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The Sunday EXPRESS



EYE

Mango on my Map

It's not a fruit, it's an aroma, it's sticky elbows, summer and chaos and, when everything is forgotten, a memory that brings you home

SCREEN

Deepali Sahay on her song *Tere paas main* from *Main Vaapas Aaunga* that is leaving listeners misty-eyed

DAILY FROM: AHMEDABAD, CHANDIGARH, DELHI, JAIPUR, KOLKATA, LUCKNOW, MUMBAI, NAGPUR, PATNA, PUNE, VADODARA

'NEW EV POLICY EMPOWERS MIDDLE CLASS'

'Delhi transforming... has chosen a new direction for cleaner, more modern future'

'Subsidies not capped... total incentive around Rs 60,000-70,000 per vehicle'

Gayatri Mani
New Delhi, July 4

The Capital's new Electric Vehicle (EV) Policy is not merely an incentive scheme, but a comprehensive roadmap to transform its transport ecosystem, reduce pollution and make electric mobility affordable, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said Saturday.

In an interview with *The Indian Express*, Gupta described the policy, which came into effect July 1, as "common-man centric" and one designed primarily for Delhi's middle class. The policy, she said, departs significantly from previous approaches by removing subsidy caps and focusing on the segments that contribute the most

REKHA GUPTA
DELHI CHIEF MINISTER
PAGE 4

to air pollution.

"We have given all kinds of possible incentives: Subsidy, scrapping incentive, road tax exemption and registration exemption," Gupta said.

•CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Hafiz Saeed kin and aides among 23 added to terror list under UAPA, total count 80

Listing by Centre will help fight terror networks at national, international levels

Mahender Singh Manral
New Delhi, July 4

THE CENTRE Saturday designated as terrorists 23 operatives of Pakistan-based terror organisations including Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), citing their involvement in terror recruitment, infiltration, training, supply of arms through drones and planning of attacks in Jammu and Kashmir.

This raises the total count of designated terrorists to 80. Fol-

lowing the amendment to the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA) by the Centre in 2019, 57 individuals had been designated as terrorists in 2024 under Section 35 of the Act and listed in its Fourth Schedule.

Among the 23 are the son-in-law of LeT founder Hafeez Muhammad Saad and his close associates, three involved in the 2016 terror attack on an Army camp in Nagrota, and two involved in the 2018 terror attack on the Sunjwan Military Station.

•CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Barmer mosque razings spark legal battle, unite residents across faith

Officials cite national security; residents allege no due process as per SC guidelines

Parul Kulkreshtha
Keroli (Barmer, Rajasthan), July 4

IN THE early hours of a tense morning outside the Strait of Hormuz, near the Fujairah anchorage, and wait. Salim later learned that arriving in the area just 15 hours earlier would have trapped the vessel inside the strait when the situation really deteriorated.

It was on one of those drifting mornings, stepping onto the deck for fresh air before her engine room rounds, that she heard a sound from the sky and looked up to see the flashes.

new it's gone. This is the only mosque within a 10-km radius. Where are we supposed to go now?" says Hishamuddin, the mosque's maulvi.

Fellow resident Hakeem Ram Meghwal still can't make sense of what is happening. "We offered food to the Muslims after they stopped cooking to protest

Biggest cities offer better salaries, more regular jobs for women, but stark gender disparity in income favours men

Women's overall contribution to workforce, however, continues to languish — just one of every four women employed in big cities compared to almost 3 of every 4 men

Zeeshan Shaikh
Mumbai, July 4

INDIA'S BIGGEST cities seem to offer better opportunities for women to get salaried or regular jobs than urban India as a whole.

According to the latest report on Labour Market Dynamics in Million-plus Cities published by the National Statistics Office, women participation in such

•CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

EXPRESS special

JOBS AND SALARIES IN BIG CITIES

% employed in regular jobs

	MN-PLUS CITIES	URBAN INDIA
Men	56.4	46.5
Women	65.1	50.9
Overall	58.5	47.6

Average monthly salary

	MN-PLUS CITIES	URBAN INDIA
Men	Rs 30,707	Rs 27,984
Women	Rs 23,707	Rs 21,664
Overall	Rs 28,808	Rs 26,258

SOURCE: PERIODIC LABOUR FORCE SURVEY (PLFS) 2025

How metro cities pay

	MEN	WOMEN
Mumbai	Rs 36,453	Rs 35,788
Delhi	Rs 35,708	Rs 31,644
Bengaluru	Rs 37,430	Rs 28,325
Chennai	Rs 31,655	Rs 22,919
Kolkata	Rs 21,534	Rs 13,784



Lionel Messi reacts as Cape Verde players celebrate their second goal against Argentina. AP

Cape Verde lose to Argentina, but steal the show in a match for ages

Sandip G
New York, July 4

IN THE beatifically lit Hard Rock Stadium in Miami, a fairy tale met a tearful end. Cape

Verde's journey from an utter unknown to nearly pulling off the greatest shock in World Cup history ended at the hands, legs, and experience of the world champions, Argentina, in extra time, 3-2. The story

their brave men wrote will haunt them: men who defeated the odds and left everything on the field. But Cape Verde leave this World Cup as its most heart-warming narrative. They

leave as heroes. Some leave as household names.

The toll was visible in its final seconds. Messi sank to his knees and prayed, staring at the sky. His teammates lay sprawled on the grass: Cape Verde's players staggered like ghosts. The world would spend days replaying an unseemly classic, wishing it had never ended.

Until the last second of the

•CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Happening today

• **JOINT AWAMI ACTION COMMITTEE**, a collective of activist groups leading the protests in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, has called for a shutdown in response to sweeping crackdown by Pakistani authorities.

• **SHIV SENA (UBT) CHIEF** Uddhav Thackeray is set to launch a 'Ram Raksha' agitation in Maharashtra over the alleged theft of donations at the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

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POLITICS PAGE 7



MAMATA SLAMS REBELS AS KEY AIDE QUILTS AMID TMC MELTDOWN

SAYS FEARMONGERS DID NOT SUCCEED

PM: Navigated energy crisis with India jalwa and hard work



PM Narendra Modi at an integrated refinery-cum-petrochemical complex in Rajasthan's Barmer, Saturday. PTI

'India has friendly ties, sourced fuel from over 40 countries during West Asia war'

Hamza Khan
Jaipur, July 4

UNDERLINING THAT his government took "every single step... sensitively, whether at the policy level or the diplomatic level" at the height of the West Asia crisis, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Saturday that India successfully navigated one of the world's global energy crises by sourcing fuel from more than 40 countries, and credited it to friendly relations, diplomatic power, hard

•CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

E. EXPLAINED

Shift in strategy
India's crude oil strategy has shifted ever since the outbreak of hostilities in West Asia hit oil flows and increased freight risks. While Russia's crude is still the backbone of India's import slate, refiners have diversified towards North American and Venezuelan barrels to offset the drop in supplies from the Gulf.

POLITICS PAGES 7, 6

PM WISHES TRUMP AS U.S. TURNS 250

JAISHANKAR LEAVES FOR WEST ASIA, U.S., EUROPE TOUR TODAY

Adani power infra: Gujarat govt notifies new compensation policy for farmers

Ritu Sharma
Ahmedabad, July 4

THE GUJARAT government on Saturday announced new guidelines for compensation of land in Right of Way (ROW) corridors and towers for transmission lines to "balance the financial burden on the power transmission companies and the possible increase in tariff to the end consumer".

Citing various queries and representations regarding compensation of land in Right of Way (ROW) corridors and tower-based areas during laying of transmission lines, the resolution issued by the Department of Energy and Petroleum will supersede provisions of all other resolutions issued earlier by the state relating to compensation for damage to land/crops/fruit trees and other

trees, during the erection of transmission lines and towers.

The *Indian Express* reported Friday how farmers at Jetpur village of Morbi district who were facing loss of land were protesting against Adani Energy Solutions Ltd (ASEL) whose Special Purpose Vehicle, Halvad Transmission Ltd is installing high tension towers for transmission cables to evacuate power from the renewable energy park at Khavda in Kutich.

They would wind up the agitation only after the state issues a fresh resolution, they said. On Friday, Agriculture Minister and Gujarat government spokesperson Jitu Vaghani agreed to key demands of the farmers including doubling the market price for calculating compensation, and the setting up of a Market Rate Committee

•CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

A month after he crossed LoC for love, 22-yr-old PoK man sent back

Bashaarat Masood
Srinagar, July 4

A MONTH after he crossed the Line of Control (LoC) in Uri to meet his love, Zeeshan Ahmad Mir, a resident of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), was sent back across the border Saturday, officials said.

Zeeshan, 22, a resident of Pankodi village in Uri, crossed the border on May 31 to meet his love, Ram Majed. On the same day, the Indian Army issued a statement saying an "in-



The Indian Express report published on Saturday

truder" had been apprehended while crossing the LoC in Kashmir's Uri sector. Sources later said that he appeared to have "no hostile intent".

Zeeshan and Ram had fallen in love over Snapchat. On his arrival in the Valley, Zeeshan was detained by the Army at Silikote, a fenced border village where access is restricted to soldiers and residents.

While the Army was convinced Zeeshan had crossed the border only to meet Ram,

•CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

• 24-YEAR-OLD MARINE ENGINEER FROM KERALA, ON HER FIRST SHIP DUTY, CAN'T FORGET THE SIGHT OF MISSILES STREAKING OVERHEAD

'Saw missiles for first time': For *Paanch Saab*, baptism by fire at sea near Hormuz

Sunanda Mehta
Pune, July 4

IN THE early hours of a tense morning outside the Strait of Hormuz, near the Fujairah anchorage, and wait. Salim later learned that arriving in the area just 15 hours earlier would have trapped the vessel inside the strait when the situation really deteriorated.

It was on one of those drifting mornings, stepping onto the deck for fresh air before her engine room rounds, that she heard a sound from the sky and looked up to see the flashes.

planned cargo run to Kuwait in early March.

The vessel was instead directed to drift outside the Strait of Hormuz, near the Fujairah anchorage, and wait. Salim later learned that arriving in the area just 15 hours earlier would have trapped the vessel inside the strait when the situation really deteriorated.

It was on one of those drifting mornings, stepping onto the deck for fresh air before her engine room rounds, that she heard a sound from the sky and looked up to see the flashes.

"This was the first time I saw

missiles in real life. My hands started shivering," she says. Terrified, she ran below to the mess room and considered asking to sign off. But once there, she found her crewmates eating breakfast, laughing, entirely at ease and something in her perspective shifted.

"If my seniors could carry their own fear and still show up for work, so could I," says Salim. She heard the main engine starting—a small click ahead for position adjustment. "I heard the starting sound. 'Tak Tak Tak.' I hear that sound every time. But that morning it felt different. It felt like the heartbeat of the ship. And that time I real-



Hifa Salim (24) was just months into her dream job, having joined her very first ship, when war broke out in the Persian Gulf

ised the ship is alive. We are not alone," wrote Salim later in an essay published in the magazine of Synergy Marine Group that manages her ship.

She went down to have a cup of tea with the Second Engineer, the officer she reported to. "He took one look at me and could read that something is not right and when I said that I want to stay on board and be part of the team instead of quitting, he smiled and said in Malayalam, 'Saab ippo strong aayi. Vaa namukoru fuel valve overhaul cheyeyi, appo ellam sharyavanu' which translated to Saab had become strong now. Come, let's overhaul one fuel valve,

then everything will be alright.' In the middle of uncertainty, those simple words gave me comfort, strength and the confidence to carry on with my work."

As a fifth engineer everyone on board called her "*Paanch Saab*", the traditional title for the ship's youngest engineer. "I liked the name. It made me feel like I belonged, even though I said I have a watch yet," says Salim who also made the decision to not tell her family at home the full extent of what was happening—she didn't want them to panic. It was only after the ship had safely cleared the area that she learned her parents had been doing the very same thing

for her: staying composed on their calls, masking their own fear so she wouldn't carry the weight of theirs.

"We were all trying to protect one another in our own way," she reflects.

Hailing from Edakkazhiyur, a small town in Thiruvananthapuram, her close-knit family had always stayed her to dream big, she says. She had once dreamed of the Indian Navy, but the engineering side of the Merchant Navy pulled her in, partly because almost no one at home could tell her what the profession even involved.

•CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

[FROM PAGE 1 | FULL REPORTS ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM]

Salaries and jobs

•WHERE WOMEN BEAT MEN

TOP SIX CITIES	WOMEN	GAP	MEN
Prayagraj	Rs 42,254	31%	Rs 32,214
Srinagar	Rs 33,869	24%	Rs 27,323
Lucknow	Rs 31,744	17%	Rs 27,098
Patna	Rs 31,013	11%	Rs 27,902
Meerut	Rs 20,057	5%	Rs 18,946
Varanasi	Rs 20,821	2%	Rs 20,331

stable jobs is stronger in cities with one million-plus population compared with urban India as a whole. Women also surpass men in such jobs by a notable margin, i.e., 65.1% of all employed women in million-plus cities have a regular or salaried job compared with 56.4% all employed men.

Gender disparities in income, however, prevail in big cities as much or more than they do in rural India.

The report shows that women participation in regular or salaried jobs at 65.1% is also much stronger in 46 cities which have more than a million people as per Census 2011 compared with 50.9% in urban India.

While this is true, it is also a fact that women's worker population registered rate (WPR) continues to languish. While men's WPR in million-plus cities is 72.6%, that for women is 25.5%. This is not very different from that of urban India, as a whole (73% for men, and 25.9% for women). WPR is the percentage of persons employed among the persons in the population.

There is a clear distinction in the employment trends of million-plus cities compared with urban India. Overall, regular or salaried jobs are markedly higher at 58.5% in these cities compared with 47.6% in urban India. Self-employed and casual jobs are higher at 41.4% in urban India compared with 41.4% jobs in million-plus cities. Jobs are divided in three categories: salaried or regular, self-employed, and casual.

In terms of income in regular jobs, while both men and women earn at least 10% more in million-plus cities compared with urban India, the income gap widens in the million-plus cities. Across urban India, men in regular salaried jobs earn an average Rs 27,984 a month against Rs 21,664 for women, a gap of Rs 6,320. In the country's 46 largest cities, the gap widens to Rs 7,000, with men earning an average Rs 30,077 a month and women Rs 23,707 for women. Women salaries as a percentage of men's salaries is 77.2% both in million-plus cities and in urban India.

In handful of cities, though, women have achieved near parity with men in regular salaried jobs. Prayagraj tops the list, where women earn 131.2% of male salaries (Rs 42,254 against Rs 32,214), followed by Srinagar at 124% (Rs 33,869 vs Rs 27,323), Lucknow at 117.1% (Rs 31,744 vs Rs 27,098), Patna at 111.1% (Rs 31,013 vs Rs 27,902), Meerut at 101.5% (Rs 20,057 vs Rs 18,946) and Varanasi at 102.4% (Rs 20,821 vs Rs 20,331).

The findings are part of the Free Telegram Channel https://t.me/+2xRvD_RG9nMzjMg1

PoK

he was handed over to the police for legal proceedings. The police registered a case against him for illegal intrusion and sent him to jail in Baramulla. Three days ago, he filed a chargesheet. The court admitted the police chargesheet and closed the case, following which formalities for his repatriation were completed.

On Saturday, Indian officials informed their Pakistani counterparts about the deportation. Zeeshan was then taken to Kaman Post. "We took him to Kaman Post and handed him over to Pakistani soldiers. His repatriation took place at 12.30 pm," a police officer said.

Iram and her family were allowed to meet him briefly before his deportation. "We were allowed to meet him for two to three minutes before departure. He didn't say anything," Iram said. "He just went the whole time we were there."



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PM on energy crisis

work and resolve.

Speaking in Rajasthan's Balthora after dedicating the country's first greenfield integrated refinery-cum-petrochemical complex to the nation at Puchpadra, Modi said, "Due to the war in West Asia, there was panic across the world. Every country was in distress. This war gave birth to the biggest energy crisis of the 21st century. Major nations are still grappling with fuel shortage today. But the willpower and efforts of the new India of the 21st century have prevailed over these challenges."

"During the war, India's friendship with other countries proved very useful. When this crisis began, India was importing fuel and energy from 25-26 countries. *Lekin sangat kesaam Bharat ki diplomacy ki madad se, humne dekh ke saath humara achhe sambandh is sankat ki ghadi mein bahut kaam aaye* (But during this crisis, the power of India's diplomacy was demonstrated; our good relations Free Whatsapp Channel https://t.me/+2xRvD_RG9nMzjMg1

Cape Verde steal show

120th minute, Cape Verde stretched the champions, and Messi himself, to the outer limits of physical and mental fortitude. They did not flinch when Messi broke their resistance in the 29th minute, controlling the ball on the rise with the outside of his boot to beat goalkeeper Voznica. They weathered the storm, came out for the second half on the front foot, and equalised in the 59th minute through Deroy Duarte's sumptuous nutmeg of Emiliano Martinez, born from a defender nicknamed "the Butcher" for the way he plays, not the way he finishes, came to his country's rescue with a goal built like a striker's, hammered into the roof of the net. Surely now Cape Verde's resolve would break.

But their opponents weren't finished. Manager Bultosa signalled for calm, and his players stood like the Rock of Gibraltar, turning away a venomous Messi free kick from just two or three metres out, struck from his favoured spot on the right, while his defenders threw their bodies at anything that smelled of danger. Ar-

gentina's desperation curdled into uncharacteristic mistakes. Coach Lionel Scaloni's face burned red with agony. When extra time began, the score looked at 1-1, this was no longer champions and minnows, but a fight between equals. The smallest nation ever to reach a World Cup knockout round refused to yield.

The dynasty of Messi, Maradona and Kempes stood from the precipice of its darkest hour. Three minutes in, Lisandro Martinez, a defender nicknamed "the Butcher" for the way he plays, not the way he finishes, came to his country's rescue with a goal built like a striker's, hammered into the roof of the net. Surely now Cape Verde's resolve would break. But their opponents weren't finished. Manager Bultosa signalled for calm, and his players stood like the Rock of Gibraltar, turning away a venomous Messi free kick from just two or three metres out, struck from his favoured spot on the right, while his defenders threw their bodies at anything that smelled of danger. Ar-

Delhi CM

"Unlike other states, we have not put any capping. We want as many people as possible to avail the benefits of this EV policy so that the government can switch to electric vehicles."

Framing the policy as part of a broader transformation of the Capital, Gupta said, "Delhi is transforming. It has chosen a new direction - one focused on building a cleaner, more modern, and better future. The EV policy is also a part of this transformation and we believe it will usher in a new era of cleaner mobility."

Gupta said the policy deliberately prioritises electric two-wheelers and auto-rickshaws because the government believes they offer the quickest gains in reducing vehicular emissions. "We want to encourage the use of two-wheelers, but they could not do so because of the cost gap," she said, estimating that the combined incentives amount to nearly Rs 60,000-70,000 per vehicle.

While the draft policy had proposed incentives for strong hybrid vehicles, the final version excludes them. The decision, Gupta said, the government's immediate focus is on technologies that deliver the greatest environmental benefits. "This is an EV policy, not a petrol policy," Gupta said, adding that hybrids could be considered in future phases if cleaner technologies become more viable.

with other countries proved very useful during this crisis. During the war itself, India began importing fuel from more than 40 countries," he said.

A lot of rumours were spread and people were instigated, political games were played. But those whose intentions were wrong did not succeed," he said.

"Apart from minor disruptions in remote areas, there were no major supply challenges. Diesel and petrol companies alone incurred losses of over Rs 75,000 crore. This means a loss equivalent to the construction of a new refinery. The government treasury shouldered the responsibility of covering this loss. We also reduced the excise duty on Rs 10 per litre, ensuring the public was protected from excessive burden," he said.

"India sent a clear message to the world that national interest and the interests of its citizens are paramount. Our mantra is 'nagrik deo bhava'."

Free Whatsapp Channel https://t.me/+2xRvD_RG9nMzjMg1

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Gujarat

(MRC). The final market price will be determined by the MRC based on the 'reference market rate' as well as a 'lottery system,' according to the guidelines.

The method for determining the Reference Market Rate (incorporated for the first time since the state adopted the setting of the MRC) states that if the difference in the market rates determined by two selected values is less than 20 percent of the lower value, the average value of both the valuations will be considered as the reference market rate.

In the second case, if the difference between the two is more than 20 percent, the reference market rate can be fixed at 10 per cent more than the lower valuation. "Only if it is not acceptable, the sealed report of the third valuer shall be opened and the reference market rate shall be finalised by taking the average of the two lowest valuations," the guidelines say.

The MRC will be formed at each district level to resolve the

The country didn't emerge from this unexpected challenge just like that, it was also due to the success of our visionary policies that have been going on for a decade," he said.

Attacking the previous Ashok Gehlot government in Rajasthan, Modi said, "Today, we are inaugurating the Rajasthan Refinery here. We signed an MoU for this in 2017. However, the Congress government ruled Rajasthan from 2018 to 2023. Due to the Congress's non-cooperation, work here virtually stalled. But as soon as the double-engine (BJP) government came to power, work progressed rapidly," he said.

"And you know my working style, whatever we lay the foundation stone for, we also inaugurate it. Similarly, India has steadily expanded its refinery capacity. The United States hasn't built a single new refinery in the last 50 years, and Europe's refinery capacity has steadily declined, while India today has the world's fourth-largest refinery capacity. And we are not going to stop there. This capacity is set to grow even further in the coming years," he said, adding

Free Whatsapp Channel https://t.me/+2xRvD_RG9nMzjMg1

a stunning equaliser in the 103rd minute: left-back Sidney Lopes Cabral drilled past Nicolas Tagliafico and curled the ball into the far top corner from the edge of the area.

Cabral is 23, born in Rotterdam, and now plays for Trabzonspor after a rapid rise through Sweden's Helsingborg. Germany's lower leagues with Rot Weiss Erfurt, and a breakout season at Portugal's Estrela da Amadora, before a move to Benfica and a €10 million switch to Trabzonspor weeks before this World Cup. It is a long way from the fifth tier, where he earned €850 a month and endured racist abuse both on and off the pitch. He climbed into the stands to find his girlfriend. It should have been the most famous goal in his country's history. For now, it's remembered as the moment just before the one that would leave Cape Verde numb.

A shootout loomed until Argentina's 35th minute. Messi's swerving deftly appeared to cannon in off Christian Romero's head. Replayed shortly otherwise: the ball had clipped Romero, then caught Diney Borges's arm on the way in. Argentina's third. When the big screen showed the

issues of compensation of affected land and to fix the market rate. For valuation of the land, it will appoint land valuers who are empanelled by the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India. Three valuers (one by the landowners' representative, one by the State Government and one by the District Collector) will be appointed on day of the committee meeting.

The appointed evaluators will submit their independent reports in a sealed cover directly to the District Collector within 21 days of their appointment by the MRC. After receiving all three reports, two will be opened by the District Collector by selecting them through a 'lottery system'.

The District Collector can allow immediate commencement of physical works of transmission lines without any hindrance on condition of payment of compensation based on the market price as determined by the MRC.

The provisions of the GR published with the 'in-principle approval and approval received' from the Finance Department, Revenue Department and Agriculture and Cooperation Department through letter on July 4,

Terror list

was designated as a global terrorist by the US in August 2012.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, in a post on X, said "Pursuing PM Shri Narendra Modi Ji's vision of zero tolerance against terror, the MHA today declared 23 dreaded terrorist functions, two with one (day of transmission line), the compensation will take MRC-determined market value of the land for the area over which the land passes. In rural areas, it will be 30% of land value, 40% for municipalities, nagar panchayats, 45% for all other urban planning areas, and 60% for Municipal Corporations and Metropolitan Areas."

● **Forcible compensation:** Rates fixed by APMC will be applicable and the valuation will be certified by concerned sarpanch/ talati/ mamlatdar or the concerned revenue officer.

that it was due to such efforts that "India has emerged victorious from the biggest energy crisis of the century."

The country, he said, "took correct decisions at every stage: accurately assessed the crisis in a timely manner; devised an effective strategy; utilised the resources in a balanced way; and positively utilised Bharat's diplomatic power. Only then was Bharat able to emerge from the crisis."

"When certain forces were busy spreading rumours and apprehensions in the public sphere, the scale at which work was being carried out and the way the situation was being managed - that hard work, those efforts, and the patience involved were remarkable. Every single step was taken sensitively, whether at the policy level or the diplomatic level. And sooner or later, history will record that all of this was unprecedented," he said.

On the occasion, Modi also laid the foundation stone and inaugurated various development projects worth around Rs 1,06 lakh crore in Balotra, with the projects spanning multiple sectors including petrochemicals, urban transport, railways, roads, renewable energy, and power transmission.

replay, Borges sank to the turf and buried his face. Argentine fans celebrated wildly, then caught themselves; by now, they knew what their opponents were capable of coming back from.

Sure enough, Cape Verde regrouped for one final push. They very nearly got there: only the glove of Emiliano Martinez, patch-patched and thrown full stretch, kept out a stinging Cabral free kick. Argentina were flying, running now on willpower and the fear of an equaliser that could end their title defence, and perhaps the World Cup career of arguably the greatest footballer there has ever been. Martinez had to rush off his line to smother a looping ball but Cabral's boot could reach it. That was as close as Cape Verde came. It was as close as Argentina came to a shock for the ages.

The fairy tale ends here. But the memory won't. The day before America's 250th birthday will be remembered as the day the smallest nation ever to reach a World Cup knockout stage came within a heartbeat of dethroning the champions, burning an empire, and nearly writing the final chapter of Messi's career at the top of the game.

2026 are equally applicable to all new transmission lines of 66 kV and above to be laid in the Gujarat and to all transmission lines of 66 kV and above in progress.

● **Tower Base Compensation:** 100% of market value as determined by the MRC for loss of land in the tower base area (the area between the four bases of the tower). To calculate area, an extension of 1 meter on each side in addition to the actual area of the four bases of the tower will be taken into account.

● **Right of Way Corridor Compensation:** For land due to the two sides of the transmission line, the compensation will take MRC-determined market value of the land for the area over which the land passes. In rural areas, it will be 30% of land value, 40% for municipalities, nagar panchayats, 45% for all other urban planning areas, and 60% for Municipal Corporations and Metropolitan Areas."

● **Forcible compensation:** Rates fixed by APMC will be applicable and the valuation will be certified by concerned sarpanch/ talati/ mamlatdar or the concerned revenue officer.

Mosque demolitions

government is getting out of this. These are our brothers."

This mosque is one of 12 that a writ petition in the Rajasthan High Court claims were demolished between June 18 and 20 across eight border villages in Barmer and four in Bikaner.

The demolitions are all within the 10-15 km radius of the international border and have triggered widespread protests.

Over the past week, hundreds of residents, both Hindu and Muslim, have banded together under 'Sarv Dharma Shanti Sabha,' held marches, submitted memos to the administration.

Officially, the notices cite policy law violations, claiming the mosques stood on Gochar, or pastoral, land. On May 27, Union Home Minister Amit Shah had directed authorities to strictly enforce a zero-tolerance policy against illegal structures within 15 km of the international border and demolish them.

Residents, however, claim the notices appeared suddenly and the demolitions were carried out without due process. They allege no other structures have been demolished.

They should have at least given a warning. We would have paid the fine as well," says Abdul Sindh, a resident of Siyavi village. Says Asif Jani, Barmer president of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimin (AIMIM): "They are trying to create a rift between Hindus and Muslims but this seems to be failing. Many Hindus are supporting us and participated in the rally."

Paradiya sarpanch Sarta Ram Meghwal, who joined the Sarv Dharma Shanti Sabha rally, says there are many structures, including temples, on Gochar land.

"We're not supporting encroachment, but the government has decided to demolish one set of structures, it should do the same for others too. When you are a minority, you cannot raise your voice against injustice, but it shakes the democratic foundations of this country. Hindus and Muslims have lived peacefully in Barmer all these years, such incidents make people bitter towards each other. They should follow the raj dharma, not rajneet. Otherwise, we will take to the streets and fill jails," he says.

Barmer Collector Chinmay Gopal, Superintendent Chitra Ram Jat, and Rajasthan Director General of Police (Law & Order) Sanjay Kumar Agarwal declined to comment. The Border Security Force declined to respond.

For residents, the notices came as a shock but have also become a unifying force. "When the administration left, every Hindu in my village was at my house expressing grievance over the mosque. No Muslim cooked food for four days after the demolition and Hindus used to send food for us," Hishamuddin says.

On November 13, 2024, the Supreme Court held that demolitions without due process violate the rule of law and said affected parties must receive prior notice and at least 15 days to respond. Residents claim that although the notices — under Section 91 of the Rajasthan Land Revenue Act, 1956 — were dated earlier in the month, they received them only a day before the demolitions.

At Kerikeri, residents claim they received the June 11 notice only on June 17. Issued under Section 91 of the 1956 law, it alleged encroachment on Gochar

land and directed the mosque's mauvi, Hishamuddin Sindh, to vacate the land or appear before the court on June 18.

"The patwari brought the notice around 7.30 pm," says Hishamuddin Sindh. "I was still at the masjid. We've been worshipping at this mosque for the last 30 years."

The villagers then held a meeting and headed to the local tehsil office the next day. By then, residents say, the bulldozers rolled in.

"Seven big trucks and 6-7 police jeeps came to the village. The demolition drive lasted two hours," says village resident Rakesh Kumar.

Residents say the mosque was rebuilt as a pucca structure two years ago with village donations. "We kept a locked box inside the mosque to collect donations. By contributing small amounts over five years, we were able to build a modest pucca mosque, now demolished," says Hishamuddin Sindh, another resident.

In Malana, 3 km from the international border, there's a wall of silence around the demolition, though a pile of rubble marks where the village mosque once stood. A resident says the notice was served on June 17 and the mosque was flattened the next day. In Siyavi, 15 km away, local resident Patu Khan walks through the wreckage. Behind him stands a turquoise-painted minaret with a gold finial. On June 20, a day after the village received the demolition notice, the 40-year-old Siyavi mosque was razed.

The demolitions form the basis of a writ petition by Peer Mohammad Shah Jilani Darqah Samiti in the Rajasthan High Court. Court documents show that at the July 3 hearing, the petitioners said the notices were served in a "cyclostyled and mechanical manner, reflecting a predetermined approach, particularly under Section 22 of the 1954 Act", and that national security could not override the principles of natural justice.

The state government claimed the matter involved national security. It also said some of the notices were issued in a discriminatory manner, reflecting a predetermined approach, particularly under Section 22 of the 1954 Act, and that national security could not override the principles of natural justice.

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"Tharwasis (the people of Thar) will remain united," says Ummeda Ram Beniwal, Congress MP from Barmer's Baytu constituency, while Shree MLA Ravindra Singh Bhat says: "National security is important but not at the cost of social harmony."

When contacted, BJP state president Madan Rathore says he's "unaware of any mosque demolition cases in Rajasthan". He adds, "If any such incident has happened, it must have been due to illegal encroachment on government land. We don't harass anyone on the basis of religion or caste."

Says Nand Kishore, sarpanch of Ranasar village in Barmer: "This area has never seen communal tensions. If the government wants to remove structures on pastoral land, it should do so for everyone. One community should not be targeted. I know a lot of BJP workers and their members are not happy with these incidents."

When contacted, BJP state president Madan Rathore says he's "unaware of any mosque demolition cases in Rajasthan". He adds, "If any such incident has happened, it must have been due to illegal encroachment on government land. We don't harass anyone on the basis of religion or caste."

JeM infiltration of Pakistani terrorists into J-K and was involved in the Sunjan attack. He supplied arms and ammunition through drones across the border and is also involved in handling a team of JeM cyber players who use various social media platforms to recruit youths," the notification said.

Fifty-two-year-old Mufti Muhammad Asghar Khan, also known as Abu Saad, a resident of Abbaspur in PoK, has also been listed. "He is a launching commander of JeM terrorists in J-K and one of the masterminds of the November 2016 attack on the Indian Army camp in Nagrota in Jammu," the notification said.

