expounds in para 5.6 stating that, "In *K.P. Singh vs. State (NCT of Delhi)* [(2015) 15 SCC 497] it was

observed by the Court that the quantum of sentence to be awarded would depend upon a variety of factors including the mitigating circumstances in a given case. It was stated that in doing so the courts are influenced in varying degree, and adopt reformative, deterrent and punitive approach. 5.6.1 It was observed thus, ".....delay in the conclusion of the trial and legal proceedings, the age of the accused, his physical/health condition, the nature of the offence, the weapon used and in the cases of illegal gratification the amount of bribe, loss of job and family obligations of the accused are also some of the considerations that weigh heavily with the courts while determining the sentence to be awarded....." (Para 10)." Be it noted, the Bench notes in para 6 that, "The conviction and sentence have their respective realms. While the conviction would be recorded on the basis of evidence adduced before the Court which would establish the implication of the accused in the offence, the guilty person or the convicted when to be awarded a sentence, a host of factors would operate to govern. 6.1 In determining the final sentence and the nature thereof, variety of factors that would operate would include the intervening time between the commission of offence and the actual award of the sentence, age of the accused, the stress which he or she might have suffered because of passage of time during each case has remained pending and undecided, the family circumstance and such other factors, without becoming exhaustive." Most remarkably, the Bench points out in para 7 propounding that, "The process of sentencing by the

courts is guided by theories such as punitive, deterrent or reformative. Each school of thought has its own object and purpose to explain awarding of sentence and its utility. Amongst these theories, reformative approach has become increasingly acceptable to the modern jurisprudence. Reformation is something always considered progressive. When there are mitigating circumstances, the court would lean towards reducing of the sentence. The focus would be on the crime, and not on the criminal. The society and system would nurture the guilt with positivity, while selecting the sentence." It cannot be lost sight of that the Bench while taking note of the mitigating factors observes in para 8 that, "In light of the above principles guiding the sentencing process, the submission of learned advocate for the appellant could be countenanced that in the case on hand the incident had taken place on 23.09.2002. Since then, more than two decades have passed by. The appellant underwent imprisonment for 31 days. The appellant is a widow lady. It was stated that she is now 75 years of age. The appellant has been staying alone, the husband having died, stated her learned counsel. She belongs to scheduled caste and has been spending her life negotiating all hardships." Most significantly, the Bench encapsulates in para 9 what constitutes the cornerstone of this notable judgment postulating precisely that, "The prolongation of a criminal case for an unreasonable period is in itself a kind of suffering. It amounts to mental incarceration for the person facing such proceedings. For a person who is convicted and who has appealed against his or her

conviction and sentence and who everyday awaits the fate of litigation, spends time in distress. In the present-day system of administration of justice, in which proceedings have often gone on protracted unreasonably and therefore unbearably, the passage of long time itself makes the person suffer a mental agony." Most rationally, it would be instructive to note that the Bench hastens to add in para 10 noting that, "The aspects in the present case as highlighted above that the incident had occurred more than 22 years ago and that the age of the widow appellant is 75 years who stays alone, the Court finds it appropriate that she may not be made to undergo the imprisonment again. In the totality of the facts and circumstances, the imprisonment already undergone by her is treated to be adequate sentence. 10.1 The sentence awarded to the appellant is accordingly reduced to the actual undergone. At the same time the imposition of fine is required to be increased. The appellant shall be liable to pay fine of Rs 25,000/- over and above originally imposed. The amount of fine shall be paid on or before 10th September, 2025." Finally, it is also worth noting that the Bench then concludes by directing, stipulating and holding in para 11 that, "The appeal is thus dismissed off by confirming the conviction of the appellant, however by modifying the sentence which is awarded as above. It is provided that if the appellant fails to pay the amount of fine as directed above within the stipulated time, the original order of sentence shall revive and operate rendering the appellant liable to surrender before the authorities concerned."

RBI'S 19-CITY SURVEY SHOWS HOW HOUSEHOLD INFLATION EXPECTATIONS STEER POLICY

The survey's broad 19-city reach ensures varied perspectives, directly informs RBI's inflation-targeting strategy, and encourages wider participation through door-to-door and online responses.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced the September round of its Inflation Expectations Survey of Households (IESH). Conducted every quarter since 2008, the survey invites households in different cities to share their perceptions of current price levels and their expectations for the future. This particular round will reach nineteen cities, ranging from major metros like Mumbai, Delhi and Chennai to state capitals such as Guwahati, Jaipur and Patna. For many readers, the idea of a central bank asking people about how they feel about prices may seem abstract or even trivial. Why does the RBI care about subjective expectations, and how does this exercise influence monetary policy? In this explainer, we unpack the purpose of the IESH, discuss how it is conducted, and explore why inflation expectations matter for policymakers and households alike.

UNDERSTANDING INFLATION AND INFLATION EXPECTATIONS

Inflation refers to an overall increase in the prices of goods and services, resulting in a decline in the purchasing power of money. When inflation is positive, each unit of currency buys fewer goods and services than before. India's inflation is commonly measured using two indices: the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which tracks the prices of a basket of goods and services consumed by households, and the Wholesale Price Index (WPI), which measures price changes at the wholesale level. The RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) uses the CPI to set policy, aiming to keep inflation at 4% fl 2%. Inflation is not inherently bad. Moderate and predictable price increases can encourage consumption and investment, enabling economic growth. Deflation – a sustained decrease in prices – can be more damaging, as consumers delay purchases in expectation of lower prices, leading to economic contraction. Problems arise when inflation is too high, reducing purchasing power and harming savers, or too low, signalling weak demand. The central bank's challenge is therefore to maintain inflation within a "target band" that supports growth without destabilising the economy.

INFLATION EXPECTATIONS: WHY PERCEPTIONS MATTER Inflation outcomes depend not only on supply and demand shocks but also on how people expect prices to evolve. These expectations influence household behaviour (whether to spend or save today), business decisions (how to set wages and product prices) and financial markets (how investors value bonds and currency). If households expect prices to rise quickly, they may spend more now or demand higher wages, fuelling future inflation. Conversely, if expectations are anchored around the central bank's target, consumers and businesses

TDG EXPLAINER

behave in ways that support price stability. Central banks therefore track inflation expectations as a key indicator of monetary-policy credibility. For example, the United States' Federal Reserve monitors the University of Michigan's Survey of Consumers and the New York Fed's Survey of Consumer Expectations, while the European Central Bank uses the European Commission's Consumer Survey. The RBI's IESH plays a similar role for India, offering insights into how households across different regions perceive current inflation and anticipate future price changes.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE IESH

The IESH is designed to answer three broad questions: (1) What do households think inflation is right now? (2) What do they expect over the next few months? (3) What do they expect over the coming year? The September 2025 survey seeks to capture perceptions of current inflation levels and expected inflation over the next three months and one year. Respondents are asked both qualitative and quantitative questions about price changes in general goods and specific product categories. The RBI uses these responses to assess whether people believe inflation will accelerate, remain steady or decline. By comparing these expectations with actual inflation data, policymakers can judge whether price expectations are well anchored.

ACCORDING TO THE RBI, THE SURVEY COLLECTS:

Qualitative responses: Households indicate whether they think prices have "increased," "remained the same," or "declined" over different time horizons and across categories such as food, fuel, housing and services. **Quantitative responses:** Respondents are asked to provide numerical estimates of inflation for the current period, three months ahead and one year ahead. These quantitative expectations are aggregated to compute the mean expected inflation. The combination of qualitative and quantitative questions allows the central bank to understand not just the average expectation but also the distribution of perceptions, revealing whether a majority expect higher inflation or whether opinions are mixed.

CAPTURING PRICE PERCEPTIONS BEYOND STATISTICAL INDICES

Statistical price indices like the CPI are calculated from market transactions and reflect average price changes across the economy. However, they may miss nuances in how households feel about inflation. For example, many people experience inflation through the prices of daily essentials like food, fuel or medicine, which may rise faster than the broader CPI. The IESH

asks households about essential goods, services such as transport, healthcare and education, and general perceptions of the cost of living. These insights help the RBI understand the lived experience of inflation, complementing objective price indices.

GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE – WHY 19 CITIES?

To ensure a representative view of inflation expectations across India's diverse regions, the RBI conducts the survey in nineteen cities. The article explains that the chosen cities reflect "varied geographic and consumption patterns". The list includes six metro cities – Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Bengaluru, Kolkata and Hyderabad. These urban centres are economic hubs with high population densities and diverse consumer markets. But the survey also goes beyond metros to include smaller state capitals and regional centres: Ahmedabad, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Chandigarh, Guwahati, Jaipur, Jammu, Lucknow, Nagpur, Patna, Raipur, Ranchi and Thiruvananthapuram. This distribution provides coverage across north, south, east, west and central India.

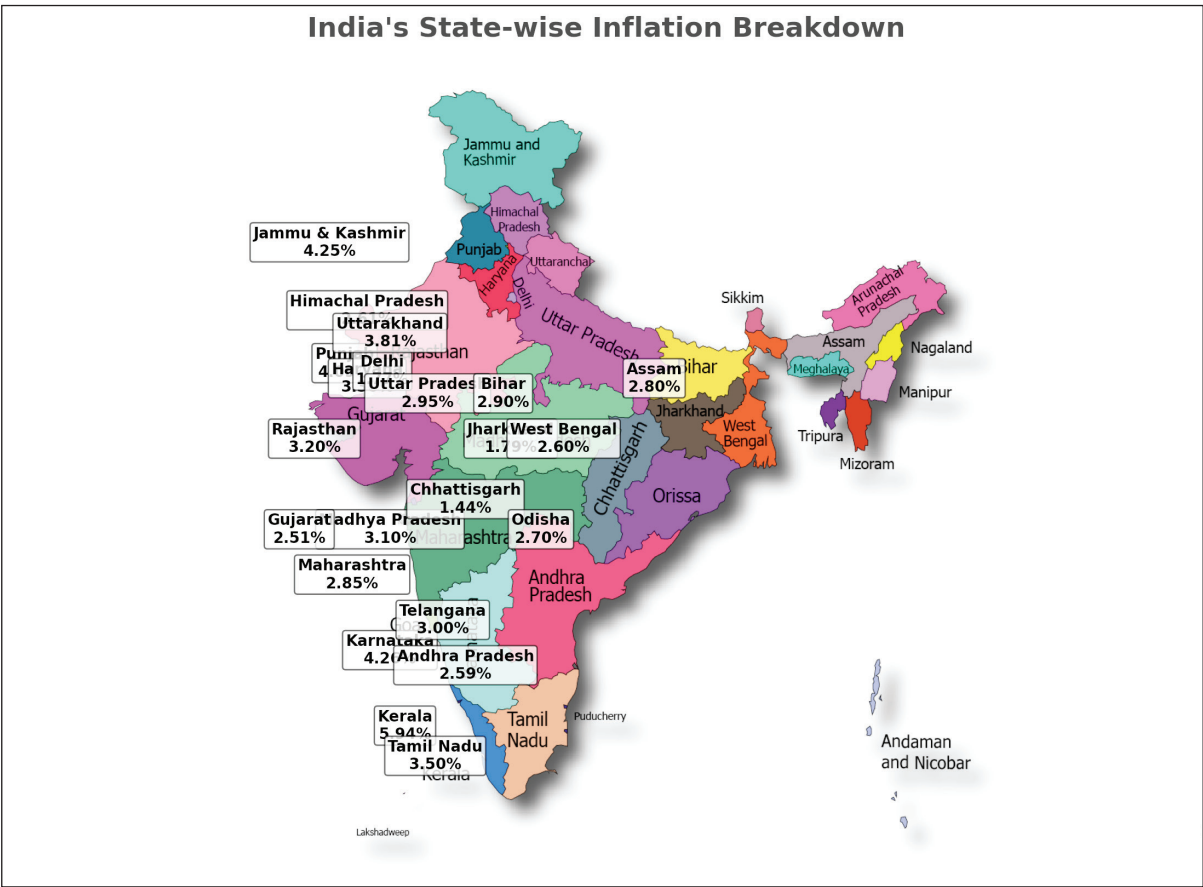
Selecting multiple cities ensures that the survey captures different consumption baskets, income levels and cultural preferences, all of which influence inflation perceptions. For instance, consumers in Mumbai or Delhi might be more sensitive to housing and transportation costs, while households in Ranchi or Guwahati may weigh food prices more heavily. The inclusion of both coastal and inland cities accounts for region-specific shocks (such as fuel supply disruptions or monsoon variations) that may shape expectations differently.

