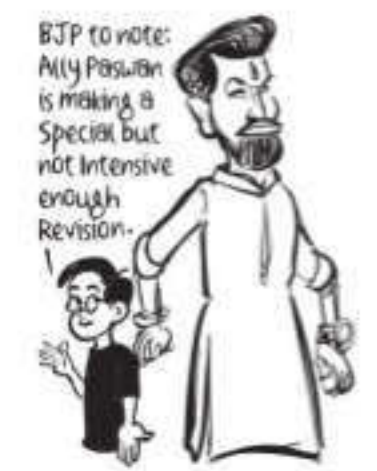


BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNNY



THE WORLD



ISRAEL ANNOUNCES RELIEF IN GAZA AREAS TO ALLOW AID FOR STARVING P10

Bihar special roll revision: Volunteers will help electors get govt documents, says EC

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JULY 27

VOLUNTEERS WILL be deployed to help electors get the documents required from government departments to meet the submission deadline of September 1 as part of the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar, the Election Commission said on Sunday.

The EC's statement comes a day before the Supreme Court is set to hear a clutch of petitions challenging the SIR with opposition parties and civil society groups raising concerns over the potential disenfranchisement of existing electors.

According to the EC, the first phase of the drive, which started on June 25, came to an end on

EXPLAINED Chasing paperwork

THE EC'S push to draft volunteers comes in the backdrop of concerns raised by electors across poll-bound Bihar about difficulties faced by them in obtaining the documents mandated to enroll as voters. It comes a day before the SC is set to hear petitions challenging the SIR exercise in the state.

July 26 with the enumeration forms of 7.23 crore out of 7.89 crore registered electors of the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

BLOs' refrain: Many still not able to file one of 11 documents needed

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, JULY 27

ON SUNDAY, the Election Commission announced that volunteers will help electors obtain the official documents required to meet the submission deadline of September 1 in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in poll-bound Bihar.

They have their task cut out. *The Indian Express* spoke to a dozen BLOs from across the state — including from the capital Patna, Samastipur in North Bihar, Purnea in the Seemanchal region,



and Banka in South Bihar. After the month-long SIR exercise, their refrain: most of those who had to submit one of the 11 documents

GOVT & POLITICS

S.I.R AN EXERCISE TO DETERMINE CITIZENSHIP: OPP P6

have not been able to do so.

Consider:

■ A BLO from the Danapur Assembly constituency said: "Out of 1,200 voters who submitted enumeration forms in my booth, 550 were in the 2003 voters' list. Of the remaining 650 voters, only about 60 people

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

DEBATE IN LS TODAY

PM: Op Sindoor proved there is no safe haven for terrorists

At TN event, Modi speaks of India's military might, Chola empire legacy



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a roadshow in Tamil Nadu's Ariyalur district on Sunday. P11 RELATED REPORT, P5

ARUN JANARDHANAN
CHENNAI, JULY 27

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Sunday said Operation Sindoor sent the world the unambiguous message that "there is no safe haven" for terrorists and other enemies of the country. The military operation, he said, ignited a "new awakening" and "new self-confidence".

The comments came a day before the Lok Sabha is scheduled to hold a 16-hour debate on the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack and the subsequent action

that the government took against terror infrastructure in Pakistan. The Rajya Sabha is set to discuss the matter on Tuesday.

"Operation Sindoor proved that for enemies of India, for terrorists, there is no safe haven. The world saw how India responds if someone attacks its security and sovereignty. When I came here from the helipad, the three to four kilometre distance suddenly became a roadshow, and everyone was praising Op Sindoor ... It has created a new awakening, a new self-confidence across the country," Modi said in his address

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Not just stalking accused, several VIP relatives on list of Haryana law officers

Of the 97 appointed, 23 have links to politicians, bureaucrats or judges

VARINDER BHATIA
CHANDIGARH, JULY 27

THE HARYANA government may be having a rethink over the appointment of Vikas Barala, an accused in a sexual harassment case, as Assistant Advocate General, but a scrutiny of the list shows that like Barala, many of those appointed as law officers are relatives of VIPs, including politicians and bureaucrats.

This, ironically, when the Supreme Court, as early as 2016, had cautioned against such appointments and advised guidelines to insulate the process from politics.

On July 18, Vikas Barala, the son of BJP Rajya Sabha MP and former Haryana BJP president Subhash Barala, was named as

one of 97 law officers in the state.

Talking to *The Indian Express*, Advocate General Pravindra Singh Chauhan said: "As far as Vikas Barala is concerned, he has not joined yet... I was not aware of the background (of Vikas Barala). I don't think he (Vikas) will join."

Chauhan said it was wrong to see all from one lens. "I have seen their (the new appointees') working. All of them are competent lawyers. They have not made it to these posts due to their surnames, but only due to their competence. All the selections have been made on merit."

The AG's office in Haryana put out an advertisement in January for 100 posts of law officers (including 20 Additional AGs, 20 Senior Deputy AGs, 30 Deputy AGs

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



EXPRESS NETWORK

DIPLOMATIC FLURRY AS INDIA SEEKS MORE AFRICAN CHEETAHS

KHADSE SON-IN-LAW HELD, DRUGS SEIZED AT PARTY IN PUNE

PAGES 5, 7



After the stampede near Mansa Devi temple in Haridwar on Sunday; (below) police and SDRF personnel at the site. P11

8 killed, 30 injured in stampede near Mansa Devi temple in Haridwar, inquiry ordered

AISWARYA RAJ
HARIDWAR, JULY 27

PANIC TRIGGERED by a suspected electric spark caused a stampede on a packed narrow stretch leading to the hilltop Mansa Devi temple in Uttarakhand's Haridwar district Sunday morning, killing at least eight persons and leaving 30 injured, police said.

IGP (Law and Order) Nilesh Bhanne said devotees were heading to the temple when the incident took place around 9 am. "There was some rumour about

electricity hazards, creating panic among the devotees, leading to the situation," he said.

The stampede took place on a 1.5-km ramp, around 100 metres from the temple entrance. The path, which is less than 3 metres wide, is used by devotees both entering and exiting the temple.

A police officer said the rush from those entering and exiting the temple at the same time made some climb a wall to enter the temple through a shortcut. "Prima facie, when someone tugged on an electric wire while climbing the wall, it is believed

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



WITNESSES RECALL: PANIC, THEN CHAOS P7

Jadeja, Washington hold fort as India draw strength from stirring last-day fightback

SANDEEP DWIVEDI
MANCHESTER, JULY 27

THE DAY was ending, Ravindra Jadeja and Washington Sundar were in their 80s and there was no doubt about the result of the Test. India had miraculously managed to snatch a draw from the jaws of defeat on the final



Ravindra Jadeja (107 not out) and Washington Sundar (101 not out) during the Manchester Test on Sunday. Reuters

day of the fourth Test. The knackered England captain Ben Stokes had enough, he wanted to shake hands and nurse his wounds in the dressing room.

But the day's heroes — Jadeja and Washington — were in no hurry to leave. They wanted to rub a few English noses in the mud and get well-deserved Test hundreds. They also wanted the crowd, and their teammates, to celebrate the draw that was as precious as a win. They finally shook hands with the scoreboard showing India 425 for four, Jadeja

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



IDEA EXCHANGE

'The climate has lent itself to many lawsuits, making it more terrifying for filmmakers'

NAGESH KUKUNOOR
FILMMAKER

PAGE 13

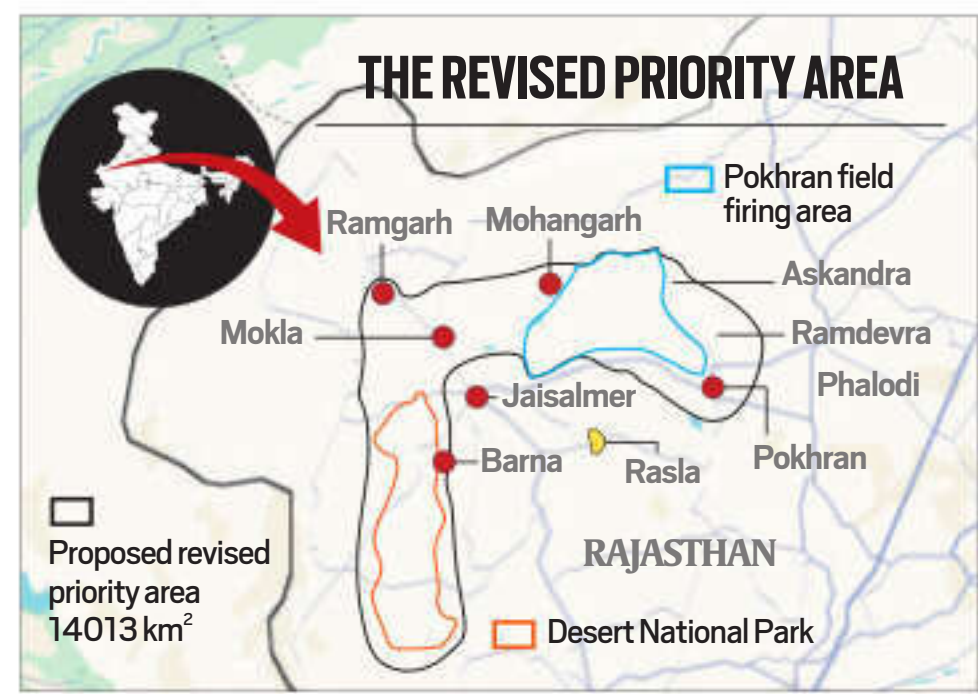
SC-named panel proposes 'power corridors' through Bustard habitats

NIKHIL GHANEKAR
NEW DELHI, JULY 27

GIVING RELIEF to renewable energy companies from blanket restrictions on existing overhead power lines in habitats of the Great Indian Bustard (GIB), a Supreme Court appointed expert committee has proposed designated "power corridors" for transmission lines in Gujarat and Rajasthan, *The Indian Express* has learnt.

The committee has also

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



'India can play role in Syria stability through friendship with Syrians, Kurds'

HARITHA SAVITHRI
BARCELONA, JULY 27

THE RECENT Israeli airstrikes in Damascus have heightened tensions among the many stakeholders in the region. As commander of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and one of the most senior leaders in the Kurds-led Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES), Kurdish leader General Mazloum Abdi is a key player in a region with a complex and unique set of security and governance challenges. While in-

terim president Ahmed al-Sharaa and the Damascus government have been asking the SDF to honour their March 10 deal by dissolving the outfit and fully integrating its fighters into the Syrian Arab Army, the SDF has been demanding a decentralised security arrangement that preserves its command structure. Besides decentralisation, the SDF had been seeking eth-

nic/religious rights (especially Kurdish recognition) and gender equality. Damascus, however, rejects these as infringements on state sovereignty. In an interview, Gen Abdi speaks about Syria post Assad, the sticking points in the deal with the Syrian government.

How has daily life for civilians in Syria changed since the fall of the Assad government?



General Abdi is a key player in a region with a complex and unique set of security and governance challenges. AP

The collapse of the Baath regime after 13 years was a development that all Syrians were happy about and a cause for celebration for all of us. At the same time, this moment has created a huge security and administrative vacuum. All areas of life in Syria were almost completely destroyed during the years of war. Basic necessities, such as water and electricity, are still very difficult to find. However, the positive thing is that now, with the lifting of some of the economic sanctions, there has been some relief and there is hope that our country can rebuild. There are

many difficulties and dangers in terms of security. The interim government is trying to gain control through a unilateral approach, but there are many violations and violence has increased. We have seen many suicide attacks in the big cities. The threat of ISIS and the ISIS movement has also increased.

What are the challenges in integrating the SDF into the Syrian army under the March 10 agreement? What role can DAANES play in Syria's future?

We attach great importance

to that memorandum of understanding. We are currently working to broaden and implement it. The experience of DAANES constitutes a positive model of governance for Syria. In the last more than 10 years, DAANES has been able to rebuild the region that had been destroyed during major battles with ISIS and re-establish security there. This is a very important issue that must be considered. After the collapse of the highly centralised and dictatorial regime of (former president) Bashar al-Assad, Syria now has a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Haritha Savithri is a
Barcelona-based Malayalam
writer and freelance journalist.

As more slum dwellers told to move, Delhi CM assures justice

EXPRESSNEWSERVICE
NEW DELHI, JULY 27

REITERATING THAT unauthorised slums will be removed from Delhi, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Sunday said that the government has allocated a budget Rs 700 crore to provide accommodation to eligible slum dwellers.

"Whenever slums need to be removed for any reason, arrangements are being made to provide houses to the eligible residents..." she said at the 'Faatak wali jhuggi' near the railway crossing in Shalimar Bagh on Sunday morning.

The Railways has issued a notice for the removal of the sum cluster, citing that it is located on railway land needed for the expansion of the Azadpur railway station.

"You will get complete justice. The Delhi government is fully committed to this," Gupta told the slum dwellers.

"When a crisis came upon you, I came to meet you because the Delhi government is not in favour of removing slums without reason... If slums have to be removed for development projects or other legitimate reasons, the government will ensure proper rehabilitation for the eligible residents so they too can become part of Delhi's growth story," she added.

This comes amid the recent demolition of unauthorised slums at Madras Camp, Bhoomiheen Camp, Jailerwala Bagh Camp and Taimoor Nagar in the Capital.

Taking on AAP and Congress, Gupta said that in the last 40 years, no development has taken place in Delhi's slums.

"These parties have only seen slum dwellers as voters and constantly tried to exploit them, while also damaging the city's geo-



Chief Minister Rekha Gupta

graphical character," she said.

The AAP, meanwhile, said in a statement, "The CM has been constantly lying on this issue. First, on completion of 100 days of her government, she claimed no jhuggi will be demolished. And on the very next day, hundreds of jhuggis were demolished at Madras Camp. Later, thousands of people have to rendered homeless at Jailerwala Bagh, Bawana, Moti Nagar, Kalkaji etc."

"We challenge Rekha Gupta to publish the list of jhuggis that have been demolished and names of people who have been given flats by them. They are trying to fool the people by giving flats to just a few of them and making others homeless," the party added.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, too, said on Sunday that hundreds of slum dwellers in Delhi are going through the pain of being rendered homeless with their houses being destroyed by the BJP government, as he claimed that this "atrocitiy" exposes the ruling party's "insensitivity" towards the poor and its "arrogance of power".

The leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha shared a video of his recent visit to Delhi's Ashok Vihar area where houses of several people were brought down by the administration.

The small houses in which they had settled their entire life were "ruthlessly destroyed" by the BJP government, he alleged in his post in Hindi on X along with the video.

ONLINE SEARCH FOR MEDICINES LEADS TO DIGITAL ARREST FRAUD

‘Good cop, bad cop’: How fake NCB officers duped 62-year-old woman of Rs 77 lakh

PRAGYNESH
NEW DELHI JULY 27

LAST AUGUST, a 62-year-old woman was surfing an online drug store's website for her monthly prescription of sleeping pills. It was a routine for her to order medicines online every month for a neurological ailment. However, her latest search landed her in trouble, which ended in an alleged digital arrest fraud of Rs 77 lakh as two men — allegedly posing as officers of the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) — used "good cop, bad cop"-based modus operandi," said police.

After she reported her ordeal to the police, it took investigators nine months to trace the accused who had transferred a major portion of the defrauded money in his bank account. His arrest led the police to four more accomplices, all of whom were arrested by July 1, said officers.

A resident of Vasant Kunj and a former teacher, the woman told police she had received the first call from the alleged fraudsters last August. A man posing as an NCB officer triggered alarm by claiming that she had ordered "banned drugs". The woman who lives alone panicked. "The caller told her that the drug she ordered was banned in India and that the NCB suspected she was helping

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

AUG 2024: Woman gets first call from man posing as NCB officer; told she ordered banned drugs online
■ Asked to verify bank account details
BY SEP 10, 2024: Helpless, she transfers Rs 3 lakh



■ Fraudsters use 'good cop, bad cop' modus operandi
SEP 20, 2024: Another man impersonating NCB officer calls her, assures help
SEP 24, 2024: Four men on video call ask her to share phone screen
■ Netbanking credentials stolen, she is duped of Rs 77 lakh

the supply of these drugs in Delhi," a senior police officer, privy to the investigation details, said.

Forced to prove her innocence, the woman had transferred Rs 3 lakh by September 10. (see box)

On September 20, 2024, another man posing as NCB officer, pretending to be the "good cop" called her and assured help.

Four days later, the final blow came. She got a video call on WhatsApp. "This time, four men were on call. She was asked to share her phone screen and open her bank account after which all her money could be returned. As she trusted the man who had posed as the 'good cop', she followed the instructions," the officer explained. Trouble, however, deepened for the elderly woman

as her netbanking credentials were allegedly stolen.

The video call ended with the fraudsters allegedly telling the woman that they were satisfied with the probe. Soon after, her worst nightmare turned true. Multiple debit messages flashed on her mobile phone — transactions of Rs 5 lakh, Rs 10 lakh and so on followed. When she called up the man posing as the NCB officer, his phone was off.

She finally sought help from a relative and filed a complaint at the Intelligence Fusion and Strategic Operations (IFSCO) Unit of the Delhi Police's Special Cell on September 26, 2024. A team under ACP Manoj Kumar and Sub Inspector Karamvir started a probe into the money trail.

Grenade attack in Punjab: Another 'BKI associate' held

EXPRESSNEWSERVICE
NEW DELHI JULY 27

A 22-YEAR-OLD man was arrested by Delhi Police Special Cell on Saturday for allegedly harbouring terrorists attached to the banned terror organisation Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) and being involved in a grenade attack on Quila Lal Singh police station in Punjab in April.

Karanbir alias Karan, hailing from Chananke village in Amritsar, was apprehended on July 26 from Gurdaspur under the Arms Act registered at the Special Cell police station. Police said he is

a key accused in the April 7 grenade attack at Quila Lal Singh police station in Batala.

"He received money from his handler for executing the grenade attack. He also facilitated the stay of two persons at his home before the attack, who had executed the task of launching the grenade at Qila Lal Singh police station. His brother Gursewak, who was also involved in the attack, has already been arrested in the case," DCP (Special Cell) Amit Kaushik said.

Karanbir is the second alleged BKI terrorist arrested this week. Akash Deep — wanted in an illegal arms trafficking case in the

Capital and the grenade attack on Quila Lal Singh police station — was arrested on Wednesday. "Following leads based on Akash Deep's questioning, Karanbir alias Karan was arrested from Gurdaspur," the DCP said.

Karanbir allegedly told the police that he was in contact

with a BKI handler from Punjab, based abroad, through social media and was receiving instructions to carry out terror activities.

"He was instructed on encrypted apps in code language to act on behalf of BKI," an officer said.

3 Month Financial Inclusion Saturation Campaign

(01.07.2025 - 30.09.2025)

83.10 Crore+ Enrollments

Securing The Unsecured - Through Jansuraksha Schemes

Atal Pension Yojana

7.83 crore Enrollments

- Minimum guaranteed pension ranging from ₹1,000 to ₹5,000 per month after the age of 60 years
- On subscriber's death, spouse gets the same pension
- After the death of both subscriber and spouse of subscriber, the nominee receives the pension wealth accumulated till age 60
- Age Criteria: Indian citizens aged 18-40 years

PM SURAKSHA BIMA YOJANA

51.43 Crore Enrollments

- Accident insurance cover of ₹2 lakh in case of death and permanent total disability
- ₹1 lakh Insurance cover for permanent partial disability
- Affordable premium of only ₹20 annually
- Age Criteria: Indian citizens aged 18-70 years

PM JEEVAN JYOTI BIMA YOJANA

23.84 Crore Enrollments

- Affordable life insurance cover of ₹2 lakh
- Annual premium only ₹436 per annum
- Age Criteria: Indian citizens aged 18-50 years

5 Features of PMJDY

- Access to overdraft facility of upto ₹10,000, subject to eligibility conditions
- Easy access to banking services in rural areas, through Bank Mitras
- Awareness about financial products through financial literacy programs

Basic Savings Bank Deposit (BSBD) account

Free RuPay debit card, with in-built accident insurance cover of ₹2 lakh

PMJDY accounts

If you still don't have bank account, come and open free of cost bank PMJDY account with lots of benefits

Digital frauds

Beware of frauds to prevent your money from being stolen

Unblock blocked bank account

Account blocked / Inoperative - Visit the camp and get your Re-kyc done to unblock accounts

Bank at your doorsteps

AVAIL THE BENEFITS

Join the Movement. Spread the Word. Be Insured

Visit the Camp in each Panchayat for Jansuraksha Schemes Enrollment, Account Opening, Re-KYC & prevention of frauds.

ICL Fincorp

This is an advertisement issued pursuant to Regulation 30(1) of the SEBI (Issue and Listing of Non-Convertible Securities) Regulations, 2021 as amended, for information purpose only.

ICL FINCORP LIMITED

ICL Fincorp Limited ("our Company" or "the Company" or "ICL") was originally incorporated as 'Jawahar Finance Limited' at Chennai, a public limited company under the provisions of the Companies Act, 1956, pursuant to a certificate of incorporation dated December 9, 1991, issued by RoC. The name of our Company was changed to 'Irinjalakuda Credits & Leasing Company Limited' pursuant to a fresh certificate of incorporation dated April 26, 2004 issued by the RoC. Later, the name of our Company was changed to 'ICL Fincorp Limited' pursuant to a fresh certificate of incorporation dated May 8, 2016 issued by the RoC. Our Company holds a certificate of registration dated June 09, 2016 bearing registration number B-07.00437 issued by the Reserve Bank of India ("RBI") to carry on the activities of a non-banking financial company without accepting public deposits under Section 45 IA of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934. For further details about our Company, see "History and Certain Other Corporate Matters" on page 108 of the Prospectus.

Registered Office:

Plot No: C308, Door No: 66/40, 4th Avenue, Ashok Nagar, Chennai- 600 083, Tamil Nadu, India; Tel: +91 44 4208 2381, 2958 0014; Corporate Office: ICL Fincorp Limited, Main Road, Irinjalakuda, Thrissur - 680121, Kerala, India; Tel: +91 480 2670400, 2828071, 2831305; Corporate Identification Number: U65191TN1991PLC021815; PAN: AAACJ1806C; E-mail: info@iclfincorp.com; Website: www.iclfincorp.com; Company Secretary and Compliance Officer: Visakh T.V.; Email: cs@iclfincorp.com; Tel: +91 480- 2670400, 2828071, 2831305; Chief Financial Officer: Madhavankutty Thekkedath; Email: cfo@iclfincorp.com; Tel: +91 480- 2670400, 2828071, 2831305;

PUBLIC ISSUE OF UP TO 10,00,000 SECURED, REDEEMABLE, NON-CONVERTIBLE DEBENTURES (NCDs) OF FACE VALUE OF ₹1,000 EACH

NOTICE TO INVESTORS

This notice is with reference to the public issue of up to 10,00,000 secured, redeemable, non-convertible debentures of face value of ₹1,000 each, ("NCDs") at par, for an amount up to ₹5,00,000 thousand ("Base Issue Size") with an option to retain oversubscription of up to ₹5,00,000 thousand aggregating up to ₹10,00,000 thousand (the "Issue") by ICL Fincorp Limited ("Company") in accordance with Securities and Exchange Board of India (Issue and Listing of Non-Convertible Securities) Regulations, 2021, as amended (the "SEBI NCS Regulations"), the applicable provisions of the Companies Act, 2013, as amended from time to time, and rules made thereunder the SEBI Circular no. SEBI/HO/DDHS/PoD1/P/CIR/2024/54 dated May 22, 2024, as amended ("SEBI Master Circular"). The Company has filed prospectus dated July 25, 2025 ("Prospectus") with the Registrar of Companies, Tamil Nadu at Chennai ("RoC"), Securities and Exchange Board of India ("SEBI") and BSE Limited ("BSE") (the "Stock Exchange").

ISSUE PROGRAMME

ISSUE OPENS - JULY 31, 2025 (THURSDAY)

ISSUE CLOSURES - AUGUST 13, 2025 (WEDNESDAY)*

*The Issue shall remain open for subscription on Working Days from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Indian Standard Time), during the period indicated above, except that the Issue may close on such earlier date or extended date as may be decided by the Board of Directors of our Company or the Debenture Issue Committee, subject to relevant approvals (subject to a minimum period of two working days and a maximum period of ten working days from the date of opening of this Issue).

In the event of an early closure or extension of the Issue, our Company shall ensure that notice of such early closure or extension is given to the prospective investors through an advertisement in a national daily newspaper and a regional daily newspaper in Tamil Nadu where the registered office is located, with wide circulation on or before such earlier date or extended date of closure. Application Forms for the Issue will be accepted only from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Indian Standard Time) or such extended time as may be permitted by the Stock Exchange, on Working Days during the Issue Period. On the Issue Closing Date, Application Forms will be accepted only between 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and uploaded until 5:00 p.m. (Indian Standard Time) or such extended time as may be permitted by the Stock Exchange.

Allotment on "first come first serve basis" #

#As per the SEBI Master Circular, the allotment in this issue is required to be made on the basis of date of upload of each application into the electronic book of the Stock Exchange. For further details refer section titled "Issue Related Information" on page 225 of the Prospectus.