The Centre has also designated as terrorist 56-year-old Hafiz Abdul Shakoor, who works as a launching commander for JeM in J-K and was involved in the 2016 Nagrota attack. Abdul Shakoor is a resident of Shakergarh in Narowal district of Pakistan, has also been designated. He is one of the main handlers of

MEMBER OF LAST-ELECTED GOVT BODY OF CLUB MOVES COURT AGAINST CENTRE'S NOTICE

Pre-conceived design to take over Gymkhana property: Civil suit in HC

Damini Nath
New Delhi, July 4

CHALLENGING The Union government's June 29 eviction notice to the Delhi Gymkhana Club, a civil suit filed by a club member in the Delhi High Court has said that the notice relies on a clause of the imperial-era lease that is "unworkable" and that behind the move lies a "pre-conceived design" to take over the property.

The suit filed by Urmila Gupta, a permanent voting member and a part of the last-elected government body of the Club — moved by advocate Gaurav M Liberman on Friday — argued that the Land & Development Office's (L&DO) eviction notice to the Club and its May 22 letter ending the perpetual lease of the land is illegal. The civil suit is listed for hearing on Monday.

Since 2022, the Club has been managed by government-appointed directors on orders of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT). This was after the Ministry of Corporate Affairs moved the NCLT alleging irregularities in the manage-



The Gymkhana Club. FILE

ment of the Club.

On May 22, the L&DO wrote to the Club terminating the lease that was signed on February 28, 1928, saying it needed the 27.03 acre plot on Safdarjung Road for "strengthening and securing defence infrastructure and other vital public security purposes".

"The land is essential to fulfil urgent institutional needs, governance infrastructure, and

public-interest projects, integrated with the resumption of adjoining government lands," it said, referring to its recent taking over of the Jaipur Polo Ground and clearing of slums in the area near the Prime Minister's residence.

Under Clause 4 of the lease, the government could take back the land if it was needed for a public purpose.

Then on June 29, the L&DO

issued an eviction notice under the Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Act, 1971 asking the Club's representative to appear before it on July 7 for a hearing.

The civil suit pointed to a contradiction in the May 22 letter. While Clause 4 of the lease, as cited in the L&DO letter, said the government can re-enter — that is take possession of — and then determine, which means end the lease and change the allotment, the letter said the government is determining and then re-entering the property.

It added that this goes against Clause 4 of the lease and that this was done without issuing a show-cause notice to the Club.

"...the impugned order/letter is ex-facie illegal, and contrary to legal principles based upon a pre-conceived design to appropriate the property of the Gymkhana Club," the suit said.

It added that Clause 4 of the lease, which was alluded to by the Secretary of State for India in Council in 1928, itself was contrary to law.

"...alternatively Clause 4 as existing is unworkable, grant extensive power and is how-ever contrary to law being inconsistent with the grant of the suit property to the Gymkhana Club, therefore, Clause 4 is liable to be declared void and unenforceable being contrary to law and unconscionable," the suit added.

The land was given to the Club — an incorporated company — on payment of Rs 5,460. As per the lease, it was to be used for "a club and purposes for which the same are customarily used, including the holding of banquets, concerts and dances and the lodging and boarding of the members resident in the premises..." the civil suit further said.

The L&DO has argued that it needs the land back for public purposes. In its eviction notice, it has said that the premises "constitute valuable public premises vested in the Union of India and the Government is under an obligation to regulate, protect and utilise such public premises in accordance with public interest and public purpose".

DELHI COURT HEARS FARMHOUSE FIRING CASE

'Don't need Singham or Pushpa in state governed by law': BJP MLA gets 4-year jail

Nirbhay Thakur
New Delhi, July 4

ADELHI court on Saturday sentenced Bihar BJP MLA Raju Kumar Singh to four years in prison in a case of celebratory firing inside his farmhouse in South Delhi's Fatehpur Beri on New Year's Eve in 2018. The firing had led to the death of a 45-year-old woman.

"We need neither a Singham nor a Pushpa in a state governed by the rule of law. The brazen act of firing by Raju Kumar Singh was, however, an inspiration to both such aspirations," said Special Judge Vishal Gagne of Rouse Avenue Court in his order. "...the court finds it quite foreseeable that such acts of firing by a MLA embolden others to emulate such conduct in similar or even larger measure. The rank and file of those who seek macho gratification with the imagery of guns being fired would include not only the law-enforcement but also uniformed clads of criminals and the law."

Judge Gagne also said that



BJP MLA Raju Singh. ANI

Singh will pay Rs 25 lakh as compensation to the victim's family.

Singh was convicted under Section 304 (II) (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) of the IPC and under Section 30 of the Arms Act (punishment for contravention of licence or rule) on June 6.

During a New Year's Eve gathering at his farmhouse at Ambedkar Colony's Rose Farm, Singh had fired gunshots in the air, which hit a woman named Archana Gupta. She died during treatment at a hospital. "Such display and use of weapons by a MLA conveys to criminals that a gun is a weapon

of choice, flaunting and assertion. Considering that certain states in India are known to harbor illicit production facilities for local firearms, the sight of a MLA Acting like a strongman by untrammelled use of firearms, even on social occasions, encourages an ecosystem of illicit firearms," Judge Gagne said in the order. "...many an aspiring gang leader or strong man has stepped into politics in our nation on the strength of the gun, earning thereby the notorious sobriquet of Bahubali. In his zeal to be seen as gun wielding politician, the conduct of the convict not only betrays the public trust of his constituents but also encourages a general subscription to his conduct by criminal elements," he added.

The prosecution had examined 33 witnesses, among whom seven were eyewitnesses. Primarily, three eyewitnesses supported the charge against Singh — Vikas Gupta, the husband of the deceased and the complainant in the case, his cousin Puneet and Puneet's wife Sapna.

Man hits wife with battery, kills her over infidelity suspicion, later dies by suicide

Express News Service
New Delhi, July 4

A 28-YEAR-OLD man allegedly killed his wife by striking her on the head with a battery after suspecting her of talking to someone on the phone and then died by suicide by consuming aluminium phosphate tablets, in an incident in Ranchola, police said on Saturday.

The incident came to light on the evening of July 2 after Ranchola police station received a PCR call regarding an alleged attempt to murder a woman at Tilangpur Kotla Village.

According to police, when officers reached the ground floor of a rented accommodation, they found Nisha, aged around 23-24 years, with a severe head injury.

She was rushed to Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital, Mangolpuri, where doctors declared her brought dead, said officers.

Police said Nisha had got married to Vinay about four to five years ago.

The couple, along with their daughter — aged around three — had been living as tenants in the locality for the last six to seven months. Vinay worked in a private company in Uttam Nagar, they added.

"Preliminary investigation suggests that Vinay allegedly assaulted Nisha with an Exide battery after suspecting her of speaking to someone over the

phone.

After the assault, he allegedly consumed aluminium phosphate (commonly known as Sulphas) tablets," said an officer.

"Vinay then took the couple's daughter to his mother's rented accommodation in Kotla Vihar, about 150 m away. He informed his sister, Priya, that he had killed his wife and had also consumed poison," the officer added.

When Priya reached the couple's rented room, she found Nisha lying in a pool of blood.

She alerted the neighbours, who informed the police. Vinay, meanwhile, was taken to Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital, where he was also declared brought dead.

Police said postmortem examinations have been conducted, and the bodies have been handed over to their families for the last rites.

An FIR has been filed at Ranchola police station under Section 103(I) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, which deals with murder.

'No option but to follow SC order': Court denies bail to Umar Khalid, Sharjeel Imam

Express News Service
New Delhi, July 4

A DELHI court on Saturday rejected the bail applications of Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam in the larger-conspiracy terror case linked to the 2020 Northeast Delhi riots, underlining that it had "no option but to follow" the Supreme Court order dated January 5.

On January 5, the apex court had refused bail to Khalid and Imam in the larger-conspiracy case, while granting the relief to co-accused Gulfiha Fatima, Meeran Haider, Shifa Ur Reh-

man, Mohammad Saleem Khan and Shadab Ahmad. A bench of Justices Arvind Kumar and N V Anjaria had then observed that there was a prima-facie case against Khalid and Imam under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and held that all accused could not be treated equally in view of the "hierarchy of participation".

Only on the completion of the examination of the protected witnesses, the apex court had said, or upon expiry of one year from the date of said order, whichever is earlier, Imam and Khalid would be at liberty to

renew their prayer for grant of bail.

As the matter came up before him on Saturday, Additional Sessions Judge Sameer Bajpai of Karkardooma Court said that the bail pleas of the accused were not maintainable in court and he could neither entertain the pleas nor grant them relief. "This court has no option but to follow the judgment dated January 5, 2026, as passed by the Supreme Court, whereby the petitions of both the applicants were dismissed. Following the said order of the Supreme Court, this court cannot enter-

tain the applications and grant bail to the applicants. In fact, the applications are not maintainable and they are hereby dismissed," the Judge said.

"Since then, there are no substantial changes of circumstances as pleaded by the applicants and there arises no question to re-consider the bail of the applicants," the Judge underlined. Khalid and Imam were booked under the stringent UAPA for allegedly being part of a larger conspiracy linked to the February 2020 riots in North-east Delhi, which left 53 people dead and over 700 injured.

58-year-old man arrested for rape of toddler in Ghaziabad

Drishti Jain
Ghaziabad, July 4

A TWO-AND-A-HALF year old girl was allegedly raped by a 58-year-old man in Ghaziabad on Saturday morning, police said. The accused, a labourer, has been arrested.

Assistant Commissioner of Police (Kotwali) Upasana Pandey said a PCR call was received by the local police station regarding the incident. "The accused, a labourer, has been taken into custody," she added.

According to officers, the girl, whose father works as a labourer and mother as a do-

mestic help, was playing with her siblings outside her home around 11 am when the accused took her to a nearby secluded place. The houses of the accused and the minor are located at a distance of around 3-4 km. They are not related, said an officer. "After being raped, while the girl was returning home, residents noticed that the accused was walking behind her. The minor was bleeding from her private parts. Locals informed the police and he was arrested," the officer added.

Accused under the POCSO Act and of rape under BNS was lodged by the police.

CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR
Ganderbal www.cukashmir.ac.in

ADMISSION NOTICE 2026 4-YEAR INTEGRATED TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME (ITEP)
(B.A. B.Ed. & B.Sc. REJ.)

Central University of Kashmir announces admission to 4-year Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) for the academic session 2026-2027. Candidates who have appeared in NCTE-2026 conducted by National Testing Agency (NTA) and are interested in seeking admission to 4-year integrated teacher education programme (B.A., B.Ed. & B.Sc. REJ.) offered by the Central University of Kashmir, are hereby informed to register for admission. The registration process shall start from 3rd July, 2026 (5:00 PM). For detailed information regarding registration process & eligibility, the candidates are advised to visit University website: www.cukashmir.ac.in

Date: 3/7/2026. Director of Admissions

NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY DELHI
(A University of Law Established by Act No. 1 of 2008 of NCT of Delhi)
Sector-14, Dwarka, New Delhi-110078

ADMISSION ANNOUNCEMENT

Executive Diploma Programme (Law) 2026-27
Last Date for Submission of Applications: 31.07.2026

The NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY, DELHI invites applications for admission to the Executive Diploma Programme (Law) for the Academic Year 2026-27 commencing from 1st September 2026. The Executive Diploma Programme (Law) is a Diploma Programme conducted through a mixed mode of distance education and contact learning. The programme will be for a period of one academic year, spread over two semesters. The academic year will run from September to August. Contact classes will be held at NLU Delhi. Eligibility, total seats and other details of the programme are as under:

Eligibility: A person who has completed their graduation/post graduation in any discipline, with a minimum of 50% marks and has been in service, or has had professional experience for at least three years will be eligible to enroll for the programme. The students currently enrolled in other programme at NLU Delhi shall not be eligible to apply for the Executive Diploma Programme (Law).

Total Seats: All the applicants, who are found eligible, will be admitted to the programme.

Duration of the Programme: One year

Fee: The tuition fees for the programme for Indian Nationals shall be Rs. 1,00,000 (One Lakh only). For foreign nationals, the amount shall be USD 10805 [One Thousand Eighty only].

Interested candidates should apply online only. For further details relating to application form and eligibility criteria visit <http://www.nlu.edu.in>

Prof. (Dr.) Risham Garg
REGISTRAR

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- Only compoundable Traffic challans/notices pending on Delhi Traffic Police portal and forwarded to Virtual Court till 31.03.2026 will be taken up in this Lok Adalat.
- All the Notices/Challans are to be downloaded from Delhi Traffic Police website i.e. <https://traffic.delhipolice.gov.in/lokadalat> Or by scanning the QR Code.
- It is mandatory to carry a print out of the Notices/Challans, as no printing facility will be available at the court complexes.

Scan QR Code 1 Steps for booking online appointment

Scan QR Code 2: Downloading Notices/Challans

This link will be activated on 06.07.2026 at 10:00 am, Maximum of 50,000 Challans/Notices may be downloaded per day subject to an overall limit of 2,00,000 Challans/Notices.

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CORRIGENDUM

With reference to the advertisement published in this newspaper on 28.05.2026 titled "Request for Proposal (RFP) for Selection of Master Developer for development of AI City-cum-Business Park at Vrindavan Yojna IT City, Lucknow", bearing Reference No. 798/YR-4/61 and dated 27.05.2026.

It is hereby informed to all interested bidders that the last date for submission of bids under the aforesaid RFP has been extended from 6th July 2026 to 24th July 2026 up to 05:00 PM (IST).

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'EV policy for common people... maybe in next phase, will include hybrid vehicles too'



The much-awaited EV policy is here. Have you set any targets that you want to meet next year?

This new EV policy is very different, special and common man-centric. We have given all kinds of possible incentives to the people. We have given subsidy, scrapping incentive, road tax, registration exemption — everything. So, the target you talk about, we have uncramped it. We have not put any capping (on incentives and subsidies); unlike other states, wherever EV policy was implemented, it came with capping.

We want as many people as possible to avail the benefits, so that the city improves, the air improves. The more they avail the benefits, the more successful we will be and the faster we will eliminate pollution.

Draft policy proposed 50% road tax and registration waiver for strong hybrids but it was dropped in the final policy. Why?

The way a hybrid engine works is that, at the time you accelerate, even slightly, it automatically switches to petrol and the electric feature doesn't really work.

The second thing is pocket. Currently, we have invested Rs 15,000 crore in the big segment — two-wheelers and autorickshaws, one of the biggest contributors to pollution. So, for the big component, we gave a big incentive. So, we need to take this policy in a phase-wise manner. This EV policy is for the next three to four years. Maybe in the next phase, we will include hybrid vehicles too.

If a new technology for hybrids comes or if it supports clean fuel, will you consider it?

Today, we are focused on the most feasible technology we have, and that is EV. So, we adopted it immediately. In the future, if a better option comes, we can equally take it up.

How different is your EV policy in comparison to the previous policy? In the previous policy, people struggled to get subsidy, which they had to pay for at the dealership only with their help while buying the vehicle. Under this policy, people have to apply for subsidy themselves?

The previous government did launch a policy but it had several gaps and leakages, due to which neither the benefits reached the intended beneficiaries nor they had an intent to give incentives. Even pending subsidy amounts from the earlier regime have been cleared by our government to ensure that public trust in both the govern-

ment and EV adoption remains strong. We have disbursed Rs 45 crore in subsidy payments.

Our government has now created a dedicated portal and within 60 days of receiving the Registration Certificate (RC), the buyers will receive the subsidy amount in their account through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). Applicants can apply themselves now and payments will be made directly to manufacturers by the government. The dealers are mandated to inform buyers whether the vehicles they are buying are eligible for subsidy or not.

You have set strict mandates and timelines for adoption of EV two- and three-wheelers. But one big concern is inadequate charging infrastructure.

The success of this policy depends on the success of the charging infrastructure. It is also one of our key priorities. Not only the government, but all government agencies, departments and OEMs (original equipment manufacturers) will work together on this. We have made OEMs, whose products will be sold in the market, responsible for the development of the charging infrastructure.

The Delhi Transport Corporation has been the nodal agency, so that it can ensure availability of adequate power and charging network while overseeing strengthening of sub-stations.

Another important step we have taken is the provision of a single-window clearance system for those investing in and developing charging infrastructure. They should not face any unnecessary hurdles and the government will provide them with full support.

In fact, this will open up a new segment for employment, entrepreneurship and investment. A new industry will emerge in Delhi and many will build businesses around the charging infrastructure.

Have you set any year-wise target to achieve this?

Currently, we have around 9,000 charging points. On average, we will expand this every year, adding about 10,000 charging points annually until we reach the target of 32,000. We have already created charging infrastructure at bus depots and terminals. Gradually, as our requirements grow, we will expand the network.

Two-wheeler owners largely belong to the middle-income group. As per studies, 60% of them rely on this mode for long-distance travel and work. Do you think e-bikes have that capacity to match petrol bikes?

E-bikes have better capacity than petrol bikes (for long distance travel). People wanted to switch to electric two-wheelers but they could not do so because of the cost gap. Keeping this in mind, the government has provided the highest incen-

Days after unveiling the Delhi Electric Vehicle Policy 2026, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta talks to Gayathri Mani on how the new measures would reduce air pollution, create jobs and transform Delhi while also benefiting the common man.



PHOTOS BY PRAVEEN KHANNA

tives for two-wheelers. There is purchase subsidy of Rs 30,000, scrapping incentive of Rs 10,000, along with exemptions on road tax and registration charges. Taken together, I believe the total incentive comes to around Rs 60,000-70,000 per vehicle.

So, people are happy to shift to EVs... and when people will get charging facilities in every location across the city, they would be able to cover even longer routes. We held multiple meetings with stakeholders, and based on those discussions, we decided to give the highest priority to the largest segment.

If you speak to people who are already using EVs, they will tell you that it almost feels as if the vehicle is running free of cost. The fuel savings are so substantial that it feels like there is hardly any operating expense... So, people are happy.

There is a huge dependence on China for EV batteries. How will you address this? Also, we are seeing that Chinese apps can control and shut down e-rickshaws, which is a safety threat.

We have taken a few steps in this regard. First, we have ensured EVs covered under the policy must be registered in Delhi. Secondly, we have given preference to Indian companies and Indian-made products to reduce dependency on China. A few days ago, when this issue of e-rickshaws shutting down surfaced, the government acted immediately.

Going forward, the government will ensure that batteries of better quality are used and such things do not happen — through apps or hacking.



There is no question of ifs and buts in our policy. Please have trust and confidence in the government. Within just one year, a comprehensive EV policy has been implemented with 360-degree efforts... We will make it 100% successful; the government is working on it wholeheartedly.

The policy is designed for the common people and the middle class because they depend on their vehicles the most for daily travel. A wealthy person may own four cars and one among them may be an EV. But a middle-class family usually has just one car or one scooter — their dream as well as their medium of daily utility.

Previous govt's policy had many gaps... neither the benefits reached the beneficiaries nor they had intent to give incentives... We have disbursed Rs 45 crore in pending subsidy payments



We have designed this policy as an end-to-end solution. While we are providing subsidies, we are also planning e-waste plants for battery disposal... Overall, it is a fool-proof policy... It combines regulatory mandates with incentives to encourage people to adopt EVs. Ultimately, keeping this city clean is shared responsibility, and we all need to work together to achieve that.

Registrations of petrol two-wheelers will stop in the next two years. At the same time, a large number of two-wheelers and autos registered around 2011-2013 will complete their 15-year lifespan. Do you have a plan for phasing out these vehicles?

Yes, the scrapping and subsidy benefits are meant exactly for this purpose. We have provided scrapping incentives for every category of vehicle — e-rickshaws, autorickshaws, even jugad-type vehicles, NI category vehicles and cars... The idea behind the scrapping incentive is to phase out older petrol vehicles and encourage people to

get their overaged vehicles scrapped and replace it with EV.

For four-wheelers priced below Rs 30 lakh, we are giving an incentive of Rs 1 lakh for cars, which is big. When people get such incentives, it motivates them to replace their old vehicles immediately.

The policy is primarily designed for the common people and the middle class because they depend on their vehicles the most for daily travel. A wealthy person may own four cars and one among them may be an EV. But a middle-class family usually has just one car or one scooter — which is their dream as well as their medium of daily utility. So, this policy is specifically targeted for the middle class.

Delhi has thousands of small mechanic shops and workshops that service petrol and diesel vehicles. People in this sector will now be significantly affected. Is the government planning any training or skill development programme to help them learn EV repair skills?

Earlier, people used to operate pedal rickshaws. Then e-rickshaws came and people naturally upgraded... Today, an e-rickshaw driver earns around Rs 20,000 a month. Society adapts and moves to the next stage on its own.

Similarly, EVs will create many new job and business opportunities. As I said earlier, charging infrastructure itself is going to become a major sector. It will require people to operate it, maintain it and manage it. Likewise, EVs will also need trained mechanics.

The industry naturally responds to these emerging requirements. Training programmes are already underway. The government is strengthening its skill centres so that people can also learn about EV technology. The government is already working in that direction.

It is said that EV batteries, especially of cars, have a life of 6-8 years. After that they require replacement and retrofitting is expensive. Do you have any plan to subsidise the same or any talks with OEMs?

OEMs will equally participate and share responsibilities across all aspects — from battery replacement to retrofitting — and will also help find pocket-friendly solutions to customers. The entire ecosystem will be made more cost-effective and consumer-friendly.

With the rollout, things will gradually settle down and improve over time, because this is an open market. Any industry that wants to survive, will find its own solutions, create new opportunities and offer better services to consumers...

People have been complaining about

use of ethanol-blended petrol that is affecting the mileage and engine capacity of their cars. Have you received any complaints in this regard?

No... as of now, we have not received any such complaints.

The EV policy indicates mandates for four-wheelers. Can Delhi expect strict mandates for petrol and diesel cars in future?

We have already set mandates for N2B5-VI vehicles and NI trucks, starting from January 1, 2027. These vehicles are called *chhoti haathi*, and mostly ply in the city. So, the government has placed strong emphasis on this segment.

We have also provided good scrapping incentives for different categories of vehicles, including cars... This policy will be in place for four years but in the future, as and when more requirements arise, they (four-wheelers) will be included within this framework.

If charging infrastructure or subsidy disbursement faces delay, will the timelines for phasing out new petrol two-wheelers be revised?

There is no question of ifs and buts in our policy... Have trust and confidence in the government. Within just one year, a comprehensive EV policy has been implemented with 360-degree efforts... We will make it 100% successful; the government is working on it wholeheartedly.

What is your larger roadmap to address pollution in Delhi?

We presented a Rs 1 lakh crore budget and earmarked Rs 22,000 crore as 'Green Budget' to curb pollution — road infrastructure, dust mitigation, vehicular emissions, sanitation and waste management. The government allocated dedicated funds to the MCD to purchase litter picker machines and mechanical road sweeping machines. Resources have been provided to eliminate Delhi's garbage mountains and to revive water bodies.

Reducing pollution in Delhi requires action on multiple fronts, and we are making efforts in every direction.

For the first time, capital expenditure has crossed 30% of Delhi's budget. Earlier, it rarely exceeded Rs 5,000-7,000 crore, as a large share of the Budget was spent on free schemes... Today, we are investing significantly in long-term projects to curb pollution, improve infrastructure, develop new roads, flyovers and make the city clean and beautiful.

Delhi is transforming... It has chosen a new direction, one focused on building a cleaner, more modern and better future. The EV policy is also a part of this transformation, and we believe it will usher in a new era of cleaner mobility, making Delhi a cleaner and better city for everyone.

Thunderstorms, light rain likely over next few days

Express News Service
New Delhi, July 4

TWO DAYS after the Southwest Monsoon reached Delhi, parts of the city received moderate spells of rain on Saturday. The IMD issued several yellow alerts through the day before upgrading the warning to an orange alert by evening amid intensifying thunderstorm activity.

Rainfall remained uneven across the city. While the city's base observatories recorded only trace rainfall in the 24 hours ending 8.30 am, showers picked up later in the day.

Between 11.30 am and 2.30 pm, Pusa recorded 23.5 mm of rainfall, the highest in Delhi, followed by Janakpuri (9.5 mm), Ridge (3.8 mm) and Mayapuri Vihar (1 mm). During the next three hours ending 5.30 am, Pitambara recorded 0.5 mm of rain.

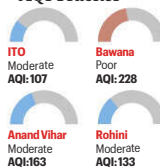
The IMD has forecast generally cloudy skies over the next few days, with spells of light rain, thunderstorms and lightning likely. Gusty winds of up to 50 kmph are expected on Sunday

• Skywatch



Forecast: July 5, 2026
Generally cloudy sky; spell of very light to light rainfall
MAX: 33-35
1.6°C below normal
MIN: 27-29
9°C below normal

• AQI Tracker



and Monday, with maximum temperatures remaining below 30°C and 33°C.
Southwest Monsoon had



Vehicles waded through a waterlogged road at Mandawali in Delhi after heavy rainfall on Saturday. ANI

reached Delhi on Thursday, five days later than its normal onset date of June 27.
The Capital's Air Quality

Index (AQI) was recorded in the 'Moderate' category on Saturday and the 24-hour average AQI stood at 123 at 4 pm, as compared to the average AQI of 105 (Moderate), recorded at the same time Friday, as per Central Pollution Control Board data.

It supplies drinking

DJB work set to hit water supply in East & South Delhi for 2 days

Express News Service
New Delhi, July 4

MULTIPLE PARTS in East and South Delhi are set to see a disruption in water supply on Monday (July 6) and Tuesday (July 7) due to maintenance work at Sonia Vihar Water Treatment Plant (WTP), the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) said on Saturday. Apart from the maintenance work, the DJB undertaken, construction of a boundary wall along the Taimoor Nagar drain is being carried out in compliance with a Delhi High Court ruling in May amid concerns over waterlogging.

Sonia Vihar Water Treatment Plant, with a 635 million litres per day (MLD) capacity, is one of Delhi's largest water treatment facilities. It treats raw water drawn from the Upper Ganga Canal at Muradnagar and plays a key role in meeting the Capital's daily water demand. It supplies drinking

water to large parts of South, Central and East Delhi.

In a statement, the DJB said it will undertake maintenance works at the water treatment plant for the interconnection of a newly laid water pipeline near the Taimoor Nagar drain.

Major maintenance works on the 1,900-m South Delhi main of the WTP will affect water supply for eight hours on Monday, starting 10 am. As a result, water supply in the affected areas may either remain unavailable or be available at low pressure until the evening, the statement read.

Areas likely to be impacted include CWG Village, Patparganj, Okhla, Zakir Nagar, Batia House, Siddhant Enclave, Khan Market, Aliganj, Jor Bagh, Lodhi Colony, Nizamuddin, Ambekar Nagar, South Extension, Lalpat Nagar, Sarai Kale Khan, K and L Pockets of Sarita Vihar, Greater Kailash (South), Chhatrapur, Srinivaspur, Amar

Colony, Malviya Nagar and adjoining localities.

Water supply will also remain affected from 10 am on Tuesday until 4 pm to facilitate the interconnection of a newly laid 1,500-mm mild steel water pipeline near Khirzabad Village along the Taimoor Nagar drain, according to the statement.

The shutdown may impact supply to underground reservoirs, including Sarai Kale Khan, Apollo, Sarita Vihar and Greater Kailash (South), as well as areas supplied through the Malviya Nagar Water Services and the Greater Kailash Master Balancing Reservoir.

Localities expected to witness disruption include Ashram, Jangpura, Badarpur, East of Kailash, Saket, Gesta-jali Enclave, Malviya Nagar, Chirag Enclave, Panchsheel Park, Greater Kailash-II and III, CR Park, Hauz Khas, Gulmohar Park, Green Park, Mehrauli, Vasant Kunj and adjoining areas.

SUNDAY, JULY 5, 2026

UDAN next phase with Rs 29,000 cr outlay; PM opens Jodhpur terminal

Hamza Khan
Jaipur, July 4

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi launched the next phase of UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik) and inaugurated Jodhpur Airport's New Terminal Building (NTB) in Jodhpur Saturday.

On the occasion, Union Minister of Civil Aviation Ram Mohan Naidu Kinjarapu said that the launch of the Modified UDAN Scheme "marks the beginning of a new chapter in India's aviation journey". "Since 2016, UDAN has transformed the Prime Minister's vision of 'Hawai Chappal se Hawal Jahaaz' into a national movement by making air travel affordable, accessible and aspirational for every Indian," he said.

Launched in October 2016, the UDAN Scheme has operationalised 669 routes and 95 airports, heliports and water aerodromes, covering over 1.66 crore passengers. This March, the Union Cabinet had approved the Modified UDAN Scheme with an outlay of approximately Rs 29,000 crore over the next ten years to accelerate aviation-led development.

The Modified UDAN Scheme focuses on expanding regional aviation infrastructure through the development of 100 aerodromes from existing unserved airstrips with an investment of Rs 12,159 crore. It also provides Rs 2,577 crore towards Operations and Maintenance support for regional airports, development of 200 modern heliports with an investment of Rs 3,661 crore, and continued Viability Gap Fund.

Free Whatsapp Channel <https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029Van2VRbRCJOKH6oB0f>



PM Narendra Modi, Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu and Rajasthan CM Bhupendra Patel Singh Badotra during the inauguration of the new terminal building of Jodhpur Airport on Saturday.

Free Telegram Channel https://t.me/+2RvD_RG9nMjMg1

ing of Rs 10,043 crore to sustain regional airline operations. The scheme also promotes the induction of indigenous aircraft and helicopters, including HAL Dhruv and Dornier platforms, for operations in underserved and remote regions.

Modi also inaugurated the New Terminal Building at Jodhpur Airport developed by the Airports Authority of India at a cost of Rs 480 crore. Spread across 23,342 square metres, the terminal is designed to handle 1,500 passengers during peak hours and 20 lakh passengers annually. It features 250 check-in counters, advanced security screening systems, modern baggage handling facilities and six aerobridges, ensuring a seamless passenger experience.

The newly developed apron can accommodate 11 A-321 aircraft and one ATR-72 aircraft, while the city-side infrastructure provides parking for approximately 320 cars, the government said.

Free Whatsapp Channel <https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029Van2VRbRCJOKH6oB0f>

Modi opens chip facility in Gujarat, tells youth: 'idea aapka, saath mera'

Express News Service
Rajkot, July 4

"I SAID earlier this year that India will have four functional semiconductor factories in 2026 but today my Minister has said that there would be five. In the past six months alone, production has started in three facilities. Today's India has great ambitions and the strength to achieve them as well. India gives the same confidence and the same trust to investors as well. Our policies have stability. Our decisions have stability and progress has pace," PM Narendra Modi said in Sanand, Gujarat, on Saturday.

PM Modi was speaking at a ceremony to mark the commencement of commercial production of GIC Semi-Oxide Semiconductor Assembly and Test (ISAT) facility in Sanand.

On his plans two decades ago, the PM said, "Around 20 years ago, or before, I made plans to set up a semiconductor plant in Gujarat. Identified 350-400 acres near Gandhinagar and Prantij and spoke to various companies. The Government was also talking about big things. But I don't know what happened and their (government) feet got shackled, and talks didn't proceed further. Today I see my 20-year-old dream, something that nobody

talked about at that time, today when it's happening, I have a lot of happiness."

"This is the third unit where commercial production of chip packaging is set to begin... This CG semiconductor plant is a result of cooperation between India, Japan, Thailand and other partners. It is not just a business venture it is a model of partnership that will give new impetus to India's semiconductor journey. I'm told 20 crore chips will be manufactured here each year... I'm told you all have aimed at reaching 500 crore chips a year..."

He asked youths to make the most of the opportunities that semiconductor and AI were bringing to India. He said, "I want to tell the youth that whenever any new industrial revolution comes, the most opportunities are for the youth... Today is the era of semiconductor and AI, and these two are also bringing many opportunities. The need of the day is skill and new ideas. What matters today is whether you have a new idea or not. Whether you have the will to learn something new or not. The youth should not waste this opportunity and I tell you 'idea aapka, saath mera'."

The PM also congratulated the company for starting the OSAT facility in less than two and a half years.