SAMPLE SIZE AND REPRESENTATIVENESS

Although the article does not specify the exact number of participants, earlier rounds of the IESH typically survey around 5,000 to 6,000 households. In each city, households are selected through systematic random sampling to ensure that the sample includes different income groups, professions and age brackets. While the survey focuses on urban households, the RBI also uses other surveys to capture rural perspectives and consumer confidence, thereby obtaining a more holistic view of national expectations.

HOW DATA IS COLLECTED

The September 2025 IESH is being conducted by a Mumbai-based agency appointed by the RBI. The agency's trained enumerators visit selected households door-to-door to administer the survey. Households that are not approached but want to participate can respond online via a link on the RBI's website. Allowing online participation broadens the respondent base



Inflation has been declining for last 3 year, falling from 6.7 percent in 2022–23 to 5.4 percent in 2023–24, and further to 4.6 percent in 2024–25.

and encourages civic engagement.

Each survey typically includes a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and assuring respondents that the data will be used solely for research and policymaking. Enumerators ask participants to express whether they have noticed price changes in the overall economy or in specific product groups and then record their responses on structured questionnaires. Data are anonymised and aggregated before analysis. The RBI publishes summary results in its Monetary Policy Report and sometimes provides a more detailed analysis in the RBI Bulletin.

WHY DO INFLATION EXPECTATIONS MATTER FOR POLICY AND CITIZENS?

INPUTS INTO MONETARY POLICY

The article notes that the RBI uses the survey results to "fine-tune its inflation-targeting strategy". Inflation targeting involves adjusting the policy repo rate – the rate at which the RBI lends to commercial banks – to influence borrowing costs across the economy. For instance, if survey responses suggest that households expect higher inflation, this may indicate that price pressures are spreading. The RBI might choose to raise interest rates to dampen demand and anchor expectations. Conversely, if expectations are stable or declining despite a temporary price spike, the central bank might opt to maintain or cut rates, assuming that inflation will revert to target levels.

By comparing qualitative responses (e.g., more people saying prices are rising) with quantitative expectations (e.g., average expected inflation of 5%), policymakers can assess the strength and breadth of inflationary pressures. The IESH therefore acts as an early-warning system for the RBI. Monetary policy works with lags—changes to interest rates typically take several quarters to influence spending. If expectations become unanchored, waiting for CPI data might be too late. Survey data helps the RBI anticipate shifts in behaviour and adjust policy pre-emptively.

ANCHORING EXPECTATIONS AND CREDIBILITY

Central banks care deeply about credibility. If the public believes that the RBI will maintain inflation around its

target, households and firms are less likely to overreact to short-term price shocks. The IESH allows the RBI to gauge whether its communication strategy is effective. Suppose global oil prices spike, temporarily raising inflation. If the survey shows that households expect the shock to be temporary, the RBI might explain that it will look through transient spikes, reinforcing trust. On the other hand, if expectations rise sharply, the RBI may need to communicate more forcefully or adjust policy to reassure the public.

IMPACT ON EVERYDAY LIFE

Households' expectations feed into day-to-day decisions. If people expect higher inflation, they might advance big purchases (e.g., buying a car before prices rise), demand higher wages to maintain real income, or shift savings into assets that hedge against inflation. Expectations also influence businesses; if firms anticipate rising costs, they might pre-emptively increase prices, fuelling a self-fulfilling cycle. Recognising this loop, the RBI includes questions on specific categories. Respondents are asked about price movements in essential goods like food, fuel and medicines; services such as transport, healthcare and education; and general perceptions of the cost of living. This granularity helps policymakers see which sectors drive expectations.

For the average person, participating in the IESH is an opportunity to voice concerns about the cost of living. The survey provides an institutional channel to highlight issues that may not yet be visible in official statistics. For example, during periods of drought, vegetable prices may rise sharply in certain regions; though the national CPI may show only a modest increase, households in affected cities will express higher inflation expectations. By incorporating these insights, the RBI can tailor its responses and coordinate with other agencies (such as the Ministry of Consumer Affairs) to address supply bottlenecks.

HOW THE SURVEY FITS INTO THE RBI'S TOOLKIT

Complementary surveys The IESH is one of several forward-looking surveys conducted by the RBI. Consumer Confidence Surveys (CCS) assess households' perceptions of general economic conditions, income prospects and spending behaviour. In-

dustrial Outlook Surveys gauge manufacturers' views on production, order books and capacity utilisation. Services and Infrastructure Surveys capture the sentiment of the services sector. Together, these surveys provide a rich picture of the economy from the perspective of different actors. The IESH adds a unique lens by focusing specifically on households' price expectations.

INTERACTION WITH OTHER INDICATORS

While the IESH captures subjective perceptions, it is used alongside objective indicators such as the CPI, the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), money supply growth, fiscal data and external sector developments. If survey expectations diverge significantly from actual inflation, the RBI investigates why. Sometimes households might overestimate inflation because salient price increases (like cooking oil or fuel) dominate their shopping experience. The divergence itself is informative; it signals potential issues in information dissemination, financial literacy, or supply-side disruptions. The survey results also feed into expectations-augmented Phillips curve models, which relate inflation to economic slack (like unemployment) and inflation expectations. Central banks use these models to forecast future inflation and simulate the impact of policy changes. Anchored expectations can flatten the Phillips curve, making inflation less sensitive to temporary economic shocks. Unanchored expectations steepen the curve, meaning inflation responds strongly to fluctuations in demand.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND EVOLUTION OF THE IESH

The RBI launched the IESH in September 2008, at a time when many central banks worldwide were looking to better understand household expectations after the global financial crisis. Initially, the survey covered six major cities and targeted about 2,000 respondents. Over time, the RBI expanded the sample to cover twelve cities and then nineteen cities, recognising that price perceptions vary widely across India's vast geography. The survey has also evolved in methodology. Early rounds focused mostly on qualitative questions, asking whether prices had increased or decreased. Later

rounds added quantitative questions, enabling analysts to compute mean and median expected inflation. The RBI also improved its sampling techniques to ensure diversity in income, occupation and education. In 2015, the central bank started publishing summary results in its Monetary Policy Reports, increasing transparency.

INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

As inflation expectations gained prominence in macroeconomic analysis, many countries introduced household surveys. The United States uses the University of Michigan's Survey of Consumers (started in the 1940s) and the New York Fed Survey of Consumer Expectations (launched in 2013). These surveys ask Americans about price expectations over one and three years and also gauge wage expectations. In the Eurozone, the European Commission's Consumer Survey collects monthly data on price expectations over the next 12 months. Japan employs the Bank of Japan Opinion Survey. Compared with these, the IESH's quarterly frequency and focus on 3-month and 12-month horizons are similar, but India's survey covers more cities relative to its population size and includes both qualitative and quantitative components.

Cross-country research has found that households often overestimate future inflation relative to professional forecasts, partly because they focus on salient prices like food and fuel. However, these expectations still hold predictive power, especially when they become unanchored. In advanced economies with well-anchored inflation expectations, central banks can adopt flexible inflation targeting. In emerging markets like India, where expectations may be less anchored, surveys like the IESH are particularly valuable.

LIMITATIONS

While the IESH provides important insights, it is not without challenges: **Urban bias:** The survey focuses on urban areas. Rural households, which constitute a large portion of India's population, may have different inflation experiences due to agricultural dependence and differing consumption baskets. **Sampling errors:** Ensuring a truly representative sample across diverse cities is diffi-

cult. Households that agree to participate might systematically differ from those that decline (a phenomenon known as non-response bias). Efforts to improve random sampling and door-to-door outreach mitigate this issue but cannot eliminate it. **Measurement issues:** Asking households to provide numerical estimates of future inflation can be challenging, especially for respondents with limited financial literacy. Many people might simply report a high number to express dissatisfaction with rising prices. Moreover, the survey takes place in a country with numerous languages, which can lead to translation differences.

Anchoring bias: Respondents might anchor their expectations on recent experiences or highly visible price changes. For example, a temporary surge in onion prices could disproportionately influence their responses, even if most other prices are stable.

Information asymmetry:

The general public may not be aware of the central bank's inflation target or the macroeconomic outlook. Educational initiatives alongside the survey can help improve understanding and ensure that responses reflect informed expectations. Recognising these issues, the RBI continuously refines the questionnaire, trains enumerators to explain concepts clearly, and cross-checks survey results with other data sources.

BROADER IMPACT: COMMUNICATION AND TRUST

Central banks today understand that transparency and communication are crucial for effective policy. By publicly inviting households to participate in the IESH, the RBI signals that the public's voice matters. Publishing summary findings allows economists, journalists and citizens to interpret the data and hold policymakers accountable. In turn, this transparency helps build trust. When people trust the central bank to respond appropriately to inflation risks, their expectations are more likely to remain anchored.

The IESH is also a useful pedagogical tool. Media outlets and educators can use the survey to explain how inflation works and why central banks adjust interest rates. Participating in the survey encourages households to reflect on their own consumption patterns and the broader economy. Over time, such engagement can increase financial literacy, empowering citizens to make better decisions about savings, borrowing and investment.

LOOKING AHEAD

The September 2025 round of the IESH comes at a time when India's economy is navigating several cross-currents. Global commodity prices remain volatile due to geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions and climate-related shocks. Domestically, the monsoon's performance affects food prices, while government fiscal measures, such as changes in GST rates or fuel excise duties, influence inflation dynamics. In recent months, the CPI inflation rate has been hovering around the upper end of the RBI's target band. Policymakers will therefore be watching the latest survey results closely to see whether households expect inflation to remain elevated or to ease.

THE ROYAL TRAINS OF RAJASTHAN: JOURNEYING THROUGH HERITAGE AND LUXURY

TDG NETWORK
JAIPUR

The thrill of traveling through Rajasthan lies in its blend of history, culture, and breathtaking landscapes. As you journey across this vibrant state, every turn reveals magnificent forts, grand palaces, and bustling bazaars alive with color and tradition. From the vast stretches of the Thar Desert to the tranquil lakes and ancient temples, Rajasthan offers a rich tapestry of experiences. Whether by road, rail, or air, traveling here is more than just a journey—it's an immersion into the royal legacy and warm hospitality that define this incredible land. Each trip promises unforgettable memories filled with adventure and cultural splendor.

THE LEGACY OF ROYAL TRAINS IN RAJASTHAN

The concept of royal trains traces back to the era of Indian maharajas who commissioned lavishly decorated private trains to travel across their kingdoms in unmatched style and comfort. These trains were symbols of power, wealth, and prestige, fitted with luxurious cabins, elegant dining cars, and ornate interiors that rivaled the finest palaces.

Today, this legacy has been revived and transformed into luxury tourism experiences, offering a glimpse into the royal lifestyle while show-

casing Rajasthan's cultural tapestry. These trains attract domestic and international travelers who want to experience the grandeur of Rajasthan's heritage with modern amenities and personalized services.

THE PALACE ON WHEELS

Arguably the most famous among Rajasthan's royal trains, the Palace on Wheels is a pioneer in luxury train travel in India. Launched in 1982, it was among the first luxury trains introduced by Indian Railways, specifically designed to boost tourism in Rajasthan.

The train itself is a marvel, inspired by the carriages used by the Maharajas of Rajputana. It features exquisitely decorated cabins with antique furniture, traditional Rajasthani art, and all modern conveniences such as air conditioning, private bathrooms, and Wi-Fi. The interiors evoke the ambiance of royal palaces, allowing guests to experience a bygone era of luxury.