In accordance with the provision of and requirement under Section 30 of the Companies Act, 2013 read with Regulation 30(1) of the SEBI NCS Regulations, the Company has published statutory advertisement dated July 27, 2025 on their website at www.iclfincorp.com on which contains the disclosures as per Schedule V of the SEBI NCS Regulations ("Statutory Advertisement"). The Statutory Advertisement can be viewed through the QR code and web link given below:

Web link: https://iclfincorp.com/fileupload/keWa05GuoT

(please scan this QR code to view the detailed advertisement)

Capitalized terms not defined herein shall have the same meaning as assigned to such terms in the Prospectus.

All the potential investors are advised to please provide attention to the above mentioned update and take an informed decision accordingly.

For ICL Fincorp Limited SD/-

K.G. Anilkumar (Chairman & Managing Director) DIN: 00766739

Place: Irinjalakuda

Date : 27/07/2025

Gunshots fired for recording reel injures cab driver; two held

EXPRESSNEWSERVICE
NEW DELHI JULY 27

GUNSHOTS ALLEGEDLY fired for recording a reel ended up injuring a 24-year-old cab driver in Southeast Delhi's Badarpur, police said on Sunday, adding that two men have been apprehended. Another accused is on the run.

According to the police, the incident happened in the early hours of Saturday, when the Gurgaon-based cab driver, identified as Gautam Saini, was with the accused at a house in the Molarband Extension area. "Saini was called by one of the accused, Rakesh, to party in Badarpur. They had drinks and even made reels together," a police officer aware of the investigation said.

The officer added that the accused have claimed that as they made the reel, they fired in the air and Saini was accidentally injured. It is still being confirmed if the incident was an accident, police said.

"On July 27, at 06:07 am, a PCR call was received at the Badarpur police station from Apollo Hospital regarding a Medico-Legal Case (MLC) of a gunshot injury sustained by one Gautam Saini," DCP (South East) Hemant Tiwari said. The police said that upon reaching the hospital, it was found that Saini had a gunshot injury on his head.

"After initial treatment, the family shifted him to AIIMS trauma centre. His condition remains critical but stable. A case has been filed under Section 109 of the BNS and the Arms Act," DCP Tiwari said.

IndiGo flight from Goa to Hindon airport diverted to IGIA

EXPRESSNEWSERVICE
NEW DELHI, JULY 27

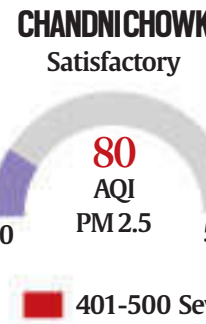
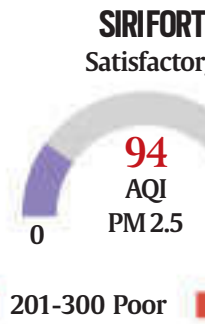
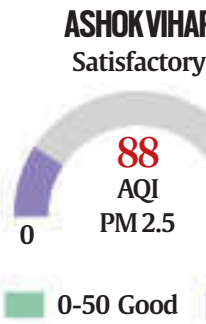
AN INDIGO flight from Goa, which was scheduled to land at the Hindon airport in Ghaziabad, was diverted to the Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) on Sunday evening. The diversion happened due to a lack of parking spots, according to a source.

According to flight tracking website Flightradar24, IndiGo flight 6E2575 was scheduled to depart from Goa at 2.20 pm and land in Ghaziabad at 4.50 pm. The flight took off at 2.33 pm and was diverted to Delhi eventually.

"As the flight was approaching to land at Hindon Airport, we were given directions to divert to IGIA due to unavailability of parking," a source said. Passengers de-boarded the plane at IGIA after some confusion.

"When we reached Hindon, the pilot kept flying around the airport for around 45 minutes before taking us to the IGIA, where we eventually landed at Terminal 3," said Ajay Mishra, a neurosurgeon and a passenger on the plane. "When we said we wanted to exit the plane, the crew said we will go to Hindon again. That is when the passengers created a ruckus, after which we were allowed to leave the plane," Mishra said.

According to a source, the airline had to take permission from the Hindon airport for another attempt at landing, which took time. The Indian Express tried reaching out to IndiGo for an official response but could not get a comment.



S K Y W A T C H

FORECAST: July 28
Generally cloudy sky; light to moderate rain with thunderstorm/lightning

MAX: 33-35
.1°C above normal

MIN: 26-28
.7°C above normal

NOIDA: FATHER AND UNCLE CRITICAL

5-yr-old dies as BMW coming from wrong side hits scooter

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JULY 27

A FIVE-YEAR-OLD girl died and her father and uncle sustained critical injuries after a speeding BMW car, being driven on the wrong side, hit their scooter in Noida's Sector 30 on Saturday night, police said.

The accused, identified as Yash Sharma (22), a resident of Sector 37, and his co-passenger Abhishek Rawat (22), have been arrested. Both stay in Sector 70.

Both are students, police said, adding that the BMW bearing a Haryana registration number has been impounded.

According to the FIR, the accident took place near Gate 3 of Post Graduate Institute of Child Health in Sector 30.

Gul Mohammad and his brother-in-law Raja, residents of Sadarpur Khajoor colony near Sector 45, were returning home after taking Ayat, Gul's sick



The impounded BMW; Ayat (above) was returning from hospital. Express

daughter, to the hospital.

The police said the rashly driven BMW rammed into the two-wheeler, throwing all three passengers off the vehicle. While Ayat succumbed to injuries, the two men were admitted to hospitals in a critical condition.

The police said the two accused made an attempt to flee the spot but were arrested shortly after pedestrians informed the authorities.

Assistant Police Commissioner Praveen Kumar Singh said that preliminary investigation has revealed the two accused were returning from a birthday celebration when the incident occurred.

"They two had attended a birthday party before the crash. As part of the investigation, they are being subjected to a medical examination to ascertain whether they were under the in-

fluence of alcohol at the time of the accident," he added.

The police said the car was found to be registered in the name of one Gagan. Yash Sharma, who deals in used cars, had borrowed it from Gagan a week ago, said an officer.

A case has been registered at the Sector 20 police station under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita sections of causing death by negligence and rash driving on a public road.

Will die a thousand deaths when he hears of our daughter's passing, says mother

SAMAN HUSAIN
NOIDA, JULY 27

IN HER one-room rented house at Noida's Sadarpur Khajoor colony — a maze of tightly packed lanes and shared washrooms — Tanjeela sits silently on a thin mattress, eyes fixed on the door.

"My Babua is no more," she whispers. "We were supposed to get her enrolled at a school next week... Her father had been saying that he would take leave and get her enrolled."

Her five-year-old daughter, Ayat, had died late Saturday, flung off a scooter as it was hit by a speeding BMW allegedly coming from the wrong in Sector 30. The two men accompanying her, her father Gul Mohammad, and maternal uncle Raja, were rushed to hospitals in critical condition. Raja, doctors say, is in a coma.



Ayat's mother Tanjeela at their house. Saman Husain

is still in the mortuary.

Around 11 pm on Saturday, Ayat began crying in pain — a tiny insect had crawled into her ear. Her father, an electrician, and her uncle, a tailor who stayed with them, rushed her to the Post Graduate Institute of Child Health.

They left on a scooter. The hospital was nearby.

"She got her ears cleaned... But when they did not return, I called to check... No one picked up the

calls," says Tanjeela.

Around 1 am, her phone rang — the police were calling to inform that her daughter was no more and that her husband and brother are being rushed to a hospital in critical condition.

On Sunday, the extended family split into three groups — one at each hospital, and one at the mortuary. While Gul is awake in the ICU of Kailash Hospital in Sector 27, Raja is yet to gain consciousness at Ghaziabad's SMART Hospital. At the mortuary, relatives await the body to be released after postmortem examination.

"We are trying to be everywhere at once," said Shamad Ali, a cousin. "Gul *bhai* is stable, but Raja's condition is very serious."

Tanjeela is inconsolable. "I could not find out anything from the doctors, or the police. I have not even seen my Babua till now," she breaks down.

"Her father still doesn't know

that she is gone," she adds. "If I tell him, he will die a thousand deaths."

Tanjeela and Gul had migrated to Noida from Bihar in search of work. Raja had accompanied them. In the dusty, crammed Sadarpur's Khajoor Colony, they found a corner to call their own. While she works as a domestic help, Gul is an electrician. They also have an 8-year-old son.

Tanjeela is now worried how she will pay the hospital bills and if Raja needs to be shifted to a government hospital. "Raja and Gul Bhai used to take care of everything... rent, expenses... everything. Gul bhai loved the girl more than his life," says Naheeda, a neighbour.

"*Do bachche the... humse jitna paisa le lete, lekin meri bacchi ko kuch na karte* (They could have taken all the money I had but not killed her)," Tanjeela murmurs, her voice cracking.

Toxic elements that could cause cancer in Delhi's dust, soil: Study

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JULY 27

TOXIC ELEMENTS are present in the soil and dust on the roads of Delhi, with the potential to cause cancer and other serious ailments, a new study has revealed.

The study, funded by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), was conducted in collaboration with researchers from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and Australia's University of New South Wales (UNSW) in Sydney.

It analysed roadside soil and dust samples collected from 33 places in the Capital.

The analysis, conducted at UNSW, revealed high levels of antimony, a chemical element, in the soil and dust. Antimony exposure is touted as a potential carcinogenic risk factor.

Dr Manoj Pratap Singh from JNU, the principal investigator behind the study, said children are at high risk of developing cancer owing to the toxic element exposure.

"At the present rate of exposure, such toxic elements can cause over 1.8 lakh cancer cases in men, more than 2.1 lakh cancer cases in women, and over 21,000 cancer cases in children," he added. Dr Singh further said that children have higher daily exposure to rare earth elements (REE) than adults.

"Their neurodevelopment is highly susceptible to REE exposure. It is associated with a decrease in IQ level and memory loss," he added. The toxic elements can enter the body by ingestion or swallowing soil and dust particles, which is common among children, he explained.

"This study revealed that children in Delhi are intake over 1 milligram of toxic and non-toxic metals every day through roadside soil and dust," Dr Singh said, adding that the toxins may enter the human body via a dermal route and cause various diseases, including diabetes mellitus and gestational diabetes mellitus. Inhalation of

dust can also be a pathway for the toxic elements to enter the body, said Dr Singh.

On why Delhi roads have high antimony content, Dr Singh said that the frequent use of brakes in vehicles can cause the toxic chemical element to be released in the environment in the form of fine particles. Research has also revealed that burning fossil fuels on a large scale contributes to the accumulation of toxic elements, he added. He further said that the study has confirmed the presence of a dangerous metal, lead, in the toxic elements present in Delhi's soil and dust.

Dr Singh said Cerium (Ce) content was found to be the highest

in roadside soil and road dust among the REEs analysed for the study. A Ce compound is used in catalytic converters of vehicles for the complete combustion of fuel, and is emitted from exhaust in the form of fine particles.

"Fifteen elements were identified from a priority list of the upper 275 toxic substances based on various parameters, including toxicity for human exposure... These are — arsenic (1), lead (2), cadmium (7), chromium VI (17), beryllium (43), nickel (57), zinc (75), chromium (78), uranium (97), copper (118), barium (134), manganese (140), selenium (146), aluminum (183) and vanadium (200)," he added.

'Delhi is where thousands of years of civilization is visible and alive'



FERNANDO BUCHELI
AMBASSADOR OF ECUADOR

NIRBHAY THAKUR
NEW DELHI, JULY 27

A CAREER diplomat with over three decades of experience, Fernando Bucheli, Ambassador of Ecuador to India, has represented his nation in various postings around the world, including Japan, Switzerland, Germany, and the Netherlands. He has been living in Delhi for around a year, and he says that the city "touches your heart in quiet, enduring ways". "It is not just a city you live in—it is a city that stays with you," Bucheli asserts. He speaks to *The Indian Express* as part of a series of interviews with Ambassadors about Delhi — their home. Excerpts:

What is the one place in the city that you love to visit often?

I have been living in Delhi for one year, and during this time, I have come to appreciate the city as one of the world's great historical capitals. Delhi is not just a seat of government—it is a place where thousands of years of civilization is visible and alive.

One place that left a lasting impression on me is Akshardham Temple. Beyond its physical beauty, what moves me most is the story it tells about India. Every visit to Akshardham is a reminder of how deeply rooted Indian identity is in history, reflection, and devotion. It offers a unique perspective—not only into Hindu philosophy, but into the broader soul of the country.

What are the three things that stood out in Delhi during your stay here?

First, the profound spirituality of its people. In Delhi, spirituality is not something abstract—it's a living force that shapes daily life. Second, the genuine warmth and friendship extended to foreigners. From the very begin-

ning, I was welcomed with openness and sincerity. The friendships I've built here—across cultures, professions, and backgrounds—are among the most meaningful aspects of my diplomatic mission.

Third, the striking contrasts that coexist in the city. Delhi presents a complex mosaic where wealth and opportunity stand alongside inequality and hardship.

Any memories here that you'll never forget?

Delhi has offered me unforgettable experiences that go far beyond official meetings or diplomatic engagements. What has truly stayed with me are the spiritual spaces I have visited and the conversations with people deeply rooted in India's philosophical traditions. I have found peace and perspective in places like the ISKCON temple, the Jain temples, and the gurdwaras — especially Bangla Sahib, where the spirit of service and equality is deeply moving. One particularly meaningful experience has been my visit to the Art of Living



Ambassador of Ecuador to India Fernando Bucheli. Express

International Center, where I was introduced to meditation and breathing techniques that embody India's living wisdom in a contemporary context.

Delhi also provides opportunities to appreciate the contributions of Islamic culture to India's artistic and intellectual landscape — visible in its architecture, calligraphy, music, and traditions of hospitality.

At a diplomatic level, it was a great honour to present my credentials to President Droupadi Murmu, a moment of deep sym-

bolic and institutional significance. I was also privileged to greet Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a social event—a brief but memorable exchange with the leader of this extraordinary nation.

Favourite food in the city?

There are several places I enjoy visiting. The Spice Route at The Imperial is not just a restaurant—it's an artistic and cultural experience, and the food reflects a journey through Asia. I also appreciate the modern elegance

and fusion style of Bo Tai in Qutub, as well as the vibrant atmosphere and traditional flavors at Parikrama, a revolving restaurant.

How is Delhi different compared to other cities that you have visited?

Among the many capitals I have served in, I can confidently say that Delhi is one of the most active and vibrant in terms of events, conferences, and outreach activities. There is a constant flow of invitations—from chambers of commerce, ministries, universities, think tanks, and cultural institutions—that reflects the city's dynamic role in shaping not only India's national agenda but also its international relations. As a diplomat, this offers unique opportunities to engage with a broad spectrum of stakeholders and to deepen bilateral ties in meaningful ways.

If you had to introduce Delhi to someone back home, how would you do it?

I would say that Delhi is not just a city—it is an awakening. This city has the power to expand

your mind and deepen your spirit. It leaves a mark that stays with you—quietly, but forever. Delhi teaches you to see the world differently. You encounter thousands of years of civilization in a single walk, hear dozens of languages in a single day, and witness countless acts of kindness in the most unexpected places.

Is there anything you would want to tell the administrators to change about the city?

I believe that initiatives aimed at improving air quality, waste management, traffic flow, and noise levels would contribute greatly to the overall well-being of its residents and visitors alike. These are challenges shared by many global cities, and I have no doubt that with its talent, creativity, and determination, Delhi will continue to make meaningful progress.

Does pollution bother you? How do you deal with it?

Yes, like in many major global cities, pollution in Delhi—especially during certain times of the

year—is a serious concern. I take the necessary precautions: following public health advisories, limiting outdoor exposure when the air quality is poor, and taking measures to ensure a healthier indoor environment.

That said, I also see pollution as part of a broader global environmental challenge. No single city or country can solve it alone.

What will you miss the most once you say goodbye to the city?

I will miss the spiritual atmosphere that is so present in daily life. I have also grown fond of the presence of green and historic spaces, particularly in Lutyens' Delhi.

And I will always carry with me the memory of paying homage to Mahatma Gandhi at Raj Ghat. It was a deeply moving experience—one that reminded me of the timeless relevance of his message of peace, truth, and nonviolence. His legacy continues to guide not only India, but also the conscience of the world.

Above all, the generosity, humility, and sincerity of the Indian people.

Before Magna Carta, Cholas had ‘ballot pots’: What is the ancient voting system PM lauded?

ARUN JANARDHANAN
CHENNAI, JULY 27

STANDING BEFORE the thousand-year-old stone temple built by Rajendra Chola I, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the Chola empire carried forward India's ancient democratic traditions. "Historians talk about Britain's Magna Carta in the name of democracy," he said, referring to the 1215 English charter. "But many centuries ago, elections were held in the Chola Empire through a democratic method."

Long before the Enlightenment in Europe birthed the ideals of representative governance, the Cholas had etched out rules for local self-rule, literally inscribed into stone. The inscriptions of Uttaramerur, a village in present-day Kanchipuram district, offer some of the world's earliest surviving evidence of a formal electoral system.

As chronicled by KANilakanta Sastri in The Cholas (1935), the Chola administrative framework was built on two foundational units: the Sabha for Brahmin settlements and the Ur for non-Brahmin villages. These were not symbolic councils but elected bodies with real powers over revenue, irrigation, temple management, and even justice. "It was democracy at the grassroots — built into the fabric of Tamil civil life," Sastri wrote in Chapter VIII, "Local Self-Government".



PM Narendra Modi at Brihadeeswara Temple, at Gangaikonda Cholapuram on Sunday. PTI

But what made the system particularly striking was the method of voting, a process called the Kudavolai system or "ballot pot" election. Under this method, as detailed in the Uttaramerur Inscriptions documented in Epigraphia Indica Vol. XXII (1933–34), the names of eligible candidates were inscribed on palm leaves and placed inside a pot. A young boy, typically chosen for his impartiality, would draw the lot in full public view. This randomised draw was not a game of chance but a civic ritual rooted in transparency, fairness, and collective consent.

While many historians say it as one designed to combine divine will and civic integrity, essentially to ensure that power was not monopolised by dynastic elites, eligibility criteria under the system were strict. Candidates had to own tax-paying land, be between 35 and 70 years old, possess knowledge of Vedic texts or administration, and have no record of crime or domestic abuse. Debt defaulters, alcoholics, and close relatives of sitting members were disqualified. "The disqualifications were perhaps even more revealing than the qualifications, laying out a moral vision of public service," Sastri wrote.

Accountability was embedded. Annual audits were mandatory. Misappropriation of funds or dereliction of duty could lead to disqualification from future office, a radical mechanism even by modern standards. Inscription no. 24 from Epigraphia Indica details the dismissal of a treasury officer over embezzlement, followed by a fine. These weren't isolated experiments. As Anirudh Kaniseti notes in Lords of the Earth and Sea (Penguin, 2023), the Chola model of statecraft relied heavily on decentralised administrative systems. By empowering merchant guilds such as the Manigramam and Ayyavole, and sustaining local assemblies, the Cholas expanded both trade and legitimacy. "Imperial rule," Kaniseti wrote, "was constructed not just through conquest, but by engineering sustainable civic systems".

This is the vision Modi looked to tap into when he said, "We hear about kings who brought gold, silver, and livestock after conquests. But Rajendra Chola brought Gangajal", a reference to the emperor's symbolic act of bringing Ganga water to his new capital, Gangaikonda Cholapuram, in 1025 CE. The act, memorialised in copper plates (as cited in Sastri's The Cholas), was described as building a "liquid pillar of victory (ganga-jalamayam jayastambham)", merging military triumph with ritual statecraft.

However, the Chola system was far from egalitarian in the modern sense. It excluded women, labourers, and landless groups. But as historian Tansen Sen wrote in The Military Campaigns of Rajendra Chola, the Cholas were masters of strategic signalling, not just through naval conquests but in governance structures that prefigured electoral thought.

The shares re-lodged for transfer shall be issued only in demat mode.

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NOTICE TO SHAREHOLDERS

Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) vide its circular no. SEBI/HO/MIRSD/MIRSD-PoD/P/CIR/2025/97, dated July 2, 2025 has allowed the opening of special window to facilitate re-lodgment of transfer requests of shares held in physical form, lodged prior to the deadline of April 1, 2019 and rejected/returned due to deficiency in the documents. Hence, investors who missed the earlier deadline of March 31, 2021 for re-lodgment are requested to submit necessary documents with the Company's Registrar and Share Transfer Agent by following the details as given below:

Key Details	
Window for re-lodgement	July 7, 2025 to January 6, 2026
Who can relodge the transfer requests?	Investor whose transfer deeds were lodged prior to April 1, 2019 and rejected/returned due to deficiency in documents.
How to relodge the transfer requests?	Submit necessary original transfer documents with corrected or missing details to the Registrar and Share Transfer Agent, MUFG Intime India Private Limited (Formerly known as Link Intime India Private Limited)
Postal Address	MUFG Intime India Private Limited Unit: Tata Steel Limited C 101, Embassy 247, L.B.S Marg, Vikhroli (West), Mumbai – 400083
Helpline no.	+91 81081 18484
For any queries	Raise a service request at: https://web.in.mpms.mufg.com/helpdesk/Service_Request.html or send an email at cosec@tatasteel.com

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July 25, 2025
Mumbai

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Pune party drug seizure: NCP(SP) leader Khadse's son-in-law among 7 held

SUSHANT KULKARNI & MANOJ MORE
PUNE, JULY 27

FORMER MAHARASHTRA minister and NCP (SP) leader Eknath Khadse's son-in-law was among seven people arrested Sunday morning after the Pune City police said it seized drugs during a raid at an apartment where they were allegedly partying. A local court later remanded them in police custody until July 29.

Pranjal Khewalkar, the husband of Khadse's daughter Rohini Khadse, who is the NCP (SP) Maharashtra Women's Wing president, and the six others were held after the Pune Police's Crime Branch raided a rented studio apartment in the upmarket Kharadi area around 3.20 am after receiving a tip off about a party there.

Pune Police Commissioner Amitesh Kumar said the raid was conducted on the basis of the information received from a source. "The seven were first detained during an early morning raid and subsequently arrested," he said.

"We have recovered 2.7 grams of substance suspected to be cocaine and 70 grams of substances suspected to be marijuana from them... We have also seized 10 cell phones, two cars, hookah pot, liquor and beer bottles from the location. An offence was subsequently registered at Kharadi police station," said DCP (Crime) Nikhil Pingle.

Reacting to the incident, Eknath Khadse said, "I have not spoken to my son-in-law as he is in police custody... I was suspecting that something like this would happen because of the prevailing political scenario. But I am not the one who will support anything wrong. If anyone has done anything wrong, they should be punished."

Apart from Khewalkar, 41, a doctor, the six others were identified by police as: Nikhil Jethanand Poptani (35), a cigarette trader; Sameer Fakir Mohammed Sayyed (41), who deals in hardware; Sachin Sonaji Bhombe (42), who works for a private firm; Shripad Mohan Yadav (27), who is into construction; Isha Deviyot Singh (22) and Prachi Gopal Sharma (23).

All seven were booked under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act and Cigarettes and the Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, police said. A Crime Branch officer told The Indian Express that after the raid, the seven were taken to Sassoon General Hospital for a medical examination. Khewalkar's residence in Hadapsar area of Pune was also searched, the officer said.

"The forensic evidence collected from the location... and the objects seized during the raid at Khewalkar's house are being investigated. A key focus of the investigation will be to find out how and from whom the drugs were procured. Preliminary field kit tests have confirmed these are drugs and a detailed report from the Forensic Sciences Laboratory is awaited. We are also investigating the role of each person in the party and how they are known to each other," the officer said.

Home secy: CAPF troops with permanent disability to get financial package

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, JULY 27

OFFICERS AND jawans of the CAPFs who lose their limbs or suffer any permanent disability during operations will continue to remain in service and get their due promotions and pay apart from a one-time basic monetary package, Home Secretary Govind Mohan said Sunday.

Mohan was speaking to CRPF personnel on the occasion of their 87th Raising Day. A senior CAPFs officer told PTI that a committee of officers has been constituted under the chairmanship of CRPF DG Gyanendra Pratap Singh and it is expected to finalise its recommendations and the modalities for the roll out of the plan in the next few months. The officer said there are hundreds of CAPF personnel who have lost their legs, hands or eyes and have suffered permanent disability due to an IED blast or similar incidents during operations over the last decades.

Dr. B.R. AMBEDKAR UNIVERSITY DELHI
(Established by the Govt. of NCT Delhi)

(Special Drive for SC/ST/OBC)

Admission Notice for Academic Year 2025-26 for Postgraduate Programmes

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University Delhi, a State University established by the Government of NCT of Delhi invites applications for admissions to its various PG programmes under different School of Studies in Kashmere Gate, Karampura, Lodhi Road & Qutab Institutional Area Campuses for the academic session 2025-26.