Pirated movies, OTT content: Govt notice to Telegram, seeks report in 15 days

Amrita Nayak Dutta
New Delhi, July 4

THE I&B Ministry on Saturday issued a notice to Telegram over the alleged widespread dissemination of pirated films, OTT content, and other audiovisual material through its platform, while directing the messaging app to take corrective action and submit an action-taken report within 15 days.

It is learnt that the I&B Ministry has also asked Telegram to strengthen its systems for the detection, reporting, disabling of access to and removal of pirated films and infringing audio-visual content.

The Ministry has directed Telegram to act against repeat infringers, including channels, groups, bots, accounts, administrators, and associated entities, while seeking details of its grievance redressal mechanism for producers, OTT platforms, and law-enforcement agencies.

Telegram has been asked to detail measures adopted to prevent, detect, and remove pirated content from the platform in its report. According to officials, the communication signals a shift from previous piecemeal takedown to platform accountability. The government had earlier acted against over 3,000 Telegram channels for pirated content.

Reminding Telegram that, as an intermediary, it is required to observe due diligence under the IT Act and the IT Rules, the I&B Ministry has stated that Telegram should not be waiting for the government to identify each piracy channel and also emphasised that a purely reactive, channel-by-channel takedown approach may not be sufficient to demonstrate due diligence as required under the IT Act, 2000, and the IT Rules, 2021.

Jaishankar begins trip to four West Asia nations today; will visit US July 13

Part of official tour of six nations, he is scheduled to travel to Brussels July 14-15

Shubhajit Roy
New Delhi, July 4

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS Minister S Jaishankar is scheduled to depart Sunday on a six-nation tour, visiting four Gulf countries impacted by the West Asia war — Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman — apart from the US and Belgium. The tour is scheduled from July 5 to 15, the Ministry said Saturday.

All these Gulf countries have hosted American military personnel, bases and military facilities for decades, and have been attacked by Iran as a retaliatory response against the US and Israeli military offensive that began in February.

Meanwhile, Qatar and Oman have also emerged as key mediators, along with Pakistan, in bringing about an Iran ceasefire. In this geopolitical context, Jaishankar's visit is timed to get a sense of the ceasefire and its aftermath. Announcing the visit, the MEA said Saturday that Jaishankar will be an "official visit to Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman from July 5 to 10". During the visit, the MEA said, he will be meeting his counterparts and the leadership.

"The visit will focus on enhancing our bilateral relations with the four countries and also provide an opportunity to exchange views on regional developments and issues of mutual interest," the MEA said.

Jaishankar's visit follows the visit of the Indian delegation — consisting of Bihar Governor Lt Gen (ret'd) Syed Ata Hasnain and MoS, External Affairs Pabitra Margaita — at



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's visit will focus on enhancing bilateral ties with Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman, said MEA.

Atayollah Khamenei's funeral. In this backdrop, Jaishankar's visit will focus on getting a sense of the status quo so far as the US-Iran peace framework is concerned. India also has robust energy ties with all these countries, and has a flourishing diaspora working and living there.

Jaishankar is scheduled to head to the US to launch India's official campaign for UNSC tenure 2028-29 in New York on July 13. The tenure also coincides with Lok Sabha elections scheduled to be held in 2029. India has been a non-permanent member of the UNSC for eight terms, with the most recent being the 2021-22 term.

In the last leg of his tour, Jaishankar is expected to visit Brussels for the 3rd India-EU Trade and Technology Council Meeting and interact with his EU and Belgian counterparts on July 14-15. This is one of the key meetings after the twosides concluded the negotiations for the India-EU FTA earlier this year.

EXPRESS special

Temple donation 'theft', UGC rules row: Ahead of UP polls, BJP's focus on prompt action, correction

Lalmani Verma
Lucknow, July 4

CONCERNED OVER the political implications of the alleged theft of donations at Ayodhya's Ram Temple ahead of the 2027 UP Assembly polls, the BJP's central leadership on Saturday asked its members in the state to deal with the issue "carefully" and tell people about the action taken by the BJP-led state government in the matter so far, promising them prompt action against the culprits.

At a meeting with BJP MPs and MLAs, party president Nitin Nabin spoke on the Ram Temple donation theft and the UGC regulations row that erupted earlier this year, said sources. Nabin said the alleged embezzlement of donations has hurt the entire

Hindu society and the BJP organisation. "He called the theft a 'mistake' done by some 'wrong people' and assured that the mistake will be corrected and the government will take every action to punish the guilty and bring more transparency (in counting of donations)."

The sources said Nabin accused the Opposition parties of "conspiring" to politicise the temple donation theft issue and gave the example of the recent Ayodhya visit by AAP convenor Arvind Kejriwal.

On the UGC regulations row, following which some upper caste leaders from UP districts resigned from the BJP, Nabin said the party members should not panic or react abruptly to any such issue. "Nabin-jai said the intention behind the new UGC

regulations was not wrong and whatever has happened, the government will correct that too," said a BJP leader.

Sources said BJP's national general secretary (organisation) B L Santhosh spoke on the temple donation row in the presence of Nabin in a closed-door meeting with newly appointed state office-bearers, morchas presidents, regional and district presidents at the BJP state headquarters in Lucknow. Sources

said Santhosh also expressed concern over the UGC regulations controversy. UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was also present at the meeting.

"Santhosh-jai, in his address, asked us to be careful on both Ram Temple and UGC regulations issues. He asked the party leaders to tell the people that the

issue of 'theft of donations' was unfortunate, but the UP government promptly constituted an SIT to probe the matter. An FIR has been lodged and arrests have been made," said a party leader who attended the meeting.

"About UGC row, Santhosh said some wrong use of words in the notification of the new regulations created a negative message. We have to tell this to the people," said another leader.

The UGC equity regulations 2026, notified in January this year, were meant to address discrimination, including caste bias, in higher education institutions. The new regulations, however, sparked protests and calls for withdrawal from sections of students, who claimed they could create divisions over caste and lead to "harassment" of

those in the general category.

The Supreme Court later stayed the UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026, observing that they raise important questions which, if left unexamined, could have "very sweeping consequences".

At the meeting with BJP office-bearers, Nabin said the SP and the Congress were "indulging in negative politics to divert the attention of the people because they do not have any issue against the BJP government."

He asked the party to complete the constitution of regional and district committees by this month-end and prepare for the 2027 elections.

'Channi a crown on Cong head': Warring denies rift within party

Man Aman Singh Chhina
Chandigarh, July 4

PUNJAB CONGRESS president Amrinder Singh Raja Warring on Saturday dismissed speculation of factionalism within the party following a meeting of leaders at the residence of former Charanjit Singh Chhina a day before, asserting that such gatherings are normal and that all differences would be resolved as the party unites to fight 2027 Assembly elections.

Warring, who was retained as Punjab PC chief in the recent organisational reshuffle, described Chhina as a "crown on



Punjab Congress president Amrinder Singh Raja Warring

Congress's head" and an "honourable leader".

"If people gather at my house, Chhina's house or Randhawa's house or at any leader's house, it does not mean that

there is any fight or factionalism," Warring said. "Chhina is the senior leader and brother in the party. Partap Singh Bajwa is also our senior leader, Sukhinder Randhawa is our senior leader and we have many more like them. We have one aim that we have to bring Congress back to power in 2027. We will leave behind all our differences and emerge as a single platform."

On party's CM face, he said he had been in the race but would "stand by whoever Rahul Gandhi appoints CM. The mandate to appoint CM is with Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge and not with me."

● WHILE DIGVIJAYA'S 'REBUTTAL' OF MP CONGRESS CHIEF'S ALLEGATION AGAINST THE TRUST REIGNITES PARTY INFIGHTING, PATWARI HOLDS HIS GROUND, RAISING TRANSPARENCY ISSUES AND TARGETING BJP-RSS

At the centre of Digvijaya-Jitu Patwari flashpoint, what is Veer Bharat Nyas

Anand Mohan J
Bhopal, July 4

THE CONGRESS in Madhya Pradesh has accused the BJP-led government of handing over land worth Rs 500 crore in Ujjain to a trust, Veer Bharat Nyas, for Re 1, to allegedly benefit its trustee Shriram Tiwari, who is CM Mohan Yadav's cultural advisor.

Official records reviewed by *The Indian Express* show that Veer Bharat Nyas is a government trust under the state Culture Department, which began in 2013 with a working corpus of Rs 1,995 and no immovable property.

A review of state Cabinet minutes, Culture Department orders and the trust's own public communications shows that Veer Bharat Nyas is headquartered at Ravindra Bhawan in Bhopal, with a second facility on Ujjain's Kothi Mahal campus. The trust was constituted by the MP Culture Department in February 2013 after Cabinet's approval in 2012, and functions as an autonomous body under that department with the CM as its ex-officio Chairman.

Shriram Tiwari, who also heads the state-run Maharaja Vikramaditya Research Peeth in Ujjain, has been associated with

the trust since 2012, when he was named an ex-officio trustee by virtue of then heading the Directorate of Swaraj Sansthan under Culture Department, a post he still holds. He was given additional charge as the trust's trustee secretary in March 2024.

Among its ongoing activities, the trust runs heritage-themed quiz competitions alongside cultural and research programmes tied to the Vikramaditya Peeth. It is this trust, and Tiwari's dual role within it as the CM's cultural advisor, that MP Congress chief Jitu Patwari raked up at a June 24 press conference in Delhi, where he alleged that government land in Ujjain worth around Rs 500 crore had been allotted to the trust for a token sum of Re 1.

Ex-CM Digvijaya Singh later seemed to contradict Patwari, claiming his own documents "establish that the concerned land hasn't been given to any private trust". Singh's "rebuttal" triggered a war of words within the state Congress, reigniting factionalism.

Trust and museum

On July 5, 2011, the state General Administration Department issued an order, convening a ministerial committee

to examine a proposed cultural project called "Veer Bharat". The committee met on February 6, 2012, with then BJP ministers Babul Gaur, Laxmikant Sharma, Archana Chitnis, Ushankar Gupta and Ranjana Baghel in attendance, along with senior officials from the Housing and Environment and Culture departments.

As per minutes of that meeting, the principal secretary of the Housing and Environment Department briefed the committee on a study tour, telling members that "a team of officials had visited Akshardham and Virasat-e-Khalsa at Anandpur Sahib, Punjab, and inspected the work carried out there". The committee was informed that "the first phase of the Virasat-e-Khalsa project had recently been completed by Punjab government at a cost of Rs 40 crore over a period of 10 years..."

The committee arrived at several conclusions that would shape the project. It recorded that the state government had a large project with an estimated cost of around Rs 500 crore, for which a full-time establishment and dedicated leadership will be required, and recommended that "a separate trust should be constituted under



Cong leaders Jitu Patwari (left) and Digvijaya Singh. @BTPATWARI/X

the chairmanship of the Chief Minister, with the Culture Department functioning as its administrative department". It noted that "funds for the trust will primarily have to be provided from the government budget."

On land, the committee's assessment was that the project "would require a minimum of 100 acres", and that "in addition to the government land proposed by the Collector, Bhopal, suitable private land may also need to be acquired". It stated a preference that "it would be appropriate for the land to be located within the limits of the Bhopal Municipal Corporation", while leaving the final decision to the trust once formed.

On the character of the pro-

ject itself, the committee stated that "Veer Bharat should not be developed merely as a museum", recommending that "emphasis should be laid, as far as possible, on entertainment and interactive displays", and that components suited to PPP be identified. The minutes concluded with a decision to place these recommendations before the Council of Ministers.

The Cabinet, led by then CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan, approved the proposal on August 28, 2012. On February 14, 2013, the Department of Culture issued an order approving the creation of Veer Bharat Nyas as an autonomous trust under the department. According to that order, the trust was "conceived to plan, construct and operate

a proposed cultural complex dedicated to showcasing Indian history, culture and the country's glorious heritage." The order authorised the Directorate of Swaraj Sansthan director to complete the modalities of registering the trust, using a trust deed vetted and revised by the state Law Department.

Government records show that for more than a decade after its constitution, the trust functioned without a dedicated trustee secretary. On March 6, 2024 under the Mohan Yadav-led government, the Culture Department issued an order directing Shriram Tiwari, then director of the Maharaja Vikramaditya Research Peeth, as additional complex as the trustee secretary of Veer Bharat Nyas. The order specified Tiwari would continue to hold his existing post while simultaneously discharging the new responsibility.

Land allotment

The land allotted to the trust in Ujjain was around 100 acres. An order issued by Ujjain Collector on September 11, 2024 cites a communication issued by the General Administration Department on February 23, 2024, which directed that the foundation stone of a proposed "Veer

Bharat Parisar", described in the communication as "a temple dedicated to India's immortal personalities and illustrious heroes", be laid in Ujjain. That communication directed that government land on which the Kothi Mahal building and campus stand in Ujjain be allotted to the Culture Department for establishing a museum there.

The Collector's order records that Veer Bharat Nyas submitted an application seeking "allotment of Survey No. 63, measuring 1,486 hectares, for establishment of a museum under Veer Bharat Nyas".

The same order references an earlier, separate proposal for the same site. It notes that the Tourism Department had at one point proposed converting Kothi Mahal into a heritage hotel, but that the Town and Country Planning Department had objected, citing the Ujjain Development Plan, 2021, under which "a hotel is not an acceptable/permissible category of land use on land earmarked for public and semi-public purposes". The Collector's order states that on this basis, "allotment of the land for a heritage hotel does not appear appropriate".

Holding that there were "no objections" to Veer Bharat's

proposed project and citing approvals from the General Administration and Culture departments and the Divisional Commissioner, the Collector ordered that "the Kothi Mahal building and campus constructed on Survey No. 63... are hereby allotted/transferred to the Madhya Pradesh Culture Department for establishment of the Veer Bharat Museum".

Congress stance

Amid the Congress row following Digvijaya's remarks, Patwari maintained his position, saying that "It doesn't matter if this is a private or public trust. My concern is why is it that BJP and RSS members are part of such trusts. There are also transparency issues, as the trust doesn't reveal its functioning or other aspects in RTI applications".

Sriram Tiwari declined to comment on the row. A senior Veer Bharat Nyas official said the trust was funded by government. "Shriram Tiwari has headed the trust since its inception and has helped publish over 70 books when he was associated with it in 2012. The trust is run under Culture Department and has organised Mahabharat plays and other cultural programmes attended by CM," he said.

Modi greets Trump, people of US on 250th anniversary of independence

Express News Service
New Delhi, July 4

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Saturday greeted US President Donald Trump and the people of the United States on the 250th anniversary of America's independence and said the two countries' shared belief in democracy and the rule of law, and the limitless potential of their people make the friendship a "force for global good".

Modi said that India and the United States share more than a strategic partnership.

"On behalf of 1.4 billion Indians, I extend my warmest congratulations to President Trump and the people of the United States on the historic 250th anniversary of your independence," the Prime Minister said. "An incredible trip to Mt Rushmore with the Greatest President," Modi said in a post on X, sharing a photo of him on Trump onboard the Air Force One on Friday.

Trust decision on Champat Rai, Anil Mishra resignations tomorrow

Maulshree Seth
Ayodhya, July 4

IN A crucial meeting on Monday in the wake of alleged Ram temple donation theft, the Shri Ram Jambhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust will take a call on the resignations of its general secretary Champat Rai and member Anil Mishra besides deciding as to who will be in charge of the temple's day-to-day affairs until the STI submits its report.

The meeting will be presided over by Trust president

Mahant Nritya Gopal Das who returned to Ayodhya late Friday from Lucknow where he was admitted in a private hospital. "The meeting has been called around 3pm at Mani Ram Das Chhavan (Mahant Gopal Das-headed ashram), like in the past. The development was communicated verbally and no official statement has been issued yet," a Trust member told *The Indian Express*.

Sources said Rai is likely to skip the meeting.

Cong seeks SC-monitored probe into Ram temple 'theft'

Panaji: Congress on Saturday demanded that PM Narendra Modi order a Supreme Court-monitored probe into the alleged theft of donations and offerings at the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

Speaking at a press conference, party general secretary KC Venugopal said he had written to the PM seeking an independent probe as serious questions had been raised over the handling of donations at the temple. "I wrote a letter to the PM that there should be an impartial inquiry monitored by the Supreme Court to find out the real culprits of the temple theft," Venugopal said.

He referred to claims by a former Union home secretary that 1 kg of gold donated to the temple deity was not properly accounted for. "This is not an allegation by a common man. It has been made by a retired Union Home Secretary. What is happening in Ayodhya Ram temple is very painful for all of us," he said, questioning the PM's silence on the issue. PTI

'I ignore all traitors': Mamata slams rebels as key aide quits

Ravik Bhattacharya & Atri Mitra
Kolkata, July 4

THE EMBATTLED TMC chairperson and former West Bengal CM, Mamata Banerjee, Saturday called party rebels "traitors", asserting that she will continue to lead the TMC and that she prefers party workers over such leaders.

"I don't care. I ignore them all who are gone. To me workers are important than leaders. They are traitors. I ask such traitors if you have guts, go join BJP. Do you think I am dead? TMC workers are dead? Those who left had a lot of baggage and properties to save. We have TMC family to save," said Mamata on Facebook Live.

This came hours after her close aide and former minister, Chandrima Bhattacharya, resigned from all TMC posts, barely a month after she was appointed the Bengal unit chief after the party's split in the wake of its Assembly poll rout.

Soon after her resignation, Bhattacharya went to the state Assembly premises where she joined a meeting with TMC rebels including Lop Pitabrata Banerjee, Firhad Hakim and San-



TMC leader Mamata Banerjee in a video message via social media, Saturday.

dipan Saha, in what signalled her possible switch.

According to party sources, Bhattacharya was at Trinamool Bhawan in Kolkata Friday evening, and left minutes after rebel MLAs barged in to take possession of the office. They changed the locks at the office and hung a banner there declaring Arup Roy as TMC chairman instead of Mamata. Sources said Mamata was upset with Bhattacharya over her "lack of resistance".

Hitting back at the TMC rebels, Mamata said: "They are trying to get the party symbol. They will never get it. Remember, you contested polls

on a symbol which was signed by me. You contested on behalf of a party founded by me. Even if EC, which works for BJP, gives them the symbol, we will fight. People are with us."

Referring to Bhattacharya's exit, Mamata said, "She told me a few days back she will resign. Before that her son (Sourav Basu, an ex-councillor) joined hands with them (rebel group). I don't care," adding "It has just been two months (since the TMC's poll defeat). So little patience you have. You were MLAs and ministers for 15 years. You are rebels now. Why were you not rebels before the polls?"

Mamata also announced that she will henceforth oversee the Bengal party unit herself. "We will include Kunal Ghosh and Madan Mitra as two state general secretaries. I am the party chairperson. I will also look after the state," she said.

Regarding the TMC rebels' bid to "capture" the party headquarters, she said: "We paid the rent for the building, which was Rs 1 lakh per month. Some people are saying they signed on the agreement — but that person was asked by the party to sign it. We have it on rent till October 2027. But they (rebels)

came and locked it."

A defiant Mamata also said that her home at 30 B Harish Chatterjee Street will now be the TMC headquarters.

Attacking the Suwendu Adhikari-led BJP government over what she called "rashtriya santras (state terror)", Mamata alleged false cases were being slapped against TMC leaders and workers to arrest them.

Once a key face of Mamata's women brigade in Bengal, Bhattacharya has been her long-time associate who held multiple portfolios in the previous TMC government as MoS, including the ministries of Finance (industrial charge), Health, Family Welfare and Land Reforms. A prominent TMC leader, she also led its women wing.

After her resignation, Bhattacharya told reporters, "When one's loyalty is questioned, there is no way you can stay. There is no point in staying. There is no question of returning." Targeting Mamata, she said: "I was told that I allowed them (rebels) to capture the party office. After hearing all that I cannot stay. I consider myself a failure."

Welcoming her decision, Sandipan Saha said, "She is with us and we are the Opposition."

Shah to visit Kolkata for Syama Prasad's 125th birth anniversary

Kolkata: Union Home Minister Amit Shah will visit Kolkata Monday to attend programmes marking the 125th birth anniversary of Bharatiya Jana Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mookerjee, in one of the most significant political events in West Bengal since the formation of the new BJP government.

He is also likely to lay the foundation stone for a proposed 125-ft statue of Mookerjee in Jirat in Hooghly. PTI

Ghaziabad Development Authority
VIKAS PATH, GHAZIABAD
(ISO 9001 : 2015 & ISO 14001 : 2015 certified organization)

चार्ज 43/4/ई00/जीन-1/2026 दिनांक- 04/07/2026

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Ghaziabad Development Authority, Ghaziabad (GDA) intends to develop International Cricket Stadium.

Therefore, GDA invites experienced and reputed consultancy firms to submit proposal (Technical and Financial) for Selection of Project Management Consultant (PMC) for Comprehensive Design, EPC Bid Process Management, Construction Supervision and Project Management Consultancy Services for Development of an International Cricket Stadium at Motti (Raj Nagar Extension), Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh.

Details of RFP can be viewed from the website through <https://gdaphazabad.in> and can be downloaded from UP E-Tender Portal from date 06.07.2026

Proposal Submission Start Date	06.07.2026
Last date for submitting response	27.07.2026
Bid Opening Date	29.07.2026
Tender Fees	Rs. 13,098.00
Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)	INR 10,00,000/- (through RTGS) (to be paid using the link https://gdagzhp.procure247.com/TenderPay/xlogin .)
Pre-Bid meeting Time & Venue	-16.07.2026 -12.00 pm, Conference Hall, Ghaziabad Development Authority Vikas Path, Ghaziabad.

Further enquiry can be made from Executive Engineer (EE Zone-1) on mobile no 7290046139 during office hours (10:00 AM To 5:00 PM).

Chief Engineer

ई-मेल : helpingeda@gmail.com, Gda.Ghaziabad@gazb
हेल्पलाइन नं० 0120-4418384 वाटरफ़ॉन 9990988004, वेबसाइट : www.gdaphazabad.in
एक सुन्दर शहर हमारा संकल्प

This Monsoon, Let's come together for

Catch the Rain campaign

take pledge for water conservation

As we cannot live without water.

Tasks, we have to perform

Adopt Rain Water Harvesting system in every home, society and workplace.

Install Recharge Pit and Shaft at appropriate places and repair the unused borewells for enabling ground water recharge.

Restore Baolis, Wells and traditional Water Bodies and make them usable.

Enhance water retention capacity by removing silt from ponds and water reservoirs in your vicinity for maximum Monsoon water conservation.

Please ensure maximum tree plantation to enhance green coverage in water retention areas.

" Catch the Rain-Through this mission, we have to collectively save every drop of rainwater. My special appeal to save every single drop of rainwater collectively."

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY

Letter No. DRM/C/AGRA/PARKING/E-AUCTION/2026 Date: 03.07.2026

E-Auction Notice

On behalf of the President of India, The Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager-North Central Railway- Agra invites E-Auction as per categories given as under:-

Category: Parking | **E-Auction Catalogue No.:** PARKING-AGRA-AF

Asset Details: Agra Fort, Railway Station, Agra Fort (AF) Station Daresi Side- Circulating Area- Mixed (Two Wheelers and Four Wheelers) Parking.

E-Auction Start Date and Time: Date- 20.07.2026 Time- 12.00

E-Auction End Date and Time: Date- 20.07.2026 Time- 12.30

Note:- Prospective bidders are requested to visit E-Auction Leasing Module on IREPS website (www.ireps.gov.in). The Lot-wise details are available therein under the above mentioned Catalogue Number. 1529/26 FA

www.northcentralrailways.gov.in @CPRONCH www.northcentralrailways.gov.in

BANARAS LOCOMOTIVE WORKS, VARANASI-221004

E-TENDERS Date: 03.07.2026

E-Tenders are invited for & on behalf of the President of India for the supply of following items. Only e-tender will be accepted for which vendors must have Class III Digital Signature and registrations on IREPS. The details of tenders are in the following sequence - S.No., Tender No., (Due Date), PL No., Description and Quantity. 01. C2081340 16/07/2026, Con Rod Bearing Lower Part No. 16150181, 4098 Nos. 02. 10261328 14/07/2026, Con Rod Main Bearing Lower Part No. 16060330, 243 Nos. 03. 10261307 13/07/2026, Detector ASM Part No. 16360523, 474 Nos. 04. 10261452 09/07/2026, Development Tender for BOLT SPRING LK W/SHR ASM. PL No.: 162468912, 320 Nos. 05. 09250500C, 16/07/2026, CABLE Tie 762 X 7.6 PA, as per Specification No. CLW SPEC/CAT/IFR No. CLW/IES/0151F To PL No. 29618733, 235235 Nos. 06. 06261201, Open Tender, (22.07.2026), Horizontal Damper Secondary New, PL No. 17452850, 1916 Nos. 07. 04265034, 23/07/2026, Bogie frame arrangement (PL No. 08. 02261175, 10 Nos. 09. 02261175, 20/07/2026), Bolt Cylinder Grab Furg, PL No. 17230123, 2880 Nos. 09. 01261465, (11/08/2026), OIL PAN MACHINING ASSEMBLY, PL No. 16020534, 15 Nos. The details of above tenders are available on website www.indianrailways.gov.in and www.ireps.gov.in CORRIGENDUM NOTICE-10, Bid No.-E-12 Tender No.: 09265004, Supply, Retirement and Commissioning of BRUSHLESS DC CAB MOUNTED COMPACT HVAC COOLING CAPACITY 75 TRS OR DIESEL ELECTRIC LOCOMOTIVE in PL No. 18050116 Revision: 2 Description of Correction:- Existing Due Date: 01/07/2026 Revised Due Date: 07/07/2026 Note:- All other terms & conditions will remain unchanged for above tender.

Principal Chief Material Manager

PRO/BLWIS-14

f www.bilwvaranasi.com Website: www.bilw.indianrailways.gov.in

Gujarat flood fury: Two swept away; one dead in roof collapse

Kamal Salyed
Surat, July 4

HEAVY RAIN in the last 24 hours in Gujarat has led to three deaths — two tribal farm workers in Tapi district and one in Valsad district.

As per the police, two men identified as Kamlesh Chaudhary, 40, and Mitesh Chaudhary, 41, were swept away by the water current while they were engaged in cutting wood from a forest area in Tapi district's Valod taluk on Friday afternoon. Due to rain, water in the adjoining stream overflowed, drowning the men, all residents of Dodiya village.

The residents alerted the village head, who later alerted the Valsad police and district administration. The district disaster management officials, along with a Fire Department team, reached the spot. After a search operation of around four hours, the dead bodies of both tribal farm labourers were fished out.

Valod Sub-Inspector S R Solanki said, "We have registered an accidental death and have started a probe. The bodies were handed to their families on Saturday. The Valod Mamlatdar (Revenue Officer) also had reported the deaths to higher authorities in the district."

In the third case reported from Valsad district, an elderly man in Dhanni village in Dhamrampur taluk died after the roof of his hut collapsed and fell upon him on Friday night due to the downpour. The deceased has been identified as Dhakalhai Kesre, 69. His wife, Kakubhen, 57, was injured in the incident.

Low pressure system over Bay of Bengal brings promise of rain

Heavy rain likely in Maharashtra, Karnataka, MP

Express News Service
Bengaluru, July 4

THE SEASON'S first low pressure system, formed over the Bay of Bengal, will give a fillip to the monsoon and bring widespread rain over western and central India in the next 4 to 5 days.

"It (low pressure) is likely to move across north Odisha and north Chhattisgarh over the next 3 days," the Met department said on Saturday.

Kerala, coasts of Karnataka and Maharashtra, including Mumbai, Pune and nearby areas, have been receiving steady and heavy spells of rain since the past 2-3 days.

Low-lying areas in these cities witnessed flooding. Ghats of Madhya Pradesh and Konkan reported over 200mm of rain on Friday. Parts of Saurashtra on Friday received 570mm of rain in 24 hours, submerging the area.

In addition to the low pressure, an off-shore trough runs between south Gujarat and Karnataka. This is adding to the favourable monsoon conditions over the western coast.

The IMD further said that monsoonal trough is active and is located to the south of its normal position.

Free Telegram Channel https://t.me/+2RvD_RG9mJmZgl

AFTER DELAYED MONSOON, DELUGE

Mumbai floods: Roads shut, train, Metro services hit, red alert issued

Naynika Bose
Mumbai, July 4

AMIDA red alert and high tide, torrential rain crippled life in Mumbai on Saturday.

With over 200-mm rain lashing pockets of the city in a span of 10 hours, traffic came to a standstill and people were left wading through knee-deep waters after the Mogra nalla and its associated drains overflowed in the western suburbs on Saturday afternoon.

The inundated streets nudged the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) to enforce road closures across suburbs like Andheri, Vikhroli and Chembur.

In no respite from the downpour, heavy showers continued to sweep the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) on Saturday. The Met had issued a red alert for Saturday.

Data from the weather department and BMC's automatic weather stations showed between 8 am and 6 pm, Vikhroli area received 247-mm rain, Powai logged 240 mm, 220 mm in Chincholi and 208 mm in Andheri. In the neighbouring district of Navi Mumbai, over 180 mm rainfall was recorded between 8.30 am and 6.30 pm in Airoli, followed by 155 mm



The city received over 200 mm rain in 10 hours on Saturday. EXPRESS

rain in Digha and 143 mm rain in Kopardevi. According to IMD records, the Santacruz station recorded 164 mm rainfall between 8.30 am and 5.30 pm on Saturday.

Traffic takes a hit

Throwing life out of gear in the suburbs, Mogra nalla — a key drain flowing through Andheri east and west before finally emptying into the Arabian sea through the Versova creek — started overflowing around noon on Saturday. Alongside, drains associated with the Mogra drainage network also started to overflow. As the drain

breached the normal levels, its water spilled onto the streets along Andheri subway as well as the adjoining carriageways like SV road in Andheri and Link road among others. With continuous showers battering the region, the floodwater on the streets did not recede leaving the entire belt waterlogged for several hours. In what added to the civic woes were the 4.26-metre high tides at 2.50 pm.

Meanwhile, the central railway's main line services between Kalyan and CSMT were delayed by 20-25 minutes while trains along the Harbour line ran with a delay of 10-15 minutes.

The IMD has forecast no signs of slowdown in rain across the Mumbai Metropolitan region until Monday morning. Mumbai and its neighbouring districts will remain under a red alert through Sunday, after which rain is likely to subside.

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Railway affected

The unabated spells took a toll on railway and metro services during the day. According to officials, railway services were impeded along the Central and Western lines. Along the western line, rainwater flooded the railway track sections between Virar and Nalasopara delaying rail services by nearly 15-20 minutes.

Meanwhile, the central railway's main line services between Kalyan and CSMT were delayed by 20-25 minutes while trains along the Harbour line ran with a delay of 10-15 minutes.

The IMD has forecast no signs of slowdown in rain across the Mumbai Metropolitan region until Monday morning. Mumbai and its neighbouring districts will remain under a red alert through Sunday, after which rain is likely to subside.

• BRIEFLY



At the site of building collapse, Chandigarh, Saturday. KAMLESHWAR SINGH

CHANDIGARH

5 rescued, efforts underway to save 2 trapped as building collapses

POLICE SAID Saturday five people were rescued from a two-storey building that collapsed in Chandigarh's Industrial Area Phase 2. "Efforts are underway to rescue two people who are trapped under the debris," Sub-Divisional Police Officer (South) Gurjit Kaur told PTI over the phone. Officials said police, National Disaster Response Force, fire tenders and rescue teams rushed to the spot. The administration pressed heavy earth-moving machines into service and the area has been cordoned off. According to some locals, a portion of the building — used as a scrap godown — collapsed with a loud noise on Saturday. PTI

2 teens drown in check dam

TWO TEENAGERS drowned in a check dam in Jharkhand's Seraikeela-Kharswan district on Saturday, a police officer said. The incident happened when the boys, aged 14 and 15 years, had gone to the dam in RTH police station area for a bath in the afternoon, he said. While the body of one of the boys was fished out, search is underway to locate the other. The deceased was identified as Luv Kumar. PTI

Forest officer held for graft

THE ANTI-CORRUPTION Bureau on Saturday arrested a Range Forest Officer and a driver of the forest patrol team in Rajasthan's Jhalawar district for allegedly accepting a bribe of Rs 15,000 from a timber trader, officials said. Vikram Singh, an RFO with the forest patrol team under the Office of the Deputy Conservator of Forests, Jhalawar, and driver Firoz Khan were caught red-handed while allegedly accepting the bribe. PTI

'Missing' question papers force MP University to cancel PG exam

Anand Mohan J
Bhopal, July 4

THE RAJIV Gandhi Proudyogiki Vishwavidyalaya (RGPV) cancelled a Computer examination for second-year post-graduate students of its School of Biotechnology on Friday, after question papers were allegedly reported missing from the examination centre.