The Palace on Wheels typically runs a week-long circuit covering key destinations such as Jaipur, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Chittorgarh, Sawai Madhopur (for Ranthambore National Park), and Agra, including the Taj Mahal. Each stop includes guided tours of historical sites, cultural performances, and opportunities to sample authentic Rajasthani cuisine. The combination



of cultural immersion and luxurious comfort makes this journey unforgettable.

ROYAL RAJASTHAN ON WHEELS

Launched as a successor to the Palace on Wheels, the Royal Rajasthan on Wheels is another gem in Rajasthan's luxury train offerings. It was introduced to provide travelers with a more expansive itinerary and enhanced luxury.

This train features contemporary interiors blended with royal aesthetics, including suites adorned with handcrafted furnishings, marble bathrooms, and elegant lounges. It offers similar routes to the Palace on Wheels but extends the journey to include cities like Bundi and Kota, further enriching the cultural experience.

The Royal Rajasthan on Wheels focuses heavily on delivering a high-end experience, including fine dining, cultural programs



featuring folk dances and music, and exclusive excursions like wildlife safaris and private fort visits. The train's staff, including personal butlers, chefs, and guides, ensure that every guest is treated like royalty.

THE DECCAN ODYSSEY

Though primarily focused on the Deccan region, the Deccan Odyssey also features Rajasthan in its itineraries, providing travelers with another luxury train option to explore the royal state. Known as India's "Magic Carpet," the Dec-



UNIQUE FEATURES OF RAJASTHAN'S ROYAL TRAINS

Palatial Interiors: Each royal train car is designed to reflect Rajasthan's architectural grandeur, with intricate woodwork, elegant upholstery, and vintage décor reminiscent of royal courts.

Gourmet Cuisine: Guests savor a variety of regional delicacies prepared by master chefs. The menu often includes traditional Rajasthani dishes like dal bati churma, gatte ki sabzi, laal maas, and desserts such as ghevar and malpua, alongside continental and international cuisine.

Cultural Immersion: The journey includes onboard cultural programs featuring folk music and dance from Rajasthan, including performances of Kalbeliya, Ghoomar, and puppet shows, allowing travelers to experience the vibrant local traditions firsthand.

Exclusive Excursions: At each destination, guests are taken on exclusive tours

of heritage sites, including forts, palaces, temples, and bazaars. Some itineraries offer private safaris in national parks like Ranthambore and wildlife sanctuaries.

Luxury Amenities: From air-conditioned suites to spas and fitness centers, these trains provide all modern comforts. Personal butlers, 24-hour room service, and concierge facilities ensure a hassle-free and indulgent experience.

IMPACT ON TOURISM AND LOCAL ECONOMY

The royal trains have played a significant role in promoting Rajasthan as a top luxury tourist destination globally. They attract affluent travelers who seek cultural richness combined with comfort and exclusivity. The trains not only boost the local economy by increasing tourism revenue but also help preserve Rajasthan's heritage by promoting awareness and appreciation of its historical monuments and traditions.

Furthermore, these trains create employment opportunities for locals—guides, artisans, performers, and hospitality staff—thus supporting communities and helping maintain traditional arts and crafts.

CHALLENGES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

Despite their popularity, royal trains face challenges such as high operational

costs, competition from other luxury travel options, and occasional disruptions due to weather or infrastructure constraints. However, Indian Railways and tourism stakeholders continuously invest in upgrading these trains, enhancing services, and designing innovative itineraries to attract more visitors.

There is also growing interest in sustainable luxury travel, prompting royal trains to adopt eco-friendly practices such as waste management, water conservation, and energy-efficient operations.

The royal trains of Rajasthan are more than just luxury travel experiences; they are journeys into the heart of India's royal past, a celebration of culture, and a showcase of opulence. For travelers seeking to explore Rajasthan in style, these trains offer the perfect blend of history, heritage, and hospitality. Riding aboard these majestic trains through the golden deserts, ancient cities, and timeless palaces of Rajasthan is an unforgettable adventure that truly makes one feel like royalty.

Whether it's the iconic Palace on Wheels, the elegant Royal Rajasthan on Wheels, or the versatile Deccan Odyssey, Rajasthan's royal trains continue to enchant travelers with their timeless charm, transporting them through a land where every turn reveals a story of valor, art, and tradition.

Unveiling Jaipur's Havelis - A glimpse of history and Architecture

TDG NETWORK
JAIPUR

Jaipur, famously known as the Pink City, is a living canvas of royal legacy, where past and present coexist in harmony. Among its many treasures are the havelis—traditional Rajasthani mansions that blend opulent architecture with centuries-old stories. Wandering through the alleys of Jaipur, one can stumble upon these architectural marvels that whisper tales of grandeur, resilience, and artistic brilliance. Some of these havelis have been thoughtfully restored and transformed into heritage hotels and cultural hubs, inviting travelers to step into an era of timeless elegance.

MUST-VISIT HAVELIS IN JAIPUR

1. Samode Haveli

Nestled near the heart of Jaipur, Samode Haveli is a 175-year-old mansion that exudes royal charm. A seamless blend of Mughal and Rajput architecture, it boasts intricately hand-painted walls, tranquil courtyards, and a serene central pool. While the haveli functions as a heritage hotel, even non-residents can indulge in its ambiance through cultural performances or elegant high tea experiences. Its inviting spa and calm surroundings make it an oasis amid the city's vibrant chaos.

2. Narain Niwas Palace

Built in the early 20th century, this stately residence showcases Anglo-Indian design elements with a Rajasthani twist. Now a heritage hotel, Narain Niwas Palace offers over fifty rooms adorned with vintage furnishings and heritage art. The sprawling gardens, old-world charm, and wellness

amenities transport guests to a different time. Evening folk performances and regal dining settings add a rich cultural layer to the stay.

3. Alsisar Haveli

Originally constructed in the 18th century, Alsisar Haveli is another gem turned heritage hotel. Its majestic courtyards, marble

showcases in the courtyard.

4. The Johri

Tucked into the bustling Johri Bazaar, this boutique haveli offers an intimate experience. Lovingly restored with attention to detail, The Johri presents five uniquely designed suites surrounding a peaceful inner courtyard. The use of

Dating back to the 18th century, Mandawa Haveli is an embodiment of Rajput grandeur mixed with subtle European influences. Its grand arches, antique furniture, and vivid frescoes create an atmosphere of royal nostalgia. Ideal for travelers who want to immerse themselves in traditional luxury,

rokhas (ornate windows), and heirloom furnishings tell stories of royal lineage and leisure. Its tranquil setting, slightly removed from the city bustle, makes it ideal for those seeking relaxation, while heritage walks and culinary experiences offer immersive glimpses into Rajasthan's rich traditions.

ing. Unlike the more opulent havelis turned hotels, this space serves as a living cultural center. Visitors can witness artisans at work, learn about traditional textile techniques, and explore the roots of Rajasthan's vibrant fashion and craft heritage in a beautifully restored architectural setting.

admiring. These elements are not just decorative—they are narratives in stone, lime, and pigment that chronicle the tastes, values, and aspirations of their time.

CULTURAL IMMERSION

Many of these heritage spaces go beyond visual appeal.

HERITAGE HOSPITALITY

Staying in a haveli is unlike any modern hotel experience. From customized services and curated menus to rooms that retain their historical character, these properties reflect the grace of traditional Rajasthani hospitality. It's a style of living that values detail, comfort, and a sense of welcome rooted in age-old customs.

Hidden Corners of Culture While some havelis are renowned, others remain under the radar, offering peace and authenticity away from typical tourist routes. Visiting lesser-known spaces like the Anokhi Museum haveli allows for a quieter, more personal connection to Rajasthan's culture.

PRESERVING THE PAST, LIVING THE LEGACY

Jaipur's havelis are more than just historical monuments—they are living remnants of a rich cultural heritage. Yet many face challenges due to urbanization, neglect, and commercialization. Restorations and adaptive reuse, as seen in the transformation of these spaces into hotels and museums, play a vital role in preserving their legacy. Every visit supports their survival and appreciation.

Exploring the havelis of Jaipur is to journey through the heart of Rajasthani heritage. Each haveli, with its distinctive character and layered stories, offers a window into a regal past while embracing the present with warmth and elegance. Whether you're sipping tea in a royal courtyard, staying in an antique-filled suite, or watching artisans revive centuries-old crafts, these moments shape a travel experience that lingers long after the journey ends.



7. CHANWAR PALKIWALON KI HAVELI (ANOKHI MUSEUM OF HAND PRINTING)

A hidden treasure in the town of Amer, this 16th-century haveli has been reborn as a museum dedicated to the art of hand block print-

WHY THESE HAVELIS MATTER

Architectural Brilliance The havelis of Jaipur are masterpieces of craftsmanship. From intricate carvings and mirror work to latticed balconies and colorful frescoes, every corner holds a detail worth

Folk dances, traditional music, craft workshops, and regional cuisine create experiences that are immersive and authentic. Whether through an evening performance in a candlelit courtyard or a hand-printing demonstration, these havelis connect visitors to the soul of Rajasthan.

CHINA-BACKED HACKERS TARGET GLOBAL DIPLOMATS

China-linked hackers breach security, widen global cyber espionage net.

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

A hacking group with ties to China targeted diplomats in Southeast Asia and various global entities earlier in the year, as reported by The Epoch Times, citing information from Google.

The attack, which Google identified in March, was deemed “likely in support of cyber espionage operations that align with the strategic interests of the People’s Republic of China (PRC),” according to a blog post from Google’s threat intelligence group on August 25.

The hackers used strategies such as captive portal hijacking to distribute malware disguised as legitimate software or plugin updates, which ultimately enabled them to implant a backdoor into the systems of their targets, as referenced in the TET report.

Google stated that it had notified all Gmail and Workspace users who were affected by this hacking incident, although the complete extent of the victims remained undisclosed. The

NGT ISSUES NOTICE

- Google uncovers China-linked cyberattack on Southeast Asian diplomats, global entities.
- Hackers used fake updates to implant malware and backdoors.
- Microsoft warns of wider CCP ops stealing data, exploiting software flaws.



Representative image

- FBI cites Mustang Panda targeting governments, firms, and dissidents worldwide.

campaign was linked to a group of hackers referred to as UNC6384, who cyber researchers believe are connected to another China-affiliated cyberespionage group known as TEMP.Hex or Mustang Panda.

“UNC6384 and TEMP.Hex are both known to focus on government sectors, especially in Southeast Asia, in line with PRC strategic goals,” noted the company in the post. U.S. investigators have recognised Mustang Panda as a state-sponsored hacker group based in China, responsible for infiltrating

computers worldwide to obtain data through malware, according to the TET report.

In January, the Justice Department announced that it had successfully removed the malware, a variant of PlugX, from over 4,200 computers in the country. In a court filing in a federal court in Pennsylvania, authorities claimed that the Chinese regime had financed the group to create and implement the malware as part of broader cyber espionage initiatives.

The FBI’s investigation, which spanned several

years, revealed that the Mustang Panda group had targeted Western governments and nonprofits in the U.S. and other nations, based on the court records.

Notable targets identified by the FBI included European shipping firms, worldwide Chinese dissident organisations, and “governments across the Indo-Pacific”, including Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Mongolia, India, Myanmar, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, and Pakistan, as reported by TET.

The announcement from

Google arises amid increased scrutiny regarding cyberespionage activities backed and executed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). In July, Microsoft disclosed that two Chinese state-sponsored hacking groups participated in a malicious campaign that exploited weaknesses in its SharePoint collaboration software, according to TET.

One of these groups, called Linen Typhoon, was accused of stealing intellectual property, while another, known as Violet Typhoon, focused on espionage, targeting information from former government officials, military personnel, and organisations involved in human rights, finance, and health sectors globally, as stated by Microsoft.