Particulars	Last Date to apply online
Special Drive for SC/ST/OBC	1st August 2025 (Friday)

For the latest admission related information, kindly visit university website www.aud.delhi.gov.in
Dated: 24.07.2025 www.aud.delhi.gov.in
DIP/Shabdarth/Classified/0159/25-26 Registrar

DIRECTORATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION, GOVT. OF NCT OF DELHI

Heartiest Greetings to all on the auspicious occasion of Hariyali Teej

भारत की गौरवशाली विरासत को पुनर्जीवित करने और उसका सम्मान करने की दिशा में कई प्रयास किए गए हैं, जिससे हमारे युवाओं और हमारी संस्कृति के बीच का रिश्ता और गहरा हुआ है।
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State Level Programme

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Sh. Nayab Singh Saini
Chief Minister, Haryana

July 28, 2025 | Time: 2 pm | Ambala

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DELHI CONFIDENTIAL

'SP Ki PATHSHALA'

ON THE directions of Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav, workers are running symbolic 'PDA pathshalas' (PDA schools) in villages where the UP government proposes to pair primary schools with other schools. Akhilesh has also announced that when his party comes to power, the schools will be back in their respective villages. In the day-long 'PDA pathshalas', SP workers taught children Hindi and English alphabets, besides numerals.

MISSING LINK

TWO DAYS after the Congress held a convention for its OBC leaders and workers at Talkatora stadium, there are whispers that it may take a while for the party to walk the talk vis-a-vis poll-bound Bihar. The party's screening committee for Bihar, some insiders say, does not have a local OBC leader. There are talks among the OBC workers that a state like Bihar with a large OBC population should have local OBC leader(s) in the screening committee, especially when Rahul Gandhi is reaching out to the OBCs.

COMIC ATTACK

DURING A stand-up comedy show at the Talkatora Stadium in Delhi on Sunday, a DIG-rank officer of AGMUT cadre was roasted by the artiste. As the officer, who is currently posted with the National Investigation Agency (NIA), sat with his family in the front row, a person came up to serve them coffee in the middle of the show, prompting the comic to crack a joke on him since beverages and eatables were otherwise strictly prohibited at the venue.

OVER 200 STARTUPS IN SPACE SECTOR: MODI IN MANN KI BAAT

PM praises Shukla, says new wave of curiosity among kids

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JULY 27

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi Sunday commended astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla for his space voyage, praised students who bagged medals at International Olympiad, expressed happiness at UNESCO's World Heritage site tag for 12 Maratha forts, and mentioned a surrendered Maoist for taking a plunge into fish farming in Jharkhand's Gumla, while urging people to share new ideas on how to celebrate National Space Day on August 23.

"As soon as Shubhanshu landed safely on earth, people jumped with joy and a wave of happiness rippled through every heart," the PM recalled in his Mann Ki Baat's 124th episode. He said after the Chandrayaan-3 success in 2023, there was "new curiosity among children about science and space" as they dreamt of becoming space scientists, wanting to go to space and land on the moon.

Referring to the INSPIRE-MANAK Abhiyan, a campaign to promote innovation among children, Modi said that five kids were selected from each school, and they presented innovative ideas. "Space start-ups are also growing



BJP chief J P Nadda listens to Mann Ki Baat, in Delhi, Sunday

rapidly. Five years ago, there were less than 50 start-ups. Today, there are more than 200, just in the space sector," the PM said.

Mentioning the success of fish farming in Jharkhand's Gumla, where a surrendered Maoist took the initiative with the help of PM Matsya Sampada Yojana, he said, "Today, more than 150 families of Basia block have joined fish farming. There are many people who were once in the Naxalite organisation. Now they are living a life of respect in the village itself and providing employment to others."

Congratulating 4 Indian students for winning medals at the International Chemistry Olympiad recently, he said students won

3 gold, 2 silver and 1 bronze medals at the International Mathematical Olympiad in Australia as well. With Astronomy and Astrophysics Olympiad in Mumbai next month, he said, "Students from more than 60 countries will participate... This will be the biggest Olympiad till date. In a way, India is now moving ahead in both the Olympics and the Olympiads."

Modi expressed happiness that 12 Maratha forts were recognised by the UNESCO as World Heritage Sites and said, "These forts are not just bricks and stones, they are symbols of our heritage."

Paying tribute to the freedom fighters with Independence Day just weeks away, the PM said

August was the "month of revolution" and recalled that Khudiram Bose was executed in Muzaffarpur on August 11, 1908, August 1 is the death anniversary of Lokmanya Tilak and on August 8, the Quit India Movement, led by Mahatma Gandhi, was launched. "Another revolution started on August 7, 1905. The Swadeshi Movement lent a new energy to local products... especially handloom," he said. Just as Khadi gave new strength to the freedom struggle, the PM said, when India is moving towards becoming developed, textile sector has emerged as the country's strength.

"Our real strength is the knowledge that has been preserved in the form of manuscripts for centuries. These manuscripts contain science, medical procedures, music, philosophy, and most importantly, the thought that can make the future of humanity brighter."

On the Grassland Bird Census conducted at Kaziranga National Park, he said, "More than 40 bird species have been identified, including many rare birds. The team installed sound-recording devices. The sounds were analysed on computers... AI was used. The birds were identified just by their sounds, without disturbing them."

Not viable: Govt cancels tender for Bhubaneswar Metro project

SUJIT BISOI
BHUBANESWAR, JULY 27

UNCERTAINTY LOOMS over the Bhubaneswar Metro Rail Project after the Odisha government cancelled the tender for the ambitious urban mobility project initiated by earlier BJD government.

Housing and Urban Development Minister Krushna Chandra Mohapatra said the decision was taken due to delay in implementation and to avoid cost escalation. "The metro project initiated by previous government wouldn't have been viable. An inter-minister committee has been formed to take a fresh look at the project by studying various aspects, its viability and submit a fresh proposal," said Mohapatra.



MATOSHREE REUNION

MNS president Raj Thackeray visited 'Matoshree' to wish his cousin and Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray on his 65th birthday, in Mumbai on Sunday. Uddhav said his happiness 'multiplied manifold' after he met Raj. 'He came to Matoshree after many years,' he said. PTI

Bharat should not be translated, else it will lose its identity and respect, says RSS chief

JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI, JULY 27

CALLING FOR India to transform from "a golden bird" to a "lion" in the prevailing circumstances, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat Sunday said that since the world understands power, the country should be powerful, economically vibrant and display the height of technological prowess.

"It is necessary because the world understands power. So Bharat should become strong. It also has to become wealthy from an economic perspective," he said. He made it clear that the country should not become strong to rule



RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat and Governor Rajendra Arlekar in Kochi, Sunday. PTI

over others, but to help the world. Bhagwat said that 'Bharat' should not be translated as otherwise it would lose its identity

and along with it the respect it enjoys in the world. While India is 'Bharat', Bhagwat said, "It should be kept as such when we talk, write or speak about it, whether in public or personal spaces." He said that the identity of Bharat is respected "because it is Bharat". "Bharat is a proper noun. It should not be translated. 'India is Bharat'. That is true. But Bharat is Bharat. That is why, while talking, writing and speaking, be it personal or public, we should keep Bharat as Bharat," he said.

Speaking at the 'Gyan Sabha', a national education conference organised by the RSS-linked Shiksha Sanskriti Utthan Nyas in Kochi, Bhagwat said that

'Bharatiya' education teaches sacrifice and living for others. "The purpose of our education and our outlook about it is unique and any education according to that would benefit not only me, but also my family and entire world," he said.

As a result, 'Viksit or Vishwa Guru Bharat' will never be the cause of a war nor will it ever oppress or exploit anyone, he said. "... many kings came and went ... Why do we remember Lord Ram?... dharma of living for everyone, connecting your development with that of everyone else... teaching this dharma is Bharatiya Shiksha. Education which teaches only selfishness is not Bharatiya Shiksha," he said.

Behind swipe at Nitish govt on law & order, Chirag's game plan

JDU hits back: If uncomfortable, he can join alliance with 'tainted people'

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, JULY 27

UNION MINISTER Chirag Paswan's fresh salvos at the Bihar government over "deteriorating law and order" in the state and comments about his "political constraints" behind supporting the Nitish Kumar-led NDA government have not only invited strong reactions from ally Janata Dal (United) but also put the BJP in an uncomfortable position.

The Opposition has lapped up the opportunity, with Congress and RJD reiterating that the leader of the LJP(RV), an NDA constituent, was only "reinforcing" their claims that CM Nitish Kumar was "not in control" in the state administration.

"He is endorsing our line. It is fashionable to criticise the RJD's tenure as 'jungle raj', but the Gopal Khemka and Paras Hospital murders have presented a very distressing image to the country. The

NDA must not adopt an ostrich-like attitude towards the surge in crimes," said RJD spokesperson Mritunjay Tiwari. Congress spokesperson Asit Nath Tiwari said Chirag's concerns were "those of people in the state".

On Saturday, addressing a rally in Gaya, Chirag expressed deep anguish at the state's "poor" law and order situation. He said he felt sad about supporting a government under which crime had "spiralled out of control".

"Bihar has seen a series of criminal incidents and the administration seems to be bowing down before the criminals... Arrests have been made but why do such incidents recur?... If such incidents keep happening, the state would see a dreadful situation," said the Union Minister.

He said even if the incidents were happening in poll season to "malign the government", it was the administration's responsibility to keep them in check. "Either the administration is



LJP (RV) chief Chirag Paswan in Gaya. PTI file

colluding with criminals or it is trying to cover up the crimes or it has become completely incompetent," he said.

Chirag's scathing attack is aimed at much more than bargaining or a "good number of seats" in Assembly polls, scheduled for later this year. "It is about asserting ourselves as a political party, which has to answer to the cadre. He has been looking to expand the party's voter base to

around 15% to enable our party to become a key stakeholder in the state's politics. We have the overwhelming support of the Paswan community (5.3%), while we can get a sizable chunk of votes from the Ravidas community (5.2%), and around 3% from the Mushahar and Bhuiyan voters. We are also working on consolidating upper-caste voters from the Bhumihar community," said a state-level functionary of the LJP (RV).

The party's Bihar in-charge and Jamui MP Arun Bharti said the criticism should be seen as the fulfilment of an ally's role in a coalition by making constructive criticism and not as an "attack". Bharti told *The Indian Express* that increasing crimes were not "the concern of one party or individual but the pain of the entire state."

"The fundamental duty of a coalition government is to prioritise people's issues and take concrete steps. The zero tolerance towards crime is not only part of the alliance's common minimum programme but also a promise to

Bihar electoral roll revision an exercise by EC to determine citizenship: Opp

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JULY 27

CONGRESS LEADER Abhishek Manu Singhvi on Sunday said that the Election Commission's special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in poll-bound Bihar seemed more an exercise in checking citizenship – something that the election regulator was not empowered to do.

He said that while no decision had been taken regarding what Tejashwi Yadav said was the option of poll boycott, all options were open for Opposition. Singhvi said this at an INDIA bloc presser addressed by the Congress, RJD and the Left parties in Delhi, and while talking to mediapersons afterwards.

"It now becomes clear that it is a citizenship exercise. Even the Supreme Court has observed that proofs like Aadhaar, ration card and EPIC should be considered. Yet, they have insisted on not accepting these. So, the real objective is to determine citizenship, as the EC has said documents like Aadhaar, EPIC and ration card cannot determine it. Is the power to determine citizenship the domain of EC?" Singhvi said.

He added, "I will tell the EC that this is not an issue of institutional arrogance. Since 2003, you have conducted 9-10 elections to the LS and Assemblies. You had Aadhaar, ration card, etc, as identification proofs. So, why did you have to link it to the elections? You could have done it (SIR) later. It was not necessary to squeeze it in, which creates problems."

He said that Article 10 of the Constitution dealt with the continuance of citizenship, meaning that once a person is a citizen, he or she cannot automatically lose it. "It could be lost only via a detailed process laid down by specific laws," he said.

"These matters are covered

under Citizenship Act and Foreigners Act. You are trying to determine citizenship as the EC... what is not in its powers... It can't be done through voter lists.

"Citizenship Rules 1966 have detailed procedures. The Central government, MEA and Foreigner Tribunal are required for that. Singhvi said, adding that termination of citizenship is a detailed procedure, and none can be removed via electoral rolls.

He added, "For the last 15 years, citizens were told to show Aadhaar. Today, they say Aadhaar is useless. Till now the presumption of citizenship is there. Now they are trying to put the onus on the person with a two-month timeline."

RJD RS MP Manoj Jha said CEC Gyanesh Kumar had said while taking charge that no such decision will be taken without consulting political parties, but what he has done is contrary to that.

CPI (ML) (Liberation) general secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya said that the latest information is that 65 lakh names have been cut from Bihar electoral rolls, adding that as many as 2 crore people may get "disenfranchised" once the perusal of documents is done.

He added that while people were being excluded, the EC has not come across a single person to be included in the voter list as a new voter.

Meanwhile, without naming anyone, the EC in a statement said: "EC is not able to understand that when a full month period from August 1 till September 1 is available to point out wrongful inclusion or wrongful exclusion of any name, why are they creating such a big fuss now? Why not ask their 1.6 lakh BLAs [Booth Level Agents] to submit claims and objections from August 1 till September 1? Why are some persons trying to give an impression that the draft list is the final list, which it is not, as per SIR Orders."

Rajnath says logistics management was key to Op Sindoor success

ADITI RAJA
VADDARA, JULY 27

DEFENCE MINISTER Rajnath Singh Sunday credited "efficient handling of resources" for the success of Operation Sindoor. Singh said in times of wars, emergencies or global pandemics, countries with strong logistical chains are the ones that have proven to be "stable, secure and capable".

While virtually addressing the convocation ceremony of the Vadodara-based Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya (GSV), Singh quoted ancient Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu and said, "The line between disorder and order lies in logistics... the way the world is changing is impressive and shocking. Major transformations in the defence sector are not a secret... The techniques of warfare are also changing. In today's age, wars are not won only with guns and bullets. They are won with time-bound delivery



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh

of the weapons... It means that the line between victory and defeat is decided by logistics.

"The entire world has seen the example of this during Operation Sindoor. The way logistics management was handled by various agencies – from mobilisation of forces to transporting equipment and items needed by them at the right time and at the right place, was a deciding factor in the success of Operation Sindoor..."

"Logistics is the power that converts an attempt to control; it is the discipline that makes a battlefield what it is meant to be. In the absence of logistics, a battlefield will only become a confusion zone... Today, strength is measured not just by weapons but by timely resource management."



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‘Oxygen supply defect’ leads to death of three patients at Jalandhar hospital trauma centre

Oil leakage in the supply line caused the fault:Hospital superintendent

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
JALANDHAR, JULY 27

A TECHNICAL malfunction which led to the alleged fall in pressure in the oxygen supply system at the Trauma Centre in Jalandhar Civil Hospital late on Sunday resulting in the deaths of three patients on ventilator, officials said.

According to hospital officials, the deceased included a 22-year-old woman being treated for a snakebite wound, another was a tuberculosis patient, and third patient was being treated for drug overdose.

Dr Vinay Anand, a senior medical officer at the trauma centre of the hospital, confirming the incident to the media, said, “There was a sudden drop in oxygen pressure due to a fault in the trauma centre’s supply line. All three patients were already in critical condition. Although we cannot conclusively say that the deaths were caused by the drop in oxygen supply, but it is true that they passed away shortly after the pressure fell. A thorough investigation is underway to establish the exact cause.”

Dr RK Baddhan, medical superintendent at the Jalandhar civil hospital, added that there

was some oil leakage, which caused the fault in supply of oxygen.

He added that the bodies have been sent for post-mortem.

Meanwhile, a family member of 22-year-old Archana, who was undergoing treatment for a snakebite wound, blamed the hospital for negligence. “Our daughter was recovering after seven days of treatment. When the oxygen stopped, her condition deteriorated. She died soon after. Had the oxygen supply system been working, she would have been alive,” her family said.

Congress MLA Pargat Singh blamed the Punjab government for the three deaths and said that the incident reflects the state’s deteriorating public health system under the AAP.

“I offer my heartfelt condolences to the families. This tragedy is not fate—it’s failure. When life-saving systems fail in hospitals, it exposes a government that prioritises image-building over life-saving,” he said.

Demanding immediate technical audit of all ICU oxygen systems, Pargat added that Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann owes answers not just to the Assembly, but to the grieving families.

As India seeks more cheetahs, a flurry of diplomacy in Africa

ANAND MOHAN J
BHOPAL, JULY 27

OVER THE past two years, India has been working its diplomatic channels with Botswana, South Africa and Kenya as it navigates a complex set of negotiations to replenish its African cheetah population.

Senior members of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) have said that talks with South Africa, a key source country, have slowed down following the formation of a new political coalition after general elections there last year. At the same time, Botswana has formally committed to sending four cheetahs, and discussions are underway to finalise timelines. In Kenya, negotiations remain broad, centred on long-term collaboration rather than immediate translocation.

As many as 20 cheetahs have already been brought to India as part of the country’s ambitious translocation plans. Of these, eight were brought from Namibia in 2022 and 12 from South Africa in early 2023. They were all brought to Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh.

In April this year, the Madhya Pradesh government announced that eight new cheetahs would be brought from Botswana and that the first four would arrive by May. That is yet to happen.

A senior official from the National Tiger Conservation



20 cheetahs brought to India from Africa since 2022

Authority (NTCA) said, “We have sought an engagement to work out the logistics. Our High Commission is coordinating to arrive at dates of mutual convenience. The Union Minister concerned has been working on speeding up negotiations with the other countries.”

Records of Cheetah Project Steering Committee meetings show that as early as December 13, 2023, the committee was apprised that “steps have been taken for bringing further cheetahs from Kenya, Tanzania, Sudan, and other range countries as well.” However, the NTCA has clarified that as of now, there is “no arrangement with Sudan or Tanzania”.

As for South Africa, with the translocation of 12 cheetahs having already taken place in 2023, experts from the country have been closely associated with India’s Cheetah Project. However, the changes in government in the country have led to delays in further discussions to bring more cheetahs to India, officials said.

“In South Africa, there has been a significant change in the government since the last engagement. Hence, the processes are taking time. The new government is going through the nuances and understanding the project,” a senior NTCA official. In 2024, the ruling African National Congress lost its outright majority, which it had enjoyed for over 30 years, and has been in a shaky coalition with the Democratic Alliance that is under threat of collapse over sharp divisions between the two parties.

As per the steering committee’s meeting records from December 4, 2024, committee adviser S P Yadav said that “bringing cheetahs from South Africa may take time beyond three months since negotiations are underway”.

“Cheetahs from Kuno National Park need to be translocated to the Gandhisagar Wildlife Sanctuary for fostering housekeeping practices. The fresh lot from South Africa are to be housed in Kuno,” Yadav told the committee.

The DIG of the NTCA, Dr Vaibhav C Mathur, had in this meeting apprised the committee that a high-level delegation had visited Kenya “for sourcing of cheetahs” and that action was underway “for dialogue with governments of Botswana and South Africa on sourcing of cheetahs”.

On February 19 this year, the State Chief Wildlife Warden, Shubharanjan Sen, again suggested to the committee that the

cheetahs in Kuno be transported in order to “bring new cheetahs from South Africa”.

Mathur had apprised the committee that there was a “deadlock with South Africa” and that officials were trying to address it. Mathur also told the committee that an MoU with Kenya would be signed in the first week of March.

Unlike with Botswana, discussions with Kenya have remained “generic and overarching”, with the focus more on “capacity building for their staff, use of technology for protection, and similar collaborative efforts,” an NTCA official said.

The chairman of the Cheetah Project Steering Committee, Dr Rajesh Gopal, said, “We are yet to get a fresh stock. In the last steering committee meeting, the Government of India informed us that discussions are ongoing. Several countries are being explored — we haven’t narrowed it down to one yet. There are options on the table.”

Madhya Pradesh wildlife officials are also involved in on-ground diplomacy. A senior state forest department officer, who was part of a delegation to South Africa, said, “We have visited South Africa and held discussions with their team. We will soon issue an update after the NTCA delegation clears some issues... There are new officials and we are getting them up to speed with our preparations in Gandhisagar and our success with the project.”

Male nurse sedates patient, sexually assaults her in UP hospital ICU, held

MANISH SAHU
LUCKNOW, JULY 27

A 25-YEAR-OLD male nursing staffer of a private hospital was arrested in Uttar Pradesh’s Balrampur district on Sunday for allegedly raping a woman patient after administering a sedative to her on the pretext of treatment, police said.

The victim was admitted to the intensive care unit (ICU) of the hospital.

The accused, identified as Yogesh Pandey, allegedly sent the attendants of all patients out of the ICU before sexually assaulting her, the police said.

“We arrested the accused after gathering sufficient evidence against him,” said Balrampur Superintendent of Police (SP) Vikash Kumar.

The police claimed to have examined footage from the CCTV cameras installed at the ICU and recorded statements from the female staff members.

The CCTV camera captured the entire incident as it was installed just outside the curtain surrounding the bed, a police officer said.

The accused has no past criminal record, it learnt.

According to the police, they received information on Friday

that a woman admitted to the ICU of a private hospital was sexually assaulted in the early hours of the day. A case was registered and the victim’s medical examination was conducted.

The report of the medical examination is awaited.

During the preliminary investigation, the police found that the woman went to the hospital a day before for treatment after she experienced chest pain.

After examination, she was admitted to the ICU and began her treatment.

The accused, Pandey, and a female trainee nurse were on duty for the night shift.

Around 2 am, Pandey allegedly asked all the patients’ attendants to leave the ICU and the trainee nurse went to the general ward to rest, it was alleged. When the ICU was unattended for a while, the accused went to the victim and administered on her an injection that left her unconscious, it is learnt. This is when he took the opportunity to sexually assault her.

But when the victim regained her consciousness she found herself in discomfort and distress. She immediately informed her family members who in turn alerted the police.

The police said they were collecting more details on the case.

‘Annual income of ₹3’: Admin says clerical error; Cong jibe at MP govt over faulty paper

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BHOPAL, JULY 27

AN OFFICIAL income certificate, showing a farmer in Madhya Pradesh’s Satna district with an annual income of just Rs 3, went viral on social media and prompted the Congress to quip that “India’s poorest man” has been founder under the rule of Chief Minister Mohan Yadav.

Subsequently, authorities issued a corrected version of the certificate, saying the earlier one was the result of a clerical mistake. The initial certificate was issued by the tehsil office in Kothli and bore the signature of the local Tehsildar.

The incident occurred after Ramswaroop, a resident of Nayagaon village, applied for an income certificate at the Kothli tehsil office. When he received the document dated July 22, it declared that his family’s annual income was ₹3, effectively placing his monthly income at a mere 25 paise.

The certificate was signed by Tehsildar Saurabh Dwivedi and

said that the income details were based on the self-declaration provided by the applicant.

Ramswaroop then approached the tehsil office to lodge a complaint. A new certificate was issued on July 25 — this time listing his annual income as ₹30,000, or ₹2,500 per month.

Kothli tehsildar Saurabh Dwivedi acknowledged the error, attributing it to a clerical mistake. “An income certificate was issued by our office in which, due to a clerical error, the annual income was mistakenly recorded as Rs 3. This has now been corrected,” he told local media.

The Madhya Pradesh Congress, however, posted an image of the certificate on its X handle and said, “In Mohan (Yadav’s) reign, India’s poorest man has been found! An income certificate was issued in Satna district! Annual income stated to be only Rs 3! Isn’t that shocking! A mission to make the public poor? Because now the chair itself is eating the commission!”

BJD corporator held for ‘sexually assaulting’ teen since 2023

Bhubaneswar: The Odisha Police on Sunday arrested BJD corporator Amaresh Jena in connection with an alleged rape case lodged against him recently.

Jena, a key face of the BJD in Bhubaneswar, was apprehended from Nilagiri in Balasore following raids after remaining absconding for days, police said. On Saturday, the police also arrested five of his associates for allegedly harbouring the accused person.

On July 23, Jena was booked under sections 64 (2) (rape), 89 (causing miscarriage without the woman’s consent), 296 (obscene act) and 352 (criminal intimidation) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and under the POCSO Act. The complainant, a 19-year-old, accused Jena of sexual misconduct since September 2023 after promising to marry her and divorcing his wife. She was a minor at that time.

She also alleged that she had gotten pregnant and that Jena coerced her into an abortion two months later in February 2024 and threatened her harm if she goes for any legal action.

Meanwhile, the BJD suspended Jena from the party. **ENS**

Massive crowd, panic, then chaos: Witnesses and victims’ families recall Haridwar stampede horror

AISWARYA RAJ & MANISH SAHU
HARIDWAR, LUCKNOW, JULY 27

AROUND 8 am on Sunday, Nirmala (28) tightly clutched the hands of her two children as she started ascending the ramp towards the Mansa Devi temple in Haridwar. Around 100 metres from the temple’s entrance, she heard some incoherent shouts from people. After this, the massive crowd exiting the temple through the same ramp — less than 3 metres wide and encroached on one side by shops — shoved into the crowd that was entering.

“I fell, but I did not loosen the grip over my two children (aged four and eight). All of us were on the ground, and many people fell on us. Some stepped on us as they scrambled to safety. After what felt like a long time, a man rushed to my side, covered all three of us with his arms, and took us to one of the shops nearby. The shopkeeper refused to take us in. Then, more people came and carried all of us to the ropeway,” Nirmala recalled, staring at the window of the district



Police and SDRF personnel at the stampede site on Sunday. PTI

hospital where she was taken to.

While Nirmala and her four-year-old daughter sustained injuries, her son, Arush, died in the stampede. He was among eight people killed in the tragedy, which also left 28 injured.

Panic triggered by a rumoured electricity spark is suspected to have caused the stampede in the area leading to the hilltop Mansa Devi temple, where hundreds of devotees had gathered Sunday morning, police said.