The exam was called off shortly before it was due to begin at 11 am, and has been put off until further notice.

University authorities have alleged that nine sealed packets containing the question papers were stolen during the intervening night of Thursday.

"Someone broke in through a window and stole the sealed envelopes before the exam began. The administration discovered the theft in the morning," said a police officer.

An FIR has been registered with the Gandhinagar Police Station and a probe is underway.

Yesterday morning, I was intimidated about missing papers from the examination centre. I rushed to the spot. I noticed a broken window and some scattered items. I instructed a few faculty members to lodge an FIR," said Vice-Chancellor Alok Sharma.

Following the incident, Vice-Chancellor Sharma issued separate show-cause notices to School of Biotechnology director, Chhanna Tiwari and the post-graduate examination controller, directing them to submit written explanations in three days.

"As Controller of Examinations, it is expected of you to ensure the confidentiality and security of question papers. Due to this incident, serious doubts have been raised about the management of university examinations. Therefore, you are directed to mandatorily submit your written clarification within three days of receiving this letter," stated one of the notices.

Sharma alleged the theft was part of a larger attempt to tarnish the university's reputation.

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"As Controller of Examinations, it is expected of you to ensure the confidentiality and security of question papers. Due to this incident, serious doubts have been raised about the management of university examinations. Therefore, you are directed to mandatorily submit your written clarification within three days of receiving this letter," stated one of the notices.

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Draft emission cut targets issued for iron, steel sector

Nikhil Ganekar
New Delhi, July 4

THE CENTRE has once again issued a draft notification to set greenhouse gas emission intensity (GEI) targets for the intensive iron and steel sector and to align them under India's carbon credit trading system (CCTS).

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) issued the draft on June 26 and made it public on July 2. It has set emission reduction targets for 255 industrial units, including the sector's giants such as JSW Steel, Tata, SAIL (Steel Authority of India), and ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel, among others.

Draft targets for the iron and steel sector were already issued on June 23, 2025, along with aluminium (second aluminium), petroleum refinery, petrochemical and textile sectors. While final targets for other sectors were notified in January 2026, the Environment Ministry has issued a revised draft for iron and steel sector with marginal changes to targets, but without any explanation for the draft.

The draft notification lists 2023-24 as the year for baseline product output and baseline emission intensity, and 2026-27 as the compliance year target for individual steel plants, sponge iron units and ferro-alloy manufacturers. A 60-day window has

E. EXPLAINED

Global commitment on climate action

INDIA'S GLOBAL commitments on climate action include reducing emissions intensity of its GDP — emissions behind economic output — making heavy industry manufacturing cleaner and more efficient. The government has incentivised emissions reduction through a carbon credit scheme. As part of this initiative, it has set sectoral targets for more polluting industries. If industries achieve those targets, they can earn credits, or buy them from others.

been given to submit objections and suggestions on the draft.

The draft defined targets in terms of tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e), which is used to measure the impact of all greenhouse gases and not just CO₂, based on their warming potential. The draft has set GEI targets for 2026-27, while 2025-26 column has been left blank.

GEI is the amount of greenhouse gases (GHG) emitted per unit of product output, and as the quantum of gases released while producing cement. The

CCTS was launched in 2023 to create a framework that incentivises emission reduction through a market-based mechanism and to help achieve India's climate action goals.

The Centre has already finalised emission reduction targets for eight sectors — aluminium, cement, chlor-alkali, pulp and paper, secondary aluminium, petroleum refinery, petrochemical and textile.

In March, India revised its nationally determined contributions commitments on climate action under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement. This included a revision of target to reduce emissions intensity of Gross Domestic Product, which was set at 47% by 2035, compared to 2005 levels.

India has committed to reduce the emissions intensity of its gross domestic product — the amount of energy used per unit of GDP — to 47% by 2035 compared to 2005 levels as part of its domestic commitments under the agreement. The targets set in previous rounds covered 490 high-emission industrial units.

The CCTS, notified in 2023, created an overarching framework for the Indian carbon market. The objective was to slash or avoid GHG emissions from sectors whose processes emit more pollutants and whose operations are hard to decarbonise.

CBI arrests ex-CFO of Reliance Capital in bank fraud case

5 others arrested earlier in Reliance ADA Group cases

Express News Service
Mumbai, July 4

THE CENTRAL Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested Reliance Capital's former chief financial officer (CFO) Amit Bapna in connection with the investigation into the Reliance ADA Group cases.

Bapna, who served as the CFO of Reliance Capital Limited from August 2014 to December 2019, was one of the key decision-makers responsible for managing the company's financial affairs. The CBI has so far arrested six accused, including Bapna, in the bank fraud cases linked to Reliance ADA Group.

Bapna has been lodged in Tihar Central Jail since April this year after being arrested by the ED in connection with a bank loan fraud and money laundering case linked to Reliance Home Finance Limited (RHL) and Reliance Commercial Finance Limited (RCFL).

The CBI obtained Bapna's production warrant from a Mumbai court and secured his custody from the Tihar Jail. He

was produced before the CBI Special Court in Mumbai on Saturday and remanded to the agency's custody for four days.

Bapna has been accused of facilitating and approving loans to intermediary and conduit companies despite being aware that such lending was against the RBI guidelines and the sanction conditions governing borrowings from public sector banks.

The funds borrowed by RCFL were allegedly diverted through intermediary entities to various Reliance ADA Group companies, including Reliance Capital Ltd, Reliance Infrastructure Ltd and Reliance Power Ltd, thereby causing wrongful loss to the lending banks and corresponding wrongful gain to the accused persons and related entities, said a release issued by CBI. The CBI has registered seven FIRs against Reliance Communications Limited (RCOM), RHL, RCFL and Reliance Telecom Limited (RTL) on the basis of complaints received from various public sector banks and LIC.

The agency's probe into the cases is being monitored by the Supreme Court. The first charge sheet in the RCOM case was filed on May 29 against 16 accused, including five senior executives of RCOM and 10 bank officials.

• ESSEL INFRAPROJECTS INSOLVENCY PROCEEDINGS IN CORPORATE GUARANTOR CASE

AI-hallucinated judgments: Why Supreme Court set aside a tribunal order

National Company Law Tribunal relied upon six AI-generated citations in ruling

Amaal Sheikh
New Delhi, July 4

SIX AI-HALLUCINATED judgments formed the basis for the Supreme Court's striking down of an order passed by the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) on Thursday.

Three of the cited judgments did not exist, while the remaining three either did not contain the propositions attributed to them or did not correspond to the context they were cited for.

For instance, the NCLT order cited a 2019 judgment ICICI Bank Ltd v Urban Infrastructure

Real Estate Ltd., which did not exist. Along with it, the 2021 case V S Dempo & Co Ltd v Reliance Communications Ltd and the 2022 case Sarbjit Singh v Union Bank of India were also found to be non-existent.

Two of the judgments, Everest Kanto Cylinders Ltd v Union of India (2015) and Canara Bank v N G Subbaraya Setty (2018), were genuine, but the passages quoted from them are not found in the judgments themselves.

The sixth judgment, State Bank of India v M/S Shree Ram Urban Infrastructure Ltd, 2020 SCC OnLine SC 341, corre-

sponded to a different case, namely M Subramaniam v S. Janaki, and the quoted passage does not appear there either.

The bench of Justices P Narasimha and Alok Aradhya observed on July 2 that while the use of AI judgments could be "gratifying, even inspiring," AI may eventually "infiltrate our intellectual work ethic and before long, renders dependent on its vast capabilities."

They said that "for those in the province of adjudication and determination of disputes, this by-product of AI, ie, the production of fake, non-existent, and hallucinated material, and its utilisation as precedents in law, is like the release of methyl isocyanate in the province of law; it is just: invisible, insidious, and

catastrophic by the time anyone notices. It not only contaminates but takes away the very lifeblood of judicial determination."

Holding that a decision built on fabricated case law "is no decision at all," the court said such orders must be set aside even if "an iota of fake or hallucinated material enters the decision-making process."

The AI judgments

Six citations were relied upon by the NCLT while rejecting objections raised by Essel Infra Projects Ltd against insolvency proceedings initiated against it as a corporate guarantor.

One of Essel's arguments was that a renewal-cum-reduction letter issued by Jammu and Kashmir Bank in 2017 renewed

the loan on revised terms without mentioning the corporate guarantee, indicating that the guarantee had been relinquished. Rejecting this argument, the NCLT observed that "the said letter itself... states that all existing terms and conditions remain unchanged" and that the guarantee "remains valid and binding despite not being explicitly referenced in the renewal letter." For this reasoning, it relied on State Bank of India v. M/S Shree Ram Urban Infrastructure Ltd., quoting it as "The guarantor is bound by terms of guarantee as long as underlying debt is valid and enforceable."

Essel had also argued the bank's subsequent decision to obtain a fresh guarantee from another group undermined its

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own position that original guarantee remained operative.

The NCLT relied on Everest Kanto Cylinders Ltd v Union of India, quoting it as holding that a corporate guarantee "does not invalidate the original guarantee when additional security is sought" and that "the primary obligation secured by the guarantee remains enforceable."

Relying on this proposition, the NCLT held that "seeking additional guarantee does not invalidate the original Corporate Guarantee provided by the Corporate Debtor."

Essel's principal defence was that its liabilities, including the corporate guarantee, had shifted pursuant to a Bombay High Court-approved demerger and amalgamation in 2014. Reject-

ing this, NCLT relied on ICICI Bank Ltd v Urban Infrastructure Real Estate Ltd, quoting it as "a general corporate guarantee remains enforceable even if there is a restructuring of corporate structure, provided the underlying debt is not discharged."

The tribunal consequently held that the guarantee "will remain unaffected by the demerger & amalgamation." No such judgment exists.

Essel further argued that the bank could not proceed against it while insolvency proceedings were already underway against the principal borrower and Pan India Infra Projects Pvt Ltd, the entity to which the mortgaged property had eventually passed under the restructuring exercise.

NCLT relied on Canara Bank

v N G Subbaraya Setty, quoting it as saying that "the rights of secured creditors over mortgaged or secured properties are not extinguished merely due to the transfer of such properties to another entity via amalgamation or restructuring."

Two other citations were relied upon to answer procedural objections. None of the six citations had been placed before the tribunal by either side. Jammu and Kashmir Bank, the financial creditor in the case, told the Supreme Court. The first charge sheet in the RCOM case was filed on May 29 against 16 accused, including five senior executives of RCOM and 10 bank officials.

FULL REPORT ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Classifieds

PERSONAL

I, SIDHARTI KUKREJA, S/O Dharmendra Kukreja, 17/59-B, GF, Tikar Nagar, Delhi-110008 have changed my name to SIDHARTI KUKREJA. 007104894-1

I, MANISH GUPTA S/O RAJ KISHOR GUPTA R/O-3009-11, BAHADUR GARH ROAD, BANGWAN (GATE), SADAR BAZAR, DELHI-06, have changed the name of my minor son SHAURYA GUPTA and shall thereafter be known as SHAURYA GARG. 0040864128-2

I, Hitherto known as Rajesh Kumar Gadia, S/o Om Prakash Gadia, R/O-A-19, 3rd Floor, Near Deepali Chowk, Panchsara, Karawal-Vihar, North-West Delhi, Delhi-110034, have changed my name and shall thereafter be known as Rajesh Gadia. 0040864274-2

I, RENU ALIAS RENU KAMRA ALIAS RENU ARORA, S/O CHHABIL DAS W/O PARVEEN KUMAR R/O 34/26 1ST FLOOR, NEAR ANAND NURSING HOME, PATEL NAGAR WEST, CENTRAL DELHI, DELHI-110008 have changed my name to RENU ARORA for all purposes. 007104850-1

I, MITTAL GAURAV KUMAR, S/O JAYANTI PRASAD MITTAL, R/O-177, NIT-KHAND-1, INDIRAPURAM, RAJIBABAD GHATIABAD, UTTAR PRADESH-201010, have changed my name to GAURAV KUMAR MITTAL. 0040864281-9

I, Dharmender, S/o Satish Kumar, R/O-221 Pocket-2 Paschim Punah, Vihar Delhi-110063 have changed my name to Dharmendra Permanently. 0040864200-1

I, RAJEEV KUMAR, S/O SOHAN LAL DUDEJA, R/O WZ-22 Phase-1, OM KHAR, UTTAMNAGAR, NEW DELHI-110059 have changed my name to RAJIV DUDEJA. 0040864272-3

I, Mohd Ashraf S/o Mo Moshir R/O 08, Bhudh Vihar, Noida, GB Nagar, have changed my name to Mo. Ashraf. 0040864281-2

I, Ekta Anand alias Dolly Anand D/o Gurcharan Lal Bhalla and W/o Chetan Anand R/O 47/1, 4th Floor, Near By, Balaji Hospital, Paschim Vihar, Jawala West, Delhi-110063, have changed my name to Dolly Anand. 007104856-1

I, Vipin kalia S/o Sh. Brijmohan kalia R/O 26/38, Kanna Sec-2, Vaishali Ghaziabad, UP-201010, have a correction in name spelling of my minor daughter from Garna kalia to Garseema Kalia for all purposes. Both name belongs to one and same person. 007104899-1

I, Mohammad Yasin, S/o Mohammad Ibrahim, No.301, Jafarabad, Delhi-110053 have changed my name, from Yasin to Mohd Yaseen, for all purposes. 0040864272-3

I, Asif, S/o Abdul Rashid, R/O C-116, 2nd Floor, Gal N0-9, Wazirabad Village, North Delhi, Delhi 110084, have changed my name to Mohd Asif. 007104591-1

I, Sarbjit Kaur W/o Gurjit Singh Saathi, R/O-120, SF Rajouri Garden, Delhi-110027 have changed my name to Sarbjit Kaur permanently. 0040864281-1

I, Mohammed Zaryab Rasool, R/O-221, Gali No-6, Near-Firdous Masjid, J. Extension, Gal N-9, Karim Nagar, Delhi-110052, inform that Zaryab Rasool and Mohammed Zaryab Rasool, both names are same person. 0040864272-5

I, Sanjeev Kumar, S/o Surender Kumar, R/O B-640, Avantika, Sector-1, Rohini, Delhi-110085, have changed my name to Sanjeev Kapoor for all Purposes. 0040864281-4

I, Keith Ravindra Egbert S/O Ivan Naurattan Egbert R/O Flat No. 901, Tower-7, Utech Horizons Bhorini Chakrasperum Sector P-2, Greater Noida, GB Nagar U.P. 201310 have declared that the both names KEITH RAVINDRA EGBERT AND RAVI EGBERT are one and the same person. 007104857-1

I, N-14845010M Unit 528 AC BN, Fakkesraya Subhaham, R/O-164 Nekar Street Kurnakar, District-Dharwad Karnataka-581212, in my previous records name of my spouse has been wrongly mentioned as Parvati B instead of Parvathi Boothamath vide affidavit dated 29-06-2026 before public notary Kupwara. 0020516089-1

I, A, GIRIJA DEVI MOTHER OF REGHUNATH S REPADAM OF GIRJANIVAS, PAVIZHAKUNNU, MANALI, PADAM, VELLAS-VANDAZHY, S/O RAJAGOPALLUR, THESSIL-ARATHUR, DISTT. PALAKKAD, KERALA 678605, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME FROM GIRIJA DEVI TO GIRIJA DEVI A, VIDE-AFFIDAVIT DATED 04-JUL-2026. 0040864274-2

I, Firdos Raho W/o Mohammad Tanvir Raho R/O-C-451, Sector Alpha Greater Noida, U.P. I have changed my name from Firdos Raho to Firdos Tanweer for all future purposes. 007104893-1

I, Lal Bahadur Rana S/o Raj Singh R/O WZ-42-80, Square Plot, Tikar Nagar, Delhi-110008, have changed my name to Lal Bahadur for all Purposes. 007104884-1

I, RAJEEV KUMAR SALLUJA, S/O BALBIR KUMAR SALLU R/O 29/18-A-FIRST FLOOR VIKRAM VIHAR LAJPAT NAGAR-4, DELHI-110024 has changed my name to RAJEEV SALLUJA. 0040864272-4

I, RAHUL S/O DHARAM PAL SINGH, R/O-7, SANGAM APARTMENT, POCKET-24, SECTOR-24, ROHINI, DELHI-110085, have changed my name to RAHUL CHAUDHARY. 0040864281-6

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I, Gurjit Singh S/o Mahinder Singh Saathi R/O-120, SF Rajouri Garden, Delhi-110027 have changed my name to Gurjit Singh Saathi permanently. 0040864281-12

I, Iqhar S/o Nishar Ahmed R/o Mohla Kot, Muradnagar, Ghaziabad, have changed my name to Iqhar. 0071045896-1

I, Aditi Aggarwal, W/o Mr. Rishabh Goyal R/O House No. 17458, Sector-48, Gurgaon, Haryana-122031, have changed my name from Aditi Aggarwal To Aditi Goyal, for all future purposes. 0040864272-6

I, SAYAM S/O JAIPAL R/O 80A/12-13 SIKKA COLONY SONIPAT HARYANA-131001 have CHANGED MY NAME TO SAYAM NANGALIA. 0040864281-5

I, Kamlesh Chhabra W/o Vinod Chhabra R/O C-366B, Lawrence Road, Keshav Puram, Delhi have changed my name to Kamlesh Kumar for all purposes. 0071045879-1

I, hitherto known as SUNITA, daughter of, LATE SH. C.R. KHLIWANI, resident of H N 50 Kohat Enclave, Plot No. 156, New Delhi-110034, after-marriage, have changed my name and shall thereafter be known as ARTI MOTWANI wife of SH. BHAGWAN DAS, residing at, 495/496, Double-Storey, New Rajinder-Nagar, Delhi-110060. 0040864281-18

I, LENKA RAMAKRUSHNA, FATHER OF LENKA MANJANNA KUMAR, ADDRESS: PENASAMPILLAGE, I/GANTYADA (MANDANALAM), VIJAYANAGARAM, DISTT. ANDHRA PRADESH (STATE), PIN-535215, HAVE CHANGED MY NAME FROM LENKA RAMAKRUSHNA TO LENKA RAMAKRISHNA VIA AFFIDAVIT, DATE-04-JULY-2026. 0040864274-8

I, BINA VERMA alias BEENA VERMA W/O PREM SUSH VARMAR/O 69/3686, REGHAPURAM KAROL BAGH NEW DELHI-110008 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO BINA VERMA DEVIL FOR ALL PURPOSES. 0071045798-1

I, Sarng Rana W/O Lal Bahadur R/O WZ-42-80 Yards, Tikar Nagar, Tikar Nagar, West Delhi-110018, have changed my name to Sarng Bala for all purposes. 0071045887-1

I, W/Romildevi W/o Mayanglal Singh Rajput Singh, No. 151387191, Rank-Havildar, Record Office R/O, ARTY NASHIK, a permanent resident of Umr Mukha Lekai P.O. L.Pong, P.S. Irling, District-Imphal East, Manipur, do hereby declare that my correct name is Waikhom Romildevi, and hence will be known for all future purposes. 0040864202-1

I, SHAHEENA BANO, W/o No. 9108117W, SEF Mushtaq Ahmed R/O P/O-Lowang, Tab-Nabi, Distt. Kathua, J&K-184201 have changed my DPO from 05-12-1988 to 05-12-1992, for all future purposes vide Public Notice Affidavit dt-05-06-2026. 0040864272-10

I, PUSHPA YADAV W/o Ramesh Kumar R/O-6/104-01, Paschim Vihar New Delhi-110087, have changed my name to PUSHPA DEVIL for all purposes. 0040864281-7

I, YASMIN, W/o AYAZ AHMED R/O A-69/5-2, 3rd Floor, Shamir Garden, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, UP-201005, have changed my name to SHAGUNTA YASMIN permanently, for all future purposes. 0040864272-1

I, SUNITA SHARMA W/O SUBODH SHARMA R/O G-5/145, JANTA ENCLAVE, PREM NAGAR-3, KHAROLI S/O SULEIMAN NAGARLO, KIRARI SULEIMAN NAGAR, S/O SULTANPUR C BLOCK, DISTT. NORTH WEST DELHI, DELHI-110088 have changed my name to SUNITA for all purposes. 0071048589-1

LOST & FOUND

LOST original title documents, including the complete chain of Sales Deeds and other related ownership documents, pertaining to: Property No. 9/46, Geeta Colony, Delhi-110031, standing in the name of Mr. Raj Kumar Gulyani, S/o Late Shri Har Chaudhary, and Shop No. 436, Jheel Khurana, Delhi-110051, standing jointly in the names of Mr. Raj Kumar Gulyani, S/o Late Shri Har Chaudhary, and Mrs. Neelam Gulyani as co-owners. NCR/Complaint regarding the loss of the said documents has already been filed with NCR/D-10. 70019136/2026 dated 18.06.2026 at PS Geeta Colony ePolice station. Finder please contact on 9810070765. 0071045867-1

Lost Property-Paper of 11-A, Radhey, Plot-Delhi-51, Vide DCO No. 7435, Volume 2813, Book No. 1, Pages 235 to 237 Dated 27-11-1953 SF, Delhi, Shuddhi Khanna, D/o Surjeet Manchanda, 92311299411. 0040864274-10

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J&K govt withdraws school library books 'glorifying' separatists, suspends 8 officials

Books called Maqbool Bhat a 'martyr', portrayed separatists as 'great personalities'

Arun Sharma
Jammu, July 4

THE JAMMU & Kashmir government Saturday withdrew two books from its school libraries on the grounds that they contained "highly inappropriate content" on separatism. Eight officials from the school department have been suspended, and one contractual employee terminated, after the row broke out.

The withdrawn books - 'Personalities and Legends of J&K' by Hilal Ahmed and Santosh Meena, and 'Great Personalities of Jammu and Kashmir' by Dr Sushant Giri - were published by Oberoi Book Service, Jammu, and Anurag Prakashan, Delhi, and supplied to school libraries as part of Samagra Shiksha for higher secondary classes.

According to an order by Ram Niwas Sharma, Commissioner/Secretary, School Education Department, the books contained references with the "potential to create law-and-order issues", and their selection reflected "serious negligence, dereliction of duty and lack of due diligence".

The order also blacklisted the authors and their publishing houses from publishing any other material in the Union Territory. While 123 copies of the first book were supplied to school libraries in Jammu, Ramban and Udhampur districts, 128 copies of the second were supplied in Jammu and Baramulla districts.

The suspended officials are Fazil Imran Saddiqui, Coordinator Library, Samagra Shiksha; Gurjeet Singh, Assistant Coordinator, Sanjeev Sharma, Principal, Government Secondary School, Kore Panu in Kathua; Shazia Kouser, Academic Officer, SCERT, Jammu; Imtiyaz Ahmad Mir, Lecturer, Boys Higher Secondary School, Wathora, Budgam; Niranjan Sharma, Lecturer, GHSS, Badhat in Kishtwar; Renu Mengi, Lecturer, DIET,

Jammu; and Rajmohini, Lecturer, GHSS, Poonch. During suspension, these officials will remain attached with the Administrative Department (School Education Department), the order said.

The government has also set up a high-level inquiry headed by Financial Commissioner and Additional Chief Secretary Ashwani Kumar, who has 30 days to submit a report.

The contractual employee whose services were terminated was Sheikh Iqbal Ahmad, a computer assistant, assisting the coordinator, library.

Gurjeet Singh, one of the suspended officials, denied having anything to do with the books, saying he was "merely a teacher". "I was asked by the authorities to assist the library coordinator by getting him material like stationary, I know nothing about the contents of the book," he said.

Meanwhile, Oberoi Book Service, Jammu, said "Personalities and Legends of Jammu and Kashmir" was already published by a Delhi-based publication house in 2017. Its proprietor too said he was "un-

aware of the contents of the book". "We approached the publishers to allow us to print it under our name," proprietor Inder Pal Singh told The Indian Express. "The publishing house reprinted copies of the book under our name in 2014 and sent those to us for Samagra Shiksha."

One of the books purportedly calls Maqbool Bhat, co-founder of the separatist Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front who was hanged in Tihar Jail on two murder charges, "shaheed" (martyr), adding that "the early years of Maqbool Bhat's life, like thousands of other Kashmiri children were shaped by the harsh living conditions that characterised the life of peasants at this juncture of Kashmir history. It was the feudal system in Maharaja's Kashmir that forced Maqbool Bhat to participate in his life-long struggle against suppression, occupation and for equality, freedom and social justice". It further purportedly describes his ex-filtration to Pakistan as "the journey on that road to great sacrifice".

CBI arrests military services engineer in bribery case

Express News Service
Shimla, July 4

THE CBI has arrested KK Soni, Assistant Garrison Engineer with the Military Engineering Services (MES) in Manali, Himachal Pradesh, on Saturday for allegedly demanding and accepting a bribe of Rs 93,000 from a contractor's representative for clearing pending bills.

According to the CBI, a case was registered on July 3 based on a complaint filed by a supervisor who works with a contractor's firm. The complainant alleged that Soni had demanded Rs 93,000 to clear the firm's bills.

While the supervisor allegedly paid Soni Rs 40,000, he said that he was asked to bring the remaining Rs 53,000 on Saturday, according to the complaint. On July 4, the CBI laid a trap and caught the accused red-handed.

The agency also recovered Rs 40,000 from the accused's residence in the MES area of Manali. Officials said the search operation is on, and added that Rs 10 lakh in unaccounted cash was recovered from the premises.

The accused will be produced before the court on July 5. Further probe is on, police said.

Integrated Parachute tests for Gaganyaan a success: ISRO

Express News Service
Bengaluru, July 4

THE INDIAN Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Friday successfully conducted Integrated Parachute tests required to validate deceleration systems, which will be used in the Gaganyaan's Crew Module splashdown at sea. Crew Module is a special, pressurised space vehicle which houses the astronauts during take-off, space flights and splashdowns.

ISRO Saturday said it was developing a solid motor-based Sub-Orbital Launch Vehicle for Experiments (SOLIVE).

This is a special test rocket that can perform numerous experiments.

Free Whatsapp Channel: <https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029Van2VbR6GJOKH6o8Df>



The test involved deployment of 10 parachutes to facilitate the deceleration of the Crew Module before splashdown.

Free Telegram Channel: https://t.me/+2RDV_RGf9nMjMz1

periments under various test conditions. During such tests, the Crew Module is separated from the vehicle at an altitude of 10 to 17 km.

ISRO added that the tests performed on July 3 at Sri-

harikota centre saw the deployment of about 10 parachutes, which are primarily responsible for reducing the velocity of the Crew Module as it descends and splashes down into the sea.

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Gangster Dhillon held in Spain; police to seek extradition in cashier murder case

Express News Service
Chandigarh, July 4

NOTORIOUS GANGSTER Gurpreet Singh, alias Goldy Dhillon, was arrested in Spain, police confirmed on Saturday. Dhillon is accused in the NIA-investigated Sector 5 firing case in Chandigarh, and was also suspected to be the key conspirator in the recent killing of a pharmacy cashier here. Police are also probing his alleged role in an extortion racket targeting businessmen in Chandigarh.

Chandigarh police will seek his extradition for questioning in the June 13 murder of Sector 11 chemist shop cashier Janki Das. Officials confirmed that the NIA had already secured a Red Corner Notice against Dhillon in the 2024 Sector 5 firing case.

"We will initiate the process for his extradition in the Sector 11 murder case for questioning," the SSP Kanwardeep Kaur said.

Police believe the conspiracy to kill Das, 45, a cashier at Shri Kumar Medics in Sector 11, was orchestrated from abroad through Dhillon's network operating in India. Two armed men shot Das inside the chemist shop on June 13. He later died at the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER).

Hours after the murder, a so-



Goldy Dhillon, FILE

cial media account identifying itself as the 'Goldy Dhillon Group' claimed responsibility for the killing and threatened persons allegedly linked to gangster Lawrence Bishnoi. Dhillon's name was also mentioned in audio clips attributed to Dhillon, later surfaced online, though police said forensic verification is part of the ongoing investigation.

Sources said Dhillon was earlier associated with networks linked to gangsters Lawrence Bishnoi and Goldy Bhat before establishing his own module.

Within a week of the murder, Chandigarh police arrested multiple alleged members of Dhillon's network. The two alleged shooters, Sunny Mehra and Aryan Sharma, sustained bullet injuries during a police encounter while allegedly attempting to escape custody.

'Regret not being with my closest friend that day': Manipur CM at MLA Valte's funeral

Sukrita Baruah & Jimmy Leivon
Guwahati, July 4

ATTENDING the final rites on Saturday of Zomi MLA Yungzag Valte who died in February this year after suffering grievous injuries in a 2023 mob attack in Imphal, CM Yumnam Khemchand Singh regretted not being there with "one of his closest friends", and said that he "often thinks" his presence would have averted the unfortunate incident.

Singh arrived in Churachandpur in a helicopter, the first chief ministerial visit to the Kuki-Zo majority area since ethnic violence erupted between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities in May 2023. He then travelled to the family home of Valte, a three-time MLA from Thanlon and one of the 10 Kuki-Zomi MLAs, despite earlier statements by some Kuki-Zo groups like the Kuki Inpi Manipur and Kuki Students Organisation opposing the move.

Valte was a "dear friend" of

A Cold War-era Seychelles mission



VAPPALA BALACHANDRAN

IN APRIL 1986, Seychelles President France-Albert Rene made a special request to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi during his visit to New Delhi: Depute a small team of Indian security officials to discreetly assess the existing security and police systems in his country.

This arose because of his doubts about his own security setup and since the entire Indian Ocean Islands were caught in the whirlpool of Cold War polemics. Consequently, this writer was chosen to lead a two-member team in 1987. The other member was senior Intelligence Bureau (IB) official.

Rene, a "leftist", had ousted James Mancham, the first "right-wing" president, from power in 1977, one year after the country's independence. Since then, Mancham was openly in cohorts with the Western and South African intelligence agencies to return to power through counter coup or elections.

Although Rene personally knew many foreign leaders like French President Francois Mitterrand or Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere, there were reasons why he turned to India to do this sensitive work. He did not want to be caught in the Cold War crossfire. Also, France, which had guided Seychelles' security for long, had turned against it for geopolitical reasons, forcing Rene to Free Telegram Channel https://t.me/12rDv_RG0nmljMz1

temporarily turn to Tanzania and the Soviet Union to save his government.

Further, the May 13, 1978, coup in the Comoros orchestrated by a French mercenary named Bob Denard had successfully overthrown the leftist President Alioufou and had brought back former president Ahmed Abdallah, who was ousted in 1975. Ahmed Abdallah had then promptly restored his close ties with France and other Western countries.

Meanwhile, Mancham, on May 24, 1983, told *The Observer* in London that he had accepted GBP 12,000 from MI-6 for his campaign. He admitted he had signed two agreements with the CIA, well before the Seychelles got independence in 1976, through which the agency would set up an intelligence system to monitor his opponents and create a para-military unit in the Seychelles. The other agreement was to subsidise his weekly *Seychelles News* through the US embassy in Nairobi.

More light was thrown on Rene's predicament by a CIA assessment document ("The Mellowing of President Rene", October 1983), declassified only in 2008. In April 1979, he had to hurriedly request the Soviet Union to send warships to show support during a suspected coup in the Seychelles. In November that year, the Soviet Union was again asked to send warships against a suspected French plot to oust him. During that period, Rene even arrested a French police adviser then working with him and deported him to France. *The New York Times* (December 23, 1979) identified him as Jacques Chevillard.