Jeff Hoffmann, a senior cyber fellow at The Gold Institute for International Strategy, remarked that these cyber espionage efforts signify that the CCP is “actively seeking to explore potential vulnerabilities and to demonstrate that it has a presence,” as emphasised in the TET report.

IDF kills Hamas’ head of Gaza general security

AGENCIES
TEL AVIV

In a targeted airstrike, the Israeli Air Force eliminated Mahmoud al-Asoud, commander of Hamas’ General Security Apparatus for the Western Gaza sector. According to the IDF, al-Asoud played a key role in the security apparatus over the years and was considered a major source of operational knowledge within the organisation.

Meanwhile, Division 162 forces continue fighting in northern Gaza, in Jabaliya and on the outskirts of Gaza City, destroying terrorist infrastructure and eliminating operatives. In parallel, Division 99 forces operating on the city’s outskirts located and destroyed several Hamas observation posts that posed a threat to Israeli troops. In southern Gaza, Division 36 troops, in cooperation with the Air Force, eliminated several terrorists in the Khan Yunis area and destroyed both aboveground and underground military infrastructure. Additionally,



The IDF has confirmed in a statement that the commander in Hamas’s general security apparatus in the Gaza West Sector. X post/ @solverHenry

Israel eliminated Hamas commander Mahmoud al-Asoud in Gaza, while divisions destroyed terrorist infrastructure across northern and southern sectors.

Israeli aircraft, with naval guidance, struck a weapons storage facility and a site used to repair naval weapons in Khan Yunis.

Elbit launches advanced JUPITER camera

AGENCIES
TEL AVIV

Israeli defence company Elbit Systems successfully launched its new space camera, JUPITER, aboard the NAOS (National Advanced Optical System) satellite. The launch took place from Vandenberg Space Force Base in California, using a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket.

The NAOS satellite is designed to support a wide range of Earth observation missions, including military operations, environmental monitoring, and scientific research.

Developed by Elbit’s Intelligence and EW division - Elop, the JUPITER camera is considered to be among the world’s most advanced space



Elbit’s JUPITER space camera launched from Vandenberg, California, SpaceX.

cameras. It features an exceptionally large optical aperture, lightweight design, and seamless integration with satellite systems and ground stations. According to Elbit, the data produced by JUPITER is optimized for advanced image-

processing engines and AI systems, enabling actionable insights to support decision-making across multiple fields. The company described it as “one of the most advanced spaceborne optical observation systems in the world.”

Arab Parliament slams West Bank escalation

AGENCIES
CAIRO

The Arab Parliament has strongly condemned the dangerous escalation in the West Bank. The latest actions include the brutal incursions by Israeli occupation forces into the cities of Ramallah, Al-Bireh, and Al-Khalil, and vicious attacks against Palestinian citizens. These events are happening as armed settlers intensify their assaults on Palestinian villages and towns, all under the protection of the occupation forces.

In a statement issued this evening, the Speaker of the Arab Parliament, Mohamed bin Ahmed Al Yamahi, affirmed that these violations and attacks are a continuation of the genocidal war, systematic starvation,



Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia. Xpost/ @World_Affairs11

and displacement policies pursued by the Israeli occupation in the Gaza Strip. He noted that these actions are in blatant defiance of all international and humanitarian laws and norms, and show a complete disregard for resolutions of international legitimacy.

US envoy angers Lebanese journalists

AGENCIES
BEIRUT

A top US diplomat sparked outrage in Lebanon after telling the a group of local journalists to “act civilised,” after meeting with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun in Beirut, Al Jazeera reported.

Tom Barrack, the United States ambassador to Turkey and the special envoy for Syria, made the comments after President Joseph Aoun discussed plans to destroy Hezbollah.

“We’re going to have a different set of rules... please be quiet for a moment,” Barrack said. “And I want to tell you something, the moment this starts becoming chaotic, like animalistic, we’re gone. So, you want to know what’s happening?”



US envoy Tom Barrack sparks outrage after remarks in Beirut.

Act civilised, act kind, act tolerant, because this is the problem with what is happening in the region,” he added. “In cadence with your kindness, your interest and your thoughtful questions, we’ll give you responses,” Barrack further said. “If that’s not how you’d like to operate, we’re gone.” Barrack’s comments drew heavy backlash with people accusing the diplomat

of displaying arrogance and a colonial mentality, Al Jazeera reported. The Lebanese Presidency expressed regret over the comments, saying in a statement on X that the government has “full appreciation for all journalists” and “extends to them its highest regards for their efforts and dedication in fulfilling their professional and national duties”.

Pakistan’s Punjab shuts schools amid monsoon floods

AGENCIES
LAHORE

Authorities have announced the closure of schools for an indefinite period in the flood-hit district of Punjab province as Monsoon havoc continues in Pakistan, ARY News reported, citing officials.

All public and private schools in Sialkot, Narowal, Gujrat, and Pasrur will remain closed from August 27 until further review, officials said.

Deputy Commissioner



Representative image. X post/ @Asyabulten

Sialkot Saba Asghar Ali issued a notification stating, “To ensure the safety of students, teachers, and staff amid torrential rains

and the resulting flood situation, all public and private schools (Primary, Middle, High, and Higher Secondary) in District Si-

alkot shall remain closed on August 27, 2025. The closure will remain in effect until further review.”

All on-campus academic and co-curricular activities will remain suspended, ARY News reported, citing official notification.

The order directed strict implementation by all concerned authorities. Residents have also been advised to stay indoors, avoid commutation, and refrain from taking trips to affected places.

PTI boycotts upcoming by-elections

AGENCIES
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) announced on Tuesday that it will boycott the upcoming by-elections across the country and withdraw from all parliamentary committees, citing an uneven political playing field, The Express Tribune reported.

The decisions were taken during a meeting of PTI’s political committee, which unanimously endorsed the boycott and instructed party lawmakers in the National Assembly to resign from their committee member-



Representative image. X post/ @today_paki9

ships, in line with directions from the party’s founder and former Prime Minister, Imran Khan.

According to party sources, the meeting aimed to

define PTI’s electoral strategy following a series of recent disqualifications that have created vacancies in national and provincial assemblies. Lawmakers were

invited to share their views on whether the party should contest the by-polls, The Express Tribune reported.

As per the Express Tribune, sources revealed that most members opposed participation, pointing to the prevailing political climate and compromised conditions for a fair contest. The boycott proposal was approved unanimously, with senior leaders such as Sanaullah Masti Khel, Barrister Gohar, Sheikh Waqas Akram, and Amir Dogar supporting the decision as consistent with the guidance of PTI’s founder.

Dhaka warns of action against Chandranath Hill unrest

AGENCIES
DHAKA

The Bangladesh interim government will take action as soon as signs of provocative activities are seen around Chandranath Hill, the Chief Adviser’s Press Wing said in a statement on Wednesday.

Three Advisers to the Muhammad Yunus-led interim government, Muhammad Fawzul Kabir Khan, Bidhan Ranjan Roy Poddar, and Dr AFM Khalid Hossain, met with the leaders of the traditional Chandranath Dham (Kanchannath-Chandranath-Adinath) Shrine Commit-



Interim govt Chief Advisor Dr Md Yunus. X post/ @Kamlesh_ojha1

tee of the Sanatan Dharma followers, the statement said.

The meeting was held at Rail Bhavan at 10 am on Wednesday. At the meeting, the leaders of the

Shrine Committee said that various types of provocative activities have been seen around the temple for the past five years.

They also said that there are attempts to destroy the atmosphere of harmony. Immediately after the meeting, the three advisors instructed the field administration, law enforcement, and intelligence agency officials to be vigilant in this regard.

Additionally, the committee members stated that the stairs leading to the temple, located on the hill, need to be renovated.

Shrine Committee Presi-

dent Apurba Kumar Bhat-tacharya said, “The stairs are not in very good condition now. There is a risk of accidents.” In response to this request, Advisor Fawzul Kabir Khan immediately called Rezaul Maksud Zahedi, Secretary of the Chittagong Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives, and asked him to take action to repair the stairs.

At the meeting, Bidhan Ranjan Roy Poddar, advisor to the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, said, “The interim government is working to build a

society without discrimination for all, regardless of religion, caste, or class.”

Religious Advisor Dr A. F. M. Khalid Hossain said, “Those who attack the establishments of other religions cannot be religious in any way. This is a crime. There is no religion, only non-religion. If there is any attempt to destroy religious harmony, we will take strict action.”

“I urge the followers of traditional religions to send your just demands to the ministry and the Hindu Religious Welfare Trust, and we will take appropriate action,” Hossain said.

Advisor Faozul Kabir Khan said, “History and tradition are associated with the Chandranath Temple. Any provocative activities that destroy our communal harmony will not be tolerated.” Earlier on Monday, the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council strongly condemned and opposed the attempt to encroach on the sacred land of Chandranath Dham in Sitakunda, Chittagong, a holy pilgrimage site for the Hindu community worldwide, and to create communal tension and violence by disrupting communal harmony.

Two more polio cases surface in Pakistan

AGENCIES
ISLAMABAD

Two more poliovirus cases have been reported in southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), raising Pakistan’s total to 23 this year, Dawn reported, citing the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The latest cases involve a 16-month-old girl from Union Council Mulla-lazai in Tank district and a 24-month-old girl from Union Council Miran Shah-3 in North Waziristan district, Dawn added.

Pakistan is among the last two countries in the world,

alongside Afghanistan, where polio remains endemic. Despite global efforts to eradicate the virus, challenges including security concerns, vaccine hesitancy, and misinformation continue to slow progress, Dawn noted. A statement from the Regional Reference Laboratory for Polio Eradication at Islamabad’s NIH said, “With these detections, the total number of polio cases in Pakistan in 2025 has reached 23, including 15 cases from KP, six from Sindh, and one each from Punjab and Gilgit-Baltistan.”

RUSSIA BREAKS INTO ANOTHER REGION OF UKRAINE AS PEACE EFFORTS SRUGGLE

AGENCIES
KYIV

Russia's invading forces have broken into an eighth region of Ukraine, a Ukrainian military official said Wednesday, seeking to capture more ground in their three-year war of attrition as U.S.-led peace efforts struggle to gain traction.

Some Russian troops have entered the villages of Novoheorhiivka and Zaporizke in the eastern Dnipropetrovsk region, a major Ukrainian industrial center next to the Donetsk region where fierce fighting has been taking place, Victor Trehubov, spokesman for local ground forces, told The Associated Press by phone.

Russia's Defense Ministry claimed earlier this month that its forces had taken the two villages.

But the Russians have not entrenched or built fortifications there, and fighting is continuing in the villages, Trehubov said.

Ukrainian troops are under severe strain as they try to hold back Russia's bigger army. Military analysts say there is no sign of a looming collapse of Ukrainian defenses and note that Russian forces have been unable to take major towns and cities, but their slow slog through rural areas keeps Ukraine



Russian President Vladimir Putin

under pressure.

The front line, where tens of thousands of troops on both sides have been killed, snakes along roughly 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) of eastern and southeastern Ukraine, which borders Russia. Russian forces are already in the Sumy, Kharkiv, Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson and Mykolaiv regions. Russia illegally seized the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine in March 2014, and now occupies about a fifth of Ukraine.

Western leaders have accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of dragging his feet in peace efforts and avoiding serious negotiations while Russian troops move deeper into Ukraine.

U.S. President Donald Trump bristled Tuesday at Putin's stalling on an American proposal for direct peace

talks with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Trump said Friday he expects to decide on next steps in two weeks if direct talks aren't scheduled.

Ukraine has accepted U.S. proposals for a summit with Putin and a ceasefire.

Russia has also balked at U.S. and Western plans to establish postwar security guarantees for Ukraine, which fears another Russian invasion in the future even if a peace deal is clinched now.

The possible security guarantees being worked out by Western officials could include the deployment of European troops in Ukraine. But Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov reiterated Wednesday that soldiers from NATO member countries would be unacceptable for Moscow.