IGP (Law and Order) Nilesh Bharme said devotees were moving towards the temple when the incident took place around 9 am. “There was some rumour about electricity hazards, creat-

ing panic among the devotees, leading to the situation,” he said.

Nirmala and 15 family members had reached Haridwar on Friday to spend the weekend in the temple town. They were to go back home on Sunday evening. She limped towards the hospital exit, after taking a rushed discharge, to get inside the ambulance carrying Arush’s body.

“There were no police, and the shopkeepers did not let anyone in when people panicked. They asked us to leave when the man who saved us took my unconscious son to the shop. Despite letting in several devotees, the ramp was not closed,” she said.

The staff at the temple said the

police usually close the ramp when the complex fills with devotees. On Sunday morning, minutes before the incident, a massive rush was observed, but the pedestrian path remained open until the incident took place.

Anita Kumari was around 50 metres away from the spot where the stampede took place. She called Nirmala, her relative who had ventured away from them, but the calls went unanswered.

“Later, I got a call from my niece who told me about Arush’s death. This was a preventable tragedy. There was no barricading or crowd control. There should be a cap on the number of pilgrims entering the temple. This should not happen again,” said Kumari. “If someone had alerted us about the crowd above, we would not have embarked on the trek,” she said.

Also among the dead was 20-year-old Vicky Saini from Nagaria Kalan village in Uttar Pradesh’s Rampur district. Upon hearing the news, Vicky’s family rushed to Haridwar.

“On Saturday, a group of people from our village and nearby areas, including Vicky and his cousin Sachin, left for

Uttarakhand to take part in the Kanwar Yatra,” said Chaudhary Lokendra Singh, husband of village pradhan Savita Devi. “They reached Haridwar on Sunday morning. After taking a holy dip in the Ganga, they decided to visit the Mansa Devi temple, which is a common stop for devotees during the yatra.”

Singh said that Sachin, who was also injured in the stampede, called Vicky’s family in Rampur and informed them about what had happened. “He said they were taking Vicky to the hospital in an ambulance. Later, we received the heart-breaking news that Vicky had been declared dead,” said Singh.

Vicky, a second-year college student, was the younger son of Tikaram Saini, an employee at a private firm in Rampur.

The eight people who died in the stampede have been identified as Arush, 8, from Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh; Vicky, 18, from Rampur, UP; Shanti, 60, from Badaun, UP; Vakeel, 43, from Barabanki, UP; Vishal, 19, from Rampur, UP; Ram Bharoase, 43, from Budaun, UP; Shakal, 18, from Araria, Bihar; and Vipin Saini, 18, from Kashipur, Uttarakhand.

India’s 1st hydrogen-powered train nears reality as Railways successfully tests coach



India’s first hydrogen-powered coach at ICF, Chennai.

major components. First, the conversion of two conventional 1600-HP diesel power cars into hydrogen fuel cell-powered traction system, and second, setting up a hydrogen storage and fuelling facility at Jind in Haryana, with a storage capacity of 3,000 kg of the clean fuel.

The primary design, validation, and testing is being undertaken by Indian Railways’ Research Design & Standards Organisation (RDSO). A senior Railway Ministry official said that the hydrogen train project was conceptualised for conversion of

a 10-coach diesel-electric multiple unit (DEMU) into a hydrogen-powered multiple unit, with two 1600-HP cars. With a train length of 10 coaches, it can carry more than 2,600 passengers.

How will it work?

Hydrogen fuel technology is still an emerging field in the Railways. There are many challenges and safety concerns as hydrogen, the lightest element, is highly flammable, apart from being colourless, odourless and tasteless. As the project involves the retro-fitting of two diesel-

Vijai Sharma, Kyoto Protocol architect & India’s ex-chief climate negotiator, dies

AMITABH SINHA
NEW DELHI, JULY 27

FOR OVER a decade and a half, Vijai Sharma fought for the rights of India and other developing countries at the international climate negotiations. He was one of the architects of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which strongly safeguarded the interests of the developing countries, and ensured that the primary responsibility of reducing the impacts of climate change was taken by the rich and the developed world.

A 1974-batch IAS officer, who served as the Environment Secretary and then as Chief Information Commissioner, Sharma died in the United States, where he was visiting his son on July 23, after suffering a stroke, family sources said. He was 75. Sharma lived in Lucknow.

Sharma had two productive stints in the Environment Ministry. During his first stint as joint secretary, between 1995 and 2001, he became India’s chief negotiator at international climate talks, which had just been initiated, and strongly influenced



Former CIC Vijai Sharma was 75. Express

the finalisation of the Kyoto Protocol. He was also instrumental in ensuring that Delhi hosted these talks COP8 in 2002.

After stints in the Cabinet Secretariat, and other places, Sharma returned to the Environment Ministry as its Secretary in 2008. By this time, the developed countries had already begun the process of dismantling the Kyoto Protocol, and replacing it with something they were more comfortable with. This was also the time when India’s environmental governance came under great scrutiny, with an increasing number of industrial and infrastructure projects testing the environmental norms. Sharma presided over a period of strengthening of India’s environmental

regulatory structure to bring in greater transparency.

“Vijay Sharma was the quintessential civil servant — fearless in giving advice but faithful in execution even when his advice was not taken. I have many fond memories of my close association with him for a decade and a half. He had wide interests and possessed an irreverent sense of humour. He loved it when he himself became the subject of humour, laughing at the description I once gave him — Sir Humphrey Sharma (Humphrey Appleby was a character from the British TV series Yes Minister),” said Jairam Ramesh, then Environment Minister under whom Sharma served as Secretary.

After retiring, Sharma became an expert member at the National Green Tribunal, a new institution created during his time, before being appointed the CIC. Sharma, who had a postgraduate law degree from Harvard University, had a passion for history, and authored, along with his wife and IAS officer Rita Sharma, a few books on the forts of India.

But he continued to be sought out for his expertise on environment and climate law and policy.





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THE EARTH IS A FINE PLACE AND
WORTH FIGHTING FOR.
— ERNEST HEMINGWAY

The IndianEXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

CARRY IT FORWARD

India-UK trade pact is marked by a confident approach of export proactiveness rather than import defensiveness

NOW THAT THE India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) has been sealed, the focus shifts to the more challenging deal with the US. A major stumbling block to inking even an interim free trade agreement before US President Donald Trump's August 1 deadline — to either sign or face so-called reciprocal tariffs of up to 26 per cent — is agriculture. India does not want to open up its market for American soyabean, corn (maize), ethanol and dairy products. What this defensive stance misses is the potential loss from the fact that India's agricultural exports to the US, at \$6.2 billion in 2024, exceeded its imports of \$2.4 billion. A 26 per cent tariff will definitely hurt Indian seafood exports to the US that alone was valued at \$2.5 billion. That loss would be a gain for the likes of Ecuador and Chile, slapped with only the 10 per cent baseline tariff.

On the other hand, the fear of US farm imports is more about perception than reality. Take dairy, where the US isn't as big an exporter of milk powder, butter and cheese as New Zealand and the European Union. Or soyabean, where India imported over \$5 billion worth of its oil during 2024-25. The bulk of that was from Argentina and Brazil, with the US share at just \$126.3 million. The US is, no doubt, cost competitive in corn and the world's biggest producer as well as exporter. But corn is basically a feed grain, also increasingly being used as a biofuel feedstock. Allowing imports would benefit India's dairy and poultry farmers grappling with rising feed costs, aggravated by the diversion of corn for fuel ethanol production. The sheer demand growth makes corn imports by India inevitable, whether from the US or elsewhere.

India needs a farm trade policy based not on import protection, but expanding and diversifying its exports. That happened during 2003-04 to 2013-14, when the country's agriculture exports soared from \$7.5 billion to \$43.3 billion and new markets were created in products from basmati rice and buffalo meat to frozen shrimps, guar gum meal, chilly and seed spices. Since then, exports have hardly grown to about \$52 billion in 2024-25. Even worse have been shipment curbs — on rice, wheat, sugar or onion — clamped at the slightest indication of domestic supply shortfalls. CETA has been a refreshing departure, with India successfully negotiating duty-free access for its exports of seafood, processed foods, spices, fruit and vegetables to the UK, while simultaneously offering to cut tariffs on imports of whisky, chocolates, soft drinks and salmon from the latter. A similar confident approach of export proactiveness rather than import defensiveness is required in deals with other countries — the US included.

A WELCOME NUDGE

ICJ verdict on climate obligations, though not binding, could push rich countries to do more to check global warming

LAST WEEK, THE International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that countries are "obliged" to "prevent harm from climate change". The Court was responding to a UN General Assembly request, triggered by a resolution backed by small island states, for an "advisory" to "ensure protection of the environment" from GHG emissions. In a process that stretched over two years, the ICJ consulted experts, including those from the IPCC, as well as representatives of nations and blocs such as the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, to affirm that "limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees C should be considered the primary temperature goal for nations" and that they are obliged to make "adequate contributions" to achieve this target. The advisory is not binding on governments, but it could breathe new life into the flailing global climate change negotiations. It could also have significant implications for environmental jurisprudence, enabling vulnerable groups and nations to push for stronger climate action.

Ten years after the Paris Pact set the roadmap for climate action, numerous inclement weather events all over the world have shone unflattering light on the absence of a collective resolve to decarbonise the world economy. The UN's annual climate meet has taken important decisions to compensate countries for loss and damages due to global warming-induced disasters. Yet, these meetings continue to be held hostage by decades-long differences over who should contribute how much to the mitigation efforts. Last year's UNFCCC meet at Baku, billed as the finance CoP, was a particular disappointment. Leaders of most major economies failed to turn up, and less than two months after the summit, the US President pulled his country out of the Paris Climate Pact for the second time in less than 10 years. The US did not face any legal challenge for pulling out of the treaty, and developed countries have, by and large, got away with not meeting their financial obligations. The ICJ advisory has not spelt out any consequences for defaulters. However, its strong endorsement of compensation to countries that suffer climate damage could trigger a wave of litigation for damages. In recent years, developed nations have reluctantly acknowledged that vulnerable countries require assistance to deal with climate disasters, but they have rejected any suggestion for reparations. The ICJ's opinion could move the needle forward.

The top UN court has also affirmed the salience of the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities". As rich countries increasingly put pressure on emerging economies, such as India, to assume more global warming mitigation responsibilities, this founding tenet of climate negotiations has come under increasing strain. The ICJ advisory should jolt the historically high emitters and nudge them to fulfil their climate commitments.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



JAHANGIR AZIZ

THE US TARIFF saga has gone through many twists and turns. And many more are likely left. The ratcheting up of tariffs last month is broader and higher than expected. In late May, the view was that while the extant US average tariff rate was around 13-14 per cent, it was headed towards 18-20 per cent.

Much of the increase was expected to be focused on ASEAN, where the tariff rate would be raised to that of China's to eliminate transshipment of Chinese exports to the US via the region. While those on Vietnam and Indonesia were in line with expectations, the additional tariffs on Brazil, Canada, and Mexico were not. Nor was the higher 50 per cent rate on copper.

However, negotiations are ongoing, including with India, the EU, and Korea. If this week's Japan deal is any guide, tariffs on these economies will likely be half of the threatened levels. But, even at the reduced rate, if these, along with those on EU and the likely extensions of global sectoral tariffs to semiconductors and pharmaceuticals are realised, then the effective tariff rate could well exceed 20 per cent. All eyes are therefore on August 1, which is the new deadline set by the administration for countries to finalise trade deals.

But there is an upcoming and surprisingly overlooked event that could easily make these trade deals moot and plunge the tariff discussions into more uncertainty. On May 28, the US Court of International Trade (USCIT) ruled that tariffs imposed using the provisions under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) overstepped the authority granted by the Act. The ruling did not consider the current conditions in the US to be a "state of emergency," which is needed to invoke IEEPA, to be convincing nor the use of tariffs to address it. Tariffs could be imposed, if the government so desired, but via the other options at its disposal. Not IEEPA. A federal appeals court granted the government a stay on the order and is slated to begin hearing arguments on the appeal on July 31.

Be uncertainty-ready

Unpredictability around US tariffs will not be over after August 1 — and trade deals with America may not help

On May 28, the US Court of International Trade (USCIT) ruled that tariffs imposed using the provisions under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) overstepped the authority granted by the Act. The ruling did not consider the current conditions in the US to be a 'state of emergency,' which is needed to invoke IEEPA, to be convincing nor the use of tariffs to address it. Tariffs could be imposed, if the government so desired, but via the other options at its disposal.

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All the universal, reciprocal, and fentanyl-related tariffs are based on IEEPA. The tariffs unaffected are the Section 301 tariffs on China imposed under Trump 1.0 and extended by the Biden administration, and the global sectoral tariffs on aluminum, autos and auto parts, copper, and steel that were imposed under Section 232.

It is unclear how the appeals court will rule. But regardless of the decision, either party is likely to move the case to the Supreme Court. If the tariffs under IEEPA are eventually disallowed by the US Supreme Court, the government will shift to other options. Tariffs are central to this administration's economic agenda and will thus be pursued. Unlike those under IEEPA, the tariffs under the other options are more cumbersome, limited in scope, and significantly more resource intensive. But they can be implemented in a compressed time frame if the administration so desires.

A potential sequence of such actions could be the following. Use Section 122 to impose tariffs of 15 per cent for 150 days on all countries (justified to address balance of payments needs or to prevent a significant depreciation of the dollar). At the same time, ratchet up the tariffs on China that were imposed under Section 301 in Trade War 1.0 by both the Trump and Biden administrations.

Keep tariffs on steel and aluminum at 50 per cent (as on copper) and raise that on autos from 25 per cent to 50 per cent. Hasten the ongoing Section 232 (sector specific on grounds on national economic security) investigations into semiconductors, pharmaceuticals, and lumber to bring these under the tariff net of 25 per cent — 50 per cent.

Use Section 338 to impose tariffs on countries that are deemed to discriminate specifically against US commercial interests (such as digital services taxes by Australia, the EU, Canada, India, and others, although the taxes are imposed on

other countries too).

Complete Section 301 investigations on large trading partners (some are ongoing, for example, on the EU and Brazil). These investigations are resource intensive as they need to first identify the specific policy of a trading partner that is the basis of "unfair competition" and then quantify the "harm" that such policies impose on US consumers for each product and for each country. The tariff rate needs to be commensurate with the harm caused and, thus, differ, from product to product for each country. Finally, roll all tariffs under Sections 301 and 232.

As one can imagine, this is an arduous and uncertain process. However, the direction of travel is more certain — the average effective tariff rate is likely to settle close to 20 per cent. Needless to say, the country- and product-specific impact of Sections 301 and 232 tariffs could be vastly different than under IEEPA.

Markets so far have largely shrugged off the announced new tariffs. This is understandable given the quick deescalation after the strong market and corporate reaction to the Liberation Day tariffs; the possibility that the August 1 deadline is postponed; and the eventual negotiated tariff rates could be different from those announced.

However, a court ruling on IEEPA could well turn both the August 1 deadline and the trade deals moot, including potentially that with India. If the basis of these deals, that is, IEEPA, is no longer admissible, then we are headed for renegotiations with tariffs under sections 301 and 232. These could be starkly different than those that are being negotiated now.

The uncertainty around US tariffs will not be over after August 1, even with signed trade deals. US courts might well upset the best laid plans of mice and men. Continued uncertainty is the only certainty.

The writer is Chief Emerging Markets Economist, J P Morgan. Views are personal

A HULKING PRESENCE

In early '90s, WWF was how middle-class kids first met America — and Hulk Hogan



AAKASH JOSHI

AROUND 1993-94, A six-year-old was hanging on for dear life onto the railing with one hand and the other clutching his mother lest he fall out the door of one of Delhi's once-infamous Red Line buses. Terrified, but unwilling to show it, the boy shouted, "Hulk Hogan ki yahi pehchan, peeli kacchi, phati banyaan". Everyone in earshot, including the driver and conductor, burst out laughing and soon, the kid had pride of place — sitting on the large covering over the gear stick, next to the driver.

Hulk Hogan (the stage name Terry Bollea was known by), who died on July 24 at the age of 71, likely didn't realise the impact he — and the WWF, later WWE — had on a country that had just been opened up to America. But for a generation, particularly the boys among them, wrestling was our soap opera and our cultural context. It shaped how we saw the US in much the way Ramanand Sagar's *Ramayan* moulded our view of mythology. And America was, at least back then, a mythical place.

Liberalisation — both in terms of how it pushed up upper-middle-class incomes and impacted culture — didn't truly hit till the 2000s. In the early '90s, most of us were much more "local", still struggling to be part of the flattening of culture that shows like *Friends* and *Seinfeld* would later bring about.

Wrestling — and most of all Hulk Hogan — clearly had a deep cultural impact. And this impact became a weapon for the assertion of American soft power and propaganda. Hogan, 'a good guy' for much of his career (he did 'turn heel' and become 'Hollywood Hogan' for a while), was the first global wrestling superstar. And he was an all-American hero.

Today, Americanisms are a part of the vocabulary for most Indian English speakers. "My bad" (instead of my fault) and "I'm good" (not as a moral assessment but to say "I am well") are thrown about without a thought for the poor English teacher who taught us the basics of grammar.

It wasn't so when Hulkamania — and Bret Hart, The Undertaker, Lex Luger, Shawn Michaels, Razor Ramon and Yokozuna — came into the lives of today's millennials. Nonsense rhymes like the one uttered on the bus were the most common form of comedy: "Yokozuna went to Poona, eating Choo-na" or "Undertaker, ice cream maker", etc. WWF Trump cards were the card game of choice, and recreating wrestling matches was practically a sport. The first "fancy" birthday parties were wrestling-themed — with masks and championship belts. The first designer cakes were shaped like wrestlers.

As the kids grew up, WWF-WWE kept up. The risqué "attitude era" meant boys kept imitating Stone Cold Steve Austin and Triple H — giving the middle finger and the "s**k it" gesture. It was dangerous, feeding the proto-adolescent's desire for risk-taking and masculine assertion.

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this impact became a weapon for the assertion of American soft power and propaganda. Hogan, "a good guy" for much of his career (he did "turn heel" and become "Hollywood Hogan" for a while), was the first global wrestling superstar. And he was an all-American hero. His nemesis was the Iron Sheik (an evil, conniving character from West Asia). His theme song was "I am a Real American" and justified military intervention in the name "fighting for the rights of every man".

And we swallowed it all up, as kids, without knowing better. Blond American, good guy. Brown and Black, not as much. Through soap-opera plots, Hulk and the WWF kept us hooked.

Wrestling today no longer pretends to be "real"; it has many more stars and looks way more slick. In deference to the Indian market, it made superstars of the Great Khali and Jinder Mahal. Hulk Hogan had his share of controversies, a reality show and something of a sordid personal life. But for those who idolised him when they were five, who remembered the rhyme about his costume when hanging out of the door of a bus, there will always be a soft spot for Hulkamania.

aakash.joshi@expressindia.com

JULY 28, 1985, FORTY YEARS AGO

COUP IN UGANDA

REBEL UGANDAN SOLDIERS overthrew the five-year-old government of Milton Obote and seized power in a bloodless coup. Radio Uganda said Brig Bazilio Olara Okello toppled President Obote who is believed to have fled to Kenya. The radio broadcast by Second Lieutenant Walter Lacuru gave no further details.

29 MLAS RESIGN

FIVE OPPOSITION PARTIES in Haryana have decided to launch a movement against the Rajiv Gandhi-Longowal agreement on Punjab. Twenty nine members of the

Haryana State Assembly have handed over their resignations to their leaders to be submitted to the Speaker on August 9, the Quit India Day, after a rally in Rohtak.

GUJARAT BANDH

ON AN INCIDENT-FREE day, the "Gujarat bandh" call given by the striking government employees, demanding abolition of the caste-based roster system of promotion, evoked a good response in parts of Saurashtra and Baroda, while it had little effect in South Gujarat. A bomb explosion was reported at a place of worship in the Vassana suburb area of the city. No details were immediately available.

ASSAM AGITATION

ASSAM AGITATION LEADERS were not interested in continuing the talks to resolve the foreigners issue at the official level and even threatened fresh agitation if the Centre delayed in arriving at a solution. AASU leaders were reported to have said that there was no need for having another round of talks with the union home secretary, R D Pradhan, which was stated to be held in Shillong. Pradhan had assured the delegation that the Centre was keen in solving the issue and there was no "uncertainty" over the resumption of the talks. "We will intimate to him our desire of having talks at the political level", the leaders have said.



THE IDEAS PAGE

The creativity curriculum

As we journey towards Viksit Bharat 2047, our greatest strength will be in our capacity to imagine, narrate, and innovate. Let’s build an India where every child is a creator



SMRITI IRANI

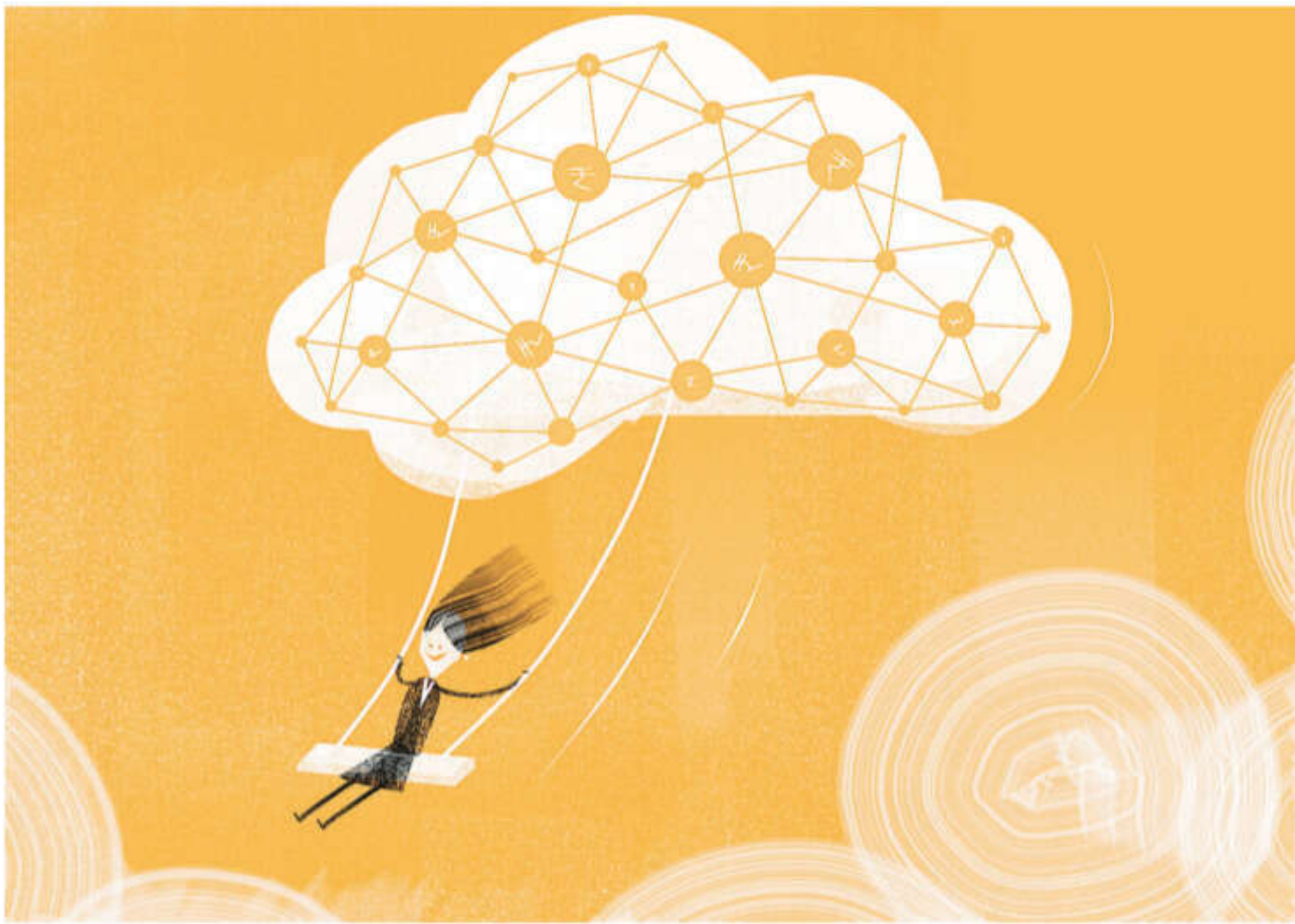
IN MY JOURNEY across the television screen, the political trail, transformative classrooms, the rattling loom, among other evolving contexts, I’ve seen one truth hold steady — our power lies in our imagination, curiosity, creativity and innovation. India’s creative economy is projected to reach \$80 billion by 2026, according to a report published recently. “Creative Economy” is not just a smart phrase but holds the potential for building creative-cultural assets. It can operate as a strategic lever of inclusive growth. I want to bring together two powerful perspectives — education and entrepreneurship, and classrooms and creators. Together, they present India’s development frontier with strong, inclusive opportunities. The question, therefore, arises: How quickly can our institutions prepare young minds with the skills and confidence to help them participate in the creative economy?

A recent survey-backed report, ‘Shaping Education to nurture the \$80 billion Creative Economy’, by a leading Indian management consulting firm, states that only 9 per cent of students across 22 states demonstrate strong readiness in design thinking, research and real-world problem-solving. These are 21st-century skills and core competencies of the creative economy. In a world where AI can code but not create, these gaps matter.