The CIA paper also said that Rene detained a French military crew working in a Seychellois patrol boat "Topaz". The paper

We were first taken to the President's secretary, who led us to Rene's modest office, where he gave us a briefing on what he was looking for. He frankly told us he could not trust his own security set-up due to 'colour' divisions.

said Rene's suspicions against the French involvement "were not totally groundless according to US Embassy reporting".

These destabilising efforts reached a nadir on November 25, 1981, when 43 South Africa-supported mercenaries called "The Froth Blowers" led by British-Irish Colonel Thomas "Mad" Mike Hoare arrived at Mahe, Seychelles International Airport through Air Swaziland F-28 (Fokker) chartered aircraft. Their original idea was to enter the country like tourists and incite Rene's opponents to rise in revolt. This time India was unwittingly involved in this attempted coup.

Although Hoare's boys were dressed as tourists, a chance examination by a local customs official led to the discovery of AK-47 rifles in their baggage. Knowing that their game was up, the mercenaries took 70 airport staff hostage. They also took control of the airport control tower.

At that time a Boeing 707 Air India flight 224 led by Captain Umesh Saxena from Salisbury (now Harare), which was going to Bombay with 64 passengers on board, was arriving at the Mahe airport for a scheduled refuelling. While Hoare's mercenaries allowed it to land, the local security forces assisted by Tanzanian soldiers did not want it to come down. A fire fight ensued which damaged the mercenary plane F-28 (Fokker).

Hoare's mercenaries realised they could escape only through the AI flight and tried to force Captain Saxena to take them to Zimbabwe. They finally agreed to travel to Durban due to fuel shortage. At Durban, the mercenaries were arrested and later prosecuted.

In this background, we landed early in 1987 at the Mahe international airport near

their capital city Victoria. We expected the airport and capital city to be ringed by uniformed troops in view of the earlier coup attempts. Surprisingly, we did not notice any unusual police or armed forces deployment there or on our way to the hotel.

The next morning, when we were taken to the presidential palace to meet President Rene, we were again surprised to find that except for a ceremonial guard outside, the corridors of the palace were deserted. We were first taken to the President's secretary, who led us to Rene's modest office, where he gave us a briefing on what he was looking for.

He frankly told us he could not trust his own security set-up due to "colour" divisions. He said he was changing the white Commissioner of Police and appointing a "mulatto" officer who had better relations with people, especially blacks. He wanted us to visit all the security establishments, including training institutes, assess their professionalism and give suggestions. In addition, he openly told us that he would have to work with the Western nations to dispel the notion that he was merely following the Soviet bloc. Amazingly, the same assessment was made by the CIA document in 1983 saying that Rene was "showing a more positive attitude toward the major US interest in Seychelles: the USAF tracking station in Mahe".

We completed our assignment within a week and orally presented our findings to him, adding that we would send our written report through our Prime Minister's office.

The writer is a former Special Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat, and was part of the committee to enquire into the 26/11 terror attacks

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Democracy that survives wrecking balls

FIFTH COLUMN
BY TAVIALEEN SINGH

LAST WEEK America celebrated her 250th birthday, so I shall begin by saying happy birthday to the world's oldest democracy from a citizen of the world's largest democracy. As an admirer of America, I have been truly impressed that its institutions have managed to survive what *The Economist* recently called the "wrecking ball revolution" that Donald Trump has used to try and weaken them. It has made me reflect and brood over how our own institutions have been less resilient. Our prime ministers may not have used a wrecking ball, but right from the time that we became an independent nation, there have been attempts to weaken the institutions of democracy.

At the risk of invoking (yet again) the ire of the Gandhi family's belligerent supporters on social media, I shall remind you that the First Amendment to our Constitution was brought to curb dissent. The opposite was true in America. The first amendment to that constitution says, 'Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.'

Those who believe that such freedoms have been damaged only since Narendra Modi became prime minister should read our own First Amendment. And we must never forget that the only prime minister who took a "wrecking ball" to Indian democracy was Indira Gandhi. It is against this backdrop that we need to examine what has happened in twelve years of Hindutva Raj, during which a disturbing allergy to dissent has become evident. As a judge of the Bombay High Court reminded us last week, "it is the right of citizens to protest".

It is said but true that every time there is a protest of some kind, Modi's acolytes, spokespersons and social media warriors collude to damage the reputation of the protesters. When farmers protested for more than a year against laws that they believed benefited corporations and not them, they were called anti-nationals, Khalistanis and traitors. All that the prime minister needed to have done was invite leaders of that protest for a cup of tea and listen to what they had to say. Why this did not happen, I do not know.

For the past two weeks, the Cockerroach Janata Party's leaders and supporters have been protesting in Jantar Mantar with a single demand that the education minister take responsibility for the mess in the education system and resign. If this minister had the smallest shred of self-respect, he would voluntarily hand in his resignation. Since he does not, it is the responsibility of the prime minister to ask for his resignation. Inexplicably, this has not happened, so now the "cockroaches" have backed him into a corner. If he sacks the minister, it would seem like surrender, and if he does not, he will continue to alienate young students.

Meanwhile, sundry leftist leaders who never protested the crushing of dissent by 'secular' prime ministers are now banding together to share the stage in Jantar Mantar. Personally, I think the fast unto death by Sonam Wangchuk is a bad idea. The old ways of satyagraha have become stale and boring. Young Indians must find new ways to make their case. It is also time they stopped invoking dead leaders and started looking for younger leaders in their own ranks. They have a right to be very angry about the appalling state of our education system and the terrifying absence of jobs for those who somehow manage to get an education. They have a right to be angry about other things. Corruption has become a huge issue since revelations about the looting of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, and people are becoming increasingly angry about the deep roots of corruption in all our democratic institutions.

Corruption is, alas, not the only thing weakening our democracy. Almost as damaging has been the rise of a tendency in our political leaders to encourage an ugly form of cultism to build around them. They do this by plastering their pictures everywhere, from electricity poles and petrol stations to advertisements of their achievements in the newspapers and on television. If this is an attempt to show the people who hold up the institutions of democracy that big brother is watching, then they may have succeeded. But is this good for democracy? Clearly not.

The additional damage that this kind of narcissistic promotion does is that it proves that despite all our talk of development and modernity, we remain a third-world country in which elected leaders can behave like kings. It is true that in this 250-year of American independence, the leader of the free world is behaving more like a king than any leader in the third world, but American institutions have shown that they are strong enough to survive Trump.

In our own ancient and wondrous land, the institutions of democracy remain fragile. But there is a small warning to those political leaders bedazzled by their own propaganda: there is increasing evidence that voters are seeing through the propaganda. This is the reason why political parties built around the cult of a single leader and his extended family are beginning to crumble into dust. It is a warning that all political leaders would do well to heed.

The writer is Senior Associate Editor, The Indian Express

Bring back the tigers that once roamed Mewar



AREFA TEHSIN

AFTER the Rajasamand MP's statement opposing the proposed tiger reserve in Kumbhalgarh, a reactive skirmish has broken out. The MP, from the erstwhile royal family, has urged the Centre to drop the plan, stating that Kumbhalgarh "has never been a traditional tiger habitat". The pushback is coming from erstwhile forest officers, some jagirdars of the former Mewar state. The tigers, one suspects, would twitch their whiskers on being told they had never actually been there. We, Mewaris, can't take this as lightly.

Mewar stretches across south-central Rajasthan, from the Aravalli hills in the northwest to the Gujarat border in the south, and from Ajmer in the north to the Hadoti plateau in the east. Udaipur is its historic heart. The Kumbhalgarh forest was a royal hunting reserve. The right to hunt a tiger, notably, rested with the Maharana alone. Not other royals. Not the aristocracy. A leopard was fair game for the nobility, a tiger was not. A peer-reviewed paper in BT's international journal (2022) by Bhanu Kapil and Uma Bhat of INU University, Udaipur, has dug into the Haqiqat Bahidas — the official shikar diaries of the Mewar rulers — and found that in 1838-39, Maharana Sandar Singh was receiving regular field intelligence about tigers near Udaipur. His men came across them at Kamlod, Tikhiya, Unjankhura. The Rajputana Gazetteers of the Mewar Residency record tigers in the Aravallis "from Kumbhalgarh to Kotra".

Sherlock Holmes had warned Watson: "It is a capital mistake to theorise before one has data. One begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts." The data, in this case, is considerable. Jaswant Singh Nathawat, ex-warden of Kumbhalgarh wildlife and park director of Ranthambore, has described in a video how he came across a tiger in Kumbhalgarh-Raoli Tatgarh sanctuary in 1967. My grandfather, T.H. Tehsin, later vice mayor of Udaipur, saw tigers in Mewar on several occasions. An archival register from the Raoli Forest Rest House in the Todgarh-Raoli Wildlife Sanctuary records tigers being shot from 1953 to 1955.

The concern about the Raika pastoral community and their camels is genuine, though it is worth noting that camels are not a tiger's preferred quarry. The question of how a tiger reserve working affects traditional grazing rights is a new worth working through with the communities involved. It has a process; consultation, buffer zones, co-existence provisions, designed precisely because these situations are not new. We have navigated them in forests far more contested than Kumbhalgarh. It would be a pity to foreclose the conversation before it has properly begun.

There is also the question of what a tiger does to a landscape once it is back. Ecologists call it a keystone species, a polite way of saying its presence matters to things that have no obvious connection to tigers. Deer that know a predator is around don't linger stripping a riverbank bare; they keep moving, nervously, which turns out to be rather good for the riverbank. The wolves of Yellowstone demonstrated this memorably. Kumbhalgarh's wolves, leopards and hyenas lived alongside tigers for millennia. They did not find the arrangement disagreeable.

The Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary, our family's regular summer haunt since my childhood, is already a success story. Leopards, wolves, sloth bears, hyenas, jungle cats, golden jackals, caracals, honey badgers — it is almost like ticking off a field guide chapter. These forests predate British documentation. Many naturalists believe the terrain, cover, and prey base make it suitable for a tiger reintroduction. The region has historically been a tiger migration corridor from Gujarat through Panarwa to Jaipur and into Madhya Pradesh. What's missing is not the habitat. It is the tiger, and that is a human doing, not an ecological one. The Aravallis of Mewar housed tigers, then lost them fairly recently, and seem to be in adequate shape for a second chance. Whether they get one is, as usual, less a question of ecology than of who is inconvenienced by the answer.

Tehsin, former honorary wildlife warden, Udaipur, is the author, most recently, of The Great Indian Safari

How UP got control over Kashi Vishwanath 44 years ago

HISTORY HEADLINE
BY SHYAMLAL YADAV

IN UTTAR PRADESH, revelations of alleged embezzlement in the Ram Mandir Ayodhya have once again highlighted the vulnerabilities in the management of temples. It echoes a case of theft from nearly 44 years ago at the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi. The theft in January 1983 not only exposed deep-rooted mismanagement but also became a turning point, prompting a change in the management of the temple and setting a historic precedent.

On the intervening night of January 4 and 5, 1983, the golden Argha — the base encircling the Shivalinga, weighing approximately 2.6 kilograms of gold — was stolen from the Kashi Vishwanath Temple. The incident, in the heart of Varanasi, sparked immediate outrage, leaving the government at the Centre and the state feeling uneasy.

At the time, Uttar Pradesh was under the leadership of Chief Minister Sriyast Mishra. The state police, headed by Shri Chandra Dikshit, launched a swift investigation. By January 22, 1983, authorities had arrested 11 individuals. Much of the stolen property was recovered, though the process dragged on. The stolen items were finally returned to the temple trust in November 2006.

The fallout extended far beyond criminal proceedings. Public criticism mounted quickly against the mahant-led management system that had been in place for centuries. Facing growing pressure, the state government acted decisively. On January 28, 1983, an ordinance was promulgated, transferring management of the temple to a government-constituted trust. Later, on September 27, 1983, Social Welfare Minister Gulab Sehra introduced a bill in the UP Assembly to transfer the ordinance. The bill passed swiftly and received assent from the President on October 12, 1983, becoming the Uttar Pradesh Sri Kashi Vishwanath Temple Act.

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At a standup show, comedian Pranit More encountered a crowd member who casually revealed he had bought a woman bryanti for Rs 370 and considered this a transaction that entitled him to her body. He said it openly in a room full of people. What's striking was his ease. A person who has never been of scrutiny. The sympathy is allocated before the first scene has even begun.

Dacoit, a Tamil production featuring Anurag Kashyap as a cop, centres around vengeance against a woman who betrayed



The state government took over the management of the Kashi Vishwanath temple in 1983. WIKIPEDIA

1983, which became effective retroactively from January 28. The Act established a board of trustees, comprising prominent religious figures and senior government officials, along with an executive committee for day-to-day operations. Vibhuti Narayan Singh was made trust president and continued in the position until his demise in 2000.

The transition highlighted stark contrasts in governance. Under the mahants, daily offerings were reportedly recorded at Rs 300-500. Temple assets were valued at nearly Rs 15.5 crore at the time of takeover. The government provided an initial loan of Rs 11 lakh to the new trust. Of this, Rs 6 lakh funded a replacement golden Argha, while the remaining Rs 5 lakh was deposited in a bank to generate interest for routine expenses. The government claimed that after the takeover, daily offerings increased up to Rs 1,500.

Minister Sehra, while tabling the bill, painted a picture of the pre-takeover era. Priests received a paltry Rs 8 per month plus meals — conditions he likened to "bonded labour". In contrast, the new management raised salaries to Rs 300 per month, with lunch provisions. Infrastructure improvements followed: 20 tubelights and 11 fans were installed for better lighting and ventilation. Cleanliness campaigns were prioritised, and milk offered to the Shivalinga was distributed to orphans. Temple traditions continued, with 51 saunas built every Monday and 30 poor individuals fed daily.

Families donating Rs 5,000 or more gained the privilege of performing puja in-

side the garbhagriha (sanctum sanctorum) once a year. The first major contribution was from then-PM Indira Gandhi. Within months, Rs 1 lakh had been raised. A police post near the temple bolstered security.

The management change, however, was not without controversy. Questions arose in the Assembly about Vibhuti Narayan Singh's approach to the entry of Harijans into the temple — he had opposed it in the mid-1950s. Some MLAs asked whether any affidavits had been taken from him for not repeating the same. Shri Chandra Dikshit joined the Vishva Hindu Parishad post-retirement in 1984 and joined the movement for the Ram Temple at Ayodhya. He eventually joined the BJP, got a ticket and entered the Lok Sabha in 1991.

The changes faced legal scrutiny as well, with challenges mounted in the Allahabad High Court and then, the Supreme Court. Finally, in a landmark March 14, 1997, verdict, the Supreme Court upheld state control. It observed that prior to 1983, "the management of Temple was in an appalling condition. Devoted pilgrims when they visited the Temples were subjected to exploitation at the behest of pandas, the precincts were in most unhygienic condition (sic)."

Yet, state control did not entirely eradicate problems. Thefts of a smaller scale continued, underscoring challenges to security and internal oversight.

The writer is Senior Associate Editor, The Indian Express

Entertainment industry's war on statistical reality

THERE is a particular kind of cultural conditioning that operates invisibly — so embedded in entertainment habits that we mistake it for taste. Viewers arrive at films primed by years of storytelling, by algorithms, and by the ambient noise of social media to receive what suffers as tragic, male grievance as legitimate, and male entitlement as worthy of scrutiny. The sympathy is allocated before the first scene has even begun.

At a standup show, comedian Pranit More encountered a crowd member who casually revealed he had bought a woman bryanti for Rs 370 and considered this a transaction that entitled him to her body. He said it openly in a room full of people. What's striking was his ease. A person who has never been of scrutiny. The sympathy is allocated before the first scene has even begun.

Dacoit, a Tamil production featuring Anurag Kashyap as a cop, centres around vengeance against a woman who betrayed

her partner. The emotional architecture asks spectators to understand his anger, follow his trajectory, and invest in his fate. *Bandar*, Kashyap's Bollywood follow-up goes further, constructing a world where false allegations against men function less as an anomaly and more as atmosphere. Every threat points to the same conclusion: a persecuted class, women wielded courts as weapons, and institutions have abandoned the former.

The NCRB logged 4,15,344 crimes against women in 2024. Spousal and family cruelty alone accounted for over 1,20,000 cases, the single largest category of gender-based harm that year. These dynamics are sustained by social, institutional, and patriarchal structures that have historically rendered them ordinary. Incidents where women commit crimes against men, however high-profile, however frequently cited, are neither systemic nor institutionalised in this way. Yet such examples get amplified, weaponised, and now cinematically immortalised.

The operative question is proportion,

SHE SAID
BY MEENAKSHI JHA

what gets funded, what gets widely distributed, and whose reality gets rendered as representative of larger truth. When a society consistently dramatises statistical exceptions while the pervasive danger women face remains peripheral, it is making a deliberative decision. What gets green-lighted, what digital tools reward, and what legal mechanisms get deployed reflect whose interiority is considered universally legible, whose pain is deemed worthy of the screen, and whose precariousness is treated as a niche concern rather than a national crisis.

A woman is killed or driven to death by dowry pressure every 68 minutes in India. Women are murdered for rejecting men. Women are slain for leaving. These are not exceptional stories. These are the norm. But the falsely accused figure in a rigid system is what's getting the big screen, the airwaves, and now the dock. That inversion is worth examining carefully, without looking away.

In 2026, the cultural ground is shifting beneath safety gains that were never secure

to begin with. Cinema positions male resentment as complexity. Standup stages generate laughs from transactional entitlement. Podcasts reframe women's legal recourse as weaponised victimhood. Each medium reinforces the next, and the cumulative weight arrives at a skewed social contract: women's security is contingent on not making men uncomfortable.

Sharper cultural literacy is the first line of defence: reading the subtext before absorbing the text, asking whose anger is being rendered sympathetic, whose experience is conspicuously absent from the frame, and what worldview is being normalised under the cover of entertainment. The screen has always reflected power. Right now, it is rehearsing it, and women are the audience being asked to applaud.

Jha is an educator and freelance writer

Editor (Planning & Projects) Shalini Langer curates the fortnightly 'She Said' column

RELIANCE ON SHORT-TERM FIXES MAY BE A WORRY FOR BANKS

Amid slowing CASA growth, banks turn to costly solutions

Akash Mandal
New Delhi, July 4

Credit growth has picked up over the past few months, but banks have struggled to grow their deposit base to match it.

Growth in current account and savings account (CASA) deposits has particularly slowed, with retail investors now having a range of avenues to put their savings in, such as stocks and mutual funds. These avenues provide much better returns than traditional CASA accounts and have become more accessible over time due to digitalisation and regulatory bodies' simplification of norms. CASA deposits are low-cost for banks and are used to fund loans, the major source of revenue.

They are considered a reliable and "sticky" source of funds for banks due to low churn, as such depositors aren't likely to shift this money to other banks easily.

Due to this mismatch in growth, the gap between credit and deposit growth has widened from 1.8 percentage points in December to 5.4 percentage points as of June 15, according to data from the RBI.

This has led to the credit-to-deposit ratio of banks — which is the percentage of a bank's deposits deployed as loans — widening to 82.5% as of June 15 from around 75% in mid-2025. The slowdown was also noted in the Reserve Bank of India's Financial Stability Report released last week.



CASA deposits are low-cost for banks and are used to fund loans, the major source of revenue. REUTERS

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Banks shifting to other funding avenues

As CASA deposits have slowed, banks have shifted to other sources of funds such as term deposits and CDs.

"Term deposits refer to financial instruments where one locks in their money for a particular tenure to earn interest in return. This includes retail options such as fixed and recurring deposits. A CD is a type of term deposit used by corporates and institutions to raise money through the money markets."

"CASA is the low-cost liability available to banks. Additionally, on a behavioural pattern perspective, CASA can support creation of longer-term assets. CDs, on the other hand, have historically been used to manage shorter-term

liquidity by banks," said Rohan Mandora, associate director at Equiurus Securities. As a result, the share of CASA in the total deposit base of the banking system has fallen to around 39% from a peak of around 44% in FY22 (during the post-Covid liquidity boom). Meanwhile, the share of term deposits has inched up to all-time highs of over 61% from around 56% in FY23.

Why is it a concern

CASA deposits have always been a reliable funding source for banks due to their low cost (around 3-4% interest rate) and "stickiness." Term deposits and CDs, on the other hand, are much higher-cost (7-8% interest rate) options that ultimately squeeze the margins of banks. "CDs are wholesale, price-

• LOAN VS DEPOSIT

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RBI, IN its Financial Stability Report released last week, also took note of the slowdown

sensitive money with typical tenors of 3-12 months, whereas CASA is granular, behaviourally sticky retail money. In a tight-liquidity phase, CD roll-over costs can spike quickly," said Yuvraj Choudhary, research analyst at Anand Rath

Institutional Equities. While banks have largely managed to maintain robust financial growth and protect their net-interest margins (NIM) so far, this increased reliance on higher-cost shorter-term funds has already started to seep in. The impact has been limited due to the low interest rate environment. This rate influences the interest rates across the entire banking system. During a low interest rate cycle, banks are able to offer lower rates to depositors, providing some breathing space.

"On funding costs, the pressure is visible but contained. The current rate-cut cycle works in banks' favour. CDs and bulk term deposits remain price downward the fastest, so short-term wholesale reliance is cheaper to carry precisely now. The risk flips when the rate cycle turns," said Choudhary. "Incrementally, some banks have marginally increased their term deposit rates in Q1. We expect the impact of higher share of bulk deposits to flow into cost of funds during 2HFY27," according to Mandora. Experts also believe the sluggish CASA growth is cyclical in nature after the post-Covid boom in liquidity due to steps by the central bank. "We believe this is more cyclical in nature and linked to overall liquidity in the system."

With most banks showing little difference in asset quality, liability franchise quality is becoming the key competitive moat in Indian banking, "an analyst at a domestic firm said. Thus, while banks have found shorter-term funding solutions as CASA growth has dried up, the over-reliance on such temporary fixes is a double-edged sword."

While it helps manage liquidity and fund the booming credit growth for now, a hike in interest rates by the RBI or an external crisis may hit the sector hard if CASA growth is not rejuvenated.

FULL REPORT ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Skyroot co-founder: India's aerospace industry is taking a private turn with ISRO's help

Nikhila Henry
Hyderabad, July 4

INDIA'S AEROSPACE industry is "very encouraging" to private players, with ISRO and private companies developing a relationship which is similar to NASA and SpaceX in the US, Skyroot Aerospace co-founder Pawan Kumar Chandana told *The Indian Express*.

On June 2, Skyroot announced they will launch an orbital class rocket, Vikram-1, into space within a window of July 12 to August 4.

Skyroot is a private space launch company. In 2022, Skyroot launched India's first private satellite — Vikram-S — from ISRO's facilities.

Vikram-1 is designed to deploy small satellites of up to 350-kg to low Earth orbit. Built with an all-carbon composite structure and powered by solid and liquid propulsion systems — including 3D printed engines — developed by Skyroot, Vikram-1 is expected to be a successful flight, its makers say.

"At Skyroot, we already launched Vikram-S from ISRO's launch pad. That was a suborbital launch. Now we are getting ready for India's first private orbital launch. It is the first test flight. There is also an expression of interest released with regard to the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV), Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) and Launch Vehicle Mark-3 (LV-M3) by the government of India."

So that private companies can take ISRO's vehicles and operate them. We will see more and more of this kind of collaboration in India," Chandana said. India's space economy is expected to grow from around \$8.4 billion now to \$44 billion by 2033.

Indigenous launch capability will be a critical enabler of this growth, unlocking opportunities for India's rapidly expanding private space ecosystem, Skyroot believes.

Vikram-1's test flight is im-

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Skyroot launched India's first private satellite, Vikram-S, from ISRO's facilities in 2022. PHOTO: X/@PANKJCHANDANA

portant because the ability to reach orbit reliably and frequently is a strategic capability that only a handful of nations have. Today, access to space remains a major bottleneck, with satellite operators often waiting months or even years for a launch opportunity.

"ISRO has been amazingly supportive. Their support has been excellent. What more they can do is that in whatever ISRO is doing, in their missions of national importance, they can have private startups as development partners. We could build some of the systems which ISRO would use — whether it be the space stations, new satellites they are developing, or new rockets they are developing."

The launch is called Mission Agastya, meaning "the arrival" and marks Skyroot's second mission following the successful suborbital flight of Vikram-S, the first private rocket to reach space from Indian soil, Chandana said.

Vikram-1 will be a partially commercial flight, with the company planning to commence full commercial flights after one or two successful demonstrations to orbit.

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US DoJ urges judge to drop charges against Gautam Adani

New York: The US Department of Justice has forcefully defended its decision to abandon the criminal case against Indian billionaire Gautam Adani and 7 others, telling a federal judge the prosecution was legally flawed, diplomatically counter-productive and inconsistent with Trump administration's enforcement priorities.

In a sharply worded 10-page filing, the DOJ said the case "should have been dropped a year ago — or never brought in the first place," arguing that the court had only a limited role in reviewing its decision to dismiss charges with prejudice.

The filing came after US District Judge Nicholas Garaufis asked the department to explain why it was seeking to permanently dismiss the indictment, calling its earlier motion "terse, bland, and conclusory."

DOJ had in 2024 under the Biden administration indicted Adani and others for allegedly bribing Indian government officials to the tune of \$250 million and to lie to investors to receive billions more in investments from other entities — during which alleged scheme Adani Green Energy Ltd raised at least \$75 million from US investors. The DOJ said requiring prosecutors to publicly justify decisions to drop cases would discourage future dismissals.

missals, expose privileged internal deliberations and infringe on the executive branch's constitutional authority over charging decisions. "Judicial inquisitions into the bases for dismissal will expose privileged internal debates," Principal Associate Deputy Attorney General R. Trent McCorvey wrote, adding that such demand hurt defendants by potentially chilling the Department from seeking dismissal of criminal charges it determines are not in the interests of justice.

Waiving privilege only for this case, McCorvey said the case "should have been dropped a year ago — or never brought in the first place," arguing that the court had only a limited role in reviewing its decision to dismiss charges with prejudice.

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Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman interacts with Indian professionals from Larsen & Toubro contributing to the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor in Cadarache, France, on Saturday. PHOTO: X/@NIRMINDIA

Auto industry defends ethanol fuel mandate

Reuters
New Delhi, July 4

INDIAN GOVERNMENT and auto industry officials on Saturday defended the mandatory rollout of petrol blended with 20% ethanol, saying years of testing and service data showed no evidence of widespread vehicle damage, despite public concerns over lower fuel efficiency and engine safety.

The fuel — known as E20 — has faced rising criticism on social media in recent days, with motorists questioning whether older vehicles designed for lower ethanol blends could suffer corrosion, wear or reduced performance.

Automakers including Ma-

ruti Suzuki, Hero MotorCorp and Toyota Kirloskar Motor said even older vehicles can run safely on E20. Maruti Suzuki, India's largest carmaker, said it had serviced more than 15 million older cars over the past two years that were not certified for E20 and found no fuel-related problems.

"As a manufacturer, we have tested E10 cars which were prevalent before 2023 when E20 was first introduced. We have not found anything of concern," Rahul Bharti, Maruti Suzuki's senior executive officer for corporate affairs, said at a joint press conference with government officials.

Industry officials acknowledged a minor trade-off: E20

reduces fuel efficiency by about 3-3.5% because of its lower energy content.

However, they said the fuel's higher octane rating can help carmakers design future engines with higher compression ratios, which could improve performance, torque, drivability and even fuel efficiency. Officials also rejected viral claims that E20 had caused engine failures, saying at least one widely shared case was linked to contaminated fuel rather than standard E20.

They added that E20 is the highest ethanol blend currently tested for regular petrol vehicles and said any move to higher blends would need fresh trials.

India-Israel bilateral investment agreement comes into effect

Press Trust of India
New Delhi, July 4

THE India-Israel Bilateral Investment Agreement (BIA), which will ensure a secure and predictable investment climate between the two countries, came into force from Saturday, the finance ministry said.

The pact, which will provide protection to the two-way investments, is expected to contribute to increased cross-border investment activity.

The two countries inked the treaty on September 8 last year. Under the pact, India has cut down the local remedies exhaustion period for Israeli investors to three years.

Local remedies exhaustion means that investors must first try to resolve their disputes using the legal system of the host country before they can take the matter to international arbitration. Normally, India keeps a five-year period for this.

The India-Israel BIA also includes dispute resolution in a deviation from such treaties in the past.

Israel is the first OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) member with which India has inked this agreement.

The agreement is expected to pave the way for increased bilateral investments between the two countries. During April 2020 and March 2026, India received \$37.3 million foreign direct investment (FDI) from Israel.

The implementation of the pact is important as both countries are also negotiating a free trade pact. The negotiations for the trade pact are going slow due to the West Asia crisis. India is also negotiating bilateral investment treaties with other countries, including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Switzerland, Russia, Australia and the European Union.

These investment treaties help in protecting and promoting investments in each other's countries. The government has earlier announced revamping the current model of BITs to make it more investor-friendly and attract foreign players.

Commenting on the pact, think tank GTRI said the 2015 model treaty excluded portfolio investments, while the Israel agreement covers shares, stocks and other equity holdings, as well as qualifying bonds, loans and other corporate debt.

"This could widen India's exposure to investor-state disputes beyond traditional foreign direct investment to certain financial investments," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said. He said the Israel pact allows investors to seek international arbitration after pursuing domestic legal remedies.

• FOUNDER USED AN AI COACH TO DEVELOP PITCH TO INVESTORS

For one small business, AI was key to a quick start and expansion

Reuters
Washington, July 4

Here Now Health isn't an AI-based company, but its quick launch and growth, thanks to a founder's idea in founder Michelle Turner, should not be seen as a sign of the future of AI in business. The company's success is due to its founder's vision and the support of its investors.

Working from her Virginia Beach home, she used AI tools to school herself in startup culture, create a business plan and fine-tune a presentation for early-stage investors.

Funding began to flow, and the company, launched in January 2025, now has 16 employees and is certified in three states to provide Medicaid-funded mental health counseling for

children entering the foster system, a gap in care she identified through her own experience as a foster parent.

"A mom of six kids who's a first-time founder, who's a sole female founder, should not be able to raise (venture capital). I don't have an MBA. I don't have these things to back me up," Turner said.

Developing her funding pitch with AI guidance was "like going to a master's level class every day from the robot. It was my startup advisor."

The rapid emergence and spread of AI has become a defining feature of the US economy, of prime interest to Federal Reserve officials trying to understand its potential to reshape productivity, growth, inflation

and labor demand. Among a broad review of the Fed launched by new Chairman Kevin Warsh, one panel will look solely at AI and its implications for productivity, a force that can allow the economy to grow faster with less inflation, but also means fewer workers are needed to create the same output.

Some Fed officials have already raised the possibility of an AI economy with structurally higher unemployment; other analysts have noted the steady dip in labor's share of national income and questioned if steadily higher returns to capital are also part of the AI future, a who-wins issue with social and political implications.

Much like when then-exec



Here Now Health was launched in January 2025 and now employs 16 people. REUTERS

new brands such as Yahoo! and America Online fought to connect everyone to the internet, different AI models are now competing for attention and dollars — but with offerings that can

perform complex tasks, solve problems, or write computer code, not just shop and search the Web.

Investment in data centers is driving overall growth and in

some cases driving up power and labor costs. Scenarios around AI range from visions of plenty to mass unemployment, with banks, government agencies, the military and more looking to exploit the new tools but also protect from them.

"Markets are confronted with dramatically different competing narratives," Jean Boivin, head of the BlackRock Investment Institute, said in a seminar with journalists on Tuesday.

"We are framing this as scarcity versus abundance. Scarcity is the story of the moment" with the AI investment boom driving up some costs and driving demand for capital, but, "we are also talking about abundance... We are talking about AI that can lead to significant break-

throughs... Growth that might be breaking out of a 2% world."