Ukraine is trying to dis-

Russian, Chinese submarines conduct joint patrol in Pacific

AGENCIES
MOSCOW

The Russian and Chinese navies have carried out their first-ever joint patrol in the Pacific region, according to a media report on Wednesday.

"The joint patrol was launched in early August, after the Russian-Chinese drills Maritime Interaction 2025 had concluded in the Sea of Japan," the state-run TASS news agency reported, quoting a statement issued by the Russian navy.

"The diesel-electric submarine Volkhov of the Pacific Fleet and a submarine of the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy took to patrol along an approved route in the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea," it said.

After completing the mission, the crews returned to their respective home bases. Amid the growing Indo-Pacific posture of the Western navies to contain China, Moscow and Beijing have intensified their naval interaction.

Earlier this year, Russian and Chinese navies had conducted a joint patrol "to strengthen naval cooperation between the two countries, ensure peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region, monitor the maritime area and protect Russian and Chinese maritime economic facilities".

rupt Russia's war effort by striking infrastructure behind the front line with long-range drones. Gas stations have run dry in some regions of Russia after they struck refineries and other oil infrastructure in recent weeks.

Russia, meanwhile, is con-

tinuing its campaign to cripple Ukraine's energy supply ahead of the bitter winter by wrecking the power grid with repeated attacks.

Ukraine's Energy Ministry said Wednesday that Russia struck energy and gas infrastructure in six regions of the country.

Catholic school shooting leaves 3 dead, 17 injured in Minneapolis

AGENCIES
MINNEAPOLIS

A gunman opened fire with a rifle through the windows of a Catholic church and struck a group of children celebrating Mass during the first week of school, killing two and wounding 17 people in an act of violence the police chief called "absolutely incomprehensible." Minneapolis Police Chief Brian O'Hara said the shooter — armed with a rifle, shotgun and pistol — approached the side of the church and shot dozens of rounds through the windows toward the children sitting in the pews during Mass at the Annunciation Catholic School. Police believe the gunman then killed himself.

"This was a deliberate act of violence against innocent children and other people worshipping. The sheer cruelty and cowardice of firing into a church full of children is absolutely incomprehensible," said the police chief, who noted that a wooden plank was placed to barricade some of the side doors. Authorities found a smoke bomb but no explosives at the scene, he said.

The children who died were 8 and 10, the chief said. Dozens more youngsters were inside. Officials were looking into the suspect's motive. O'Hara said the man is in his early 20s, does not have an extensive known criminal history and is believed to have acted alone.

Bill Bienemann, who lives a couple of blocks away and has long attended Mass at Annunciation Church, said he heard dozens of shots, perhaps as many as 50, over as long as four minutes.

"I was shocked. I said, 'There's no way that could be gunfire,'" he said. "There was so much of it. It was sporadic." Bienemann's daughter, Alexandra, said she attended the school from kindergarten to 8th grade, finishing in 2014. After she heard of the shooting, she said she was shaking and crying, and her boss told her to take the day off.

"It breaks my heart, makes me sick to my stomach, knowing that there are people I know who are either injured or maybe even killed," Alexandra Bienemann said. "It doesn't make me feel safe at all in this community that I have been in for so long."

Ukrainian drone strikes leave some Russian regions fuel-starved

AGENCIES
MOSCOW

Gas stations have run dry in some regions of Russia after Ukrainian drones struck refineries and other oil infrastructure in recent weeks, with motorists waiting in long lines and officials resorting to rationing or cutting off sales altogether.

Wholesale prices on the St Petersburg International Mercantile Exchange for A-95 gas — the highest octane — spiked to record highs last week, soaring to about 50 per cent higher than in January, as demand soared from farmers seeking to bring in the harvest and Russians hitting the roads for their last big vacation of the summer.

Russian media outlets reported fuel shortages are hitting consumers in several regions in the Far East and on the Crimean Peninsula, which was illegally annexed from Ukraine by Moscow in 2014.

Media outlets in the Primorye region, which borders North Korea, reported long lines and prices of about 78 rubles per litre (approximately USD 3.58 per gallon) at gas stations in the area, where the average monthly wage is about USD 1,200. Journalists at local news outlet Primpres found other drivers trying to sell gas online for as much as 220 rubles per litre (about USD 10.12 per gallon).

In the Kurilsky district of the Kuril Islands north of Japan, shortages of lower octane A-92 gas forced officials to halt public sales outright Monday. In Crimea, a popular resort area, some companies sold fuel only to holders of coupons or special cards.

Normal price increases are aggravated this year

Russia is no stranger to gasoline price increases at



Rosneft's largest oil refinery following a drone strike. (FILE PHOTO)

the end of summer. But this year's shortages have been aggravated by Ukraine's attacks on oil refineries in the 3 1/2-year-old war. Larger, more concentrated attacks are causing more damage and hampering production, all timed to coincide with peak demand.

Ukraine has targeted energy infrastructure before, but the recent strikes have been more successful, with more drones targeting a more concentrated group of facilities.

"The Ukrainians are attacking an arc of refineries, starting from Ryazan, which is south of Moscow, all the way to Volgograd. That region is where people are driving through on their way to (resorts on) the Black Sea. That's the region where most of the harvest operations are going on. And that's also a rather densely populated region," Sergey Vakulenko, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center, told The Associated Press.

Between August 2 and August 24, Ukraine attacked oil infrastructure at least 12 times, according to media reports. Of those attacks, at least 10 were targeting sites in the Ryazan-Volgograd arc in southwestern Russia.

These attacks have damaged many oil refineries but have not destroyed them outright, Vakulenko said, adding that most of the facilities are extremely resilient against fires.

But they can slow refinery activity, as shown by a fall in the intake of crude oil to be turned into diesel, gasoline or other products by roughly 200,000 to 250,000 barrels per day, said Gary Peach, oil markets analyst at Energy Intelligence.

"That's just enough to make their gasoline industry feel some pain, especially during the high consumption months in the summer," he told AP. Gasoline production fell 8.6 per cent in the first 19 days of August, compared with a year earlier, and diesel production was down 10.3 per cent.

Other war-related issues have caused even more consumer pain. Ukrainian drone strikes repeatedly have disrupted Russian transportation networks, particularly air traffic, causing more people to travel by car and increasing demand for gas, Vakulenko said.

Inflation also has made it less profitable for suppliers who normally buy gasoline early in the year for sale in the higher-priced summer months, and many entrepreneurs simply decided not to bother this year, he said.

Individually, none of these problems caused lasting or widespread disruption in Russia. But together, they have transformed an expected annual price fluctuation into a problem for the government.

Trump takes control of Union Station from Amtrak

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump's administration is taking management of Union Station away from Amtrak, the latest example of the federal government exerting its power over the nation's capital.

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy announced the takeover alongside Amtrak President Roger Harris at Union Station on Wednesday for the launch of the NextGen Acela, the rail service's new high-speed train.

Union Station, the secretary said, has "fallen into disrepair" when it should be a "point of pride" for the city. He said taking over management of Washington's main transportation hub, which is walking distance from the U.S. Capitol, would help beautify the landmark in an economical way and was in line with Trump's vision.

"He wants Union Station to be beautiful again. He wants transit to be safe again. And he wants our nation's capital to be great again. And today is part of that," Duffy said.

The Trump administration's move to take over



Amtrak Police officers patrol Union Station

Union Station follows other attempts to put the District of Columbia further under the president's control. In recent weeks, he has increased federal law enforcement and immigration agents in the nation's capital while also taking over the city's police department and activating members of the National Guard, saying he's fighting violent crime. Local police department statistics, though, show violent crime in Washington has declined in recent years.

Duffy echoed the Republican president, who said last week he wants \$2 billion from Congress to beautify

Washington as part of his crackdown on the city.

National Guard troops have been on patrol inside and outside Union Station after Trump launched the anti-crime effort earlier this month. Vice President JD Vance and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth were shouted down by opponents of the federal intervention when they visited with troops there last week.

Duffy had pressed Amtrak about crime at Union Station in a March letter to its chief operating officer and requested an updated plan on how it intended to improve public safety there.



US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent. FILE PHOTO

'At the end of the day, we'll align': US Treasury Secy on India trade talks

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON DC

Following Washington's 50 per cent tariffs on Indian goods coming into effect earlier on Wednesday, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent expressed optimism about resolving trade tensions with India, stating, "at the end of the day, we (India and the US) will come together."

Speaking to Fox Business Network, Bessent acknowledged the complexities in the India-US relationship amid current economic concerns, while highlight-

ing the strong personal rapport between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump as a foundation for eventual agreement.

"This is a very complicated relationship. President Trump and Prime Minister Modi have very good relationships at that level. And it's not just over the Russian oil," the US Treasury Secretary said.

"India is the world's largest democracy, and the US is the world's largest economy. I think at the end of the day, we will come together," he

added.

His remarks came after Washington's 50 per cent tariffs on Indian imports to the US took effect earlier today, following a draft notice published by the US Customs and Border Protection (CBP), which stated that the order would take effect on August 27.

According to the notice, the additional duties are being imposed to give effect to the President's Executive Order 14329 of August 6, 2025, which specifies a new rate of duty on imports of articles that are products of

India. The additional 25 per cent tariffs by the US, bringing the tariff to 50 per cent, were imposed due to India's purchase of Russian oil.

Bessent, however, stated that India's negotiating stance has been "performative", noting the US's advantage as the deficit country in trade relations.

"I think a lot of it by the Indians has been performative. But I will tell you, I've said this all along during the tariff negotiations: the US is the deficit country. When there is a schism in

trade relations, the deficit country is at an advantage. It's the surplus country that should worry. So the Indians are selling to us. They have very high tariffs. And we have a very large deficit with them," he said to Fox Business Network.

The US Treasury Secretary also traced back to India's early trade engagement with the US following Trump's April 2 Liberation Day announcement for tariff imposition on certain countries, noting that New Delhi "could be one of the earlier deals", expecting a deal to

have been struck in May or June.

"The Indians came in very early, after Liberation Day, to start negotiating on tariffs. And we still don't have a deal. I thought that we would have a deal in May or June. I thought India could be one of the earlier deals. And they kind of tapped us along in terms of the negotiations and then there is also the aspect of the Russian crude purchases, which they've been profiteering on. There are many levels going on here," Bessent added.

SUNITA DENIES SEPARATION, CELEBRATES GANESH CHATURTHI WITH GOVINDA

AGENCIES
MUMBAI

Bollywood couple Govinda and Sunita Ahuja put all separation rumours to rest as they came together to celebrate Ganesh Chaturthi at their Mumbai residence on Wednesday. Govinda, dressed in a maroon kurta, twinned with Sunita, who wore a matching saree. Videos from the celebration quickly went viral, showing the couple performing the Ganpati puja with devotion and distributing sweets to the paparazzi.

Speaking to the media during the celebration, Sunita strongly dismissed the ongoing rumours about their marriage and said that people should not believe



Govinda and Sunita Ahuja address divorce rumours with Ganesh Chaturthi celebration (Image: X)

such talk unless they themselves speak about it.

Making it clear that no one can come between them, Sunita said, "Aaj media ke muh pe thappad nahi padi hai kya? Humko saath me dekh kar. Itna close... agar kuch hota toh itne nazdeek

hote? Humari duriya hoti. Koi hum dono ko alag nahi kar sakta. Chahe upar se koi bhi aa jaye... Mera Govinda sirf mera hi hai aur kisi ka nahi hai." (Hasn't the media gotten a slap in the face today? Seeing us together like this. So close... If there was

something wrong, would we be this close? There would've been distance between us. No one can separate us... My Govinda is only mine and no one else's.)

She added with a smile, "Jab tak hum kuch na bole, koi bhi cheez pe aap mat boliye" (Until we say something, please don't speak on anything).

Several guests were also spotted at their home, including 'Bigg Boss 13' contestant Paras Chhabra, who came for Ganpati darshan.