The NEP 2020 calls for embedding 21st-century skills — critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication — into the curriculum. But we must go further. With the CBSE now mandating art-integrated learning from Grades I–X, and the Rs 400 crore Indian Institute of Creative Technologies (IIC) launching in Mumbai, the blueprint is emerging.

Creativity cannot be part-time, and in that sense, it cannot be extracurricular. It is time to mainstream creative entrepreneurial mindset training — through maker spaces, startup labs, and design sprints. Let creativity be assessed not just in art rooms, but in business models, digital portfolios and social impact. Bring it midstream in the curriculum. The Report also highlights how international boards such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) are more successful in developing core competencies of the creative economy in school students compared to Indian boards.

India’s creative force is exploding — not just in metros, but in village courtyards, small-town lanes, and local community centres. With affordable tech and deep cultural roots, over 100 million Indians — farmers, weavers and local experts — have become digital creators. The creator economy has now surpassed the \$500 million mark, powered not by polished panache but by raw authenticity! Its revolutionary power shatters barriers: In Rajasthan, women resurrect and champion vanishing oral histories through vibrant smartphone films. In Bihar, Bhojpuri creators fill the education gaps left by tradi-



C R Sasikumar

tional systems. They aren’t just telling stories — they are telling “their” stories and fuelling a grassroots movement, rooted in language, identity and local pride.

We saw this raw, vernacular creative surge reshaping how India speaks, learns and leads in the recent launch of India’s first public streaming platform, WAVES OTT, owned by Prasar Bharati. WAVES OTT accomplishes what commercial giants may not — by elevating daily creators, it is making local content and storytelling part of the national conversations. In today’s India, the most powerful public messaging isn’t top-down; it’s created, uploaded, and amplified from the ground up. WAVES is not a passive pipeline of content; it is a democratic bridge. It confers institutional legitimacy on creators emerging from villages and towns and provides them with an equal opportunity to stream their content. Small-time films, established content producers, influencers, and student films can all showcase their content alongside each other.

In classrooms across India, teachers are turning into creators, and students into solopreneurs. Khan Sir from Patna — armed with chalk, wit, and a camera — educates millions through YouTube. Meanwhile, Bengaluru’s Parikrma Foundation builds storytelling, theatre, and filmmaking into everyday learning. In Maharashtra, 17-year-old Shraddha Garad launched her own digital embroidery tutorial channel during the pandemic, is now selling patterns online and mentoring younger girls in her village — a student, a creator, and an entrepreneur rolled into one.

These aren’t outliers — they are early signals of a systemic shift. Our policy must now respond with speed and scale. Imagine government-backed media labs and creator in-

India’s creative force is exploding — not just in metros, but in village courtyards, small-town lanes, and local community centres. With affordable tech and deep cultural roots, over 100 million Indians — farmers, weavers, and local experts — have become digital creators. The creator economy has now surpassed the \$500 million mark, powered not by polished panache but by raw authenticity! Its revolutionary power shatters barriers.

cubators in every district —where students prototype campaigns, narrate local stories, and learn digital production as a life skill. But this transformation won’t happen in silos. Ministries like MoE, MSDE and I&B must converge — blending skilling with storytelling, curriculum with creator capital. In a Viksit Bharat, literacy isn’t just about reading and writing — it’s about creating, pitching, and publishing.

Yet, the true power of the creative economy will be unlocked not only from scale but in its social resonance. In communities where institutions are slow or absent, creators are stepping in — bridging information gaps, shifting norms and activating public awareness in real time. In Odisha, tribal teenagers use Odiya rap videos to teach climate-resilient farming — reaching over 5,00,000 farmers, where traditional extension systems have fallen short (UNICEF, 2024). In Kerala, ASHA workers produce short-form health content in Malayalam, doubling engagement on TB awareness compared to state-led clinic outreach. Vernacular influencers, across platforms, have driven more than 70 million views on subjects like menstrual health, child nutrition, and vaccinations — topics too often left out of mainstream media.

As we journey towards Viksit Bharat 2047, our greatest strength will not be in factories or code — but in our capacity to imagine, narrate, and innovate. In a world shaped by algorithms, India’s currency is creativity — and its potential is limitless. Let’s build an India where every child is a creator, and every creator is a force for economic, cultural, and social transformation. That is the India we must shape.

The writer is a former Union Minister

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“Zelenskyy should recover support at home and abroad not only by restoring the independence of anti-corruption investigators, but by taking heed of the broader lessons about the people’s justified expectations of their government.”

— THE GUARDIAN

The soft sedition

Regional prejudice feeds into the ongoing trend of linguistic vigilantism. These tendencies undermine national integration



RAMANAND SHARMA AND SANDEEP KUMAR

A FEW WEEKS ago, a shopkeeper was allegedly attacked in Mumbai by Maharashtra Navnirman Sena workers for not speaking Marathi. Similar attacks have been reported across Maharashtra and other parts of India. In Bengaluru, destruction of Hindi-written signage is quite frequent, and in Tamil Nadu, anti-Hindi campaigns have a long history — they often resurface in response to perceived threats to Tamil. Even in Delhi, there is, at times, a subtle exclusion of those who speak with a southern accent or hail from the Northeast.

Instances of regional prejudice feed into the trend of linguistic vigilantism that is increasingly spreading across the nation. These tendencies are not secessionist, but they undermine national integration and constitute a new type of “soft sedition”. They represent a kind of regional hegemony that lives by cultural bullying, verbal violence and everyday discrimination.

The underlying causes of this crisis resurfaced with the implementation of the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, especially its three-language equation. NEP aims to develop multilingualism and enhance national integration, but its implementation requires students to be taught three languages, including at least two Indian languages. On paper, it allows states to choose these languages. However, in many parts of non-Hindi India, it was seen as a surreptitious advancement of Hindi and perceived as a threat to local languages.

Politicians from all parties and regions play on people’s fears. They have started muddying the waters again — overt threats against Hindi speakers and migrants from Northern regions are being justified as a counter to Hindi imposition. Even the national parties are hesitant to address this problem, for fear of alienating their state units.

The crisis requires us to look again at the philosophical and constitutional basis of the republic. Article 1 of the Constitution says, “India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States.” This choice of words reflects a conscious rejection of the idea that states are sovereign, cultural or political entities. Unlike a federation that unites countries through treaties, India is a civilisational polity where states derive their legitimacy from the Union. The 1956 linguistic reorganisation was intended to accommodate diversity through better administration.

Language does create a strong sense of identity and belonging in India, but it needs to be framed as a common resource — not the right of any state. It is the means through which we connect, share ideas, and forge relationships. Our linguistic diversity should not be a reason for division, but a means by which we understand and are understood. The Constitution gives every Indian citizen freedom through Articles 14, 19 and 21. Every Indian has the right not only to speak their

language but also to work and reside throughout the country. A Bihari living in Bengaluru or a Manipuri living in Mumbai is not an outsider; they are equal citizens of the nation. This is not just a cultural sensitivity issue, but a matter of constitutional morality, which Ambedkar invoked while warning against majoritarian tyranny. Any attempt by political or local actors to create linguistic conformity is a violation of the Constitution.

Linguistic violence impacts internal migration, which is essential for India’s economy, by making workers fear discrimination in unfamiliar states. Such chauvinism exacerbates mistrust between linguistic groups. This anxiety proliferates into educational contexts, job interviews and housing preferences, shrinking the ambit of what it means to be Indian. Cultural majoritarianism does not simply become political, as Ashis Nandy warned, but alters how people see themselves and their social location.

This leads us to refer to the phrase, “soft sedition”. The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, has updated how we interpret threats to the nation. BNS’s Section 152 acknowledges that threats to the nation-state do not always take the form of rebellion, insurrection, or armed revolt. Language-based exclusion, violence and campaigning carve out zones of exclusion. Such ideological subversion must, therefore, be addressed as a potential national security threat and seen as an assault on “the unity and integrity of India”.

Supporters of regional identities argue that linguistic pride is crucial to India’s federal character. They are not wrong. India’s strength has always been its ability to bind together many languages, cultures and traditions. But diversity should not be confused with division. Love for one’s mother tongue does not condone hostility towards another.

The executive must act quickly and decisively. Law enforcement agencies should be directed to identify, monitor, report and prosecute language-based hate crimes under the new BNS provisions. Political parties disseminating linguistic hatred must be held accountable under the law. As the final protector and guardian of the Constitution, the Supreme Court must also act.

The Centre should consider launching a National Linguistic Harmony Mission, preferably in coordination with the Ministry of Home Affairs or the Ministry of Culture, to monitor interstate animosity, promote mutual respect and create outlets where citizens who speak different languages can interact. The Home Ministry should issue public advisories clarifying that verbal abuse and online troll attacks based on language will be considered a crime under the BNS.

In the Republic of India, no one is a second-class citizen. India’s strength has never come from forcing sameness, but from embracing difference. From Kalidasa and Rabindranath Tagore to Dharamvir Bharati and Premchand, our greatest voices came from different corners, yet spoke to the same soul. India does not need a *lingua franca*; it needs a *lingua familia*, where each language is celebrated without any hierarchy. This is not just a call to protect words or languages. It is a call to protect who we are as a people. If we fail to act now, we risk the very idea of India.

Sharma is assistant professor, Aryabhata College, University of Delhi, and Kumar is advocate, Delhi High Court



ASHISH DUA

THE STEADY DECLINE of Congress’s electoral fortunes over the last decade is distressing. It has not made the mark it should have in three consecutive general elections and failed to regain states that were once its strongholds. A few in the long list are Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Assam. In Kerala, Congress’s loss marked the end of a decades-long trend of the incumbent being voted out.

It is not that there have been no wins. However, long-term gains that should have accrued are frittered away because of a myopic vision. Those who contribute to wins are neither rewarded nor recognised — favouritism rules the roost. Committees are formed, but little changes. All that those who care can do is lament, as with this column.

I have been with the Congress for 18 years, and I was a lateral entry into the party. I wanted to contribute to nation-building. I sacrificed a career despite belonging to a middle-class family with no “pedigree”, money or muscle power. My original motivation is as strong as ever. However, over the years, I have witnessed how sycophancy and mediocrity in the prevailing system are steadily pushing merit to the sidelines. Big names and small men conspire to keep providing the electoral platform to their families, cronies and followers. This attitude is accompanied by a lack of performance on the ground.

Maharashtra has been in the news recently. Having been the Congress Secretary in charge of the state for six years, and as an

A Congressman’s lament

Party must introspect, not blame. Leaders must listen to workers, respect merit

observer of Maharashtra politics for more than 15 years, I could not stop myself from writing this column.

As against the national trend, Congress has been ascendant in Maharashtra. The 2019 Assembly elections gave us 44 seats with a vote share of 15.87 per cent. This came as a surprise to people outside the party as well as political pundits within the Congress who were predicting a rout and allocated meagre resources for the poll. Star campaigners too stayed away. But our workers, with their ears to the ground, delivered. The rebound in Vidarbha continued, with a first victory in the Nagpur MLC election in 57 years and the first majority in decades in the Nagpur rural zila parishad elections. The number of seats won in the Lok Sabha polls from Maharashtra was also a surprise to many. Unfortunately, that is where the success story ends.

Maharashtra politics can shift at any time. It took down Maha Vikas Aghadi, unable to manage the pulls and pushes of the allies. The unilateral decision by a few individuals in Congress to withdraw from the Speaker’s chair without taking allies on board not only left a powerful position vacant for a long time but also revealed a spectacular inability to forge consensus. Later, the Congress’s choice of the Rajya Sabha candidate also caused friction. The shocking defeat of the Shiv Sena candidate exposed the alliance’s mismanagement. The BJP plucked low-hanging fruit, leaving the battered MVA powerless. It had won the narrative on na-

tionalism and created the perception of efficient delivery of welfare schemes. It also tapped into the dynasty discourse, historical glory and issues around aspiration. Congress was either slow or reactive, caught up in false pride, and those calling the shots chose to shoot the messenger.

The Mahayuti government returned, in 2024, on the back of welfare schemes like Ladki Bahin, free electricity and toll-free access to Mumbai. The ruling coalition also benefited from a demoralised Opposition, which was sending contradictory signals on seat sharing till the last minute. This was a far cry from the synchronised Lok Sabha campaign just a few months earlier.

There have been allegations around voter enrolment and voting percentages, which are for the EC to answer. The election process involves multiple layers and actors, including Booth Level Agents (BLAs), polling agents, counting agents, polling officials and others, including returning officers. Any discrepancies at any stage must be addressed by the person concerned. The parties have their own scrutinising, checking and cross-checking mechanisms involving BLAs appointed by them, polling agents, counting agents, overseeing war rooms (which have become integral to Election Management), etc. Forms 17A and 17C are the hallmarks of due process when it comes to voting, and their completion is signed by agents appointed by the party. And if they are intact, accepted, signed, tallied with no legal challenges, it amounts

to accepting the process as it happened. The party must vet its own processes to sharpen the data. If any party accepts a complete collapse of its own acceptance, of abandoned polling booths or lack of oversight of the entire polling process, then it needs to set its house in order.

It is time to introspect rather than blame. To reflect on why so many former chief ministers, union ministers, PCC presidents and other senior leaders have left Congress or been all but forced out. To win an election, the party must bring up issues that resonate with the people.

Congress must not alienate loyal and committed workers as well as intellectuals, the educated middle class, young and new voters. It must start believing again in the merits of merit. It must strengthen itself by winning elections and thereby gaining respect from its allies. It must embrace a feedback mechanism that addresses the grievances of those in the field. For that, the leadership must actually give appointments to party members who have constructive suggestions. It must do this even if it is not in the interest of the coterie that ringfences the leadership.

Congress needs to undertake a yatra of self-realisation and make an assessment of where it truly stands today.

The writer is an AICC Member, former AICC Secretary in charge of Maharashtra (2018-2024)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SORRY STATE

THIS REFERS TO the report, ‘Centre orders safety audit of all govt schools’ (IE, July 27). The terrible death of seven students in a government school in a Rajasthan village points to the deep administrative malaise plaguing numerous government schools in the state. The government’s suspension of the school principal and four teachers in response is nothing but convenient scapegoating for its failure to prevent such tragedies. The fact that the village road was paved in preparation for the chief minister’s visit to the accident site demonstrates how insensitive it can be to such tragedies. The government allocates a pittance for the repair and renovation of the now-dilapidated structures. Only when accidents like this at Piplodi occur does the government talk about safety audits.

Kamal Laddha, Bangalore

PEACEFUL FUTURE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Missing in Manipur’ (IE, July 26). President’s Rule has been extended in Manipur by another six months. But few would contest this, as the Centre is struggling to find a durable solution to the ethnic conflict. Following the resignation of N Biren Singh and the fall of the BJP government, there has been a discernible but fragile calm. A crackdown on militant groups

that had operated with impunity has reduced open violence, and some displaced families have begun to return home. However, these positive developments are overshadowed by the unbridged and deep-seated ethnic schism between the Kuki-Zo and Meitei communities. Administrative steps, particularly those that reiterate de-weaponisation and a defanging of militant groups acting for ethnic interests, must continue. The future of a peaceful Manipur will be written by the initiative of committed political actors willing to transcend ethnic divisions.

Khokan Das, Kolkata

A RECOGNITION

THIS REFERS TO the report, ‘France to recognise Palestinian state, draws fire from Tel Aviv, Washington’ (IE, July 26). President Emmanuel Macron’s announcement is more than symbolic. It is a rebuke of the status quo — one in which global outrage over the suffering in Gaza has been met with diplomatic inertia. By invoking France’s “historical commitment to peace” and the two-state solution, Macron is laying the groundwork for Europe to move from cautious condemnation to tangible positioning. Unsurprisingly, the US and Israel have called this move “reckless” and “shameful”.

SS Paul, Chakdaha

TOP OF THE WORLD



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. Reuters file

NORTH KOREA

On Korean War anniversary, Kim vows to win anti-US battle

Seoul: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said the country would achieve victory in “anti-imperialist, anti-US” battles, as the country marked the anniversary of the Korean War armistice, state media reported on Sunday. Kim “affirmed that our state and its people would surely achieve the great cause of building a rich country with a strong army and become honourable victors in the anti-imperialist, anti-US, showdown,” KCNA state news agency said, referring to his visit to a war museum on a previous day. North Korea signed an armistice with the US and China on July 27, 1953, ending the fighting in the 3-year war. **REUTERS**

COLOMBIA

Deportations from Ecuador: Govt slams move

Bogota: Colombia’s Foreign Ministry on Friday criticized Ecuador for deporting large numbers of Colombian citizens without a formal protocol, describing it as a “unfriendly gesture,” while Quito said the removals followed legal procedures and upheld human rights standards. On Thursday, the Colombian government reported that authorities in the neighboring country had announced plans to deport Colombians currently imprisoned in various Ecuadorian penitentiaries. **REUTERS**

IRAN

Two executed over ‘attacks’ on civilian sites

Tehran: Iran said Sunday it has executed two members of the exiled opposition group Mujahedeen-e-Khalq after convicting them of carrying out attacks on public and civilian infrastructure. The judiciary’s official news website, Mizan Online, reported that Behrouz Ehsani Eslamlou and Mehdi Hasani were hanged on Sunday morning after being found guilty of using improvised mortar launchers to target residential areas, educational institutions and government buildings. The report said Eslamlou had a long history with the group, dating back to the 1980s. **AP**

DEATH TOLL FROM MALNUTRITION, HUNGER TOUCHES 133

Israel announces daily pauses in Gaza strikes to allow aid as criticism mounts

REUTERS

JERUSALEM, GAZA, JULY 27

ISRAEL SAID on Sunday it would halt military operations for 10 hours a day in parts of Gaza and allow new aid corridors as Jordan and the United Arab Emirates airdropped aid to the enclave, where images of starving Palestinians have alarmed the world.

Israel has been facing growing international criticism, which the government rejects, over the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and indirect ceasefire talks in Doha between Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas have broken off with no deal in sight.

Military activity will stop from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. (0700-1700 GMT) until further notice in Al-Mawasi, a designated humanitarian area along the coast, in central Deir al-Balah and in Gaza City, to the north.

Jordan and the United Arab Emirates parachuted 25 tons of aid into the Gaza Strip on Sunday in their first airdrop in months, a Jordanian official source said. The official said the air drops were not a substitute for delivery by land.

Palestinian health officials in Gaza City said at least 10 people were injured by falling aid boxes.

The military said designated secure routes for convoys deliv-



Aid airdropped to Palestinians over northern Gaza, Sunday. AP

ering food and medicine will also be in place between 6 a.m. and 11 p.m. starting from Sunday.

U.N. aid chief Tom Fletcher said staff would step up efforts to feed the hungry during the pauses in the designated areas.

Health officials at Al-Awda and Al-Aqsa Hospitals in the central Gaza Strip said Israeli firing killed at least 17 people and wounded 50 waiting for aid trucks on Sunday. Israel’s mili-

tary did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

According to the Gaza Health Ministry, six people died over the past 24 hours due to malnutrition, bringing the total deaths from malnutrition and hunger to 133 including 87 children. The Egyptian Red Crescent said it was sending more than 100 trucks carrying over 1,200 metric tons of food to southern Gaza through the Kerem Shalom crossing Sunday.

Thailand, Cambodia leaders to meet in Malaysia for discussions to end conflict

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BANGKOK, JULY 27

THAI AND Cambodian leaders will meet in Malaysia for talks to end hostilities, a spokesperson for the Thai prime minister’s office said Sunday.

This comes following pressure from US President Donald Trump to end a deadly border dispute, now in its fourth day, which has killed at least 35 people and displaced more than 218,000.

Jirayu Huangsap said Acting Prime Minister Phumtham Wechayachai will attend Monday’s talks in response to an invitation from Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim “to dis-



A refugee camp in Wat Phnom Kamboar, Cambodia, Sunday

cuss peace efforts in the region.” Anwar has been acting in his capacity as this year’s chair of the

Fainting nurses, no baby food: Starvation haunts Gaza hospitals

THE NEW YORK TIMES

JERUSALEM, GAZA, JULY 27

IN SEVERAL of the hospitals still functioning in the Gaza Strip, nurses are fainting from hunger and dehydration. Managers often cannot provide meals for patients or medical staff. Doctors are running low on formula for newborns, in some cases giving them water alone.

And at least three major hospitals lack the nutritional fluids needed to properly treat malnourished children and adults.

Those scenes were described in interviews starting Friday with seven doctors — four from Gaza, and three volunteers from Australia, Britain and the US.

After months of warnings, international agencies, experts and doctors say starvation is now sweeping across Gaza amid restrictions imposed by Israel for months. At least 56 Palestinians died this month of starvation.

In all four hospitals, the doctors described how they are increasingly unable to save mal-

nourished babies and are instead forced to simply manage their decline. The babies are too weak to be flooded with nutrients, which could overload their system and cause “refeeding syndrome,” which could kill them. In some cases, the fluids doctors can give to the babies are not enough to prevent them from dying. “I have seen ones that are imminently about to pass away,” said Dr Ambereen Sleemi, an American surgeon who has been volunteering since early July at the Nasser Hospital in south Gaza.

One-third of Palestinians in Gaza are forced to go without food for days in a row, the World Food Program said recently. The food shortages add another challenge to an already very difficult environment for doctors. “Some staff members have collapsed in operating rooms. Others have fainted in emergency wards because they have not received any proper food,” said Dr Mohammad Abu Salmiya, the director of Shifa Hospital in Gaza City. “The burden on them is immense.”

several social media platforms confirmed his participation as well. “I will lead (the) Cambodian delegation to attend a special meeting in Kuala Lumpur hosted by Malaysia... with participation of China,” he said. China is a close ally of Thailand and Cambodia and suggested he would not move forward with trade agreements with either country if the hostilities continued. He later said both sides agreed to meet to negotiate a ceasefire.

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Kyiv’s drones target St Petersburg as Putin attends Navy Day event

GLEB BRYANSKI

MOSCOW, JULY 27

UKRAINIAN DRONES targeted St. Petersburg on Sunday, Russian authorities said, forcing the airport to close for five hours as Vladimir Putin marked Russia’s Navy Day in the city, despite the earlier cancellation of its naval parade due to security concerns.

St Petersburg usually holds a large-scale, televised navy parade on Navy Day, which features a flotilla of warships and military vessels sailing down the Neva River and is attended by Putin.

Last year, Russia suspected a Ukrainian plan to attack the



President Vladimir Putin with a Soviet navy veteran in St Petersburg on Sunday. AP

city’s parade, according to state television. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov confirmed on Sunday that this year’s parade



President Donald Trump and European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen in Turnberry in Scotland on Sunday. AP

Trump, EU chief strike trade deal: 15% tariffs on all imports to US

Equal levies also on EU purchases of US energy, military equipment

ANDREW GRAY & ANDREA SHALAL

TURNBERRY, JULY 27

THE UNITED States has struck a framework trade deal with Europe, U.S. President Donald Trump announced on Sunday, averting a spiralling row between two allies who account for almost a third of global trade.

The deal, that includes a 15% tariff on EU goods entering the U.S. and significant EU purchases of U.S. energy and military equipment, will bring welcome clarity for EU companies.

However, the baseline tariff of 15% will be seen by many in Europe as a poor outcome compared to the initial European ambition of a zero-for-zero tariff deal, although it is better than the threatened 30% rate.

The announcement came after European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen travelled to Scotland for talks with US President Donald Trump to push a hard-fought deal over the line. Trump, who is seeking to reorder the global economy and reduce decades-old US trade deficits, has so far reeled in agreements with Britain, Japan, Indonesia and Vietnam, although his administration has failed to deliver on a promise of “90 deals in 90 days.”

Trump has periodically railed against the European Union saying it was “formed to screw the

EXPLAINED Likely to affect auto imports

BRINGING DOWN the tariff on European auto exports was a sticking point for the Europeans, especially Germany, the largest E.U. economy. A 15 percent tariff on European auto exports will help level the playing field between European companies and Japanese auto exporters, which have the same tariff rate. However, it raises the pressure on other major auto exporting countries, including South Korea, Canada and Mexico, who face higher tariff rates at 25%.

United States” on trade.

His main bugbear is the U.S. merchandise trade deficit with the EU, which in 2024 reached \$235 billion, according to U.S. Census Bureau data. The EU points to the U.S. surplus in services, which it says partially redresses the balance. Without an agreement, the EU had said it was prepared to retaliate with tariffs on hundreds of American products, ranging from beef and auto parts to beer and Boeing airplanes. **REUTERS WITH AP INPUTS**

UK plans social media spy squad to monitor posts against migrants

London: The British government is planning a new intelligence unit pulled from across police forces to monitor and flag anti-migrant posts on social media to preempt them flaring into violent protests, a media report claimed Sunday.

Plans for a National Internet Intelligence Investigations team working out of the National Police Coordination Centre in London emerged in a letter to British MPs by UK Policing Minister Dame Diana Johnson recently, according to The Sunday Telegraph. It provides the central planning for police when dealing with incidents similar to last year’s anti-immigration protests. **PTI**

UNCERTAINTY OVER LODGING AND SOARING COSTS LED BRAZIL’S BELEM CITY TO RENT LOVE MOTELS AND CRUISE SHIPS FOR ATTENDEES

Brazil’s Amazon city hosting COP30 faces room shortage, ‘love motels’ offer help

ANA IONOVA

BELÉM, JULY 27

THE SUITE, with its crisp white sheets and tiny soaps, could almost pass for any no-frills hotel room. That is, if it weren’t for the mirrored ceilings and the dance pole by the bed.