Somewhere in the middle sits Turner's journey from non-profit manager to chief executive of a growing company, a story John Bailey, a nonresident senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and adviser to one of the firms that invested in Here Now Health, says is becoming more common. For small entrepreneurs "things that used to take too much time or cost too much — the price to access has fallen close to zero," said Bailey, who helped Turner from the outset develop the AI tools she relied on. "It is empowering entrepreneurs to scale faster and hire people. These are not AI companies. They are traditional companies trying to deliver ser-

vices but do it faster, cheaper."

Public debate remains focused on AI's job-disrupting capacity, with rounds of tech industry layoffs attributed to it and evidence is mounting to reduce back-office and clerical employment. Bailey said he's become more convinced the AI economy won't kill jobs so much as change and rearrange them, much as happened with earlier technological leaps.

He isn't alone in seeing upside. Torsten Slok, chief economist at investment firm Apollo Global Management, attributes a recent upturn in already-high new business formations to AI, which is "dramatically reducing the cost and complexity of launching a company. As these firms scale, they will create jobs."

Decision to resign intensely personal, says UK PM Starmer

Press Trust of India
London, July 4

KEIR STARMER has spoken of his decision to resign as Labour Party leader and British Prime Minister as an "intensely personal" one, which he took with his wife and children at a family weekend away. In his first interview since his Downing Street statement that fired the starting gun for a leadership election, Starmer told the BBC on Friday evening that he would complete his current term as a central London member of Parliament.

But, while on the backbenches of Parliament, the 63-year-old politician plans on "keeping his mouth shut" to allow his successor "widely expected to be former Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham to get on with the job."

"I grappled with what was the best thing to do for me, for the country, for the government," said Starmer. "In the end it became an intensely personal decision. And that's why it was a decision taken ultimately when (my wife) Vic and I were away with the kids," he said. On June 22, when he announced his resignation on the steps of 10 Downing Street, the Starmer family was in Buckinghamshire.

MOSCOW CLAIMS ITS FORCES HAVE CAPTURED TRANSPORT AND INDUSTRIAL HUB KOSTIANTYNIVKA

Ukrainian drones hit St Petersburg oil terminal in latest strike on Russia

Associated Press
July 4

A UKRAINIAN drone attack struck an oil terminal in St. Petersburg on Saturday, Russian officials said, as Kyiv presses on with bombardment of Russia's oil infrastructure.

Almost daily long-range attacks on Russian oil facilities have created a fuel crisis and heaped political pressure on the Kremlin as its all-out invasion of Ukraine stretches into its fifth year.

Gov. Alexander Beglov said the city's Kirovsky district on the Baltic Sea was hit. He also said that air defenses shot down 72 Ukrainian drones across Russia's second-largest city and the surrounding region.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described the attack as part of Ukraine's "long-range sanctions" against Russia. He said that Ukrainian forces also hit a military target on the island of Kronstadt, just off the coast of St. Petersburg.

"The Ukrainian defence forces hit the port oil infrastructure, which earns money for the Russian war, and there were



Russian President Vladimir Putin chairs a meeting as he visits a command post of Russia's joint force grouping at an unidentified location on Friday. REUTERS

also hits on Kronstadt — an important military target," he said in a post on Telegram.

St. Petersburg's Kirovsky district was previously hit in June, ahead of Russia's flagship St. Petersburg International Economic Forum.

The Crimean peninsula,

which Russia annexed in 2014, has suffered particularly from heavy strikes, causing local authorities to suspend gasoline sales to civilians. A Ukrainian attack on Saturday killed one person and injured two more, including a 10-year-old child, the Moscow-installed Gov. Sergei Aksyonov said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has shrugged off Ukraine's strikes on Russia's energy facilities as "not critical," and insisted the war will continue until his goals are met. He has described the attacks on Russian energy as an

effort by Ukraine to distract attention from its losses on the battlefield, although analysts say the advance of Russian forces has been stymied in recent months.

On Friday, Putin visited the Russian military headquarters directing the war in Ukraine and received a report on the capture of the city of Kostyantynivka, after weeks of intense street battles. He hailed it as a key step toward capturing the nearby cities of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk, the key remaining strongholds in the so-called "forest belt" of heavily fortified cities in the Donetsk region that remain in Ukraine's hands.

The capture of Kostyantynivka, a big transport and industrial hub, is of "major strategic importance," Putin, clad in military fatigues, said in televised comments.

In a briefing Saturday, Col. Gen. Sergei Rudskoy, the first deputy chief of the General Staff of the Russian armed forces, said that Ukrainian troops had been pushed back several kilometers (miles) and that fighting was taking place on the outskirts of the nearby town of Oleksievo-Druzhkivka.



People take part in a protest against a convention of far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, in Erfurt on Saturday. REUTERS

Thousands protest in Germany as far-right AfD sets sights on power

Reuters
Erfurt, July 4

THOUSANDS PROTESTED against Germany's far-right AfD and blocked roads to its annual conference in the eastern city of Erfurt on Saturday, where the party re-elected the two leaders who have overseen its rise as a national force.

Protesters from unions, civil society groups and left-wing parties gathered as large numbers of police, including reinforcements from across Germany, were deployed ahead of the AfD's two-day conference.

Watched by police in riot gear, protesters sat in rows to block highways and roads leading to the convention center where the meeting is being held. Police estimated around 15,000 people joined demonstrations in and around the eastern city.

The AfD launched the event by re-electing party chiefs Alice Weidel and Tino Chrupalla, under whose leadership the AfD has surged to the top of national opinion polls ahead of Chancellor Friedrich Merz's conser-

vatives. The opening speeches mocked and lambasted the protesters as anti-democratic. They revelled in the AfD's rise that could see the party taking power in regional elections this year for the first time, while painting their mainstream rivals as tired, out of touch and leading Germany into decline.

"For this remains our last chance to save our country," Weidel said. "More and more people in this country want to support us in the fight against Germany's decline, in the fight for our fatherland and for our identity." Underscoring the party's hard line on immigration, a song called "Send them back" played on the AfD's social media stream minutes before the convention opened. Inside the convention center, vintage-style cards were on sale with slogans such as "YOU will be deported". Björn Hoecke, seen as one of the party's most radical and controversial leaders, offered a mix of nostalgia and invective, even pointing to the state of Germany's motorway tolls as an example of national failure.

Iranians flock to Khamenei's funeral

Reuters
Dubai, July 4

Tens of thousands of Iranians thronged a vast outdoor prayer complex in Tehran on Saturday to view the coffin of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who ruled the Islamic Republic for 37 years before being killed at the start of the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran.

Dressed in black and draped in the red, white and green flags of the Islamic Republic of Iran, mourners held up posters and A4 printed sheets with pictures of Khamenei and his son and successor as supreme leader, Mojtaba Khamenei.

Iran is staging mass funeral processions for Khamenei, who was killed in February by the opening airstrikes of the war launched by the U.S. and Israel, in a show of public devotion to the Islamic Republic'socratic state and revolutionary zeal.

After a day of Khamenei lying in state indoors for senior Iranian leaders and foreign officials to visit, his coffin, and



Iranian religious leaders walk past the coffin of the late Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in Tehran on Saturday. AP

those of several family members killed in the same air strike, were brought to an outdoor stage for the general public to view from a distance, television footage showed.

Mourners filed into the vast courtyard of the Imam Khomeini Grand Mosalla, beating their chests, wailing and wav-

ing the banners of the Islamic Republic and historic Shi'ite Muslim martyrs. Women dressed in black chadors wore white visors or held umbrellas to shield from the hot mid-morning sun.

"Let us wall" a compere encouraged the crowds through a loudspeaker. "Everybody chant

oppressed, everyone say Hussein," he said, invoking Shi'ite traditions of sacrifice, including that of the Prophet Mohammad's grandson Hussein. On cue, the crowds wailed and chanted.

The Israeli strike that killed Khamenei also killed his daughter, grandchild, daughter-in-law and son-in-law, according to Iranian state media. Their five coffins, all draped in Iranian flags and placed on a raised platform, included a tiny one for the 14-month-old granddaughter.

Iran's military and security institutions vowed revenge for Khamenei's death, and chants of "Death to America" echoed through the Mosalla, state broadcaster Seda va Sima said.

The funeral is taking place at a critical moment for Iran, where the clerical rulers backed by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) are buoyed from surviving what they saw as an existential war against their most powerful foes.

President Trump hails US, denounces Communism during 250th celebration

Steve Holland
Keystone, July 4

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump called on Americans to protect the freedoms the nation's founders envisioned 250 years ago against what he has portrayed as the "communist" threat posed by progressive Democrats, speaking on the eve of Independence Day at Mount Rushmore.

"We stand beneath the monument of these heroes, a true group of unbelievable people, and we rededicate ourselves to being a nation as big, bold, noble, and as great as these American giants, and that's not easy to do, but we're going to do



President Donald Trump speaks at Mount Rushmore National Memorial on Friday. AP

it," Trump said at the granite mountain in South Dakota where the heads of four American presidents are carved.

"There is now a resurgence of the communist menace in our land, including from new-

comers to our country who embrace ideas totally opposed to our way of life and our great success," he said. Trump has been making such points about gains by democratic socialists for a week now, but he made his most pointed and prolonged argument on that theme on Friday, coming as Americans grapple with persistent inflation and high gas prices since the start of the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran.

Increasingly uneasy that the conflict could cost the party control of at least one chamber of Congress in midterm elections, Republican lawmakers have seized on a recent string of successes by left-wing Democratic candidates.

REUTERS

Brazil: Lula and Flávio Bolsonaro clash over US tariff proposal

Rio De Janeiro: Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and his rival Sen. Flávio Bolsonaro clashed over U.S. tariffs this week, as both sought to discourage the Trump administration from following through with its proposal of applying taxes of 25% on Brazilian products despite an extensive U.S. trade surplus. The two top candidates for October's presidential election traded barbs over their responses, suggesting that they believe how they are perceived as handling the deeply unpopular U.S. tariffs will be a key factor in the vote.

AP

• BRIEFLY

BELGIUM

Company that won tariff relief gifted Trump an encrusted ring



The ring is designed by Antwerp designer David Gottlieb. REUTERS

White, the US ambassador to Belgium, to give to U.S. President Donald Trump. "A very special thank you to my friends from Antwerp for the magnificent Freedom 250 ring," Trump said in a pre-recorded video message during an event marking America's 250th birthday in Brussels. AP

SLOVAKIA

Referendum to decide lifelong salary for PM

SLOVAKS WILL cast the ballot on Saturday in a referendum to decide whether to cancel lifelong payments for the Prime Minister Robert Fico and other leaders after their terms in office expire. They will also vote on whether to reopen the office of the special prosecutor and the National Criminal Agency, which both dealt with major crime and corruption. The referendum follows a petition organised by the Democrats, a non-parliamentary pro-Western opposition party, and was signed by more than 3,50,000 citizens in the nation of 5.4 million, the threshold required by law. AP

MALI

Govt reports attacks targeting northern towns

THE MALIAN army said Saturday that several northern towns, including Gao and Sévaré, were targeted by rebels. The government said as a rebel group announced a new offensive to capture a northern town. Mohamed Elmaouloud Ramadane, a spokesperson for the Azawad Liberation Front (FLA), said in a Facebook post that the town of Anéfis was being targeted by the separatists. There were no immediate reports of casualties. Mali has previously faced insurgencies by militants affiliated with al-Qaida and the Islamic State group, as well as a separatist rebellion in the north. AP

China defies global pressure, deploys patrol near Taiwan

Lewis Jackson
& Ben Blanchard
Beijing, Taipei, July 4

China said on Saturday it had launched a new coast guard patrol east of Taiwan, drawing a sharp response from Taipei after a task force last month off the island's coast caused alarm in some Western capitals.

China's military operates almost daily around Taiwan, which Beijing views as its own territory. But China has begun using its coast guard to enforce its territorial claims in what Taiwan calls "lawfare" to claim a legal basis for Chinese actions.

The fleet will conduct "law enforcement patrols" in the area, China's Coast Guard said in a statement, adding it would strengthen such patrols in what it called China's jurisdictional waters.

The coast guard will "firmly safeguard China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests", it added. The fleet will conduct "law enforcement patrols" in the area, China's Coast Guard said in a statement, adding it would strengthen such patrols in what it called China's jurisdictional waters.

The coast guard will "firmly safeguard China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests", it added.

Taiwan's government con-

Military promotes 2 new generals after anti-graft purge thins ranks

Beijing: China's military promoted two officers to the rank of general in what may be a precursor to a reorganization of the top following the removal of several of its leaders in a long-running anti-corruption drive. The shake-up is believed to be in part an effort to ensure the military's loyalty to China's ruling Communist Party and its leader, Xi Jinping. Xi, who is also head of the military, presented orders promoting Zhang Shuguang and air force commander Wang Gang to generals at a ceremony Friday. Zhang was also named the head of the division investigating corruption at the Central Military Commission, the military's top body. The promotions could put them in line to fill vacancies on the seven-member commission, which has been effectively reduced to two by the corruption probes. AP

demned the new patrol, saying it was an "illegal expansion of power in violation of international law and a disruption of regional stability". REUTERS

• THE FINDINGS INCLUDE 11 ROCK-CUT TOMBS, WITH AN AVERAGE DEPTH OF 8 METRES, AND SEVEN SURFACE LIMESTONE-BUILT TOMBS

Well preserved: Egypt uncovers lost Byzantine-era city in the western desert

Samy Magdy
Cairo, July 4

A WELL-PRESERVED Byzantine-era residential city in the western desert is one of two major archaeological finds announced by Egypt on Saturday.

The recent discoveries at the Dakhla Oasis and at the Marina el-Alamein archaeological site, near Alexandria, are the latest findings which the Egyptian government hopes will boost the country's vital tourism sector, partially driven by antiquities sightseeing.

Along with the strategic Suez Canal, tourism is a major source of foreign currency in the cash-strapped country.

The Tourism and Antiquities Ministry said that the first discovery reveals details of daily life, urban development and economic activities in the Dakhla Oasis in the fourth century, when Egypt was part of the Byzantine empire.

The unearthed quarters included north-south thoroughfares intersected by east-west streets, forming open squares and public spaces, said Hisham el-Leithy, secretary general of the supreme council of antiquities. A basilica church, dating back to the mid-fourth century, stands at the settlement's head, overlooking its main streets, along with remains of two watchtowers to safeguard

the outskirts, said Mahmoud Massoud, who chairs the archaeological mission.

The oasis, located in Egypt's western province of New Valley in the western desert, is on UNESCO's Tentative List, a step away from being added to the agency's World Heritage List.

A heavily fortified structure with thick defensive walls, and many houses consisting of reception halls and vaulted roofs were found in the area, Massoud said. Among them were the house of Tisous, identified as a church deacon and dating to the second half of the fourth century, which archaeologists believe served as a house church before the construction



It is located in Egypt's western province of New Valley Free Telegram Channel https://t.me/+2RvD_RG9mIMZg1

of the city's basilica.

Archaeologists also uncovered bread ovens, kitchens and stone grinding tools that

had been apparently used to produce food. Also found were well-preserved bronze coins bearing portraits of Byzantine

emperors, Latin inscriptions and Christian symbols, alongside a group of gold coins dating to the reign of Roman emperor Constantius II, who ruled between 337 and 361, the ministry statement said.

Diaa Zahran, head of the Islamic, Coptic and Jewish Antiquities department, said they found a collection of about 200 pottery fragments which would have been used as writing material. The fragments, known as ostraca, have inscriptions detailing commercial transactions, correspondence and other details of daily life, Zahran said.

Separately, archaeologists have found 18 ancient tombs in the Marina el-Alamein archae-

ological site, which is around 100 kilometers (62 miles) west of the Mediterranean city of Alexandria.

The findings included 11 rock-cut tombs, with an average depth of 8 meters, and seven surface limestone-built tombs, the ministry said. That has brought the total tombs found in the site to 48, ministry said.

In the site, archaeologists found pottery vessels, amphorae, lamps, plates, mirrors and limestone beads, it said.

Mission chief Eman Abdel-Khalqi said they found a 2.5-meter-long granite sarcophagus, with skeleton remains that were currently being studied. Close to the sarcophagus, they

found the remains of a plaster sphinx statue, she said.

Abdel-Khalqi said they also found 4 gold pieces placed inside the mouths of some of the deceased — known as "the golden tongue," which had been a practice associated with funerary beliefs of that era.

Marina el-Alamein is an archaeological site close to the city of Alamein in Egypt's Northern Coast.

Unearthed in 1986, archaeologists believe that the site was the ancient Greco-Roman port city of Leukaspis on the Mediterranean, which was built in the second century and thrived until the fourth century, the ministry said. AP

● **RESULTS**
ROUND OF 32
Australia 1(2)-1(4) Egypt
(AET: 1-1, decided by penalties)
Dallas Stadium
Argentina (AET) 3-2 Cape Verde
Miami Stadium
Colombia 1-0 Ghana
Kansas City Stadium

● **MATCH SCHEDULE**
ROUND OF 16
Brazil vs Norway
East Rutherford, 1.30 am
(Monday)
Mexico vs England
Mexico City, 5.30 am
(Monday)

ZEES OTT & UNITE8 CHANNELS



Colombia's Jhon Arias. AP

Arias powers Colombia past Ghana into last 16

JHON ARIAS scored off a sharp cross from Luis Suarez in the opening minutes, and Colombia controlled Ghana on a sweltering night at Arrowhead Stadium, allowing Los Cafeteros to advance to the Round of 16 at the World Cup with a 1-0 victory. Colombia will play Switzerland on Tuesday in Vancouver, British Columbia, for a spot in the quarter-finals. AP

Klopp in talks to become next Germany coach

JURGEN KLOPP has confirmed that Germany's football federation has been in touch with him to take over as the national team's new head coach after their Round of 32 exit. Julian Nagelsmann, who had been leading the team since 2023, stepped down as coach after their loss to Paraguay on penalties. Klopp hasn't been seen in management since announcing his departure from Liverpool in 2024. "About two years ago I stopped at Liverpool and said that I lacked the energy for another year with Liverpool. Since then I'm more recharged, I'm ready," he said. ENS

“ This is part of growing. This helps us grow, and also shows that the team has a soul. ”

PEDRO BRITO, CAPE VERDE



Lionel Messi celebrates Argentina's 3-2 extra-time win even as Cape Verde's Lopes Cabral covers his face in disappointment in Miami. AP

Cabral, hero without a Cape

Cape Verde's wondergoal was struck by a player who was racially abused online, earned £850 a month while playing

Sriram Veera
Mumbai, July 4

HE CUT inside from the left, opened his body, and curled it into the far top corner, Cape Verde 2, Argentina 2, in the 103rd minute of a tie bookmakers had given Cape Verde as little as a 4 percent chance of winning outright. Sidney Lopes Cabral had just scored the greatest goal in Cape Verdean football history. He didn't stay to admire it, running straight into the crowd to find his girlfriend before turning back for the pitch. Argentina won it in extra time, 3-2, in a match that never once behaved like a mismatch. But long after the scoreline fades, people will remember the goal, and that run into the stands.

Two players stood at either end of that Cape Verde back line, and between them they told the whole story of what this team is. Cabral is 23, born in Rotterdam, one of seven squad members born in the Dutch city, more than those born in the island nation's own capital, Praia. His parents left Santiago for the Netherlands at seventeen and met there.

At the other end stood Vozinha, 40, who spent the tour-

namment saving shots from Messi and Spain and became a global name doing it. His contract with Chaves, in Portugal's second division, expired on June 1. He walked out of Hard Rock Stadium with no club to return to, weeks after his teammate's value had risen by ten million euros in a move to Trabzonspor. Cape Verde does not offer its players one story. It offers several, side by side, on the same pitch.

Cabral's version nearly didn't survive its early chapters. The football started at Twente's academy, then Helsingborg in Sweden, before a signing that looked like the end of messianic rather than the start: Rot-Weiss Erfurt, Germany's fifth tier, in February 2022.

"There was nothing at the club," he told *Maisfutebol*. "It was shorts, a thermal shirt, and a rain cape. Nothing else. We trained on a small artificial pitch, very hard. It was a real battle."

He earned the equivalent of £850 a month there, using bin bags as curtains and training in shorts through a cold German winter. Erfurt won promotion. Viktoria Köln came next, then Portugal, where he joined Es-



Sidney Cabral celebrates after scoring Cape Verde's second goal in extra time to level scores at 2-2. AP

trela da Amadora and then Benfica. "My career is a crazy story," he told *A Bola* after signing. "I'm proud I never gave up and always believed in myself. When I was on the bench in Germany's fifth division, I never imagined I'd reach Benfica."

In June, Benfica sold him to Trabzonspor for ten million euros, weeks before this World Cup. He was racially abused by fans during matches in Germany. It happened again, differently, months later at Benfica. After teammate Gianluca Prestianni was accused by Real

Madrid's Vinicius Junior of racially abusing him during the first leg, a charge UEFA provisionally suspended Prestianni over while it investigated. Cabral approached Vinicius after the return leg and asked to swap shirts, a gesture of admiration for a player he has long followed.

Vinicius agreed, pointing toward the tunnel, but the two never crossed paths again, and the swap never happened. Portuguese outlets including *A Bola*, *O Jogo*, and *Maisfutebol* reported Cabral had second thoughts, worried it would look like a betrayal of Prestianni amid the investigation, and cleared the matter up with Benfica's staff. It didn't spare him the backlash.

Supporters flooded his Instagram with hostile comments, some calling for him to leave the club, and Prestianni was seen liking a post criticising him. Cabral told *The Guardian* the messages had turned racist. "I had to turn off my phone," he said. "It's so sad."

None of Cabral's story explains how a nation this size got here at all. Cape Verde has a population of roughly 525,000, the smallest nation ever to reach a men's World Cup knockout stage, and had gone unbeaten through the group without winning a match to get here. Long before any of this seemed possible, Cabral had told his family: "I'm going to be a great football player, I'm gonna reach the top."

“ I'm proud I never gave up and always believed in myself. When I was on the bench in Germany's fifth division, I never imagined I'd reach Benfica. ”

SIDNEY CABRAL
FULL BACK, CAPE VERDE

And I'm living in my dream now," he told *The Guardian*. Before facing the best player of his generation, he had already worked out how to hold the occasion at arm's length.

"If you're like, oh, it's Messi, you're gonna lose your mind," he said. After the final whistle, he was thinking of someone else entirely. "I'm going to swap my shirt with Otamendi," he told Brazilian outlet *Lance*. "He was my teammate until this season."

Portuguese-language coverage of the defeat found little room for grief.

Maisfutebol wrote there was no space that night for tears of sadness in Praia, Mindelo, Sal, or the diaspora scattered across the world, only tears of pride large enough to spill across the Atlantic. Cape Verde goes home from its first World Cup in the round of 32. Cabral's goal against Messi's Argentina stays.

"NOW EVERYBODY KNOWS WHERE CABO VERDE IS"

Players from a country looking like dots on the map, made a big impact at Cup before a heart-break exit.

'Did it with dignity': Cape Verde coach

Cape Verde coach Bustiba felt huge pride in his team after they took three-times world champions Argentina to the wire. Former centre-half Bustiba was the architect of the project and he thought the reaction to the loss by his players, most of whom do not play in elite leagues, showed how far they had come. "The feeling in the dressing room is one of sadness," he told reporters. "We're sad, of course, we're sad because we're leaving the competition and because we got so close, so close. Even though they are sad, the players were hugging each other, they were crying. This is part of growing. This helps us grow, and also shows that the team has a soul. I feel pride in my players, and what they did. They did it with dignity and courage," he added. REUTERS



Deroy Duarte (R) celebrates after scoring with his brother Laros during the Round of 32 match against Argentina. AP

Duarte brothers: Midfield engine

It could have been the greatest night for the Duarte family, but will now leave a bittersweet feeling. Brothers taking the field together in a FIFA World Cup game is a special occasion and it was no different for Cape Verde's Deroy and Laros Duarte against world champions Argentina in Miami on Friday. Raised by single mother Maria de Cruz, fate has not always given the Duartes an easy deal. Against Argentina, they produced performances which nearly orchestrated one of football's greatest upsets. Darius' equalizer brought Cape Verde back in the game after Lionel Messi's early strike, while Laros was the Blue Sharks' midfield conductor. "It feels like a dream," Maria was quoted by *dutchnews.nl* before the Round of 32 game. Courtesy her sons, Cape Verde were in dreamland for most part of the game. ENS

'No coincidence they held Spain, Uruguay'

After Cape Verde gave Argentina an almighty scare before succumbing to an own goal to lose a tight Round of 32 match 3-2 in Extra Time, Lionel Messi was all praises for the World Cup debutants after the contest. After the match when he was taking photos with the Cape Verde players, an usually stoic Messi also cracked a joke that their opponents 'kicked the crap out of him during the match and were now asking for selfies and his jersey.' "They asked for my jersey, everything. On the field, they kicked the crap out of me. It is no coincidence that this team had not lost to Spain or Uruguay," Messi, the top-scorer at this World Cup, was quoted as saying by *Iyc Sports*. ENS



They asked for my jersey, but on the field they kicked the c**p out of me: Messi jokingly said. AP

Henry praises valiant show

Cape Verde got applause following an incredible showing against the defending world champions Argentina and for pushing them to the limit. French Legend Thierry Henry was full of praise for the World Cup debutants, considering how this small nation exceeded every expectation at their first World Cup. "You know what's actually impressive? It is not so much on how they played and everything, which is impressive, but the number of people who live there," said Henry on *Fox Sports* post match show. Reflecting on the Cape Verdeans' performance against the South American giants, Henry added, "Make them know and let them know where you're from with how you perform. Now everybody knows where Cabo Verde is." ENS

{ PH A R A O H S R I S E }

Salah gets emotional as Egypt win their first-ever knockout match

Prithviraj
New Delhi, July 4

AT ONE end of the pitch, Mohamed Salah, who minutes earlier had sent Egypt through with a chipped Panenka down the middle, stood alone for a moment and applauded the crowd, tears in his eyes, before his teammates pulled him into a mob that would later place a Tutankhamun headdress on his head.

At the other end, Lucas Herrington turned his back on the crossbar that had just denied him, put one arm to his curly hair, and bent over to hide his face. At 18, he is the youngest starter Australia has ever fielded at a World Cup, and will never be remembered for the miss that sent Egypt through. Egypt had just beaten Australia 4-2 on penalties to win a knockout match for the first time in World Cup.

Before kickoff, Salah, 34, gathered his teammates in the tunnel. "I told the boys before the game, guys, this is the biggest game you could play in your life, so just enjoy it," he said afterward. He was not the only one in tears.

Manager Hossam Hassan cried too, and dedicated the win to a cause far from the pitch. "My heart and soul are with the



Mohamed Salah tears up after the win over Australia. AP

Palestinian people," he said. "I thank them and dedicate this victory to them. We succeeded in making Arab people proud."

The match that produced all this offered little of its own. Egypt led early: Emam Ashour's own free kick was blocked, the ball came back off Jackson Irvine, and Ashour, unmarked at the back post, headed it in.

Omar Marmoush should have doubled the lead early in the second half but dragged a chance wide, and it cost Egypt when Aiden O'Neill's looping free kick found its way in off Mohammed Fany's head ten minutes later.

In the closing minutes of normal time Salah swept in a

cross for Rami Rabiah that Patrick Beach saw the gamble that then had a shot of his own blocked soon after. Marmoush set him up again in extra time, and this time Salah skied over the bar.

Goalkeeper gamble

Australia's coach Tony Popovic made the gamble that would define the night. He withdrew Beach, who had been outstanding, and sent on his captain, Mat Ryan, purely for the shootout.

Ryan never got near a single kick. Souttar's opening effort sailed over the bar. Herrington, stepping up with more experi-

“ My heart and soul are with the Palestinian people. I thank them and dedicate this victory to them. ”

HOSSAM HASSAN
EGYPT MANAGER

enced teammates still on the pitch, side-footed his attempt too high, into the same crossbar that had already beaten Souttar.

Between those misses, Mahmoud Saber and Rami Rabiah scored theirs for Egypt without fuss.

Then came Salah, stepping up to the third kick — a Panenka — with the chance to all but finish it. "Hossam Abdelmaguid told the fourth and last. He puffed out his cheeks, checked his stride, and rolled it to his right as Ryan dived the other way.

He ran to the corner and tore off his shirt before the rest of Egypt reached him.

Both teams had come to Dallas chasing the same thing, a first World Cup knockout win each had waited a lifetime for. The shootout only had room for one of them.

The various versions of the Panenka, and how it's magic when executed well

Nihal Koshie
New Delhi, July 4

IF ANTONIN PANENKA had his way, Mo Salah would have paid royalty to the former Czech midfielder, the inventor of the chip-shot penalty named after him. Panenka's original, the last of five spot-kicks taken by Czechoslovakia, won his country the Euro 1976 title against West Germany. Panenka even tried to get his creation patented. But officials didn't entertain him, he said on the 50th anniversary of the deceptive spot-kick.

Plenty of high-quality Panenkas have come in crunch moments. Egypt won their first-ever knockout game at a FIFA World Cup, beating Australia 4-2 on penalties with Salah scoring the third one with a Panenka.

When Salah prepared to strike in the shootout after the game was tied 1-1 after extra time, he seemed to be going for a full-blooded shot into one of the corners.

The Liverpool legend took a few steps to his right and then ran in from a short distance at an angle. But instead of unleashing power, he chipped the ball with his left foot in the middle of the net, where Australian goalkeeper Matthew Ryan



Salah scores from the spot via a Panenka. AP

would have stood if he hadn't dived to his left.

Now, watch footage of the first Panenka. Antonin didn't amble in but ran in full speed from a few metres before chipping the ball towards the centre. "I wasn't 100 percent confident I would score. I was 1,000 percent confident," he told *The Guardian*.

It helped that in those days of limited TV footage, the Panenka was a novelty outside Czechoslovakia. And to think that he came up with it because of a bet during club practice sessions with the goalie. If the goalkeeper stopped one of the five shots, Panenka bought him beer and chocolates.

Pirlo's classic

Salah's kick, however, wasn't as floaty as Antonin's or Andrea Pirlo's chip.

the last second, when I saw Joe Hart, the England goalie, doing all sorts of things on his line," Pirlo says in the book.

Zinedine Zidane's Panenka for France in the seventh minute of the 2006 World Cup final against Italy was a way of exerting psychological pressure on the best goalie — Gianluigi Buffon. Unlike Salah's or Pirlo's, Zidane's Panenka wasn't straight but to the left of Buffon. He was fortunate that the ball landed inside the goal line after hitting crossbar.

Others have not been so lucky. Even Lionel Messi hit the crossbar in the Copa America quarterfinal against Ecuador two years ago. Recently, in the Africa Cup of Nations final, Morocco's Hakim Diaz chipped the ball to Senegal goalkeeper Edouard Mendy. The moment would have been Diaz's cross to bear if the Confederation of African Football (CAF) had not overturned Senegal's 1-0 extra time win for their walkout protest during the match.

There is an element of risk in Pirlo, in his biography *'I Think Therefore Play'* recalled how his teammates asked him after the shootout: "Are you mad, Andrea?" But in his mind, the Panenka was the "safest" and "most productive option". "I made my decision right at



Diego Maradona lifting the World Cup Trophy at the Azteca Stadium in 1986. (R) England were hoping to keep the name of their hotel in Mexico secret, but by the time the team bus rolled in, hundreds of people were outside. AP

FACING THE HEAT



England look for Azteca closure



Sandip G
New York, July 4

TO ERR is human, and forgiving, perhaps, is divine. But no error has acquired divinity or remained unforgiven as Diego Maradona's Hand of God.

Forty years later, when the successors of the wronged Englishmen land at the site of their deepest injustice, the scars seem as fresh as the pain seems just as bitter. Their collective consciousness is not battling Raul Jimenez and friends, or the lungs-burning altitude, or the baying crowd that transforms the citadel into an inferno. But Maradona, the Hand of God, and the Deceit of the Devil.