Govinda and Sunita, who have been married since 1987, are proud parents to Tina and Yashvardhan. While Tina made her Bollywood debut in 2015 with 'Second Hand Husband,' Yashvardhan is preparing for his acting debut soon.

Mohanlal starrer 'Hridayapoorvam' trailer out

AGENCIES
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The much-awaited trailer of Superstar Mohanlal starrer 'Hridayapoorvam' has been released on Tuesday.

Directed by Sathyan Anthikad, the film stars Mohanlal, Malavika Mohanan, and Sangeeth Prathap in lead roles.

The one-minute and fifty-one-second trailer showcases a humorous yet emotionally layered interaction between Mohanlal and Sangeeth Prathap, where Mohanlal's character expresses his confused state of mind.

As per the trailer, Mo-



Mohanlal in 'Hridayapoorvam'. Picture Courtesy/ Aashirvad Cinemas' Instagram account

hanlal appears to be playing a middle-aged man who visits characters played by Malavika Mohanan and Sangeetha.

The interaction is followed by a heartwarming and entertaining narrative involving Mohanlal,

Sangeeth Prathap, Malavika Mohanan and Sangeetha.

The movie is produced by Antony Perumbavoor under the banner of Aashirvad Cinemas. Aashirvad Cinemas shared the trailer on their Insta-

gram handle on Tuesday.

The film has been granted a U certificate by the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC).

Sharing a poster of his character on Instagram, Mohanlal shared the news with a poster of his character in 'Hridayapoorvam'.

Calling it a "censor clean" movie, the superstar announced that the film will be making its way to theatres on August 28, 2025. The story of the film is penned by Akhil Sathyan, while the screenplay and Dialogues have been penned by Sonu TP.

Sophie Turner warns child actors about social media

AGENCIES
LOS ANGELES

Sophie Turner has shared her concerns for the young actors of HBO's upcoming Harry Potter TV series. Turner, who joined 'Game of Thrones' at 14, has voiced her thoughts about the child actors roped in for the roles of Harry, Hermione, and Ron.

The actor spoke about the negative impact that social media had on her in the early days.

"I think social media was just really becoming a big thing after I started on Game of Thrones, so I got a couple of years of peace and quiet and then I had to adjust. It had such a profound impact on my mental health, like more than I could tell you. It almost destroyed me on numerous occasions," she said, as quoted by The Hollywood Reporter. Referring to the new cast of the Harry Potter series, Turner stated that they must remain away from social media.

"I look at the kids who are about to be in the new 'Harry Potter' and I just want



Sophie Turner warns new 'Harry Potter' child cast about social media dangers.

The actor spoke about the negative impact that social media had on her in the early days.

to give them a hug and say, 'Look, it's going to be okay but don't go anywhere near social media,' she said.

Highlighting the importance of having a "grounding" over the newfound fame, she suggested that the kids must be at home and spend more time with their friends and family.

HBO started its search for the 'Harry Potter' cast with the audition of 32,000 children with an open casting call. It has already finalised the lead actors along with the cast for other significant characters.

Among the newcomers are Dominic McLaughlin, Arabella Stanton, and Alastair Stout, who will be seen as the young Harry Potter, Hermione Granger, and Ronald Weasley, respectively. The young cast also features Lox Pratt (Draco Malfoy), Rory Wilmot (Neville Longbottom), Amos Kitson (Dudley Dursley), Alessia Leoni (Parvati Patil), and Leo Earley (Seamus Finnigan), among others.

The shooting for the series has been begun and it is expected to debut in 2027.

BRAIN PICKING



You can be an absolute woman and also be smart and tough and not lose your femininity.

—PRIYANKA CHOPRA
(Indian Actress)

Ravi Teja's 'Mass Jathara' halts scheduled release amid industry strikes

AGENCIES
MUMBAI

Ravi Teja's much-awaited film, 'Mass Jathara' has hit a roadblock, with its scheduled release postponed. On Tuesday, the makers officially confirmed that 'Mass Jathara' will not open in theatres on the planned date of August 27, 2025.



Ravi Teja's 'Mass Jathara' photo/X.

They cited the ongoing

Talks underway for 'KPop Demon Hunters' sequel

AGENCIES
LOS ANGELES

Discussions have commenced on a sequel for 'KPop Demon Hunters,' Netflix's animated phenomenon for this summer.

According to a Variety report, Netflix and Sony are already in talks for the next instalment to follow up on the animated feature, which recently also became the streamer's most-watched film ever.

While no further details have been revealed so far, 'KPop Demon Hunters' co-director Maggie Kang, who helmed the project with Chris Appelhans, previously floated hopes for the sequel.

Hinting toward focus on the histories of Rumi's fellow group members, Zoey and Mira, Kang told Variety, "We've set up so much for potential backstory. Obviously, there's a lot of questions that are left unanswered and areas that are not explored, and we had to do that because there's only so much movie you could tell in 85 minutes." Nonetheless, the update comes at a

time when the film has amassed 236 million views on Netflix since its June 20 premiere, allowing it to pass 2021's 'Red Notice' to become all-time Most Popular English Film. With this, the top five films on the Netflix list are 'Carry On,' 'Don't Look Up,' and 'The Adam Project.' At the same time, a sing-along version of the film also hit big screens in the US, finishing off No.1 at the box office with an estimated \$19.2 million, as stated by Deadline. 'KPop Demon Hunters' revolves around the character of Rumi (Arden Cho), Mira (May Hong) and Zoey (Ji-young Yoo) - the young-adult pop stars in a group called Huntr/x.



Image of Kpop Demon Hunters.

Singer Taylor Swift and NFL star Travis Kelce are engaged

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON DC

Pop sensation Taylor Swift and NFL star Travis Kelce are now engaged after two years of dating. The couple announced their engagement on Instagram with a carousel of photos on Tuesday (India time), featuring Swift's engagement ring from the ceremony.

The series of photos captured the moment Kelce got down on his knee in a rose garden, including a close-up shot of the diamond wedding ring in a gold bezel



Taylor Swift and NFL star Travis Kelce (Photo:Instagram@taylorswift)

setting. The 'Blank Space' singer appeared over the moon as she hugged and kissed her new fiance, and the pair even posed for pho-

According to the outlet, Kelce was the one who made the first move that sparked their relationship, and it started when the Kansas City Chiefs tight end attended Swift's 'Eras Tour' in July 2023.

tos in celebration of their milestone moment. While sharing the photos from the engagement ceremony, Taylor Swift wrote, "Your English teacher and your gym teacher are getting married." Swift and Kelce's relationship has been a major topic of discussion

since they first went public in October 2023, according to Variety. According to the outlet, Kelce was the one who made the first move that sparked their relationship, and it started when the Kansas City Chiefs tight end attended Swift's 'Eras Tour' in July 2023.

Venice Film Festival 2025 kicks off with celebrities

AGENCIES
VENICE

The 82nd edition of the Venice Film Festival is set to take place from August 27 to September 6 at the barrier island called the Lido.

The red carpet has been rolled out in front of the Lido's sparkling white, freshly renovated Palazzo del Cinema, where numerous stars will be arriving when the festival kicks off on Wednesday.

Actress Julia Roberts will be making her debut at the



Julia Roberts, Andrew Garfield, (Photo:Instagram@JuliaRoberts)

Venice Film Festival this year, reported Variety.

Andrew Garfield and Ayo Edebiri are all confirmed to

be attending for Luca Guadagnino's '#MeToo'-themed film 'After the Hunt'.

The movie's trailer was recently released by the makers, according to the outlet.

Actors George Clooney and Adam Sandler will be attending the festival for Noah Baumbach's 'Jay Kelly', in which Clooney plays a movie star undergoing an identity crisis.

Emma Stone is confirmed to be Lido-bound for "Bongonia", her latest collaboration with Yorgos Lanthimos, reported Variety.

Back to Basics!

KTM Duke 160 Review

SYED SHIRAZ SHAH

KTM India conducted a short first ride of their latest offering, the Duke 160, for the media this week. It was raining almost throughout the day, and the ride itself was split into two batches, which meant that we didn't get as much time with the bike as we would have liked, and that was an unfortunate departure from the usually excellent first rides conducted by Bajaj where we get to ride for the full day. This was done primarily to engage more journalists and influencers, but I honestly don't approve of the idea because this format doesn't do justice to the motorcycle and the work that has gone into it. Nevertheless, while almost everyone else's mileage at end of the first ride was below 50 km (a few just rode for as little as 25 km), I rode the motorcycle for 114 km. Therefore, you may trust this first ride review to give you the most detailed, accurate, and useful information to help you in making an informed decision if you're contemplating a buy in this segment.

DESIGN & COLOURS

The Duke 160 is primarily based on the Duke 200, and not the latest (Gen 3) Duke 250 or Duke 390; therefore, its design is naturally closer to the Duke 200's and Gen 2 Duke 250's even though it gets a few parts from the latest Dukes as well. I will get into the nuances in the comprehensive road test review which I shall do once I get the bike for a longer duration. For now, looks wise, it would suffice to say that it's still unmistakably a Duke; however, I would have loved to see an all black shade as well. Right now, there are three colour options for the Duke 160: Blue, Silver, and the essential Orange, of course.

FEATURES

The Duke 160 should have ideally come with a TFT screen, especially when the 200 has got it as well. It should now be made standard across the range. However, it gets an LCD unit, which would leave potential owners a bit wanting in this department, more so when the generally reluctant-to-change competition



PHOTOS: Syed Sameer

has also started offering TFT screens not only in this segment but in lower segments too.

Still, it's decently legible and comprises all the necessary information readouts such as the gear position indicator, range (distance-to-empty), average fuel consumption and average speed (for Trip 1 and Trip 2), clock, etc., and of course the other essentials such as tachometer, fuel gauge, etc., as well. For me, the most impressive bit of the whole package here has to be the switchable ABS (Supermoto mode) which, if switched

off in your current ignition cycle, will remain off even in the subsequent ignition cycles. You want to switch it back on? You will have to do it yourself, which is how it should be. Plus, the ABS on/off info is always displayed on the screen.

The LHS switchgear, to toggle through all functions in the screen, has been taken from the Gen 3 Dukes, and it never misses a beat. Please also note that as far as rider aids (electronic or mechanical) are concerned, there's nothing on offer except dual-channel (switchable) ABS and

slipper clutch. Thank you, KTM India for not providing absolutely useless stuff like traction control on a 160. However, a unidirectional quickshifter (and then a bi-directional unit as and when the bike gets RBW) would have augmented this baby Duke's fun-to-ride quotient further.

PERFORMANCE, RIDE QUALITY, AND HANDLING

"Ready To Race" is KTM's tagline, which means that even the smallest Duke has to be the most power-

ful motorcycle in the segment, and it is. The claimed peak power output is 19 PS at 9,500 rpm while the claimed peak torque output figure is 15.5 Nm at 7,500 rpm. Plus, while the primary and secondary reduction ratios are unchanged from the Duke 200, the final drive has been altered (45/14 vs 200's 42/14) to make it more trigger-happy. This 160, ladies and gentlemen, would prove to be a stunter's delight. It will also be fun for those who're not majorly into wheelies but don't mind an inadvertent lift or two while gunning it when the traffic signal turns green...

And if you somehow manage to keep the front wheel down, you'll be rewarded with a 0-60 km/h time of 4.5 seconds. Well, that's the time claimed by KTM and it's totally believable because I managed a time of 4.7 seconds in rain, so I know I will

Looks wise, it would suffice to say that it's still unmistakably a Duke; however, I would have loved to see an all black shade as well. Right now, there are three colour options for the Duke 160: Blue, Silver, and the essential Orange, of course.

be able certainly better it in the dry.