The décor of Motel Secreto, on the fringes of the Brazilian city of Belém, normally serves as a backdrop for lunch-hour trysts, clandestine affairs and passion-struck lovers seeking a few hours of privacy away from cramped family homes.

But the love motel, like others across Belém, is now prepar-

ing rooms that range from the sensual to the raunchy for a different kind of guest: diplomats and climate scientists, civil servants and environmental activists, all descending on the city in November for the 30th United Nations Climate Change Conference, known as COP30.

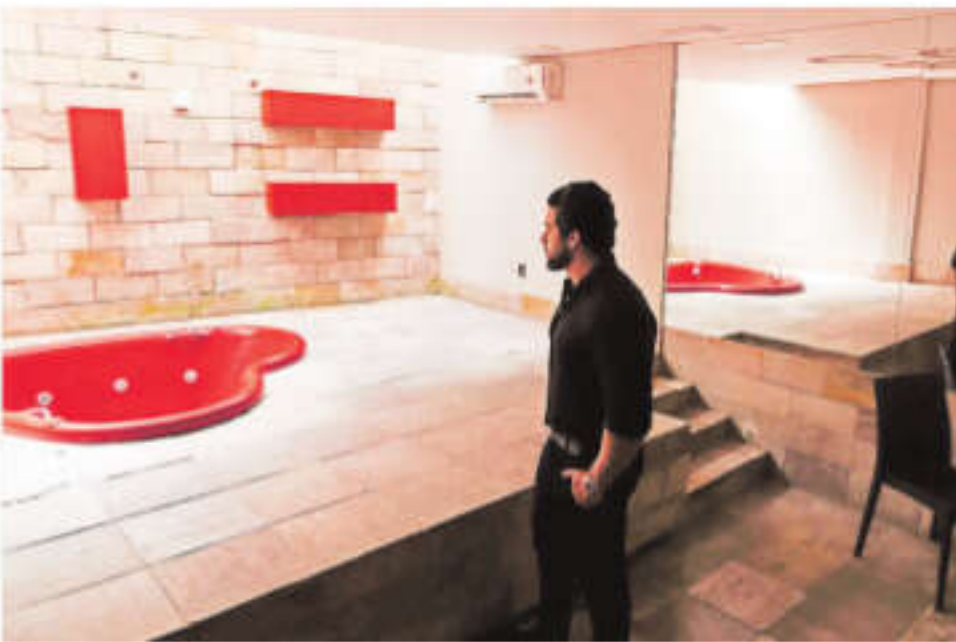
“We’re taking out anything too erotic from the rooms,” said Yorann Costa, 30, the owner of Motel Secreto, Portuguese for “Secret Motel.” “And the location is perfect.”

The 12-day summit, the first global climate gathering to be held in the Amazon region, has set off a rush to prepare Belém, a port city of 1.3 million, for tens of

thousands of visitors. To meet the demand for hotel rooms, officials vowed to nearly triple the city’s stock, from 18,000 beds in 2023 to 50,000 for the event.

As the summit nears though, uncertainty over whether there will be enough lodging has pushed hotel rates above \$1,000 a night and threatened to cause a diplomatic crisis, with some delegations complaining that eye-watering prices may bar poorer nations — often grappling with the worst impacts of climate change — from attending.

Seeking to calm jitters, Brazil said this month it had struck a deal with two cruise ships to provide some 6,000 additional beds,



A heart-shaped Jacuzzi in one of the luxury suites in the Secreto, a love motel in Belém, Brazil. NYT

which will first be offered to developing and island nations at discounted rates of up to \$220 per night. New hotels are also being built and old ones refurbished. Schools are being fitted with beds. Sporting clubs are being transformed into dormitories and residents are rushing to revamp homes into rentals. Still, with less than four months to go, much of the new lodging is still not complete and the city is thousands of beds short of its target.

Against this backdrop, Belém’s numerous love motels — short-term accommodations that charge by the hour and often lack a reception area or amenities like gyms and pools — are preparing

to fill the gap, already tweaking and outfitting many of their 2,500 rooms for visitors attending the climate summit.

Love motels surged during Brazil’s repressive dictatorship in the 1960s, when homes were often being surveilled. They have since become ubiquitous across the country.

Inspired by American roadside lodging that charges by the hour, the Brazilian love motel quickly gained popularity by offering short-term stays for a bargain and adopting a romantic aesthetic similar to Japan’s love hotels.

This is not the first time an emergency has forced Brazil’s love motels to adapt to a different

clientele. Facing hotel shortages ahead of the World Cup in 2014 and the 2016 Rio Olympics, thousands of motels were similarly revamped to welcome visitors.

This time around though, the country’s love motels are preparing to welcome a different kind of guest, arriving for business rather than pleasure.

“People think it’s like a brothel,” said Ricardo Teixeira, 49, who manages both motels and is trying to buff up their reputation. “But it’s just a space like any other.”

He is not sure yet if he will swap the menus in the rooms, which offer beers and burgers, as well as sex toy rentals. **NYT**

AS OF MARCH 2025

Credit card overdues surge 44% to over ₹33K cr amid rising consumer spending

GEORGE MATHEW
MUMBAI, JULY 27

INDIA'S CREDIT card economy, a symbol of growing consumer confidence and digital empowerment, is showing some signs of strain.

Credit card delinquencies in the 91-360 days overdue category have soared by a staggering 44.34 per cent over the past year, reaching Rs 33,886.5 crore as of March 2025, up from Rs 23,475.6 crore in March 2024, according to the latest data from CRIF High Mark.

This sharp rise highlights a growing vulnerability among borrowers, particularly in the 91-360 days category, a segment that banking regulations categorize as non-performing assets (NPAs) in the case of bank loans. Effectively, credit card holders have defaulted on nearly Rs 34,000 crore of debt that has remained unpaid for over 91 days.

The breakdown of distress

A closer look at the numbers reveals a disturbing trend. In the 91-180 days overdue segment

CREDIT CARD PORTFOLIO AT RISK (PAR)				
	PAR 91-180*	PAR 91-180**	PAR 181-360*	PAR 181-360**
March 2023	15,717.5	6.6	1,608.6	0.7
March 2024	20,872.6	6.9	2,603.0	0.9
March 2025	29,983.6	8.2	3,902.9	1.1

*Rs crore | ** In per cent | Source: CRIF High Mark

alone, the delinquent amount jumped to Rs 29,983.6 crore, compared to Rs 20,872.6 crore a year earlier, and has almost doubled from the March 2023 level, data prepared by CRIF High Mark for *The Indian Express* says. This reflects not just a growing reliance on credit but a mounting inability — or unwillingness — to repay on time.

CRIF High Mark, a credit bureau registered with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), noted a steady uptick in the percentage of portfolio at risk (PAR), which tracks overdue payments. In March 2025, PAR in the 91-180 day bucket reached 8.2 per cent, rising from 6.9 per cent in March 2024 and 6.6 per cent in March 2023 — a consistent three-year climb. For

loans overdue 181-360 days, the PAR rose to 1.1 per cent, up from 0.9 per cent in 2024 and 0.7 per cent in 2023.

These trends signal both short-term and long-term stress in the unsecured credit market, especially as consumers lean heavily on plastic for everyday and discretionary spending. Credit card outstanding was Rs 2.90 lakh crore as of May 2025 as against Rs 2.67 lakh crore in May 2024, according to the RBI.

A credit-driven consumption boom

The increase in delinquencies is set against the backdrop of an explosive rise in credit card usage across the country. The value of

credit card transactions reached Rs 21.09 lakh crore by March 2025, surging from Rs 18.31 lakh crore the previous year — a nearly 15 per cent jump. This boom mirrors India's post-pandemic economic recovery and reflects rising consumer confidence. Credit card spending in May 2025 alone was Rs 1.89 lakh crore, up from Rs 64,737 crore in January 2021.

Likewise, the number of credit cards in circulation has ballooned. As of May 2025, 11.11 crore credit cards were active in India, compared to 10.33 crore in May 2024 and just 6.10 crore in January 2021, according to RBI data.

People tend to borrow and spend more when they're optimistic about their financial future, but may also rely on credit cards to maintain their standard of living when wages stagnate or prices rise, said an investment analyst.

Rewards, offers

What's fuelling this sharp uptick in usage? Banks and fintech firms have aggressively promoted credit card adoption with attractive incentives: cashback rewards, travel perks, interest-free EMIs,

and airport lounge access. But the ease of swiping has come with a hidden cost. Credit card debt is among the most expensive forms of borrowing in India. Banks typically charge between 42 per cent and 46 per cent annual interest on unpaid balances beyond the interest-free period.

"Customers often get lured by flashy offers and rewards. But if they don't repay on time, they end up paying exorbitant interest," said a senior bank official. "A few missed payments can quickly spiral into a debt trap."

Why it matters

The sharp increase in delinquencies poses a risk not just to individual borrowers but also to the broader financial system. Credit card loans are unsecured, meaning they are not backed by collateral. Rising defaults can affect banks' balance sheets and prompt tighter lending norms, thereby slowing credit growth, a key driver of consumption in India. The RBI hiked the risk weight on credit card outstanding in 2023.

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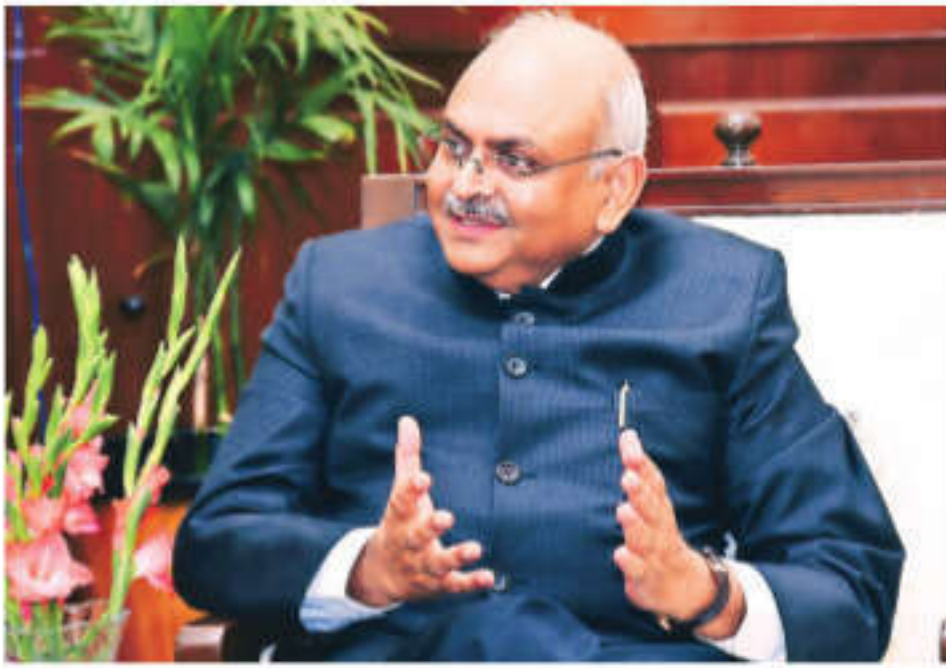
MARKET WATCH

MCAP OF 6 OF TOP-10 VALUED COS DROPS

The combined market valuation of 6 of the top-10 most valued firms diminished by Rs 2.22 lakh crore last week, with RIL taking the biggest hit, in-line with a bearish trend in equities. Last week, the BSE benchmark gauge declined by 294.64 points or 0.36 per cent.

PTI

‘As the economy grows, so would tax collection; hopeful of meeting target’



There is a moderation in direct tax collections. Till July 10, it was 1.3 per cent down year-on-year. Is it because of the income tax benefits given in the Budget? How are you assessing the trend vis-a-vis the target?

When this overall net tax collection (budget estimate) was given to us, at that point, this element (income tax cut) was also factored in while arriving at the figure and while estimating the tax buoyancy, this was factored in. We are hopeful that it will be done. So far as the reduction is concerned, that was primarily attributable to higher refunds outgo.

Also, the fact that if you compare July last year versus July this year, the difference is that the due date for filing the return was July 31, and self-assessment tax was also coming. Since the due date has been shifted, that collection to that extent has basically taken a hit to that extent. But then, going forward, we feel that as the economy grows, so would the tax collection because ultimately taxes are derivative of economic growth. So, economic growth, and then better tax administration, would definitely yield. We are comfortable and hopeful of meeting the target.

How is the Income Tax Department making use of digital technologies to boost compliance?

On an annual basis, the department captures around 650 crore transactions data from different sources. These transactions are collated, and for about 40 crore PANs, Annual Information Statements (AIS) are generated. This has the data of your TDS, tax payment, any transactions that have been done with different parties, maybe immobile property, or shares or mutual funds or any other. That is reflected on the portal online that is available to the taxpayers.

And it's not only available to the taxpayers, they are seeing it, which is an interesting statistic, to me it was very interesting. If you see in FY 2024-25, about 7.42 crore taxpayers actually saw their AIS. And the number of times they actually visited, on an average, if we see, it's about three and a half times. That means the visits to the AIS module of ours was 24 crore times. The point I'm trying to make is that one, you collate this information, this information is corresponding to more than 40 crore taxpayers and more than 7.5 crore taxpayers actually see this multiple times. This becomes a reference point basically for the taxpayer to see their ledger, take a call, what are the taxes to be paid like advance tax and all, whether it has to be paid or not and the return that has to be filed, what is the income that has to be reflected, which means that there is a wide acceptability of the information and the ledger in the form

of AIS that is being shown to the taxpayer. It also reflects their confidence in the information that is being shown.

9 crore people are filing the returns and you have more than about 40 crore people in whose case this AIS has been updated. So therefore we can say that yes, there is a scope for further increase in the number of returns that have been filed.

What is the role of AI in such analysis?

In that context, now we come to what is the role of AI? So, one is, who ought to file the return is not filing. You have this data. Based on that, you can come up with potential cases and then correspond with them electronically. So whatever coordinates you have, you can inform. The second component is whosever is filing the return, whether a correct return has been filed or not. In case, there is an obvious gap or something which needs to be flagged and from the taxpayer nudge him towards better compliance, and right compliance.

And the third component is: if you find that the taxpayer is repeatedly committing a mistake, can there be a case of a harder nudge? So these are components of tax administration that we are working on and where AI is helping. Because AI is then raising red flags in all these transactions and saying: okay, this maybe you would like to consider. And based on that we do a ABC sort of analysis, the numbers are huge...every year some 9 crore people would file returns and then you have to do that analysis. This is the extent and volume of e-governance in the tax department. The direct tax department is huge and if you see the profile of the taxpayer, that spectrum is also really very very wide wherein on one hand, you have a technologically-challenged taxpayer to a very, very matured taxpayer who is very, very technology savvy. So you have to build a system to make sure that the wide spectrum of people are able to see and find value with it.

We have seen on the indirect tax side also, like for GST, a move towards capturing the unregistered persons. Is there a similar move from the direct tax side to expand the tax net to the ones who are not filing returns?

Basically, what has to be seen is that the taxpayers' base is also increasing. And also the number of people who are filing the re-

turns are also increasing. More and more awareness once it comes, naturally the compliance will go up. So I would not put this number that all these 40 crore people were supposed to file the return and they ought to be our taxpayer. No, not that. But, yes, there is a scope for improvement. And then how do we nudge the taxpayer? How do we prompt the taxpayer to come look at their transactions and then if there is a requirement of filing a return, the person would. I think the awareness is there all across, the communication is also fast, so, by and large, now the taxpayer is also aware about the obligations. It's not that the taxpayer is not aware about it. They are taking that call. And once more and more the data gets matured and it gets populated and you are able to reflect it online, people will take care. Especially, younger generation.

How is the Tax Department flagging these gaps to the taxpayers?

Our systems create a 360-degree profile of taxpayers' financial transactions and flag any inconsistencies between their declared income and their financial activities. The in-house 'Project INSIGHT', uses advanced data analytics to collate information from various sources, including bank reports, financial institutions, sub-registrars of properties etc. The Department proactively nudges taxpayers suspected of making wrong claims or omissions to update their returns and pay the correct tax. The success of this approach is visible in the outcome of the "nudge" campaigns. In the Foreign Income and Assets Nudge Campaign, based on matching data received under automatic exchange of information, 19,501 taxpayers were nudged. This resulted in 62 per cent of them revising their returns, and a total of 30,161 taxpayers declared foreign assets worth Rs 29,208 crores and foreign income of Rs 1,089 crore during the campaign period.

For false claims, data analytics identified over Rs 9,000 crore in excess deductions claimed under Section 80GGC. Nudging taxpayers through SMS and emails led to a reduction of Rs 963 crore in deductions and the payment of Rs 409.50 crore in additional taxes as of June 18, 2025. The Virtual Digital Assets Nudge Campaign is also ongoing, wherein the taxpayers are being nudged through SMS and email to revisit claims made in ITRs related to TDS under Section 194S versus Schedule VDA filings.

The updated return facility (ITR-U) has seen significant success. As of June 18, 2025, a total of 8,892,395 updated ITRs have been filed, generating Rs 9577.06 crore in additional taxes. Overall, over 1.1 crore updated returns have been filed, collecting more than Rs 11,000 crore. By proactively providing taxpayers with information about their financial transactions, we encourage voluntary compliance. **FULL INTERVIEW ON**

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PTI & REUTERS

INDIA-US TRADE DEAL

Digital taxes: Commerce Min advised not to accept ‘unilaterally framed obligation’

RAVIDUTTAMISHRA
NEW DELHI, JULY 27

LEGAL ADVISERS to the Commerce and Industry Ministry have suggested that Indian negotiators dealing with their US counterparts should not accept Washington's proposal that prohibits India from reintroducing equalisation levy-style taxes, such as the 'Google tax', in the future, a person aware of the negotiations told *The Indian Express*.

The advice was offered on the grounds that the provisions drafted by the US did not state that both parties should refrain from applying digital taxes on each other. Rather, they sought a legal commitment only from the Indian side and were seen as a "unilaterally framed obligation", the source said.

While the US offers a range of digital services in India and American tech companies have long lobbied against any taxes on such services, India also exports a wide range of digital services to

EXPLAINED

One-sided demand

PROVISIONS DRAFTED by the US did not state that both parties should refrain from applying digital taxes on each other. Rather, they have sought a legal commitment only from the Indian side.

the US — particularly in the IT sector — generating the majority share of its total services exports earnings from the US market.

Another concern raised with the government was that agreeing to such unilateral provisions could set a risky precedent for future trade negotiations, where similar demands could be made by other trading partners during talks with New Delhi, thereby complicating future negotiations.

In a move to assuage US concerns about India being a high-tariff nation, the Central government

in March proposed abolishing the equalisation levy on online advertisements as part of the amendments to the Finance Bill, 2025.

An equalisation levy is a measure to 'equalise' the tax treatment of resident and non-resident e-commerce companies. As part of the 35 amendments to the Finance Bill, 2025, the Centre proposed removing the 6 per cent equalisation levy (EL) it charges on digital ads, effective from 1 April 2025. A query emailed to the Commerce and Industry Ministry remained unanswered till press time.

"Digital taxation is typically discussed outside the framework of a trade agreement. It is a nation's sovereign right to decide on such matters, and India should reserve that right. Bringing it under the scope of a trade agreement weakens your position. We need to examine the digital trade chapters of the US and Australia, which India must study carefully. Australia has provided the US with a carve-out that allows for protections for US services. We also need to secure our IT/ITeS and technol-

ogy exports from taxation in the US, our largest market" Arpita Mukherjee, professor at Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) said.

Notably the US has forced Indonesia to several steep terms on digital trade.

"Indonesia will provide certainty regarding the ability to transfer personal data out of its territory to the United States. Indonesia has committed to eliminate existing HTS tariff lines on "intangible products" and suspend related requirements on import declarations; to support a permanent moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions at the WTO immediately and without conditions," a White House statement read.

The United States Trade Representative (USTR), in its report on non-tariff barriers, had earlier cited the 6 per cent equalisation levy as a discriminatory measure against US firms.

FULL REPORT ON
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Shigeru Ishiba government after the bruising electoral setback.

Japan's centrality to Trump's tariff outlook

Trump's tariff negotiations have largely been about leverage, given how the US President has used tariffs as a way of getting countries to the table on issues such as fentanyl inflows or how they deal with a military conflict.

Revenue is yet another strong consideration for the Trump administration going forward, given that the six months that these tariffs have been in place, they have raised \$100 billion so far, according to estimates attributed to the US Commerce department. The other stated objective is to bring manufacturing and jobs back to the US: how that plays out is entirely another story. What the Japan deal means goes beyond basic numbers, since there's a personal connotation here for Trump. For a man who is generally fickle with his views, tariffs are an issue where Trump's been uncharacteristically consistent. And Japan was at the centre of Trump's world-view in his early years when the American businessman was still formulating his views on policy matters such as trade.

Takeaways for India

For New Delhi, which is currently engaged in extended negotiations with the US, the manner in which Japanese negotiators dangled multiple carrots, including the phased-out investment pledge and concessions on agri products, to win an evidently

favourable deal on auto offers some lessons in negotiating.

The India-UK trade deal too has some takeaways for the US deal. The UK deal showed that Indian negotiators are willing to offer concessions in areas such as agriculture and public procurement — contentious political issues where there is scope to give with factoring in some safeguards. With the US, talks have faced hurdles over agri products, with the Americans pushing for market access for genetically modified products such as soy and corn, along with broad-based access across sectors. The willingness to offer concessions on some issues that have traditionally heralded red lines for India could mean more leeway to extract concessions on other areas of interest, like Japan managed for its auto sector.

While the trade deal with the US is likely to be less focused on sectors and more focused on the headline number unlike the UK deal, India is likely to push for market access in labour-intensive sectors, while trying to ensure a significant tariff differential compared to its Asian peers.

Now, if the final tariff deal offered to India by Washington DC is between 10 per cent and 15 per cent, the tariff points offered to the UK and Japan, New Delhi should have reasons to be satisfied. The tariff advantage starts to diminish if the tariff goes over 15 per cent and inches up closer to 20 per cent, as was offered by the US to Vietnam.

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BRIEFLY

India-UK pact: Meetings to be held

New Delhi: The government will organise as many as 1,000 outreach programmes, including stakeholder meetings, workshops, in the next 20 days on the India-UK trade agreement, sources said. **ENS**

Vinfast's first India showroom

New Delhi: VinFast Auto India, the Indian subsidiary of global electric vehicle maker VinFast, has announced the inauguration of its showroom in Surat, Gujarat. The vehicles will be locally assembled at VinFast's upcoming factory in Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu. **ENS**

DoT's notice to Tata Comm

New Delhi: The Department of Telecom has issued a "show-cause-cum-demand notice" of about Rs 7,800 crore to Tata Communications over adjusted gross revenue dues. **PTI**

Japan's big trade win with the United States on auto offers some cues for India, others

ANIL SASI
NEW DELHI, JULY 27

FOR INDIA, the world's largest rice exporter, the recent US-Japan deal offers a somewhat cautionary tale on agri access in the context of its own negotiations with the Americans for a bilateral trade pact. At the same time, it is increasingly becoming clear that the Japanese negotiators managed to upstage their American counterparts by getting an immensely favourable deal on automobiles, even as they dangled the agri market access concessions offered by Japan and Tokyo's investment pledges as distraction the entire time. This could offer a template for others negotiating with the US for deals, including India.

US-Japan deal

Under the US-Japan deal, which US President Donald Trump referred to as "the biggest deal ever made", the Americans have agreed to impose 15 per cent reciprocal tariffs, compared to the 25 per cent the US had threatened earlier last week. While most of the focus of the US-Japan deal has been on how Washington DC managed to get market access for American agricultural products, including politically sensitive items such as rice, what the Japanese managed to wrangle out is the best possible deal for its auto sector in the given circumstances.

According to the final deal, Japanese automakers would face a 15 per cent tariff now when entering the US market, much less



Rows of new vehicles sit near a port terminal at the Toyota Logistics Services lot, in Long Beach, California. *AP File*

than the global tariff on cars imposed by the US. The Big Three automakers in America — GM, Ford and Stellantis (essentially Chrysler) — are now crying foul, because, as they see it, the Japanese now have a clear tariff advantage.

After this deal, cars and car parts from Japan can get into the US after paying the 15 per cent tariff while American car makers, most of whom import a lot of cars and car parts fully assembled and manufactured in Canada and Mexico, are currently paying a 25 per cent tariff to import cars and parts into the US market from these two countries.