The illusion of Maradona, who died five years ago, would hang like a human billboard, pinned to the intricately designed roofs of the stadium. None of the players were born

Back at the home of the 'Hand of God', Tuchel & Co face Mexico in the Round of 16, seeking to exorcise their demons of 1986

when Maradona's twist the goal past Peter Shilton. But they could spot his mischievous smile from a corner, or his laughter crackling from stands; or gazing mockingly at them. They must have watched the goal a thousand times, heard and read stories of the sleight-of-fist chicanery. Even their non-English manager, Thomas Tuchel, spoke about it like a spiritual guru. "We will get back. Karma will come back for us. We will turn it around. Maybe it is a good moment to make peace with the stadium and turn things around," he said.

The German manager was 12 when he spent nights watching the drama unfold. He remembers even the spidery shadow "that never moved" from a giant pole. "The sun was so steep that the shadow was always around the middle circle. I remember, of course, the World Cup of Maradona. The two goals against England. The one drib-

bling and the one ... yeah..." he paused and added, "... which would never stand these days." Maybe both goals. The goal of the century had a blatant enough foul on Glenn Hoddle in the build-up. But some myths are just meant to be.

It could be the most romanticised football match known to mankind. Everything is a treasure. Every detail, nugget, souvenir, and memory. Maradona's shirt won the former England midfielder Steve Hodge 74 million pounds in an auction in 2022. Movies were made, books were written, and statues were made. Narratives, fictitious or real, were spun. An elderly journalist claimed, "the saw guilt in his eyes." After all, he was a true catholic. "Or maybe, he could have confessed to a priest at the pulpit. But in England, he is a saint without salvation. He remains an unforgiven figure. During the 2018 World Cup draw ceremony, the former England

striker Gary Lineker quipped when he picked Argentina and Croatia from the pot. "Yes, Diego has picked out Croatia to play against his Argentina, but Diego has always been good with his hands. *¡Muy bueno con las manos!*" "You are very good with your hands." He never forgave his act, but admired the player was: "We have just never seen anyone have such a beautiful affection with a football."

Even his death did not bring forgiveness to some of Lineker's colleagues. Like Shilton. "What I don't like is that he never apologised," Shilton wrote in the *Daily Mail* after Maradona's death. "Never at any stage did he say he had cheated and that he would like to say sorry. Instead, he used his 'Hand of God' line. That was not right. It seems he had sportsmanship in him but sadly no greatness," he added.

To his comrade Terry Butcher, "It's the greatest piece of fraud in football history." He

told *Sky Sports*, "I still feel the injustice now. People tell you to let it go, but we felt we could go all the way that year and you still think about what might have been. It was probably the best piece of fraud you will ever see—and he got away with it."

Beating Mexico at Azteca, the fortress where the BTR have lost only two of their last 89 games, is a daunting task in itself. England will the vibes after producing a memorable escape against Congo. But Mexico is a canner side on a five-match winning streak. England would feel tired legs and a recent ton altitude of 2250 metres. The supporters in the stands will be vastly outnumbered—England's official fans could muster only 3,000 tickets.

But the past casts thicker and longer shadows. Most of the England players would feel like stepping into a magically realistic world, where dwells the God, the demon, the feathered guardian snake and patron saint, Santa Ursula. England have to win a match, beat a curse, and reap the rewards of their "karma."

At 2,240 metres above sea level, Mexico's Azteca will test England

The Three Lions reach at the last moment and leave soon to reduce low oxygen effects

Shivani Naik
Mumbai, July 4

ENGLAND COACH Thomas Tuchel is as alert to 2240 as he would be to his 4-2-3-1, when they travel to Mexico for the R16 clash on Sunday. Estadio Azteca is 2240m above sea-level, and poses a challenging interlude between defeating DR Congo, and possibly running into Brazil/Norway in the quarters. The altitude is Mexico's greatest ally, as the rarefied air can impede England players' oxygen uptake, and given there was no possibility of acclimatising with just a 4-day turnaround time.

Tuchel has flipped the logic with 'very late is better than not early enough'—leaving arrival in Mexico, to the last possible hour, 48 hours as FIFA mandates. It's not an exact science, but Tuchel wants to simply reduce the damage that's inevitable with the disadvantage. Mexico, meanwhile, have won all their 4WC matches here, netting 8 goals, conceding none. A trepidation it may be, but Tuchel is hoping 2240m (7220 feet) doesn't end in tumult.

Azteca challenge

Situated 7,220ft above sea level, the oxygen pressure in the air drops severely (at least by 20%, from 160 mmHg to 125 mmHg) at that height, as per *Football Ground Guide*. This reduced pressure makes the number of oxygen molecules in the air scantier, reducing aerobic capacity, making breathing heavier. With the bloodstream thinner on oxygen, the body tries to ensure enough supply to muscles while busting the lungs. It's not just the running limbs, but oxygen supply to brain dictates decision-making, so goal-mouth chaos and counter-attack runs can both be hampered as recovery slows down.

Immediate impact?

Plenty of substitutions in the second half, are expected. Fewer kilometres will get run, high presses might feel daunting after 25-30 minutes, fast sprints and quick turns will test lungs and dehydration is imminent. While the running itself might feel unimpeded because of less resistance, the recovery with sharp intake of breath between accelerations, is a com-

Altitude matters



Cerro de Pasco in Peru is the world's highest stadium at 4380m



Highest stadium in England is West Brom's The Hawthorns at 168m



Kenya's Iten, where renowned distance runners train, is 2400m over sea level



Bob Beamon's legendary long jump effort of 8.90m at the 1968 Olympics was aided by Mexico City's elevation



At steep altitudes, Earth's barometric pressure falls, air thins and less oxygen goes into the bloodstream

It's not just the running limbs, but oxygen supply to brain dictates decision-making, so goal-mouth chaos and counterattacks can both be hampered as recovery slows down.

mon symptom. BBC quoted British high altitude runner Callum Elson as saying, "Recovery is key—that idea of trying to catch your breath, trying to let your heart rate get back down, once it's up, it literally just doesn't come down."

Get-in-get-out option

It is impossible for the human body to adapt within 4 days to Azteca. It needs 2 weeks at least. Ahead of 1986, Sir Bobby Robson took the squad to Mexico a year earlier to experience the conditions. "He took us there. But you never really acclimatise," ex-England international Peter Reid told *BBC Breakfast*. Tuchel has pragmatically chosen to accept it as a disadvantage. England's rugby team had once opted for a late arrival in Johannesburg (1753m) under Eddie Jones. Both teams lost anyway. *The Independent* quoted Mercedes' FI driver George Russell as explaining, "Sleeping you feel your heart rate is elevated and a bit breathless. Arrive as late as possible, and leave as soon as possible, because you don't sleep that well." Running is impacted. "Getting there late is the best thing. You want to go into those 90 minutes being as fresh as possible. Any extra hour you are there your body is not in as good a place."

Lingering effects

While conquering Azteca might be a glorious challenge, England are obviously aiming further—heading towards Brazil/Norway in heat of Miami. Runner Elson told *BBC*, "If they get through, how absolutely exhausted are they going to be afterwards? Even if they manage in the moment with adrenaline...the after-effects of how they recover will be the really hard bit."

Advantage Mexico

They have played all save one of their four games at the Azteca, and travel from a base only 15 minutes away. Their pre-tournament camp would've helped even the majority of the squad who don't live at altitude, like Jimenez. The humidity, the noisy crowd and the ghost of Maradona, all envelop the team that's unbeaten in 10 World Cup games there. Though their history is formidable—89 played, 70 wins, 17 draws and only 2 losses—the altitude leaves an X-factor: The swerving ball.

The ball at 2200m

Very fast. 5-6% quicker than at sea level. That's worrisome for England goalie Jordan Pickford, and his backs, Guehi, Konsa and Djed Spence. But Mexico, which has been scoring through long range goals, can falter on set-pieces. England though, is coming off Set-piece Summer literally. So, Declan Rice and Bukayo Saka can send them swerving in, deliver cutters and benders while Harry Kane, Jude Bellingham, Elliot Anderson, John Stones (62') soar over the shorter Mexicans, at great speed. The men might tire, but at the Azteca, the ball absolutely bullets forth.

Vaibhav, 15, becomes youngest India debutant; scores 14

Shuvaditya Bose
New Delhi, July 4

ON THE day he became the youngest cricketer to represent India, at 15 years and 99 days, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi offered an important reminder: prodigies are nurtured with countless narratives, but only one of them is true—their own.

The pre-match discourse demanded another miracle, the sort he performed in the IPL. In a dead-calm, he ball 14, punctuated by the kind of misjudgements one would expect from a 15-year-old. It served as a timely reality check.

The second T20 in Manchester will be remembered for

Sooryavanshi's debut. There was, however, the minor matter of a match to be won—and England took the bragging rights in that regard—courtesy Jacob Bethell. The hosts secured a four-wicket win, reaching the target of 191 with over to spare to take a 1-0 lead after the Durham game was washed out.

At the opposite end, Abhishek Sharma began where he left off at Chester-le-Street. Three boundaries came off Sam Curran's first over, but a wicket off the last delivery of the Powerplay set India back.

With a 49-run knock, Ishan Kishan answered the questions heading towards the team management. With captain Shreyas



Vaibhav Sooryavanshi. CREMAS

yer playing an enforcer's role with his 22-ball 37, Kishan constructed a 65-run third-wicket stand, accumulating 93 runs per over in the process.

India were comfortably placed at 130/3 after 13 overs. The spanner in the works was thrown by Curran, with the wickets of Kishan and Shreyas. Dube in quick succession. That, India eventually got to 190, was courtesy a 17-run final over in which Tilak Varma struck a four and two sixes.

Arsheep Singh struck early with the ball for India, not once but twice, with Phil Salt and Gus Butler departing for ducks.

However, the joy was short-lived as Brook struck two fours and three sixes off his next over. Axar Patel's dismissal of Brook in the fifth over, hence, was of immense significance to India's cause. With the captain

gone, Jacob Bethell and Tom Banton prioritised consolidation, which saw England scoring 67 in the next 50 deliveries. Iyer recalled Arsheep, who got his third scalp of the match in Banton. Will Lachfield prey to Varun Chakravarthy.

A 29-run 17th over, in which Bethell struck three sixes and a four off Ravi Bishnoi, effectively sealed the game, with him unbeaten on a 46-ball 76.

BRIEF SCORES: India 190/7 in 20 overs (Kishan 49, Abhishek Sharma 43; Sam Curran 3/33) lost to England (Bethell 76, Harry Brook 39; Arsheep Singh 3/30) by four wickets.

Eala ends Swiatek's title run, Rybakina also out

Associated Press
London, July 4

IGASWIATEK'S title defence at Wimbledon ended Saturday in a 7-6 (9), 6-2 third-round loss to 21-year-old Alexandra Eala, who continues to make history for the Philippines.

Eala is the first Filipino player, male or female, to reach the fourth round of a Grand Slam singles tournament. The left-handed Eala dropped to her knees and rolled onto her back on Centre Court after hitting a forehand winner on her third match point.

"It's incredible to have my countrymen cheering me on and knowing that we're all in this together," she said in an on-court interview. The third-seeded Swiatek earned her first Wimbledon title a year ago when she beat Amanda Anisimova 6-0, 6-0 in the final.

Eala, who has trained at the Rafael Nadal Academy, gained worldwide support last year on her breakthrough run to the Miami Open semifinals, which included an upset of Swiatek. Shortly before Swiatek's exit, 2022 champion Elena Rybakina was upset by Elise Mertens 7-6 (4), 6-1.



Iga Swiatek lost 7-6 (9), 6-2 in the third round. AP

MEN'S: Alex de Minaur (5) def. Zachary Svajda 6-2, 5-7, 6-2, 6-4; Flavio Cobolli (9) def. Karen Khachanov (19) 6-0, 7-6 (4), 6-7 (5), 6-2, 6-2. **Women's Singles:** Marta Kostyuk (12) def. Emma Navarro (23) 6-2, 4-6, 6-1; Ashlyn Krueger def. Darja Snigur 6-3, 6-2; Marie Bouzkova (21) def. Liudmila Samsonova 4-6, 7-6 (3), 6-4; Elise Mertens (25) def. Elena Rybakina (27) 6-4, 6-1; Jasmine Paolini (13) def. Maria Sakkarl 6-1, 6-2; Alexandra Eala (29) def. Iga Swiatek (37) 7-6 (9), 6-2.

No Eligible Voter to be excluded and No Ineligible Person to be included

SPECIAL INTENSIVE REVISION-2026 SIR

How to fill Enumeration form?

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Name and contact No of BLO (pre-printed)

Elector's Name, EPIC, Address (Pre-printed)	Serial No., Part No. & name, ACPIC Name, State (Pre-printed)	Old Photo (Pre-printed)	Paste Current Photo
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This information will be pre-printed

Affix your latest photograph here

Annexure-III

Date of Birth (DDMMYYYY) Author No. (Optional) Mobile No. Father's/Guardian's Name Father's/Guardian's EPIC No. (if available) Mother's Name Mother's EPIC No. (if available) Spouse's Name (if applicable) Spouse's EPIC No. (if available)	(i) The elector mentioned above, being my/our family member, has not acquired the citizenship of any other country. (ii) I am applying for inclusion in the Electoral Roll, and the name mentioned above, being myself/my family member, is not included in any other Assembly Constituency/Parliamentary Constituency. (iii) I am aware that making the above statement or declaration in relation to this application which is false and which I know or believe to be false or do not believe to be true, is punishable under Section 31 of Representation of the People Act, 1950 (or Section 10 of 1950 with amendment for a term which may extend to one year or with fine or both).
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JULY 5, 2026

SCREEN | PAGE 3

Feels like home

Former *Indian Idol* contestant Deepali Sahay on her song *Tere paas* main from *Main Vaapas Aaunga* that is leaving listeners misty-eyed

POINT OF VIEW | PAGE 2

Chef Himanshu Saini's Michelin star leap



Mango on my map

The mango is not a fruit, it's an aroma, it's sticky elbows, summer and chaos and, when everything is forgotten, a memory that brings you home

Kishi Arora

EVERY MORNING this summer, I walk up to my terrace and count to three. Three Amrapali mangoes hang from a tree I planted the year my father died.

Earlier this year, it was covered in blossoms, the kind that make you pull out your phone and call your mother. Then, Delhi's storms arrived, as they always do, and took most of the flowers with them. Three survived. They are getting bigger and heavier by the day, which is how I know the wait is almost over.

He loved mangoes. When he passed away in 2018, we planted an Amrapali and a Harsingar over his ashes at the *dham* in Meerut that meant so much to him. Around the same time, almost without thinking, I planted the same two trees on my terrace in Delhi. One pair rooted in a place of memory. Another pair woven into my everyday life, mine to watch through every season, every storm, every June that came and left without giving me anything. This year, finally, the terrace Amrapali gave me fruit.

I keep doing the count.

He was from Muzaffarnagar, my mother is from Banaras. I grew up in Ghaziabad and landed in Delhi, and work eventually took me South and West and everywhere in between. Somewhere across all of it, without meaning to, I built a map. Not of highways or hill stations but of mangoes. Every place I have loved has one attached to it. Every person I have lost or kept close is somewhere in that list.

• • •

It was my father who introduced me to Rataul. Small, intensely fragrant, almost unreasonably flavourful for its size. Not as famous as Alphonso or Kesar but fiercely loved by those who know it. You soften it between your palms, make a small opening at the tip and drink it. No knife, no bowl, no ceremony. He ate it the way people eat things they grew up with: fast, without explaining it to anyone, as though stopping to admire it would ruin the whole thing. Every family has a food that makes a person immediately present. Rataul is mine for me. I cannot see one at a *mandi* without being, briefly and completely, back in a time when he was still here.

• • •

Banaras is my mother's side, which means it is where my *nani* and *nana* lived, and where some of my most stubborn memories were made.

Every summer, my *nana* would return home carrying boxes of Langra. Before anyone could touch them, the mangoes had to be soaked in buckets of water to cool. As children, we found this rule unreasonable. We would circle those buckets every 20 minutes, certain that collective impatience might somehow speed things along. It never did.

When they were finally declared ready — cool and sweet, fragrant and fibrous — the wait felt worth it. I am well into adulthood and the sight of a Langra still puts me right back in that house. The particular quality of afternoon light. The sound of water in a bucket. The specific restlessness of children who have been told to be patient and are choosing, deliberately, not to be.

• • •

Before Delhi,

there was Ghaziabad. Nearly a decade of it. Cousins, long summer holidays, mangoes at almost every meal.

Chausa was the favourite because there was simply no dignified way to eat it. Sticky hands, sticky chin, occasionally sticky elbows, all expected and entirely fine. Nobody thought to use a fork. Nobody wanted to. Chausa is probably the most honest mango. It doesn't pretend to be elegant and it doesn't need to be. Safeda and Dasherri showed up differently at our house. Blended, chilled, poured into a tall glass by my mother, who makes one of the best mango shakes I have ever had. The moment you take a sip, a little mango moustache forms above your lip. We still laugh every time it happens, which tells you something about how often we still make it. I know I am biased about the shake itself. I do not think it changes the fact.

• • •

Panna in Madhya Pradesh has its own category in my memory. The religion my parents follow has its headquarters *dham* there and we made that journey often, outside of any holiday plan. After temple came *bhag*, then family time spread out over the afternoon, and then my father would lead us to his *pakorewala*. His *pakorewala*. Not ours. His. He had found this man the way my father found most things he loved, quietly, without announcement, and then behaved as if everyone obviously already knew about him.

Because this was not your standard onion and potato situation, whatever the *sabziwala* had went into the batter. Pumpkin. Bitter gourd. Drumstick leaves. Amaranth. Things that had no business being pakoras and yet, once fried, made complete sense. Between an open-minded father with strong opinions on flavour and a *pakorewala* willing to try anything, something genuinely good kept coming out of that oil.

And then there were the *aam ke pakode*.

Raw mango, light batter, hot oil. Crispy outside, the mango inside going soft and tangy and almost jammy from the heat. Sour and hot and a little sweet all at once. I have never found them anywhere else. The kind of dish that exists because two people, one with an idea and one with a *kadhai*, decided to just go for it.

I make them at home every season now. They are good but not the same.

• • •

Work later took me to Bengaluru and Mumbai, and both cities added their own stops to the map. The Bengaluru memory is a specific one. I was there setting up a bakery, deep in recipe development, the kind of work where your palate is tired and everything starts tasting like butter and sugar. In the middle of all of it, my client handed me a Badami mango. Just like that, no preamble. Karnataka's quieter answer to Alphonso and, in that moment, possibly the best thing I had eaten all trip. Badami did not need the contrast to taste good. It just did.

• • •

Kerala changed my understanding of what this fruit could do in a kitchen.

Until then, the only savoury mango I knew was my mother's cooking. Raw mango *sabzi*. Raw mango in kadhi. Stuffed into a paratha. All of it deeply familiar, all of it made from the raw fruit. The idea of cooking a ripe mango into something savoury had simply never occurred to me. Then I came across Mambazha Pulissery. Ripe mango with coconut, yogurt and spices. It sounded, frankly, like an act of chaos. Then, I tasted it. Sweet, tangy and oddly grounding. It made the kind of quiet sense that only dishes cooked for generations tend to make. It also showed me how narrow my picture of this fruit had been. Kerala alone has countless local varieties growing in backyards and homesteads, known within particular communities, unnamed on any national list. India's mango story is so much larger than the dozen varieties most of us can name from memory.

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One discovery that has stayed very close: Jardalu from Bihar.

The fragrance stopped me the first time I tasted it. Some mangoes lead with sweetness, some with texture, some with a colour that makes a promise the flavour then keeps. Jardalu announces itself through scent alone. Before you have even taken a bite, something has already happened to you. I loved it enough to track down a grafted sapling for my terrace. It

1. WESTERN UTTAR PRADESH RATAUL

Small, fiercely aromatic, a cult mango

2. MALIHABAD, UP DASHERI

A North Indian summer staple

3. BANARAS AND EASTERN UP LANGRA

Distinctive flavour, deeply loyal following

4. UTTAR PRADESH AND BIHAR CHAUSA

Juicy beyond reason, made for two hands

5. BIHAR JARDALU

Everything is in the fragrance

6. WEST BENGAL HIMSAGAR

Fibreless, purely sweet

7. WEST BENGAL LAKSHMANBHOG

Balanced and beautifully coloured

8. GUJARAT KESAR

The aamras mango

9. MAHARASHTRA ALPHONSO

India's most internationally known

10. MAHARASHTRA PAIRI

Home kitchens and classic aamras

WHICH MANGO FOR WHAT

EATING FRESH, NO FUSS

Rataul, Langra, Chausa, Jardalu, Himsagar

AAMRAS

Kesar, Pairi

MANGO SHAKE OR LASSI

Safeda, Dasherri, Rasputri

CHEESECAKE

Alphonso, Amrapali

CAKES AND TARTS

Alphonso, Banganapalli

PANCAKES

Amrapali

MANGO ICE CREAM

Alphonso, Kesar

GRILLING

Alphonso, Banganapalli

FRUIT SALAD

Himsagar, Rataul

MANGO SALSA

Banganapalli, Neelam

AAM PANNA

Raw Totapuri

HING WALA ACHAR

Rajapuri, Totapuri

RAW CHUTNEY

Raw Langra, raw Totapuri

MANGO JAM

Pairi, Alphonso

11. MADHYA PRADESH SUNDARJA

A local gem that deserves more attention

12. KARNATAKA BADAMI

Karnataka's quieter Alphonso

13. KARNATAKA RASPUTRI

Juices and summer drinks

14. ANDHRA PRADESH BANGANAPALLI

India's most widely eaten table mango

15. TELANGANA HIMAYAT

A connoisseur's mango

16. TAMIL NADU NEELAM

Extends the season a little longer

17. GOA MANKURAD

Often preferred locally over Alphonso

18. KERALA KILICHUNDAN

Named for its parrot beak shape

19. KERALA NAADAN VARIETIES

Backyard mangoes unique to each community

20. ASSAM BOMBAY

The Northeast's most recognised variety



Naadan Varieties Kerala



Banganapalli Andhra Pradesh



Badami Karnataka



Rasputri Karnataka



Himayat Telangana



Neelam Tamil Nadu



Kilichundan Kerala



Mankurad Goa



Bombay Assam



Rataul Uttar Pradesh



Dasherri Uttar Pradesh



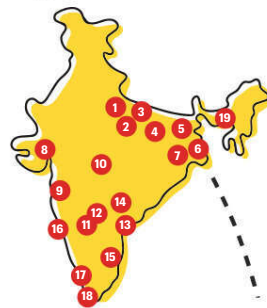
Langra Uttar Pradesh



Chausa Uttar Pradesh



Himsagar West Bengal



grows up there now alongside my Amrapali, small and unhurried, waiting to write its own chapter.

• • •

At home, mangoes are an entire season. Not just a fruit.

Before the sweet ones arrive, raw mangoes take over the kitchen. Aam panna appears on the counter. Chutneys get made. *Aam ka hing wala achar*, my mother's recipe with no oil and no sun-drying required, shows up on the table and tastes more like summer than almost anything else I know.

Then, everything shifts. Some become aamras with hot puris, a combination that has never once needed improving. Others go into cakes and cheesecakes. And sometimes, I grill mango and serve it with yuzu honey, something I started doing almost by accident during a recipe session and have not stopped since. The heat caramelises the fruit and the citrus cuts straight through, in a way that surprises you every single time. That is what makes this fruit so remarkable. It belongs equally to the entirely traditional and the completely new, without straining in either direction.

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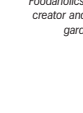
The three Amrapali mangoes on my terrace are still ripening as I write this.

They might just be the biggest Amrapali I ever eat. The plant has put everything it has into these three — seven years of waiting and not one ounce of energy wasted on anything else. Whether they will be sweet or not, I do not know. That is a question to be answered only once they are picked and cut open. And somehow, that feels right. The best things usually make you wait for the answer.

I will eat them quietly. Probably alone, on the terrace, before Delhi gets too loud. Somewhere between Muzaffarnagar and Banaras, Ghaziabad and Delhi, Panna and Bengaluru, Kerala and Bihar, mangoes stopped being just a fruit I looked forward to every year.

They became the map itself.

Kishi Arora is a Culinary Institute of India-trained chef, founder of Foodaholics, content creator and urban gardener



Lakshmanbhog West Bengal



Kesar Gujarat



Sundarja Madhya Pradesh



Alphonso Maharashtra

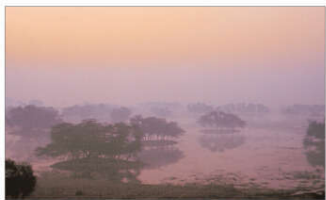


Himsagar West Bengal



DOWN IN JUNGLELAND

BY RANJIT LAL
AUTHOR, ENVIRONMENTALIST
AND BIRD WATCHER



THE HOUR OF SILENCE
A misty dawn over Sultanpur National Park, Haryana

Nature's Tonic & Tranquiliser

A sunset and a sunrise can evoke different moods and habits — in birds and cities alike

THESE HAVE got to be the best parts of any day and it's amazing how many of us miss out on them. Especially dawn. Out of the deep indigo stillness of the night, the first clear whistles of an early rising bird, breaks the silence, informing everyone that it has survived the night and all its terrors and is proclaiming its rights over its territory and inviting a mate to join it. If you are lucky enough to be in a forest, a sudden chorus of bird song breaks out — this is the famous dawn chorus and can lift your spirits like nothing else can. You can only stand stock still and listen to this orchestra. Soon shafts of misty sunlight are slanting their way through the trees, lighting up the forest floor and the leaves you notice sparkle like diamonds — either from dew or exudation — that rims their edges like a coronet.

In Goa, I would wait for the first brilliant rays to pierce their way through the coconut palms, and gold through the house, pure gold, so brightly you had to move away. Skeins of white herons would fly past, on their way where the early fishing was good.

Even in Mumbai, it was well worth watching the sun come over the city, usually shrouded in haze, as I listened to the sounds of the huge metropolises gradually waking up to face another day.

A misty dawn at Sultanpur National Park (this when there was mist and fog and not smog) shrouded the entire waterbody and its islands in mauve. From the water came the restive bugling of cranes, as one by one they lined up and took off in single file, heading no doubt for the nearby fields. They would be back again at the end of the day.

Sunset evokes a different mood entirely. As the light leaches out of the sky, the birds begin to return to their roost. In Delhi, when sparrows were still plentiful, they would stream into the avenue trees along with mynas and parakeets and gibber away at the top of their voices as they jostled for the most comfortable (and safe) roosts and excitedly exchanged the gossip of the day. The noise would rise to a crescendo and then suddenly as a switch being flipped — there would be silence.

Watching and photographing the sun go down — especially over the sea, a sheet of gold — has become a passion for many. On the beach, the crabs begin to stir, emerging from under the sand, or their rocky crevices clattering over the rocks in search of dinner. Fruit bats screech hideously as they unfurl their leathery wings and head for the nearest fruiting fig. Moths blur over white blooms and then crazily orbit bright lights before crashing into them and getting roasted. The first pinprick stars begin to flicker as sky turns to indigo again and if you're lucky, a majestic butter-gold moon may rise in stately fashion, from the east.

Every dawn and every dusk is different. A brand-new 15-minute spectacle every morning and evening. Just the tonic and tranquiliser we all need as we face yet another hustling-bustling day, or wind down with our sundowns when the day is done.



AKASH PATIL

THE BOY FROM SUI WALAN

How Himanshu Saini built the first and only Indian restaurant with three Michelin stars

Heena Khandelwal

THIS HAS not been a 100-ft journey," said chef Himanshu Saini, when Trésind Studio (Dubai) won three Michelin stars last year, becoming the first Indian restaurant in the world to do so. "It has been a marathon for many years." He means it in every sense. The restaurant took seven years to find its footing. The chef took longer.

Saini grew up in Sui Walan, a neighbourhood in old Delhi, in a joint family home of around 50 people — 20 rooms across three floors, a courtyard at the centre, and a store room large enough to hold the copious quantities of food. Everything was made from scratch: spices were ground at home, peas shelled, papads rolled out, pickles fermented and wheat was cleaned. "The conversation in the house revolved around food. What are we eating next?" he recalls, sitting at Trésind Mumbai recently where he had come for a pop-up with Chef Manish Mehrotra and Chef Sarfaraz Ahmed.

Saini, who lives in Dubai, admits that he became a chef because he loved to eat. The cooking came later, and initially from necessity. "You are 10. You don't have money. You are hungry. What do you do? You make something for yourself," he says, recalling how he would buy a ready-made pizza base for Rs 10, put some sauce, vegetables, cheese and made himself a meal. "Or find algo gobi, add some spices, sauces and turned it into a sandwich," he adds.

Saini wasn't academically inclined. Being a chef, he admits, was his destiny. His first interview was with Old World Hospitality in Delhi, after his graduation. "As a trainee, I had to spend a month each at their 18 restaurants. Sometime in the third month, I was working at a largely empty restaurant at the Manor Hotel when chef Manish Mehrotra came from London in 2008, to do trials for what would become Indian Accent. Mehrotra left, came back two months later, and asked for the same team. "I had been in any other kitchen at that moment, my life

Guests now know why food in the Thar desert is built around dairy. Because of water scarcity. Or why Chettinad food is so spicy. Because the body needs to sweat in extreme heat

would have been completely different," he says.

Saini stayed there for five years; it transformed him. Mehrotra used *umeboshi* and soy sauce alongside Indian spices, treated the cuisine not as a fixed thing but as a living one. "He introduced such an extraordinary inventory of ingredients." The influence ran deep — when Saini later went to open the Masala Library followed by Farzi Café, the Indian Accent imprint on his cooking was visible, and he took some criticism for it. "But it was the only kitchen I had trained in. That was what I had," he says.

Initially, Saini refused to join the Trésind. New York was the dream of every chef, and Saini was all set to leave for it when he received a call from Bhupendra Nath, founder of Passion F&B. He initially refused but two months later, he reached out to Nath and joined Trésind just 12 days before its grand launch was announced in Dubai. He walked in, changed the entire menu, and never looked elsewhere. The year was 2014.

Trésind Studio came four years later, and born out of a specific frustration. Their initial menu, he says, was ambitious and a bit stupid. "It was an Indian menu structured on the skeleton of a French classical tasting menu. It drew regulations and then they stopped returning," he says. "In a large restaurant, even a great dish doesn't get the respect it deserves when it's one of 50. Servers sell what they like and understand — if they don't connect with a dish, they won't push it. If it doesn't move fast, it sits in the kitchen



STRENGTH IN FLAVOURS
(Top) Chef Himanshu Saini, at Trésind Studio, Mumbai; the restaurant earned its third Michelin star last year

losing freshness, losing the care it was given in the trial. You do a trial in controlled conditions, you make the dish with complete focus, you eat it immediately — and it's extraordinary. In an à-la-carte kitchen cooking 100 orders, that dish has a completely different value," he says.

Then, they changed the menu every three months and with each new menu they changed the look of the restaurant entirely — painting walls themselves and rethinking the palette. But Covid hit. The studio shut, and reopened with a street food concept at Dharam 200. To his surprise, that worked. "It was the most affordable, the least technical, the most comforting. We built upward from there," he says.

The real turning point came with a collaboration. As Dubai reopened ahead of the rest of the world, post pandemic, Saini reached out to Ana Ros, among the most sought-after chefs in the world. She came for a two-day pop-up (at Trésind Studio Dubai) and stayed for a week.

Until then, Saini had been using luxury ingredients — caviar, truffle, wagyu — partly because the market seemed to require them. What Ros changed was his perspective. "I was making a strawberry chutney — I

started with *kalonji* and fennel seeds, put in star anise, did a *tadka*, then the strawberries — and she was fascinated because the way we use truffle and caviar is how they use our spices," he says. The realisation that followed was simple but consequential: The strength lay in what he already knew. "That was the first moment where we said: Let's go back, restrain ourselves, challenge ourselves and make our life a bit more difficult than using ingredients that are merely handy."