That should also tell you about the phenomenal grip of tyres, despite being brand new with hardly any bedding-in done. Well, I did some actually. I had picked up the bike with an odometer reading of just 3 km and carried out the performance testing after around 80 km, but tyres (and brakes too) need a lot more than that to perform at their best, and that is why it's remarkable that even with almost zilch bedding-in done, they provided astounding grip, that too in the wet. I really can't wait to test it extensively in the dry. That's when I would do a "timed" braking test as well. However, even right now I can tell you that it will turn out to be the best braking motorcycle in the segment, thanks not only to the aforementioned tyre grip, but also to the largest-in-segment front rotor hauled by radially mounted calipers.

What's the top speed, you ask? Well, it's limited to 122 km/h on the speedo, which is a tad disappointing. Come on, KTM, your Duke 125 did over 125 km/h, and I was really expecting this to at least exceed 130 km/h. Plus, the



stability is again astounding, and I am sure it would be the same even at 130 km/h as well.

It handles beautifully too, sticking to the KTM hallmark. In fact, while the steering geometry hasn't been changed at the frame, the slightly shorter fork has made the rake sharper by half a degree. The turn-ins are almost telepathic and complemented well by the brilliantly tuned suspension which allows the Duke 160 to hold its line impeccably.

With that kind of handling prowess, I was not expecting it to have good ride quality, but I am happy to report that it's not the case. The suspension works better than the Duke 200's and even than the Duke 250's on bad roads. In fact, if I remember correctly from my extensive Duke 390 ride, the Duke 160 actually fares better on bad roads than its eldest domestic sibling!

SEAT HEIGHT & ERGONOMICS

I almost forgot to tell you that the claimed seat height figure is 815 mm, which might seem a bit on the higher side for the segment, and for shorter riders, but you'll be glad to know that

even someone like me, with an inseam of 27 inches (barefoot) would be able to manage this motorcycle without much difficulty.

Also, the thoughtful R&D chaps at Bajaj/KTM have incorporated subtle handlebar risers to compensate for the shorter fork, so that you still continue to sit fairly upright on this Duke as well.

KTM also claims that the pillion seat is broader than whatever is offered by its competitors in the segment, and by just looking at the seat itself one can tell that the claim seems to be legitimate. Therefore, the Duke 160 could turn out to be the only true sports naked to keep your better half equally happy as well.

VERDICT

The KTM Duke 160 is everything that its potential buyer expects it to be in essence—a well engineered, lightweight, quick, and agile sports naked that stays stable as a rock even at the limit—but, it would have done better with a TFT screen, and a unidirectional quickshifter. Moreover, the Bluetooth suite (with navigation) is an optional extra that would cost you around five thousand rupees more.

However, if you're someone who values undiluted RAW performance over "features" then the KTM Duke 160 should be on top of your list.



Thank you, KTM India for not providing absolutely useless stuff like traction control on a 160. However, a unidirectional quickshifter (and then a bi-directional unit as and when the bike gets RBW) would have augmented this baby Duke's fun-to-ride quotient further.



SPERM FREEZING: EVERYTHING YOU'VE BEEN TOO SHY TO ASK



DR VAISHALI SHARMA

When we talk about fertility, the conversation almost always revolves around women — egg freezing, biological clocks, hormone tests. But let's be real: men aren't immune to the ticking clock either. Sperm freezing, or cryopreservation, is finally coming into the spotlight, and for good reason. Whether it's career priorities, lifestyle choices, or health concerns, more men today are taking charge of their future fatherhood. If you've ever wondered, "Is sperm freezing something I should think about?" or even "How does that work?" — you're in the right place. Let's break it down in plain, no-nonsense language.

WHAT EXACTLY IS SPERM FREEZING?
Think of it as creating a

backup file of your fertility. A semen sample is collected, frozen at super-low temperatures using liquid nitrogen, and safely stored for years. When it's needed later for IVF, ICSI, or IUI, the sperm is thawed and used just like fresh sperm.

The amazing part? Sperm can stay frozen for decades without losing quality. In fact, successful pregnancies have occurred with sperm frozen for more than 20 years!

HOW DOES THE PROCESS WORK?

No heavy medical jargon — here's the simple flow:

- **Sample Collection:** You provide a semen sample, usually at the clinic (yes, in a private room with your phone for company).
- **Sperm Health Testing:** The lab checks sperm count, motility (movement), and shape to ensure only healthy ones are preserved.
- **Freezing:** The viable sperm is mixed with a protective solution and cooled to -196°C. At that temperature, life basically pauses.
- **Storage:** The sample is stored in cryogenic tanks for as long as you want —



If you've ever thought, "What if I wait too long?", sperm freezing is the answer. It's not just for men with health challenges — it's for anyone who wants the option of starting a family later without stressing about age or fertility decline.

- 5, 10, even 20 years.
- **Future Use:** When you're ready, it's thawed, tested again, and used in fertility treatments.

WHY IS IT BECOMING POPULAR?

Life today isn't as straightforward as it was for earlier generations. Men are delaying marriage, focusing on careers, traveling, and prioritizing personal goals. But sperm quality, like everything else, declines

with age.

TOP REASONS MEN CHOOSE SPERM FREEZING TODAY:

- Medical treatments like chemotherapy or testicular surgery.
- Stress, pollution, and lifestyle factors that impact sperm health.
- Pre-planning for IVF cycles or late parenthood.
- Simply wanting peace of mind by securing fertility while young.

WHEN'S THE BEST TIME TO FREEZE?

The short answer: when you're healthy and in your prime.

Sperm quality is at its peak between ages 20–35. After 40, DNA fragmentation increases, making conception harder and sometimes riskier. Freezing while young locks in your healthiest reproductive stage, ensuring better chances later.

DOES AGE REALLY MATTER FOR MEN?

Absolutely. While men can father children even in their 50s or 60s, the risks increase. Older sperm is more prone to DNA damage, which can affect embryo quality, increase miscarriage rates, and in some cases, link to childhood disorders. Sperm freezing allows men to sidestep these age-related uncertainties.

BUSTING MYTHS ABOUT SPERM FREEZING

- **"Frozen sperm doesn't work as well as fresh."** Wrong. With modern techniques, frozen sperm is just as effective for IVF or ICSI.
- **"It's only for men with fertility issues."** Not true. Healthy men

also freeze sperm as part of long-term family planning — just like women freeze eggs.

- **"It's too expensive."** In India, it's surprisingly affordable.

COSTS IN INDIA VS ABROAD

Here's the average breakdown in India:

- Initial Testing: Rs 5,000
- Initial Freezing: Rs 15,000
- Annual Storage: Rs 10,000
- Thawing for IVF later: Rs 5,000

Compare that with the U.S. or Europe, where the costs are 4–5 times higher. For the price of a weekend trip, you can secure your fertility for decades.

If you've ever thought, "What if I wait too long?", sperm freezing is the answer. It's not just for men with health challenges — it's for anyone who wants the option of starting a family later without stressing about age or fertility decline.

It's 2025. Reproductive planning isn't just a women's issue anymore. Men have options too — and sperm freezing is one of the smartest, simplest ways to future-proof fatherhood.

The author is the Senior Gynaecologist at AIIMS.

Hello self-care: Gender neutral skin, hair, aromatic picks!

SANJANA CHAWLA

In the quiet ritual of getting ready for work each morning, I have realized that the products we choose are more than just tools—they are small acts of self-care, confidence boosters, and moments of simple joy. Just like every month, I tried on some new and carefully selected products. From the glint of a lip gloss to the lingering note of a new fragrance, these gender neutral newbies have been a reminder that beauty and wellness are deeply personal.

Read on to know how these launches have elevated my daily routine!

1. LANEIGE TINTED LIP SERUM & GLOWY BALM

For a long time, my lips have been chapped - all thanks to work stress, travel and lack of hydration. To fix this, I tried out Laneige Glaze Craze Tinted Lip Serum in Strawberry Sprinkles and Laneige Lip Glowly Balm in Taro Bubble Tea. These two products changed my perspective on lip care and were a revelation. They glided on smoothly, delivering a cool, sheer pink tint, and fruity taste that wasn't overpowering. It's what I call the "my lips but better" look, elevated by a high-shine, glazed finish that caught the light beautifully! The duo made my lips feel hydrated, plump, glossy and most importantly soft, moisturized, and visibly healthier. There was no flaking or dryness and the lightweight and non-sticky formula made them my perfect companion!

2. FOREST ESSENTIALS MUSK, LIME & PATCHOULI COLOGNE

At this point everyone knows that I am huge on good smells and have always been drawn to fragrances that tell a story, that evoke a feeling rather than just a

scent. The Forest Essentials Cologne in Musk, Lime & Patchouli is one of those rare finds. It's a fragrance that feels both ancient and modern, a beautiful blend bottled up. The first spray leaves behind a burst of fresh, zesty lime and the warm and earthy notes of musk and patchouli make this a strong and rare scent. It's a scent that made me feel



grounded and sophisticated, yet not heavy or overpowering. It's a fragrance that makes me feel put-together, polished, "it girl", and uniquely myself. And the best part? It lasts long!

3. CLAYCO MICRONEEDLING EXOSOME SERUM

The term "microneedling" has been the talk of the town yet conjured up images of painful, in-office treatments. So to test it out but at home, I tried out the Clayco Cica Microneedling Exosome Serum. The serum has a lightweight, almost watery texture that absorbs



into the skin almost instantly. After using it for weeks, I started noticing that my skin's texture was becoming noticeably smoother, and the small fine lines around my eyes and mouth seemed to soften. The serum, infused with Cica Exosomes and microneedle technology boosted my skin from within making the skin barrier felt stronger and



leaving my skin brighter, more even-toned, youthful and plump.

4. THE OUD LEGACY WITH HOUSE OF MOKSHA

My search for asignature scent that was both sophisticated and versatile ended with House of Moksha's Vetiver Oud Eau De Parfum. The first spray is a beautiful, fresh burst of bergamot and orange blossom. It's a clean, uplifting scent that immediately catches your attention and as it settles, the notes of jasmine and rose elevate to add a touch of classic elegance. The base notes of



vetiver, oud, amber, and sandalwood truly define this fragrance and create a rich, earthy, and woody foundation that feels both luxurious and grounding. It's a fragrance that makes me feel confident, poised, and powerful and feels appropriate for every occasion, from a busy day at the office to a special evening out.



5. 3TENX HYDRIFY GLOSS MIST

I have always had a complicated relationship with my frizzy, colored and dry hair. They often look lifeless, especially on days with high humidity. To fix this, I tried out the 3tenx Hydrify Gloss Mist, a genuine hair hero, a quick fix that provides instant, salon-quality results. This mist was powerful enough to tame my frizz and give me that coveted glass-like shine in an instant. This mist with raspberry seed oil and jojoba oil is incredibly good smelling, fine and lightweight, making my hair look healthier, with a brilliant, mirror-like shine. Weeks down the line of using it after hair wash and before styling, my hair feels softer and more moisturized, and better protected from the damage of heat styling and the environment. It locks in moisture and tames flyaways without compromising the natural bounce of my hair.

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Highlights three common traps that the middle class often falls into, the message aligns closely with broader mission: empowering people through strategic learning, financial agency, and emotional resilience.

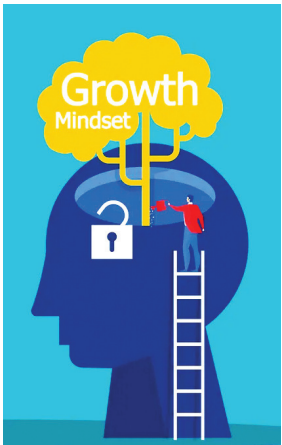
1. EMOTIONAL SPENDING VS. INTENTIONAL INVESTMENT

According to Jain, middle-class spending patterns are often driven by emotions—purchasing trending gadgets or lifestyle products that provide temporary satisfaction but little long-term value.

In contrast, the wealthy approach money with discipline and detachment. Every decision is an intentional investment, aligned to long-term growth and clearly defined outcomes.

2. COMFORT ZONE LOYALTY VS. GROWTH MINDSET

Jain points out that the middle-class frequently equates stability with safety. This mindset often keeps individuals tied to routines that may feel secure but limit progress.