Significance of the auto market for Japan

For Japan, the country's automotive industry is a big contributor to its economy, representing about 10 per cent of the country's GDP and nearly 20 per cent of its manufacturing GDP. Automobiles are among Japan's biggest exports and the sector's performance is crucial for the country's overall

economic health. And when it comes to Japan-US trade, where Tokyo has a substantial surplus, it is in the auto sector where Washington DC faces most of its trade deficit. The Japanese negotiators made some eight trips to Washington DC over the course of these last six months to get a deal that is favourable to them. While they did end up making a sizable commitment to investment in the US, alongside the concessions on the agri side involving rice and other farm products, the big prize really was auto. And that's where the Japanese negotiators have maxed out the outcomes, which could set the stage for more Toyotas and Hondas flowing into the American market. Interestingly, while the Americans have gone to town describing the deal as a big win, citing both the \$550 billion investment pledge and agri market access as wins, the Japanese have maintained a studied silence in the aftermath of the deal, despite immense political pressure on the embattled



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China’s mega dam on Brahmaputra, and concerns in India

DIVYAA
NEW DELHI, JULY 27

CHINA ON July 19 formally began the construction of a massive dam on the Brahmaputra river, close to the border with Arunachal Pradesh. The \$167.8-billion hydropower project, with a generation capacity of 60,000 MW, will be the world’s largest upon completion.

Since being announced in 2021, the project has raised concerns in India and Bangladesh about the impact it may have on the flow of the river.

Concerns in Arunachal

The dam on the Yarlung Zangbo, as the Brahmaputra is known in Tibet, is being built at the “Great Bend”, where the river makes a U-turn in Medog county before entering India at Gelling in Arunachal Pradesh. The river is called Siang in Arunachal Pradesh.

A week before the dam’s groundbreaking ceremony, Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu told *PTI* that it was a potential “water bomb” and an “existential threat”. He said if China “suddenly release

water, our entire Siang belt would be destroyed... In the long run... Siang and Brahmaputra rivers could dry up considerably”.

Other experts too have flagged the risk of flooding due to the intentional or unintentional operation of reservoirs in Tibet, and unforeseen events such as dam failure, landslides, or earthquakes. Tibet is a seismically active zone, and the region where the dam is coming up is considered to be earthquake-prone and ecologically fragile.

EXPLAINED
GLOBAL

View from Assam

The Brahmaputra is the life-line of Assam, fundamental to its economy, and central to its history, culture, and ecology. Any significant disruption in the flow of the river in the state will have far-reaching consequences.

But Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma on July 21 said that he was “not immediately worried because Brahmaputra... is not dependent on a single source [of water].” It gets most of its waters from Bhutan, Arunachal Pradesh, and rainwater in Assam, Sarma said.

On June 2, he had posted on X that “the Brahmaputra is not a river India depends on upstream”, and that “China contributes only ~30-35% of the Brahmaputra’s total flow”.



In the unlikely event of China reducing water flow, “it may actually help India mitigate the annual floods in Assam”, he had said.

The Indian response

While it has issued no official reaction after the July 19 ceremony, New Delhi has long been monitoring Chinese infrastructure interventions on the river. In January, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir

Jaiswal said: “As a lower riparian state with established user rights to the waters of the river, we have consistently expressed... our views and concerns to the Chinese side over mega projects on rivers in their territory.”

On July 23, Guo Jiakin, spokesperson for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, told reporters that the project was “fully within China’s sovereignty”. “China is engaged in cooperation with downstream countries on sharing hy-

drological data, flood prevention and disaster reduction,” he said.

Ashok Kantha, a former Indian Ambassador to China, had previously told *The Indian Express* that the project, with its “very large reservoir, in a very difficult area” was “very risky, dangerous, and irresponsible”. India, Kantha had said, needed to raise its concerns with China “forcefully”.

India is engaged with China in a series of confidence-building measures after Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri announced last October that the two sides had reached an agreement “on patrolling arrangements along the Line of Actual Control, leading to disengagement and a resolution of the issues that had arisen in these areas in 2020”.

Mitigation measures

At the heart of India’s concerns, as articulated by CM Khandu, lies the fear that China may seek to weaponise the dam project at some stage, perhaps to build pressure on behalf of Pakistan during a future conflict.

India should make scientific calculations about the Chinese dam project and build its own capability to preempt any deliberate action in the future, said Uttam Sinha, senior fellow at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for

Defence Studies and Analyses.

Water experts Naresh K Mathur and Debarshree Dasgupta had previously written in *The Indian Express* that as a mitigation strategy, India could plan storage on rivers of the Brahmaputra system to absorb potential variations in flows.

The storage of the Upper Siang project in Arunachal Pradesh, with its 300-metre-high dam, can serve as a buffer against variations in the flow of the river. But progress has been slowed by local resistance against the potential adverse environmental impact of the dam.

Sinha said there is a need to build more inland channels to carry the flow of excess water. The National Water Development Authority has proposed two links to connect the Brahmaputra and its tributaries to the Ganga basin with the aim of transferring surplus water to water-scarce regions.

Experts have also stressed on the need to utilise diplomatic channels to seek detailed hydrological and project-related data from China in order to assess downstream impact.

India should also have conversations with other low riparian neighbours — Bhutan, Bangladesh and even Myanmar — on developing a coordinated protocol for advance warning and disaster preparedness.

TELLING NUMBERS

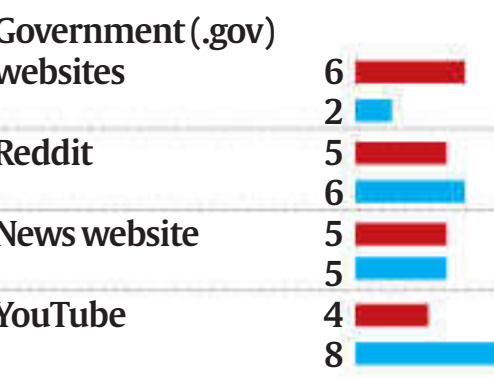
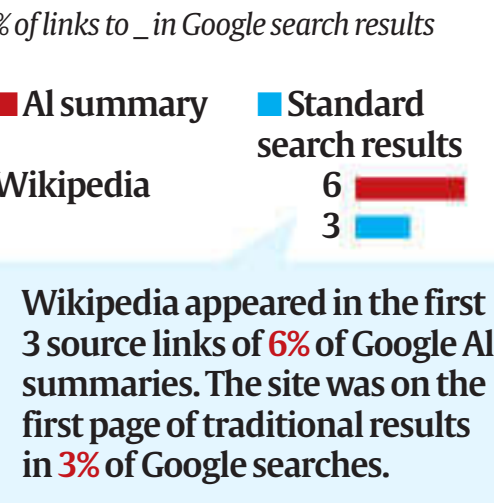
How Google users interact with AI-generated summaries

Google has been displaying AI-generated summaries on top of many search pages since 2024. Recently, online publications said these summaries have led to a decline in their web traffic as many users now rely on summaries rather than following links to their websites. The Pew Research Centre analysed 900 US adults’ web browsing data and found:

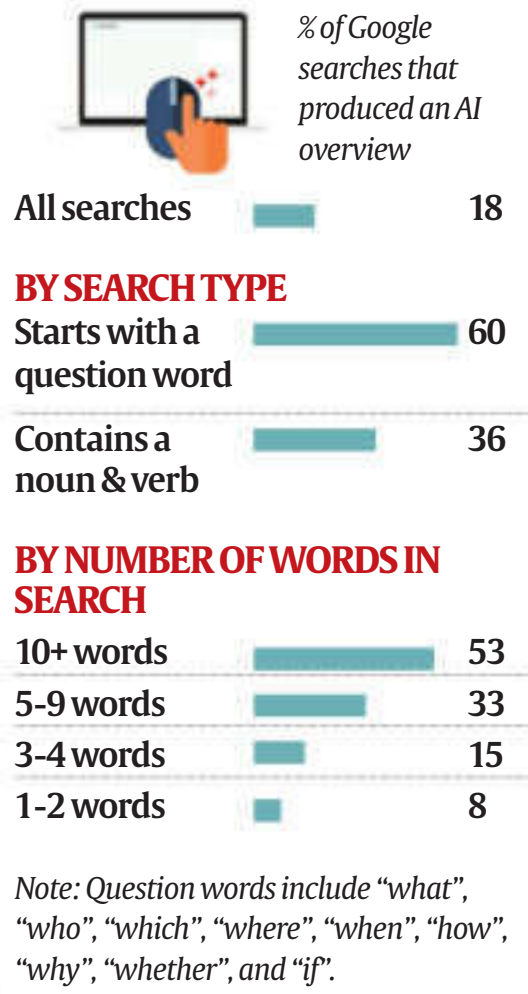


Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

2 AI SUMMARIES HAVE A LARGER SHARE OF LINKS TO WIKIPEDIA AND .GOV SITES THAN STANDARD SEARCH RESULT PAGES DO



3 QUESTIONS AND LONGER SEARCH QUERIES ARE MORE LIKELY TO PRODUCE AI SUMMARIES



EXPLAINED GLOBAL

Israel, Palestine & the West

As Israel, with American support, continues to batter Gaza, there is a growing rift in the world — including in the West — with regards to Israel & Palestine. But it is unclear what this will amount to on the ground



BASHIR ALI ABBAS

WITH THE humanitarian crisis in Gaza growing more alarming, Israel Sunday said it would halt military operations for 10 hours a day in parts of Gaza and allow new aid corridors.

Days before, Israel and the United States had withdrawn from ceasefire negotiations with Hamas, citing the Palestinian group’s lack of “good faith”. The following day, on Friday, French President Emmanuel Macron announced his country would declare its recognition of a Palestinian state at the United Nations in September, drawing criticism from both the US and Israel.

On July 21, 25 countries including Italy, Canada, UK, Japan, France and the EU had asserted that “the war in Gaza must end now”. In recent days, multiple Western leaders, including Macron, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, Canadian PM Mark Carney, and Australian PM Anthony Albanese have strongly criticised Israel’s actions in Gaza.

These developments represent a global rift — including in the West — when it comes to Israel and Palestine. It is yet to be seen what this will mean on the ground.

Israel’s war on Gaza

Over the past month, Israel’s approach to Gaza has turned more decisive. With the US withdrawing from the ceasefire negotiations, Israel appears to have a *carte blanche* both for its maximalist military objective of eliminating Hamas and its maximalist political objective of a permanent occupation of Gaza.

A chorus of Israeli ministers, like Itamar Ben-Gvir, continue to call for Palestinians to “leave” Gaza. Defence Minister Israel Katz has laid out Israel’s immediate plans for the Strip. This includes building a “humanitarian city” on the ruins of Rafah where 600,000 Palestinians would initially be “moved” and



Palestinians carry flour unloaded from a humanitarian aid convoy on Sunday. AP

“not be allowed to leave, except to go to other countries”. This plan, which will eventually include all of Gaza’s population of roughly 2.1 million people, has been described as a potential concentration camp by several experts, including former Israeli PM Ehud Olmert.

Israel’s latest strategy of allegedly shooting unarmed Palestinians lining up for aid has triggered more pointed criticism from Western capitals outside the US. The July 21 joint statement stated that the “Israeli government’s aid delivery model is dangerous, fuels instability and deprives Gazans of human dignity”.

Aid into the besieged Palestinian enclave is currently being routed through the Israeli-American Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF). There is growing evidence of starving Palestinians being slaughtered outside GHF centres; the UN reports that more than 1,000 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed by Israel since the GHF began operations on May 27.

This comes even as more than a hundred humanitarian aid organisations have warned that a “mass famine” is spreading in Gaza. The World Food Program, an arm of the UN, said recently that the hunger crisis in Gaza had reached “new and astonishing levels of desperation, with a third of the population not eating for multiple days in a row.”

Global positions on Palestine

The French decision to recognise Palestinian statehood is representative of a grow-

ing rift in the global order vis-à-vis Israel and Palestine.

■ The US and Israel reject any push for a Palestinian state. The alliance of the two stakeholders with the greatest ability to affect changes on the ground has held firm even as global pressures on Israel increase.

■ Several Western states, such as Canada, UK, and Germany, however, are seemingly breaking from the US-Israel alliance. While they do back Israel’s immediate objectives, they also remain committed to potentially implementing the two-state solution.

Note, however, that these countries also retain their broader support for Israeli interests. Macron, for instance, called for a demilitarised Palestinian state — which would effectively deny Palestinians full sovereignty.

■ The Global South and Arab states seek an immediate end to Israel’s current war in Gaza and an inclusive, negotiated two-state solution to the original dispute. However, most of these states have markedly limited abilities to actually shape events on the ground, and Arab states remain disinclined to undertake punitive economic or military measures against Israel.

Status of two-state solution

Broadly, despite the failure of the Oslo Accords of 1995, most states have stood by the two-state solution as the only achievable outcome — even as Israel progressively re-

moves the physical contours of a future Palestinian state and has killed Palestinians at record rates each day since October 2023.

A day before ceasefire talks broke down, the Israeli Knesset passed a non-binding resolution calling for Israel to annex the West Bank. Another Knesset resolution a year ago had rejected the possibility of allowing a sovereign Palestinian state. In June, Israel approved 22 new Jewish settlements in the West Bank.

Most of Israel’s West Bank settlements are deemed illegal by the UN and a majority of its member states, including India. That Israeli ministers also look to re-settle Homesh and Sa-Nur in the Northern West Bank, evacuated along with the settlements in Gaza in 2005, is indicative of Israel’s concerted push to leverage the war to expand its illegal occupation of Palestinian territories.

It is thus notable that France and Saudi Arabia are set to co-chair an international conference on the two-state solution at the UN from July 28. While a ministerial-level conference on the two-state solution was held at the UN in September 2024, Israel’s war of attrition, combined with forced mass starvation, has sparked a renewed push to explore methods to advance the solution.

However, unlike earlier global pushes for a Palestinian state alongside Israel according to pre-1967 borders, the current international effort arguably occurs with the US and Israel being the least amenable. Even as questions over the reform of the Palestinian Authority (restricted to the West Bank since 2007) can be addressed, the question of Hamas’ future remains a dead-end.

The upcoming international conference will bolster support for Palestinian statehood (recognised by 147 of the UN’s 193 member states) but the degree to which participating states can influence Israeli actions remains unclear. It remains to be seen if the conference propels states to undertake punitive measures of any nature and scale against Israel, failing which Tel Aviv has little incentive to cease hostilities and territorial expansion, especially with continuing US support.

Bashir Ali Abbas is a Senior Research Associate at the Council for Strategic and Defense Research, New Delhi

From point of origin to point of refuge: meanings & memories in Raza’s ‘bindu’

VANDANA KALRA
NEW DELHI, JULY 27

FOR MOST of his life, artist Sayed Haider Raza called France his home: after moving to Paris to study art in 1950, he made a permanent return to India only in 2010, at the age of 88.

In the 1970s, by which time Raza was an acclaimed painter of the Parisian School, the artist looked to re-connect to his roots. “He felt there wasn’t much of India in his work,” Ashok Vajpeyi, Raza’s longtime friend and author of *Celebration & Prayer: Life and Light in Raza’s Art* (2025), told *The Indian Express*.

“He began searching for a singular motif that could hold multiple meanings and spiritual possibilities. And from this search emerged the *bindu*,” Vajpeyi said.

For more than four decades, the *bindu*, which can be translated as “dot” or “point”,

served as an anchor for most of Raza’s artistic compositions.

Getting the point

“*Is bindu par dhyaan do* (pay attention to this dot),” a primary school teacher once told an eight-year-old Raza, in a bid to curb the boy’s restlessness.

“It was difficult at first, but then I got his point. Gradually, blotting out much else, my mind settled down to focus solely at that centre... I found myself riveted,” Raza wrote in a 1989 article in the *Illustrated Weekly of India*. Thus began a life-long fascination with the *bindu*.

Growing up in the jungles of Madhya Pradesh where his father served as a forest officer, Raza’s initial work was heavily influenced by nature.

In the mid-1950s, he was largely painting landscapes, devoid of figures.

The earliest hints of his iconic *bindu* would appear at this time, most notably



with his 1953 painting *The Black Sun*, depicting a black orb that towers over a geometric cityscape. The 1968 painting *Black Moon* had a deep black circle stand out amid fluid strokes in warm shades.

As central motif

It was in the 1970s, however, that Raza’s *bindu* became a central feature of his work. By this time, Raza’s palette had become denser and he had gravitated towards spir-



(Right) SH Raza’s Swasti, 2016. The Raza Foundation, Express

itual abstraction, inspired by the likes of Mark Rothko and Jackson Pollock.

In *Bindu* (1981), Raza had a black circle dominate the canvas divided into equal quarters, and encased within frames of geometric borders. The subsequent years saw several works in the *Bindu* series, with the motif rendered within defined frames. The *Germination* series reflected on the *bindu* as the womb of the earth, with infinite potential for life.

Painted in 1981, his seminal canvas *Maa* was Raza’s letter to his motherland through which he professed his longing for home. Incorporating lines from Vajpeyi’s poem *Maa, lautkar jab aaunga, kya laaunga?* (Mother, when I return home what should

I bring?), the composition had the black orb accompanied by fluid strokes in vibrant colours, evoking memory and emotion.

Talking about his work in the 1980s, Raza once said: “My present work is the result of two parallel enquiries. Firstly, it aimed at pure plastic order, form-order. Secondly, it concerns the theme of nature. Both have converged into a single point and become inseparable. The point, the *bindu*, symbolises the seed bearing the potential of all life...” (*Artists Today: East-West Visual Arts Encounter*, 1987).

Many meanings

“The *bindu* emerged as an icon that came to signify many things. It was the point of origin from where everything began, whether a line or a form. It became the concentric circle that emanated energy and radiated outward, a still center of concentration, meditation and reflection. On another plane, it also became a point of withdrawal and solitary refuge from the chaos of the world,” Vajpeyi said.

Over the years, as Raza created his own universe around the *bindu*, he also imbibed

it with themes such as the *tribhuj* (triangle) and *prakriti-purusha* (the female and the male energy). Though predominately rendered in black, the *bindu* also appeared in other colours — including the intense blue center in the oil *Blue Bindu* (1983) and the white core in *Shanti Bindu* (2007).

“In his creative process, *bindu* could both be the starter and the concluding form. Sometimes he would begin with the concept of the *bindu* and build the composition around it, bringing it alive as the vital epicenter. At other times, he would do something and then place the *bindu* within,” Vajpeyi said.

Painted months before he passed away, Raza’s very last canvas, *Swasti* (2016), had a central *bindu* surrounded by concentric circles and radiating lines. As Vajpeyi put it, “It is a work bidding farewell, an offering of good wishes for all.”

This is a part of a series on Indian masters and the motifs that appear repeatedly in their works.

Next: Himmat Shah’s Heads

13 IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

ON FILMMAKING TODAY

It is a hypersensitive world and people can come at you from any angle. Everything is so amped up. You really don't know what's going to happen and how. The biggest threat to our existence is social media

Alaka Sahani: You have managed to keep your new web series — *The Hunt- The Rajiv Gandhi Assassination Case* — quite apolitical, given that it follows the investigation after former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was killed in a gruesome manner. How did you decide on its tone and treatment?

I've always been clear about avoiding politics and religion. It's one of those areas where you're absolutely going to upset someone. It really doesn't matter how objective you try to be. What excited me about *The Hunt* was the investigation. I was around when the assassination happened and understood snatches of it. However, reading Anirudhya Mitra's book (*Ninety Days: The True Story of the Hunt for Rajiv Gandhi's Assassins*) and realising what had really happened in those 90 days were two completely different things. When I read it, my mind was blown. The hunt itself was so interesting for me that I kind of saw the path forward, to not touch upon any political angles. It starts with a political assassination and people assume that the rest of it is a political show, but it's mainly the assassination. After the show came out, I just kept my fingers crossed for the first two weeks. We're not out of the woods yet but hoping that everything will go smoothly.

Alaka Sahani: You had your primary source material in the form of a book. But what kind of research and filtering process went into it?

I co-wrote it with two other writers, and when you have a book that you base everything on — and this is also for legal purposes — you do whatever the requisite research is. You read the articles, some of the SIT members themselves have written books. There are multiple and differing viewpoints. So it became apparent after gathering all the material that we wanted to pick one and run with it. And that was the book. However, what's interesting, and this was also the reason that attracted me to the project, was that I have never adapted a book before. The most amazing sequences that play out on screen will sometimes be a single line in the book. To pick the events that actually tell the story, to make it cohesive, because when you undertake the largest manhunt in history, it's not as simple as what's shown in the show. People are telling me, 'oh, it's such a thriller'. That's because we made it like that. In reality, no investigation ever plays out like that.

Sandeep Singh: Were you looking for a theme for a series or did you decide on it after you read the book?

Anirudhya Mitra brought the material to Sameer Nair, who heads Applause Entertainment (production company). Sameer asked him to write a book so that we can adapt it. Once the book was written, that's when he pitched it to me. It was a series from the get-go. For the past seven years, I've just been almost entirely in the series space. Gone are the days when you would look at something and say, 'Oh God! This is so dense, how do I condense it in two hours?' And now that this stress is out of the window, the only question is monetary viability.

Way before streaming came to India, I'd been trying to pitch myself as a series director in the US. I've been an HBO fan and long format was something I was just waiting for. Feature films are awesome, but up to this point, it has been gratifying to do stuff in the long format.

Mohamed Thaver: Towards the end of the series, there are certain things which are not directly said, perhaps hinting at something. Does the book also leave things open-ended or have you made some changes?

We have made a couple of changes because there are so many theories floating around. So, one had to kind of maybe suggest and kind of leave it open-ended. So, that's what we did. In the case of a true crime, the moment you take it from the page to a dramatic format, the kind of liberties you have to take... So every small thing, including the words that come out of the character's mouth, makes me think: are we doing right by them? It arguably was the most stressful thing. And I don't mean for being sued or creating a controversy. It's me as a writer and a filmmaker; I want to do right by whoever I'm portraying. In my world, there is seldom any black and white, it is all grey. Even when I deal with the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam), it's dealt with so much humanity. There's never any finger pointing because as one of the characters says: 'One man's terrorist is another man's hero.'

Mihir Vasavda: Be it the LTTE side, the political side or the security establishment — how do you make a series without hurting any one

WHY NAGESH KUKUNOOR



Prominent director-writer Nagesh Kukunoor's latest web series, *The Hunt- The Rajiv Gandhi Assassination Case* on SonyLIV, has received widespread appreciation for its deft handling of politically sensitive events that shook the nation. Kukunoor, who made his directorial debut with *Hyderabad Blues* (1998)

and was hailed as a fresh voice in Indian parallel cinema, went on to helm several acclaimed films, including *3 Deewarein* (2003), *Iqbal* (2005), *Dor* (2006) and *Dhanak* (2016). He's also made his mark in the streaming space with series such as *City of Dreams* (2019–2021) and *Modern Love Hyderabad* (2022)



ON BIG-BUDGET FILMS HELPING SUPPORT SMALLER FILMS

If it weren't for the big films, half the industry won't function. There is excitement to watch something on that scale. The success keeps people employed. But that can't be the only thing on offer

‘The climate has lent itself to many lawsuits, making it more terrifying for filmmakers’

Filmmaker Nagesh Kukunoor on his recent series *The Hunt- The Rajiv Gandhi Assassination Case*, keeping it apolitical and why we still haven't cracked the true underdog sports story. The session was moderated by Alaka Sahani, Associate Editor, *The Indian Express*



Filmmaker Nagesh Kukunoor (left) in conversation with Alaka Sahani, Associate Editor, *The Indian Express*, in Mumbai Amit Chakravarty

of them?

I don't know what that answer is but when we were writing it, more than anything else, we were absolutely paying attention to the fact that there would not be any misrepresentation. Taking liberties can be interpreted as misrepresentation. But it's trying to just do the best that you can. Since it's been out, that's been my only stress. It was arguably the most exciting project I've done. But just constantly hoping that you haven't upset anyone... You can say the most meaningful of things in ways that don't offend people, as opposed to doing it in a way that's in your face and getting your point across. And it's genuinely the way I view the world. It doesn't take effort for me to write lines a certain way.

Mihir Vasavda: Is it tougher to make these kind of shows or movies now compared to 15 years ago?

It is a hypersensitive world and people can come at you from any angle. When I made *Hyderabad Blues* (1998), the censor board gave me 91 cuts. It was one of the most torturous processes to get the film to the theatre. So, I'm not new to this kind of milieu. There the gatekeepers were defined. So I knew that when I was going up before the censor board, such and such thing would happen. The Anand Patwardhans of the world were also on a parallel track with me. He was doing his own stuff and I would constantly look and say: 'Man, I could never do that'. I still write within this space and this is how I do it. In today's times, everything is so amped up. So yes, you really don't know what's going to happen and how. The biggest threat to our existence is social media. In 2019, I just disconnected everything and went off the radar.

Alaka Sahani: What was in your mind while shooting the Rajiv Gandhi assassination scene? How did you want to portray him?

I wanted to show him the way we've seen him in rallies, but arguably that was the most disturbing part of the shoot because you knew that you're portraying a horrific, grizzly scene. So, I tried to handle it with the maximum sensitivity because the whole thing is told from the child's point of view and we don't see anything. And we see very little of the aftermath other than the shoe. I think that was the one scene when you're actually doing the nitty gritty. But at the back of my mind, that was weighing a little bit saying that this is how he went.

Alok Deshpande: Could you elaborate on casting for *The Hunt*. Also, how has OTT changed the casting game?

What we understand as casting has changed because of the OTT space. Prior to

that, if I had to justify a cast like this to a platform and talk about what the marketability would be and who brings poster value — it would have been virtually impossible. But now, when I clearly sort of lay out my plan, no one baulks. Here, the guiding force was clearly the fact that we had to get people who at least looked like the characters they were portraying. Casting Bay handled this show. They dug around and absolutely found them.