The second turning point came in 2022. Now holding his first Michelin star, Saini was invited to speak at a food festival in Croatia. There were three rooms — a 500-seat auditorium, a medium one, and a small 50-seat room where he was placed. Ten people showed up. Midway through his presentation on modern Indian food, he stopped and asked those 10 people to name five Indian dishes. They could not name one. Not even butter chicken. On the flight back, Saini kept turning over one question: What was the point of calling the food modern or progressive when people had no foundation for understanding Indian food at all?

The answer to his question became Rising India — a menu of 15 dishes built around five macro regions: the northern plains, the Himalayan mountains, the Deccan plateau, the coastal plains and the Thar desert — which was part of the pop-up in Mumbai.

A 3D map of India on canvas comes to the table at the start of the meal. The host explains the structure, returns with each new region, and speaks only about what's relevant to the dishes coming next. A physical tablespace stays on the table throughout each session — for the Himalayas, actual rocks, arranged carefully, lasting two courses. "Guests leave having understood something why Thar Desert food is built around dairy. Because of water scarcity. Why is Chettinad so spicy? Because the body needs to sweat in extreme heat," he says, adding that he is careful about not giving them a geography lesson but understanding the cuisine. "Then they go to another Indian restaurant with more open eyes. They understand why there is coconut milk. They know that the souring agent changes: vinegar in Goa, kokum in Maharashtra, raw mango on the Andhra side."

Before leaving, we ask if he could say anything to that young boy making pizza from a ready-made base, he smiles before saying: "Trust your destiny, work hard. When I was in college, people used to say work smart, not hard. I always said the opposite. Smartness takes you ahead in the short term. Hard work takes you forever."

How society is an invisible editor

When children feel truly seen, the brain responds, neural pathways strengthen



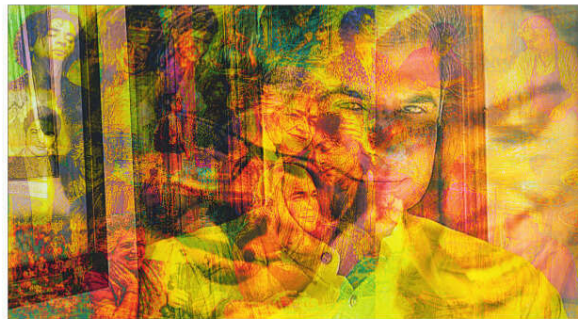
SLICE OF LIFE

BY SUVIR SARAN
CHEF, AUTHOR, EDUCATOR
AND WORLD TRAVELLER

CHILDREN ARE NOT ASKING ADULTS TO PREDICT THEIR FUTURE. THEY ARE ASKING FOR ENOUGH SAFETY TO DISCOVER IT THEMSELVES

DR SHALINI MULLICK, a neuroscientist and a mother, had shared a private collection of essays she had written over the years — meditations on parenting, neuroscience and identity. Reading them, I realised that science has quietly begun proving what the best parents have always practised: love is not merely an emotion. It is an environment.

Her essay, 'Parental Love: From Poetry to Biology,' begins with ordinary moments that alter extraordinary lives. A child dares to dream aloud. Another is gently corrected into conformity. A sentence here. A silence there. The smallest interactions begin sculpting neural pathways, emotional resilience and a lifelong sense of belonging. Childhood, she writes, is not remembered only by the heart. It is recorded by the brain. As I read her words, I found myself travelling backwards. When relatives and



SUVIR SARAN

teachers suggested my lip should be corrected, my mother refused. "This is his voice," she said. "This is his identity." When others worried that I spoke too little, she smiled. "He understands everything. He is simply taking his time," she would say. Looking back, I realise how extraordinary that was. She never confused difference with deficiency. She never mistook quietness for failure. She trusted that identity unfolds at its own pace.

Long before neuroscience began speaking of neural plasticity and emotional regu-

THE MIND IS A RECORDER
Parenting can be something gentler

lation, my mother understood something far simpler and perhaps far wiser: children bloom; they do not need to be forced open. But even homes filled with remarkable love exist inside societies that are still learning how to love.

I grew up in India during the 1970s and 1980s, carrying a truth I could feel long before I possessed the language to express it. I knew I was different. I did not know why. There were no stories that resembled mine, no public conversations that offered reassurance, no mirrors reflecting back the

possibility that a child like me could grow into a happy, healthy adult.

Home embraced me. Society had not yet learnt how. That distinction has taken me decades to understand. For years I thought something inside me had fractured. Today I know something else had simply not yet formed: the world's vocabulary.

Mullick writes that children flourish when they are not merely protected but recognised. Affection matters, but recognition matters just as deeply. When children feel truly seen, the brain responds. Neural pathways strengthen. Confidence grows. Curiosity expands. When important parts of the self remain unnamed, they do not disappear. They retreat quietly, waiting for language, safety and belonging.

Like so many children, I became an editor of myself. Not because my parents asked me to, but because the world gently suggested I should. I flowered my laughter. Softened my gestures.

Children learn astonishingly early what earns approval and what attracts discomfort. They begin pruning themselves long before they understand why. Society becomes an invisible editor, quietly marking certain parts of their identity for revision.

Yet through all of it, my mother remained constant. She did not always have answers. She could not have. The questions themselves had barely entered public conversation. But she possessed something more valuable than certainty. She possessed trust. She trusted that I would become who I needed to become. She trusted that love did not require complete understanding in order to remain complete.

Reading Mullick, I realised science has finally begun catching up with mothers like

mine. Research now tells us what instinct sometimes knew generations ago: The developing brain does not need constant correction nearly as much as it needs consistent connection. Children are not asking adults to predict their future. They are asking for enough safety to discover it themselves.

For generations, we believed parenting meant shaping children into predetermined identities. Now we are beginning to understand that perhaps parenting is something gentler.

As I look back today, I no longer see my story simply as that of a gay child growing up in India. I see it as the story of every child who has ever sensed they were different before they knew how to explain why. The child who learns differently. The child who speaks differently. The child whose heart or mind refuses the categories waiting for them.

Identity has many languages. Belonging should speak every one of them. A different way of parenting can change a child's future. Perhaps, that is how societies evolve. Not only through laws or landmark judgments, but through living rooms. Through dinner tables. Through parents willing to pause before they pronounce. To listen before they label. To wonder before they worry.

Today, I think less about the nights I lay awake questioning the future. I think more about the remarkable woman who never questioned whether I was worthy of being loved. That was my inheritance.

Love is not measured by how successfully we shape children into our image. It is measured by how courageously we allow them to discover their own. The brain remembers that. The heart never forgets it.

Actor Ali Fazal on playing a cop in Raakh, balancing Hollywood and Indian projects, fatherhood and why stories continue to guide his career

My instinct is my biggest guide

Alaka Sahani

WHEN ACTOR Ali Fazal was offered the recently-released series *Raakh*, his first instinct was to say no. After being part of the intense world of *Mirzapur* for three seasons, the actor was at the time eager to shift his focus back to movies rather than commit to yet another long-format project. There was also a practical hurdle: *Raakh*'s shooting schedule overlapped with that of *Mirzapur*. Physically, too, he was in the wrong place. The actor had bulked up to reprise his role as Guddu Bhaiya, a body-builder-turned-gangster in *Mirzapur* and looked far more muscular than the unassuming cop he was to play in *Raakh*.

Eventually, the film's schedule got pushed and Fazal joined the cast of *Raakh*. He found the script "deeply cathartic". *Raakh*'s writing is nuanced and it never demanded that larger-than-life portrayal where a cop is bashing up people around him," Fazal says about his character Jayprakash Jatav, a sub-inspector who wants to work his way up on merit, even as he navigates the limitations of the "class-trophobic" system. Currently streaming on Prime Video, *Raakh* is an eight-episode crime series set in the late-1970s Delhi and fictionalises the 1978 Ranga-Billa case.

Though Fazal has, by his own admission, worked on "a beautiful but slightly crazy mix" of projects so far, these days he is more selective because his time is divided between Indian films, international projects and his family. After being part of several talked-about international films such as *Victoria & Abdul* (2017) and *Death on the Nile* (2022), he has been focusing more on working in India because people had started assuming that he doesn't live in India anymore. "I do live here and I want to keep it simple. There's some extraordinary work being done right now, and we should celebrate it," he says. Braving the Mumbai monsoon, he arrives in

white kurta-pyjamas and marigold-yellow cap at a suburban hotel for this interview.

Much before *Mirzapur*, the series streaming on Prime Video, gave a boost to his career and brought him into people's homes, he grabbed the audience's attention as the sensitive Joy Lobo of *3 Idiots* (2009) and, later, with *Fukrey* (2013). "In the last six or seven years, I don't think I have travelled anywhere where Indians haven't recognised me from *Mirzapur*. We recently went to New Zealand and even there people immediately recognised me because of the show," says Fazal, who grew up in Lucknow, studied at Dehradun's The Doon School, and later graduated in economics from Mumbai's St Xavier's College. His next, *Mirzapur: The Movie*, is scheduled to release in theatres on September 4.

Today, Fazal mostly chooses his projects based on his instinct and its intent. "If my name can help a film get made or sold, then I have a responsibility to think carefully



A BALANCING ACT
Ali Fazal (below) a still from *Raakh*

Expanding his career beyond acting, Fazal co-founded Pushing Buttons Studios with his wife-actor Richa Chadha, in 2021 and produced *Girls Will Be Girls*. The Shuchi Talati's feature, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival 2024, won two major awards there and was screened at several major film festivals. Talking about "championing Indian cinema," he says, "We're nothing without our stories. Whenever I am on a global platform representing India, I never differentiate between industries. I speak about Indian cinema as a whole," says Fazal. Citing the success of Academy Award-winning films such as

Parasite (2019) and *Anora* (2024), he believes, independent films now have a genuine chance to travel through festivals, reach international distributors and win awards. Being on set is "meditative" for Fazal. "While shooting, I am focused only on the project and my family," he says. When he is not working, he reads a lot. "Now, my reading has slowed down. Richa recently saw me reading the same book that I started some time back and joked, 'You're still on this one?'" he laughs.

He recently loved reading South Korean writer Han Kang's *Greek Lessons*. "It's very different from *The Vegetarian* but equally beautiful in its own way. At the moment, I'm reading *Decoding the Quran: A Unique Sufi Interpretation*. It approaches the Quran through a Sufi lens, which I find fascinating. I have also been meaning to read Arundhati Roy's *Mother Mary Comes to Me*." It is evident that as an artist, his interests are diverse — that extends to the kind of characters he wants to portray. "I would happily do a John Wick-style action film next. I would also love to act in a science-fiction or historical film. And yes, we are overdue for a truly memorable romance. Great love stories are difficult because they depend so much on emotional honesty," says Fazal, who is learning screenwriting and collaborating with a friend to develop a superhero film. "It is unlike anything we have seen before. I don't know when it will be ready, but it's exciting."



The Voice that Came Home

Singer Deepali Sahay, whose soulful voice in Main Vaapas Aaunga is finding acclaim, on leaving Bollywood, finding Bhojpuri folk, her two-decade journey and being discovered by AR Rahman

ON OUR RADAR
Suanshu Khurana

THERE is a wistfulness that moves through *Tere Paas Main*, composer AR Rahman and lyricist Ishad Kamal's poignant ditty in Intiaz Ali's *Main Vaapas Aaunga*. But what makes the song compelling, especially in the increasingly forgettable Hindi film music landscape of today, is that it lingers after the fade-out: still the hallmark of a great song.

Set to the serenity of off-explored raag Yaman, the longing of two lovers is deftly anchored in the hope that, torn apart by Partition, they might just find each other one day. Even if logic suggests otherwise. With no catchy hook or a hard beat drop — a norm in the reverse-engineered songs of today — the emotional pull of *Tere Paas Main* has translated into much traction online, with listeners left misty-eyed in cinema halls.

At the centre of the song's emotional landscape is 37-year-old singer Deepali Sahay, whose nuanced rendition has given the piece an emotional gravitas. The song has also reintroduced Mumbai-based Sahay

to a national audience, in turn bringing long overdue attention to a musician who began her career two decades ago in popular reality show *Indian Idol* and made it to the Top 7. But *Tere Paas Main* has catapulted Sahay to another kind of fame: the song is inspiring numerous covers on social media.

"People dream of this. An artist always craves warmth from her audience. But for a Bollywood fan like me, to be a part of this industry in itself is overwhelming. Then to be called in by Mr Rahman to sing... Believe me, I didn't expect this. But I'm absolutely loving what has happened," says Sahay, who acted in daily soaps besides promoting Bhojpuri folk music on her YouTube channel before an unexpected call from Rahman's team on January 6, her birthday as well as Rahman's.

The composer wanted "to try out" her voice. "He had followed me on Instagram. That's what told me that he may have liked my voice," says Sahay, who went to Chennai a month later. She was briefed on the story of Ali's Partition saga and the separation of two lovers before she recorded at the Oscar-winning composer's home studio in Kodambakkam. "He sang and I repeated. Once the song was in me, he asked me to sing the way I wanted to sing it. He never asked me what I had done in life before this or if I had any recording experience. How empowering is it to hear a



HIGH BANDWIDTH
Deepali Sahay (left); with AR Rahman

composer of his stature not have you ask any questions," says Sahay.

For Mumbai-based Sahay, however, this moment of success has come after nearly two decades of pursuing music away from the glare of mainstream recognition. Growing up in Patna amid fierce academic competition, her joint family was sure that "ladki UPSC nikaalegi". That Sahay was academically bright, helped. That she could sing was discovered by her mother, who thought that someone was singing on the radio when Sahay, only a toddler then, was crooning *Ey Malik tere bande hum*, her school prayer in the next room. This led Sahay to a few music teachers in Patna, who taught her the basics of classical music. There was also the steady diet of golden oldies on the radio. Just before her 12th board exams, Sahay auditioned for *Indian Idol*. Her stint on the reality show gave her recognition and prompted a move to Mumbai to be a playback singer. A musician from the show's band introduced her to composer Monty Sharma at Yash Raj Studios, a meeting she remembers as a



dream come true. "But days later this musician wanted a foreign national to stay at my apartment for three months. I was expected to return the favour," says Sahay, who decided to walk away from Bollywood. "I knew this was just the beginning," she says. "If I agreed once, the compromises wouldn't end there."

At this point, she got an acting assignment, a Bhojpuri show, *Badki Malkin*. The money was good and Sahay didn't want to refuse. But she was not taught Bhojpuri at home and "consciously kept away from my mother tongue." Even though elders spoke Bhojpuri, were told it always had vulgar connotations due to raunchy cinema and music. I was asked to work on my spoken English by my progressive parents, get educated and leave Bihar," says Sahay, who didn't find anything lewd in the script. The show eventually became quite popular in Purvanchal and Bhojpuri-speaking parts of Bihar and Jharkhand. "I was really attracted to the language. It felt extremely sweet," says Sahay, who also studied direction at Film and Television Institute of India (FTII).

It took Sahay about eight years to realise that while many artists from Bihar had found success in Bollywood, few were working to reclaim Bhojpuri's rich musical heritage, which was now overshadowed by sexually explicit songs. She turned to traditional Bhojpuri folk, hoping to "challenge the stereotypes surrounding it". Through simple, self-produced videos, first with journalist Neelish Misra's *Gaan Connection* and later on her YouTube channel *Bhojpuri Classics with Deepali Sahay*, she began to revisit folk forms such as sohar, kagari, vivah geet and Chhat songs, while also introducing audiences to forgotten Bhojpuri film classics once sung by Lata Mangeshkar, Asha Bhosle and Manna Dey. "The idea was to restore the respect the language deserves. If I can talk in English and still relate to Bhojpuri, I was going to make people relate to it. I wanted to give it the dignity it deserved," says Sahay.

It was one of her dev geet videos that eventually found its way to Rahman, who shared it with Kamal and Ali on WhatsApp, setting in motion a chain of events that bridged the gap between Sahay's world and mainstream Hindi cinema. The result, *Tere Paas Main*, has made Sahay more than just a familiar name. It has made an audience understand that the voice behind one of the year's most moving songs was nurtured by folk music and its storytelling traditions. Perhaps that is where Sahay draws her emotional depth for a composition that continues to resonate with the audience.

As for newer offers, Sahay eagerly awaits her next song.

A Doyenne of Details

How Vijaya Bai's restrained practice shaped modern Indian theatre



ACT THREE
Veteran theatre director Vijaya Mehta passed away on July 1

Manvita Baradi

WITH THE passing of Vijaya Mehta or Vijaya Bai (at 92), as we knew her, Indian theatre has lost not only a great director, actor and thinker, but also a teacher whose quiet presence opened up a new world of theatrical understanding. I had the opportunity of training under Vijaya Bai in 1995, under the Young Directors Scheme by the Sangeet Natak Akademi, Delhi. Emerging theatre directors from across the country were selected for a month-long residential workshop at Sanskriti enclave in Delhi. Chari Bhat from Vadodra and I, from Ahmedabad, were among those selected from Gujarat.

The workshop had been designed in week-long modules by director B V Karanth. Around 30 young directors trained under some of the most significant names of the time, including Vijaya Mehta, KN Panikkar, Habib Tanvir and the younger Anamika Haksar. Each of them brought a distinct artistic universe. Listening to their journeys, inquiries, understanding of performance and reading of the theatre scenario in India, gave us lifelong learning.

Vijaya Bai's focus was realism. She spoke to us about her work on *Wada Chhrebandi* (Old Stone Mansion), Mahesh Elkunchwar's seminal Marathi play, which she had directed in 1984. The play, a landmark of modern Indian theatre, explores the decay of a feudal joint-family system in rural Maharashtra. What stayed with me was the way Vijaya Bai's process of entering its world. She spoke about studying the rural context, observing each character, understanding mannerisms, silences and movements. She believed that a realistic production should make the audience feel they were watching life through a keyhole. Her intimate, truthful, detailed approach still remains with me.

This was our first close encounter with realism as a living practice. We had read (Russian theatre practitioner) Konstantin Stanislavski and other theories. But when the veteran director spoke about space, gesture, stillness, the movement of actors, the rhythm of domestic life and the smallest habits of a character, the theory came alive. My own training had been shaped by abstract and stylised theatre, first through the work of my father, Hasmukh Baradi and, later, through my own engagement with dance, movement and non-realistic forms. Vijaya Bai opened up a different world that was theatrical but built with restraint.

There was also a personal warmth in our relationship. I was around the same age as her daughter Anahita. Perhaps that's why Vijaya Bai took a liking to me. I found in her a teacher and a mentor. Later, whenever I visited Mumbai, I met her at the National Centre for the Performing Arts, where she was director. Conversations with her were deeply formative. She spoke about the need for theatre spaces to be designed with care and about the backstage being as important as the stage. Artists, she would say, need quiet, dignity and preparation before they can enter their roles. That insight has stayed with me.

Vijaya Bai belonged to a generation that shaped modern Indian theatre with seriousness, rigour and grace. She raised the standards of those who came near her, often without raising her voice. For me, she will remain the teacher who showed that theatre lives in the details, space, discipline and in the invisible preparation behind a visible performance.

Manvita Baradi is an architect, urban planner and theatre practitioner

Trisha Mukherjee

LAST MONTH, Aban Raza was in Landour. The month before that in Aurangabad. Or was it last year? She can't recall the exact timeline. There were also Faizabad and Allahabad. Between the constant travelling and painting, the last few years have become a blur. The only thing she is certain of is her next destination: Mughal Sarai.

"These are places that have, or are proposed to have, been renamed," says Raza, about her ongoing yet-to-be-titled series, prompted by an urge to document the "slow erasure" of India's history.

Mughal Sarai became Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Nagar, Aurangabad, Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, Faizabad, Ayodhya, and Allahabad, Prayagraj. More names — Hyderabad, Hoshangabad — in faded ink and pinned on a board give away that she has been thinking about this revisionism well before she put brush to canvas in 2023.

She began with landmarks in Delhi — the Mughal Gardens and Aurangzeb Road. But the lead up to her solo exhibition last year, *Nothing Alien is Human to Me*, that documented protest sites and the people who led them, put a brief pause in the series that resumed only in early 2025.

"After *Chhaava* released, right-wing bodies wanted to break Aurangzeb's tomb in Aurangabad," recalls the artist. She was in Delhi at the time and rushed to the site afraid it may be lost forever. "Thankfully, they couldn't enter since it is an ASI site," she says, adding that painting Aurangabad was more about preserving the place but the incident did give her series a new lease of life.

In her Noida home-cum-studio, she is flanked by a towering canvas — sketched on but barely painted, with only a few green strokes. "This is Landour," she says. "It has been proposed to be renamed as Ramgiri. The other instances seemed like communal decisions, but Landour shows their problem with all things British as well. Good, bad or ugly, all of this is part of our civilisational history, and I feel the need to document these places before they cease to exist as we know them," adds the artist,



FOR POSTERITY'S SAKE
A painting of Aurangzeb's tomb in Aurangabad, Maharashtra, by Aban Raza

ART FUTURES

A Keeper of Memory

From Aurangabad to Mughal Sarai and Landour, Aban Raza turns witness to an altering nationscape

whose oil paintings are priced upwards of Rs 2.5 lakh.

There is a conspicuous urgency about Raza's work in the way it chronicles contemporary India with the abstract distortion of German Expressionism. But what draws the viewer in is the fact that it's the artist that drives the art, not the other way round; a rarity in an increasingly commercialised art world. Raza's voice, ideology and personality are all palpable in her work, much of which has been shaped by her early exposure to and subsequent work with the Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust, which included visiting protest sites since the age of three.

A recently finished oil painting that sits in her living room, is proof. On the large-scale canvas, she recreates the annual celebration of the Mahad Satyagraha — BR Ambedkar burnt the Manusmriti in Maharashtra's Mahad

in 1927. "I don't know where or when it will be exhibited but I witnessed the moment last December and knew I had to paint it. I am quite proud of this work," she says.

Raza's clarity of purpose is also evident in her career progression. She graduated in 2013 after a BFA (Painting) and an MFA (Printmaking), both from Delhi's College of Art, but she secured representation with Galerie Mirchandani & Steinrucke, and her first solo, *Luggage, People and a Little Space* only in 2020.

Even as she dabbled in teaching, filmmaking and research work to pay the bills, she never felt tempted to try a trans-disciplinary installation practice that dominates the contemporary Indian art scene. She admits wanting to work with printmaking more often but that's about it. Oil and printmaking — that she is certain of.



GARDENIA VADYU

Good, bad or ugly, all of this (heritage) is part of our civilisational history, and I feel the need to document these places before they cease to exist as we know them

It's Not All Black & White

A home should tell your story and art is one of the most personal ways to do that. Be it a painting, a sculpture crafted by a local artisan or a photograph that brings back memories, art adds character and meaning to everyday spaces



CURATED BY SHINY VARGHESE

Kapil Aggarwal

CHOOSE WHAT You Love

DO: Pick pieces that speak to you emotionally. The best art is often the one that sparks a memory, starts a conversation or simply makes you smile every time you see it.

DONT: Buy something just because it is fashionable or matches the latest trend. A home feels authentic when it reflects your personality, not what's popular at the moment.

Give Art the Space It Deserves

DO: Consider the size of the artwork and the wall where it will be displayed. A well-placed piece can anchor a room and become a natural focal point.

DONT: Squeeze large artworks into small corners or scatter tiny pieces across expansive walls. Art needs breathing room to be appreciated.

Think Beyond Paintings

DO: Explore different forms of artistic expression such as ceramics, textiles, hand-crafted objects, murals and sculptures. These layers often make a home feel richer and more personal.

DONT: Limit art to framed pieces alone. Some of the most memorable spaces celebrate creativity in unexpected ways.

Consider a Wall Mural

DO: Treat a mural as an integral part of the room rather than a decorative backdrop. The artwork should respond to the scale, function and character of the space. Keep the surrounding furniture, materials and colours relatively restrained so the mural can become the focal point. Consider sight lines as well — a mural is most effective when it can be experienced from

key viewpoints within the room.

DONT: Place a mural on every available wall or compete with it through excessive patterns, artwork or decorative necessities. Avoid selecting highly trend-driven imagery that may feel dated within a few years. A mural should enhance the architecture, not overwhelm it.

Let Lighting Complete the Picture

DO: Use lighting to highlight artworks and bring out their texture, colour and



SPACES ARCHITECTS&KA

detail. The right light can completely change how a piece is experienced.

DONT: Place valuable artworks where they are exposed to harsh sunlight for long periods, as this can cause fading over time.

Support Craft and Local Talent

DO: Look for works by local artists and artisans. Handmade pieces often carry stories, traditions and craftsmanship that add depth to a home.

DONT: Fill every space with mass-produced decorative items that lack a personal connection.

Kapil Aggarwal is principal architect, Spaces Architects&KA. His works include the UNESCO-awarded restoration of Haveli Dharampura in Old Delhi



Neil Patil

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We launched the Trans-Siberian Explorer tour a few weeks ago, and for the better part of two months before that, along with the team, I was buried in maps of a part of the world most Indian travellers never really think about.

Mongolia, Siberia, the Russian Far East, the old Soviet rail network that cuts across eight time zones. It is the kind of research that pulls you sideways constantly, because every region up there borders three others you didn't plan to look at. That is how Uzbekistan kept showing up. It isn't on the Trans-Siberian route. It has nothing to do with the railway, technically. But it kept appearing in every adjacent search, every old Silk Road map, every conversation about Central Asia I had while building the route for something else entirely.

After the fourth or fifth time, I stopped treating it as a distraction and started actually looking at it properly. Uzbekistan barely registers on the Indian traveller's map. It isn't in the Goa-Bali-Thailand conversation, it isn't even really in the "offbeat" conversation the way Georgia or Armenia have started to be. And this is the very gap that I want to talk about today. There is a version of Central Asia sitting right there, two and a half hours by direct flight from parts of India, that most of us have simply never been told to look at.

What Changed

Until a few years ago, Uzbekistan was genuinely difficult to visit. Visas were a process, the tourist infrastructure was thin, and getting there meant a clumsy connection through somewhere else. Today, Indians still need a visa. The difference is that it's now an e-visa, not a trip to an embassy.

You apply online, upload a scan of your passport, pay the fee, and the approval usually comes back in two to

three working days. That's a meaningful change from a process that used to involve actual paperwork and patience. Flights have caught up too.

Delhi and Mumbai both have direct flights to Tashkent, a little over two and a half hours in the air, which is shorter than flying to most of Europe. IndiGo, Air India, and Uzbekistan Airways all fly the route. And just a few months ago, Air India struck a codeshare with Uzbekistan Airways covering Delhi, Mumbai, and a seasonal Goa service, with through-checked baggage and onward connections to Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva built into a single ticket.

That's the kind of connectivity upgrade that usually shows up after a destination has already become popular, not before. Here, it's arrived early.

The infrastructure on the ground has followed the same curve. Old caravanserais, the merchant guest-houses that lined the Silk Road, have been converted into genuinely good boutique hotels. English-speaking guides aren't hard to find anymore. None of this existed in any reliable way a decade ago. It exists now, and the result is a country that is open, accessible, and still almost completely uncrowded by the standards of anywhere this historically significant.

That last part is the one that actually changes how I think about timing. I have stood at enough major heritage sites around the world to know what a UNESCO site looks like once it has been "discovered," you are sharing it with three tour buses and a queue. Samarkand's central square, by most accounts, still isn't there yet. That window doesn't usually stay open for long once a destination starts trending, and Uzbekistan is right on the edge of it.

Samarkand

Samarkand is the name most people have vaguely heard, usually attached to the words "Silk Road" without much else behind it. The reason it has held that reputation for centuries is the Registan, a square framed on three sides by three enormous madrasahs built between the 1420s and the 1600s. I have read several travel writers try to describe it and then admit the description undersells it, which is usually a sign that a place is actually worth the trip rather than just well-photographed.



The three madrasahs each have their own character. The Sher-Dor is the unusual one, it has mosaics of tigers and human faces on its facade, which is genuinely rare in Islamic architecture, a tradition that almost always avoids figurative imagery. Someone broke that rule here a few centuries ago, and nobody seems to fully agree on why.

If the Registan is the postcard, Shah-i-Zinda is the place I would actually send someone who wants to feel something other than just photograph it. It's a street of royal tombs built up over several centuries, with tile work in blues, greens, and turquoises that genuinely looks too precise to have been done by hand. It's less restored than the main square, which gives it a rougher, more honest feel.

There's a difference between a monument that has been polished for visitors and one that has simply survived, and Shah-i-Zinda sits closer to the second category.

Gur-e-Amir, the tomb of the conqueror Timur, is smaller but worth

the hour. Its ribbed turquoise dome is one of those architectural details that quietly travelled, you can trace its influence forward through mosques in Istanbul and all the way to the Taj Mahal in Agra. It's a strange thing to stand in front of a 15th-century tomb in Central Asia and recognise the bones of a building you grew up seeing on an Indian rupee note.

Bukhara

Samarkand wins on sheer spectacle, but if I had to choose where to actually spend an extra night, I would pick Bukhara without much hesitation. Samarkand's old city, for all its grandeur, increasingly exists for visitors. Bukhara's old city is still a place people live in.

Laundry hangs out to dry two streets from a 900-year-old minaret. Shopkeepers run businesses that have nothing to do with tourism at all. That lived-in quality is harder to fake and harder to find once a heritage city tips fully into being a museum.

The Kalon Minaret anchors the place. It was built in 1127, and there's

a story, possibly true, possibly just good storytelling passed down for eight centuries, that when Genghis Khan's forces destroyed Bukhara in 1220, he looked up at the minaret and ordered it spared, the only structure he is said to have ever shown that respect to. True or not, the minaret is still standing nine hundred years later, which is its own kind of proof. My favourite detail, though, is Lyabi-Hauz, a 17th-century pool in the centre of the old city, ringed by mulberry trees and open-air tea-houses. In the evenings, the day-trippers leave and the square fills with families instead, kids running around, older men playing chess over tea that takes longer to finish than the game does. It's the kind of place that tells you more about a country in twenty quiet minutes than most monuments manage in an hour.

Khiva

Khiva is the one people are most tempted to skip, mostly because it's the hardest to reach, a 30-minute taxi from the nearest airport at Urgench, or a long overland leg from Bukhara. Skipping it would be a mistake. The inner walled city, Ichon-Qala, is one of the most completely preserved historic urban centres anywhere in the world. The walls, minarets, mosques, and old caravanserais are all still standing, intact enough that the whole place can feel almost too perfectly preserved to be real.

The detail that stuck with me is the Kalta Minor, a short, squat, deliberately unfinished turquoise minaret. It was meant to be the tallest minaret in the world, until the Khan who commissioned it died mid-construction in 1855 and nobody ever picked the project back up. It has sat there, half-built, for a hundred and seventy years, and somehow looks more striking for being incomplete than most finished monuments manage.

A country worth its own trip

None of this connects to the Trans-Siberian Explorer in any direct sense, and I want to be honest about that rather than force a link that isn't there. What it does tell me is something about how research works, and maybe about how discovery works for travellers generally.

You go looking for one thing, in this case a railway through Siberia, and you stumble into a country that has quietly opened its doors, fixed

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its infrastructure, and still has its biggest squares nearly empty on a Tuesday morning. That combination, genuine history, real accessibility, and very little competition for your attention while you are standing in front of it, doesn't last forever once word gets out.

I went looking for a train through Mongolia, I came back with a country I now want to send people to before everyone else figures out.

Know the Unknown

You have probably figured out by now, I love doing research. We launched flight bookings on veenaworld.com this past week, and going down that particular rabbit hole, looking at routes all over the world, is how I came across this one.

Take off from Sydney at lunchtime. Land in Los Angeles at breakfast. Same day. You read that correctly. You fly through the night for roughly fourteen hours across the Pacific, and you touch down in LA earlier on the clock than when you left Sydney. You arrive before you departed.

It isn't a trick. Somewhere over the ocean, the flight crosses the International Date Line, and you effectively get an entire day handed back to you. Los Angeles runs about seventeen hours behind Sydney, so for the length of that flight, you are more or less flying backwards through time. It's the closest thing to a real rewind button I have come across in this job.

If you can think of another route that plays the same trick, write it in and tell me. I'm always looking for the next one. See you next week...

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