The affluent, however, embrace calculated discomfort. They view challenges—whether scaling a business, pursuing side hustles, or investing in personal growth—as essential gateways to expansion.

<

AJITH, NIRUPAMA SECURE GOLD AND SILVER IN COMMONWEALTH C'SHIPS

AGENCIES
AHMEDABAD

Indian weightlifters Ajith Narayana and Nirupama Devi Seram delivered superlative performances to clinch the gold and silver medals in the men's 71kg and women's 63kg category respectively at the Commonwealth Championships here on Wednesday. Narayana, the 26-year-old lifter, recorded a total lift of 317kg (145kg snatch + 172kg clean & jerk) to secure the top position on the podium, setting new Commonwealth records in the process.

Narayana's victory came after a thrilling contest with Nigeria's Joseph Edidiong Umoafia, who claimed the silver medal with a total of 316kg (146kg snatch + 170kg clean & jerk), while Nauru's Ezekiel Moses won bronze, managing a total of 290kg (135kg snatch + 155kg clean & jerk).



Ajith Narayana won silver and gold respectively

In women's 63kg, Nirupama produced an impressive performance to finish second with a total of 217kg (91kg snatch + 126kg clean & jerk). The 24-year-old's clean & jerk effort also surpassed the previous Commonwealth standard.

Canada's Maude Charron dished out a record-break-

ing effort to claim gold in the women's 63kg category, while Nigeria's Ruth Imoleayo Ayodele completed the podium with the bronze medal, recording a total of 212kg (95kg snatch + 117kg clean & jerk).

India continued its golden run in the junior categories, claiming both gold med-

South Africa's Jonathan Evan Trumble secured the silver medal with 262kg (112kg snatch + 150kg clean & jerk), while Sri Lanka's Oditha Tharupathi Narayanage claimed bronze with 206kg (95kg snatch + 111kg clean & jerk).

als in the 71kg men and 63kg women divisions as Hemanta Doimari (men) and Bidusmita Bhoi (women) topped their respective weight classes at the championships.

In the junior men's 71kg competition, 18-year-old Hemanta showcased remarkable composure to claim gold with a total of 264kg (118kg snatch + 146kg clean & jerk).

South Africa's Jonathan Evan Trumble secured the silver medal with 262kg (112kg snatch + 150kg clean & jerk), while Sri Lanka's

Oditha Tharupathi Narayanage claimed bronze with 206kg (95kg snatch + 111kg clean & jerk).

In women's junior 63kg, 20-year-old Bhoi overcame a slow start to secure the top prize with 204kg (89kg snatch + 115kg clean & jerk).

Nauru's Family-Crystie Notte, who led after the snatch with 88kg, had to settle for silver with 200kg (88kg snatch + 112kg clean & jerk), while Australia's Chloe Saliba claimed the bronze medal with 180kg (77kg snatch + 103kg clean & jerk).



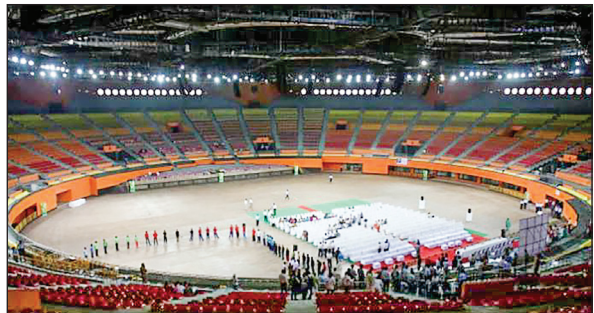
NorthEast United FC Receives The President's Cup From President Droupadi Murmu. X

Cabinet nod to India's 2030 CWG bid, picks Ahmedabad as host

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the proposal of the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports for submission of a bid for the Commonwealth Games (CWG) 2030. It also gave its approval to sign the Host Collaboration Agreement (HCA) along with the required Guarantees from the concerned Ministries, Departments, and Authorities, and sanctioned the required grant-in-aid to the Gujarat Government, in case the bid is accepted, as per a release from the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.

Athletes from 72 countries will participate in the Commonwealth Games. It will also include participation of a large number of athletes, coaches, technical officials, tourists, media persons, among others,



New Delhi hosted the 2010 edition of the Commonwealth Games (File photo)

visiting India during the Games, benefiting local businesses and generating revenue.

Ahmedabad is an ideal host city offering world-class stadiums, cutting-edge training facilities, and a passionate sporting culture. Narendra Modi Stadium, the largest stadium in the world, has already demonstrated its capability by successfully hosting the 2023 ICC Cricket World Cup Final. Beyond sports, hosting the CWG in India would leave a lasting impact, boosting tourism,

creating jobs and inspiring millions of young athletes. Apart from that, a large number of professionals will have opportunities in Sports science, Event Operations and Management, Logistics and transport coordination, Broadcast and media, IT and communications, Public relations and communications, and other fields as well. Hosting such a globally prestigious event will foster a strong sense of national pride and unity. It will provide a shared national experience and boost the morale of our Nation.

Shuttler PV Sindhu battles back, enters pre-quarterfinals at World Championships

AGENCIES
PARIS

Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu once again relied on a late surge to overcome Malaysia's world No. 40 Letshanaa Karupathevan and reach the women's singles pre-quarterfinals of the BWF World Championships here on Wednesday.

The former world champion, who had survived a scare in the opening round too, rallied from 12-18 down in the first game to register a 21-19 21-15 victory in 42 minutes.

World No. 15 Sindhu, who has five World Championships medals and two Olympic medals to her name, was in a spot of bother as the 22-year-old Malaysian led 18-12 in the opener. However, the experienced Indian bounced back, winning nine of the next 10 points to stun her opponent.



P. V. Sindhu, a former champion, took down Malaysia's Karupathevan Letshanaa in straight games in the round of 32 at the BWF Badminton World Championships in Paris.

With the momentum on her side, Sindhu dominated the second game and sealed the win in 43 minutes.

Earlier, the Indian mixed doubles pair of Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto entered the pre-quarterfinals with a 21-11, 21-16 win over Ireland's

Joshua Magee and Moya Ryan. Seeded 16th, Dhruv and Tanisha dominated the proceedings to outwit the Irish duo 21-11, 21-16 in just 35 minutes.

The Indians will next face fifth seeds Tang Chun Man and Tse Ying Suet of Hong

Kong for a place in the quarterfinals. Dhruv and Tanisha took control from the outset, racing to a 6-2 lead before extending it to 11-6 at the break. They never allowed their opponents a way back and comfortably sealed the opening game. The second game fol-

The Indians will next face fifth seeds Tang Chun Man and Tse Ying Suet of Hong Kong for a place in the quarterfinals.

lowed a similar script as the Indians jumped to a 7-2 advantage and maintained their grip on the rallies to close out the match without much trouble. Later in the day, two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu and 2023 bronze medallist H S Prannoy will be in action, while Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, the 2022 bronze medallists, will begin their campaign in the round of 32 after receiving a bye in the opening round.

Squash Nationals: Akanksha secures 2025 World Cup spot

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

Little-known Akanksha Salunkhe of Goa stunned the double World Championships gold medallist Joshna Chinappa en route to making the women's final of the 81st Squash Nationals, here on Wednesday.

With this massive win, Akanksha also secured her place in the Indian team for the 2025 Squash World Cup in Chennai in December along with Abhay Singh, Velavan Senthilkumar, and

Anahat Singh.

Goa's Akanksha, who has reached a career high ranking of 62 in February, upstaged the 38-year Joshna, who is considered one of India's finest in this sport, 11-5, 13-11, 7-11, 12-10 across four games of an enthralling semifinal at Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium. Joshna, who was awarded the country's fourth-highest civilian honour -- the Padma Shri -- in 2024, remains the youngest Indian women's national champion

Akanksha, 26, will take on Delhi's teen sensation Anabat, who rallied to beat state-mate Tanvi Khanna 3-11, 11-5, 11-0, 11-9, in the title clash.

and has won the title for a record 18 times. Akanksha, 26, will take on Delhi's teen sensation Anabat, who rallied to beat state-mate Tanvi Khanna 3-11, 11-5, 11-0, 11-9, in the title clash. In the men's competition, Tamil Nadu's Abhay and Velavan set up a summit showdown

after winning their semifinal matches against West Bengal's Ramit Tandon and Maharashtra's Veer Chotrani respectively.

Facing each other in the nationals for the first time, Ramit struck first, taking the opening game 13-11, but Abhay roared back with su-

perior control and precision to seal the match 11-13, 11-5, 11-6, 11-7 in 52 minutes.

This will be the fourth time Abhay and Velavan will lock horns in the final of squash nationals. In the ProCoach semifinals, Matthew Godwin of Tamil Nadu held his nerve in key moments to edge out Maharashtra's Raja Yadav 11-6, 8-11, 11-9, 11-7, while Uttar Pradesh's Atul Kumar Yadav outlasted Mohit Bhatt of Maharashtra 11-9, 11-4, 10-12, 11-6.

India names 73-player strong team for World Para Athletics Championships

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

Three-time Paralympics medallist high jumper Mariyappan Thangavelu was one of the notable omissions from India's 73-strong team, led by star javelin thrower Sumit Antil, for next month's World Para Athletics Championships, being hosted by the country for the first time. Another high jumper Sharad Kumar, who won a bronze and a silver in Tokyo and Paris Paralympics, also failed to find a place in the squad, which has 19 women.

The Indian squad was announced on Wednesday

during the unveiling of the jersey of the players for the championships to be held at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here from September 27 to October 5.

The 30-year-old Thangavelu is a highly decorated para athlete of the country. He won a gold in the 2016 Rio Paralympics, a silver in the Tokyo edition and a bronze in the Paris Games.

He also won a gold in the World Para Athletics Championships held in Kobe, Japan last year, after a bronze in the 2019 edition. The Tamil Nadu para athlete also won a silver in the Asian Para Games in Hangzhou, China in 2023. A para athletics said that



Dharambir and Preeti Pal will be India's flag bearers at World Para Athletics Championships

Thangavelu and Kumar did not take part in the selection trials because of different reasons.

"Recently, Thangavelu made changes in his technique and he will need



some time to get used to it. He will be back in future. Sharad wants to focus on the Asian Para Games (in Japan) next year," the coach said.

"So, both did not take part

in the selection trials and they were not selected."

The team jersey launch ceremony was graced by actress and PCI's brand ambassador Kangana Ranaut, who is also a Member of Parliament.

Paralympics Committee of India (PCI) President Devendra Jhajharia said para athletes from 107 countries have confirmed participation and this edition will be the biggest one in the history of the championships.

"India had won 17 medals in the 2024 edition in Japan. We will win more medals this time," he said.

"We want this championships to be the most successful one in para athletics

history."

Jhajharia, himself a two-time Paralympics gold-medallist javelin thrower, had earlier told PTI that the Mondo track being laid at the event venue and training area at the JLN Stadium will be completed by September 1.

Paris Paralympics club throw gold medallist Dharambir Nain and double bronze winner sprinter Preeti Pal have been named as India's flag bearers for the opening ceremony on September 27.

Jhajharia had said that the PCI has invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi to inaugurate the championships.

Dharambir, Preeti to lead India as flag bearers at World Para Athletics C'ships

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

With just 30 days to go for the World Para Athletics Championships, the Paralympic Committee of India (PCI) unveiled the official Team India jersey at a grand ceremony held on Wednesday, here in the national capital and named Dharambir and Preeti Pal as the nation's flag bearers for the event.

The announcement also highlighted the 73-strong Indian contingent, which

is preparing to compete on home soil from September 27 to October 5.

The launch event was graced by PCI's brand ambassador, BJP MP Kangana Ranaut, alongside PCI President Devendra Jhajharia, Paul Fitzgerald, Head of World Para Athletics, and India's top para athletes, including Preeti Pal, Simran, Rinku, Dharambir, Devender Kumar, Amisha Rawat, Shreyansh Trivedi, Varun Singh Bhati, and Pranav Soorma.