Zeeshan Shaikh: Based on the research you did, what is your analysis of the actual assassination? For an organisation that was so secretive, LTTE really went out of its way — they clicked those pictures which showed their involvement in the assassination.

They didn't take credit. But the justification was that everything that they did, they documented as proof to show that they could pull off the most audacious things. For example, when they ran a trial run with VP Singh, they had a bunch of different people recording but they followed the same format. Dhanu had a garland and went all the way to VP Singh and garlanded him, which is what's shown there. They wanted to take it back to Prabhakaran and prove to him that they could get all the way to the top. It was brilliant in its conception. They did the same thing here (Gandhi's assassination). Physics played a small part in it otherwise they would have gotten away with the perfect crime. The photographer wanted a slightly better angle and he raises the camera and that's a little bit above the blast radius and the camera survives.

Zeeshan Shaikh: At a time, when there are so many filmmakers and artists complaining about their freedom of expression being repressed, did you feel the pinch of what has been happening around you while making



The Hunt?

If I were to go to my previous shows and tell you the kind of minute changes that one has to make because someone else might be pissed off. Not related to any political space, but a community might take umbrage. So it's everywhere. It's political, it's religious, it's caste-based, everything is no no. You can make a sweet love story set in some small town and I guarantee someone can sue you even there. It's the times we live in. That's the reality of what we do.

Alaka Sahani: What kind of vetting did *The Hunt* undergo?

It went through the same that every show does. Every small line, every explanation. The vetting process had been going on for a very long time. It's not something that just happened. Because the climate has lent itself to a lot of lawsuits, it's far more terrifying for filmmakers.

Sandeep Singh: We are living in tough times where we have to be careful of what we are seeing and depicting. What do you think has changed?

Social media. That is the root of all evil. I don't need to know everyone's opinion, but everyone has an opinion. Let's say you are in an airport and someone recognises you. There are beautiful pluses to that and there are minuses to that. Why would you walk up to a filmmaker and say that the film you made was really bad. What do you hope to achieve with that and what do you think the filmmaker is going to say? You pour your heart and soul into it. The last thing you need is someone walking up to you and saying... it's like, if I walked up to you with your child and say, 'that's one ugly child'. Tell me which parent is going to be like 'you are right, this is a ugly child'. If you have something nice to say to someone who's made a film, say something nice. The last review I read was in 2006. So, I really

ON ADAPTATION OF TRUE CRIME

Every small thing, including the words that come out of a character's mouth, makes me think: are we doing right by them? It arguably was the most stressful thing

don't care much for reviews either. With social media, the hate floats to the top and that's what sticks. I have no desire to constantly engage with that. None.

Mihir Vasavda: Why haven't we cracked the true sports underdog stories in India?

The problem is that in order to reach a larger audience, two things happen. First, you have to get a star. You've destroyed the story there. If you don't worry about the way the person looked and you brought a star, I understand what the filmmakers are doing. Then to justify that star, you need to make it bigger and bigger. Let's say you whittled it down and made it like a three-five crore film. You tell me who is going to see it. Where are you going to show it? Then you have to circle back around to the fact that you have to get at least a B-list star. Our movie universe setup is not equipped to deal with this. That's not going to change.

Mohamed Thaver: What prompted you to write and direct to *Iqbal*?

Someone wanted a bunch of us to write short stories to commemorate former President Abdul Kalam's second term in office. I wanted to tell an underdog story. So I had an idea about a deaf and non-speaking kid who excels in malkhamb. I started writing the short story and it was only supposed to be like 10 pages. Seven went in describing what malkhamb was. So then, when I flipped it to cricket, all you had to say was Iqbal wanted to play cricket and you're done. I wrote a short story. A lot of people thought it was a movie about cricket and it wasn't. It never was. The heart and soul was about someone with a disability and overcoming it. This is a classic underdog tale.

Alaka Sahani: Is it possible to make more top grossers like *Pushpa*?

If it weren't for the big films, half the industry would not function. The success keeps people employed. There is a certain level of excitement to walk into a theater and watch something on that scale. But that can't be the only thing on offer. With OTT, the world has just become a smaller place. I had written a sci-fi film in 2000 and people kind of laughed. Now I can pitch the same. They might still say, 'we're not going to give you Rs 500 crore to make it' but that is a different conversation.

Zeeshan Shaikh: Your film *Dor* is an official remake of a Malayalam film. What is the creative freedom in recreating art that has already been created by someone?

There's not just one way to tell a story, right? I was on a jury and I saw *Perumazhakkalam* (2004), a Malayalam

film. Both this movie and *Dor* are based on the same original idea about a woman losing her husband. I loved the idea. But TA Razzaq, the story writer and producer, got there first. So I had to go and get the rights from him and then make it. But if you look at *Perumazhakkalam* and *Dor*, there is absolutely nothing in common. Not the lensing, not the way the story is told. Sometimes the core idea appeals to you and you say, 'I bet I could tell the story differently'. I did it once again with a movie in 2011 called *Mod* with Ayesha Takia and Rannvijay Singh. It was based on a Taiwanese film called *The Moment in Time* that I watched at a festival.

Suanshu Khurana: With so many big budget films with big stars not working in recent times in Hindi cinema, how do you see the uncertainty in the film industry? Does it need a fresh perspective?

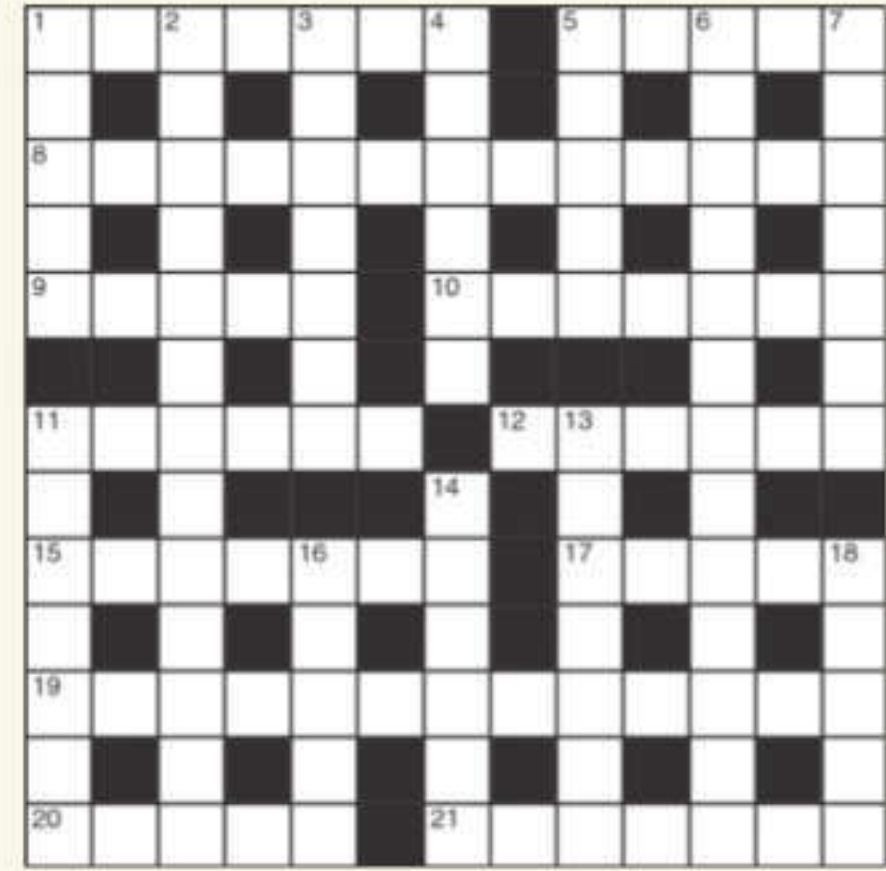
Is that what's happening? There's always a need to put things in a larger context and try and make sense of it. You have some hits, you have some losses. If we look back at the cinema that happened 50 years ago, it was driven by whatever stories were told at that point. So I don't know if just Hindi films aren't working or if now there's a larger scope for other languages to dub and then occupy what is known as the Hindi cinema space. Even when we couldn't raise money for a single film, I had this pig-headed approach that if you try hard enough, someone will give you that money and then eventually the movies would get made. Maybe this is just the lower part of the cycle and again there'll be two or three hits and again it'll come back up again.

Zeeshan Shaikh: Did you get a call from DR Karthikeyan (who headed the SIT) after *The Hunt* was released? He has an alternative version of how things unfold. Sivasaran (the mastermind of the operation) is an important character with an interesting backstory. Is he someone you'd want to flesh out in another version?

The answer is no to both. But characters who have a lot to lose are always interesting to write. Given everything, it was great fun writing Sivasaran. Then getting someone like Shafeeq Mustafa for the role. Shafeeq does the first audition and what I remember most is, he takes a drag and holds the cigarette and his hand shakes. I just loved it. That was one of the ways I saw Sivasaran. I wanted that nervous energy. The way Shafeeq walks, that's Sivasaran. I didn't have to structure that walk. Again, these are all the joyous parts of fleshing things out. So no, I would not be interested in doing anything larger.



CROSSWORD 5739



- ACROSS
- DOWN
- 1 Shy dwarf (7)
- 1 Speak well of something worn by a saint (5)
- 5 Rested as in bed (5)
- 2 It has lots to attract buyers (4,2,7)
- 8 The main split between Britain and the US (8,5)
- 3 Flier in a flat spin (7)
- 9 A bit I broke in my leg (5)
- 4 Ill stored (4,2)
- 10 News put out and the dust allowed to settle (7)
- 5 Inarticulate objection to a king's library (5)
- 11 Fast string of horses (6)
- 6 They have moving parts to play in the theatre (5-8)
- 12 Father Thomas evokes pity (6)
- 7 Points out but don't see changes (7)
- 15 Suspected of being guilty (7)
- 11 Fish and turtle photographer? (7)
- 17 Is of a capital disposition (5)
- 13 To lead such a life is simple — and hard (7)
- 19 Complaint made by a tiresome person (4,2,3,4)
- 14 Revised point I'd raised with Edward (6)
- 20 Mountains where the fires are lit (5)
- 16 Some servants go to law about it (5)
- 21 Turns out to be curried (7)
- 18 Requested a new desk (5)

Solutions Crossword 5738 Across: 1 Sprat, 8 Ignominy, 9 Kinds, 10 Foregone, 11 Utter, 12 Ada, 16 Enacts, 17 Crop up, 18 Hie, 23 Jeans, 24 Purchase, 25 Throw, 26 Livewire, 27 Stark Down: 2 Pointing, 3 Audience, 4 Age-old, 5 Tower, 6 Bigot, 7 Types, 12 Ash, 13 Ace, 14 Somewhat, 15 Turn sour, 19 Insure, 20 Spill, 21 Drive, 22 Drows

JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip. The proper ___ of ___ is the science of design. - Herbert A. Simon (5,.,7)

MSAIS

DUCTED

UYNNT

EELKMY

Solution: AMISS, TUNNY, DEDUCT, MEEKLY

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



SUDOKU 6029

Difficulty Level 5s
Instructions
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

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

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

SOLUTION SUDOKU 6028

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

Section 1
Office of the Executive Engineer U.P.R.E.D. Division Bareilly
Address.: Rural Engineering Department Second Floor Vikas Bhawan Bareilly
Press Notice for Manual Tender
Letter NO: 1164 /RED/Tender/File/ Bond Clerk/2025-26 dated: 15-07-2025

1. On behalf of His Excellency the Governor of Uttar Pradesh, Executive Engineer, Rural Engineering Department, Block Bareilly invites percentage rate tenders for the work shown below from eligible A, B, C, D and E category tenderers in Rural Engineering Department, Uttar Pradesh for building/road construction work. Tenderers can submit tenders for the work

2. Name of work as per table.

S. No	Name of District	Name of work:	Total estimated cost (in Lakh) (with GST)	Bid security (EMD) in Rupees	Cost of Bid document including GST (in Rupees)	Period of completion including rainy season
1	Bareilly	Drain construction work from old drain to tower in village Id Jagri Mohalla Balajipuram. (MLA fund-Nawabganj)	9.987	10000.00	766.00	03 Months
2	Bareilly	Construction work of CC road from Sunil Maurya's house to government cheap shop in village Jamalpur development block-Alampur Jafarabad assembly-Bithrichampur. (MLC-Alampur Jafarabad)	8.157	16400.00	766.00	03 Months
3	Bareilly	Construction work of CC road from culvert of village Sarai to meeting of Munna Lal Maurya in village Sarai development block-Alampur Jafarabad assembly-Bithrichampur. (MLC-Alampur Jafarabad)	9.993	20000.00	766.00	03 Months
4	Bareilly	Construction work of CC road from Ajayver's shop in ward no. 12 Balaji temple to Kalicharan's house. (MLAY-Cantt)	5.383	10800.00	766.00	03 Months
5	Bareilly	Construction work of C.C. road from main road to Pashy Narayan Apartment in Ward No.-32 Gandhi Udyan (MLAY-Cantt)	2.317	4700.00	589.00	03 Months
6	Bareilly	Construction work of earthen paving on the kutcha road going from Cantt Garun Dwar towards Harungala. (MPY.-Bareilly)	9.602	19300.00	766.00	03 Months
7	Bareilly	Construction work of CC road from Dr. V.P. Singh Yadav's house to On Pal Singh's house in lane number 23 in Golden Green Park. (MLAY-Cantt)	5.302	10700.00	766.00	03 Months
8	Bareilly	Construction work of CC road from Gol Chakra to Shri Rajesh Kumar Saxena's house in Ward-17 Golden Green Park. (MLAY-Cantt)	9.327	18700.00	766.00	03 Months
9	Bareilly	Construction work of CC road from Shri Amod's house to Shri Surend's house and Lamba's house in Ward-17 Golden Green Park. (MLAY-Cantt)	9.977	20000.00	766.00	03 Months
10	Bareilly	CC and drain work from in front of the graveyard in village Khanpur to Raza Hussain's house via in front of Ashfaq. (MLAY-Bhojipura)	8.005	16100.00	766.00	03 Months
11	Bareilly	CC road CC work of the road from Aziz Miya's dargah towards railway gate in village Nagariya Kala. (MLAY-Bithrichampur)	9.810	19700.00	766.00	03 Months

3. Date of availability of Bid document in the offices : 18.08.2025 to 20.08.2025 (11.00. AM to 4.00 pm)
4. Last Date/Time for receipt of bids: 21.08.2025 , 12.00 Noon
5. Place of receipt of bid : Office of the EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RURAL ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT, DIVISION BAREILLY
6. Date of opening of bids: 21.08.2025 at 12.30 PM
For further details please contact the employer office i.e. office of the Executive Engineer U.P.R.E.D. Second floor, Vikas Bhawan, Bareilly.

(Vinay Kumar Sharma)
Executive Engineer
Rural Engineering Department
Division Bareilly
On behalf of Governor of UP

UPID-236215 Dt. 22/07/2025
www.upidadv.gov.in

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Classifieds

PERSONAL

I, Amit Kaushik S/O Jagdish Prasad Kaushik R/O Chandra Lok Kaulani, Khurja, Khurja, Bulandshahr Uttar Pradesh-203131, have changed my son's name from Ved Kaushik to Varun Kaushik.

0050270861-1

PROPERTY

PROPERTY FOR SALE

Platinum-9 World Tower, Wakad, Pune's Tallest Commercial, Iconic Award Winning Project & India's 1st 3 Level 360° Revolving Restaurant, Dream Investment in Premium Showrooms, Retail Shops, Food Court, Smart Corporate Offices & Multipurpose Spaces 15Ft. Height, Your Legacy Starts Here- Once in a Lifetime Opportunity. Contact- 7205970999.

0090379661-1

PUBLIC NOTICE

Be it known to all that original property documents pertaining to DDA File No. : F/7(2)III/70/36/CL of property no 2 Community Centre, Basant Lok, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi 110057 belonging to the following joint owners is lost.

1. Shri Satender Prakash Lamba (alias Satender Parkash Lamba or S.P.Lamba or Satender Lamba (deceased on 18/11/2018) and survived by his legal heirs : a. Mrs Saroj Lamba (Wife), b. Mrs. Genmie Lamba (daughter) & c. Ms. Anisha Lamba (daughter);

2. Shri Jatender Prakash Lamba;

3. Shri Mohinder Kumar Lamba &

4. Shri Joginder Kumar Lamba.

Lost documents include : 1. Allotment Letter 2. Demand Letters 3. Payment receipts 4. Possession Letter 5. Site Possession Letter 6. Perpetual Lease 7. All correspondence 8. C&D Forms 9. Electricity NOC payment challan.

E-FIR vide LR No. 3036839/2025 dated 22/7/25 has been filed with P.S.Crime Branch, Delhi.

Finder of these documents may please contact the undersigned within 15 days of the publication of this notice.

Director CL, DDA, Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi. Gagan Deep Kaur, Advocate 206, C.K Dhaptary Block Supreme Court of India New Delhi 110001.

SALUTE THE SOLDIER

BORDER SECURITY FORCE
HEAD CONSTABLE TARSEM LAL
01.04.1965-28.07.1999

Director General and all Ranks of Border Security Force remember its gallant Jawan Head Constable Tarsem Lal on his Balidan Diwas. On this day, he sustained fatal injuries in an IED blast triggered by militants in Bachaibari area, Tripura and made ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.

CONSTABLE RANGANNA P U
01.06.1968-28.07.1993

Director General and all Ranks of Border Security Force remember its gallant Jawan Constable Ranganna P U on his Balidan Diwas. On this day, he sustained fatal bullet injuries while fighting with militants in area of Garol, Anantnag (J&K) and made ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.

LANCE/NAIK RANJEET KUMAR KIRTANIYA
01.01.1961-28.07.2001

Director General and all Ranks of Border Security Force remember its gallant Jawan Lance/Naik Ranjeet Kumar Kirtaniya on his Balidan Diwas. On this day, he sustained fatal bullet injuries while fighting with militants in area of Burihalan (J&K) and made ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.

संचालनालय खेल और युवा कल्याण, मध्यप्रदेश
टी.टी. नगर स्टेडियम, भोपाल
ई-निविदा सूचना

संचालनालय खेल और युवा कल्याण, मध्यप्रदेश, द्वारा 'म.प्र. राज्य वाटर स्पोर्ट्स केन्द्र की सैलिंग, रोइंग, क्याकिंग केनोईंग बोट्स के वार्षिक संधारण एवं सामग्री/उपकरण स्पलाई आदि कार्य हेतु' निर्माता अथवा उनके अधिकृत प्रतिनिधि से ई-निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है। निविदा प्रपत्र व निविदा की विस्तृत शर्तें www.mptenders.gov.in पर उपलब्ध हैं। ई-निविदा प्रकाशन उपरांत निविदा में कोई संशोधन व परिवर्तन किया जाता है तो वह मात्र उपरोक्त उल्लेखित ई-टेंडर पोर्टल पर ही उपलब्ध रहेगा।

म.प्र. माध्यम/121285/2025

संचालक

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr.P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Prem, S/o: Durga Prasad, R/o: H.No. 9660, Gali No-11, Multani Dhanda, Paharganj, Delhi. Has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No.: 392/2019, U/s: 379 IPC, P.S. Raja Garden Metro, Delhi, and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said Prem cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said Prem has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Prem of P.S. Raja Garden Metro, Delhi is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before 29.08.2025.

By Order
Ms. Aakanksha
Ld. JMFC-05, (West), Room No. 336 A, Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi

DP/9866/METRO/2025

15th Anniversary
CANTONMENT BOARD, MATHURA

INVITATION OF E-TENDERS (DUAL BID SYSTEM)

Electronic Bids are invited by Cantonment Board, Mathura for the under mentioned works:

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost	Earnest Money 2%	Tender Form Fee
1	Repair / renovation of Cantt. Fund Buildings for the financial year 2025-26.	₹ 40.00 Lakh	80,000	1500/-
2	Repair / renovation / Provision of Rain Water Harvesting in Cantt. Fund Buildings for the financial year 2025-26.	₹ 10.00 Lakh	20,000	1500/-

The interested contractors / firms shall upload all the documents related to above works on the website <https://defproc.gov.in/> w.e.f. starting date 28.07.2025 at 1600 hrs to ending date 18.08.2025 upto 1700 hrs. The terms & conditions for the above mentioned works may look up the ibid website.

Chief Executive Officer
Cantonment Board, Mathura
(Divya R, I.D.E.S.)

NO. CBM/e-Tender/2025-26/330
Dated: 24 July, 2025

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr.P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Mohd. Shahid, S/o: Habib Qureshi, R/o: Village Malagrah, Police Station Agota, Distt. Bulandshahr, U.P has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in CT Case No. 14401/2016, State vs Salman , Police Station Ghazipur, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest there upon issued that the said accused Mohd. Shahid cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused Mohd. Shahid has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby by made that the said accused Mohd. Shahid of Police Station Ghazipur, Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before 27.08.2025.

By Order
Sh. Sachin,
JMFC-03, Room No. 16
Karkardooma Courts, Delhi

DP/9951/ED/2025

PUBLIC NOTICE

Be it known to all concerned that my client, namely Anju Bala W/o Shri Mahesh Kumar, R/o Kharsa No.13/11, Gali No.15, Nathu Pura, Nathu Colony, Buxari, North Delhi, Delhi-110084. Do hereby Disown / Disinherit her son namely Abhishek having Aadhaar No. 6844-6832-6263. For his Unacceptable/Unapt/Immoral behaviour from all their Immoveable and Moveable Properties. If any body deal with my son in any manner, Then He/she will be responsible for His/her act, Civil as well as criminal.

Rajiv Kumar (Advocate)
Mobile :9212036442

Extremely pleased with the batting effort the past couple of days. We were put under a lot of pressure, but the way we responded, especially after losing those two early wickets... never easy. Very, very brave effort

SHUBMAN GILL, INDIA TEST CAPTAIN

PLUCK OF THE DRAW

India live to fight another Test as Gill, Washington and Jadeja score gritty centuries on Day 5 at Old Trafford to deny England a series win



EXPRESS IN ENGLAND

SANDEEP DWIVEDI
MANCHESTER, JULY 27

KL RAHUL and Shubman Gill lie on white beach towels on the Old Trafford turf, stretching their limbs for what they expect to be a long day ahead. As if they needed reminding, an early bird Indian fan from the empty stands lets out a shout that is unsolicited advice – “Poore din khehna hai” (Have to play the whole day).”

They don’t even turn back, but move on to face a few throw-downs from the trainers. Soon they are at the crease to play what is being called the crucial couple of hours that would decide the Test and the series. This first session was to determine the outcome of the match and series.

India would lose Rahul in the first half hour of the first session and Gill in the last before lunch. But the fight they showed inspired Washington Sundar (101 not out) and Ravindra Jadeja (107 not out) as India fought out a memorable draw to keep the series alive going into the final Test at The Oval. There were plots, sub-plots, tactics, counter-tactics in the opening session that set up another close final session finish.

11 AM: INDIA — 174/2 IN 63 OVERS, TRAILING BY 137 RUNS

The talk about Ben Stokes nursing a hamstring injury and not being able to bowl on the final day was either a rumour or the England skipper pulling a Novak Djokovic on the world. Stokes didn’t bowl on Saturday but on the fifth morning was a different beast. After left-arm spinner Liam Dawson bowled an over, he was taking off his woollens and cap and would bowl the most challenging over of the innings. This wasn’t going to be an easy morning.

Stokes is sticking to the plain vanilla fifth-day bowling plan – aim for the stumps and leave it to the wear and tear of the pitch to change the trajectory of the ball. He is bowling from the old pavilion end with a few patches of dirty rough outside the right-hander’s off-stump.

Gill pokes at one ball and misses. He goes for a walk towards square-leg for atonement. Soon, he has to bring his bat hastily down as a Stokes ball keeps terribly low. Another walk to square-leg to take his mind off this wicked surface. He tries to hit straight but can’t reach the boundary line. Finally, it is a Stokes ball on the legs that gets Gill, and India, the day’s first four.

At the other end, Rahul is facing Dawson – the busy-looking spinner who computers say is getting much more drift and turn than he did on Saturday. Stokes has surrounded Rahul with fielders, there is pressure on him. The opener sweeps and misses, the ball passes close to the bat. England think he is caught behind, DRS shows Rahul isn’t. No reviews left for England, they have exhausted their quota.

After bowling his menacing overs, Stokes keeps feeling his shoulder blade. He seems to be in trouble but only when he is not bowling. With an alleged dodgy shoulder and suspected hamstring strain, the England captain’s dependence on the pitch to get wickets works. Rahul is beaten by a nip-backer that stays low. He starts walking even before the umpire raises his finger. He and Gill were together for close to 70 overs, they were supposed to take India home. Indians prayed they would stay on the pitch all day. The partnership was broken in the first half an hour.

11.30 AM: INDIA — 188/3, 71 OVERS, TRAILING BY 123 RUNS



Washington Sundar (L) and Ravindra Jadeja saw off England’s bowling attack patiently on Day 5 and were rewarded with tons before calling it a draw. PTI



SCORECARD	
ENGLAND vs INDIA	
OLD TRAFFORD	
Toss: England, chose to bowl	
INDIA (1st innings)	358
ENGLAND (1st innings)	669
INDIA 2nd innings (O/N)	174/2
KL Rahul lbw b Stokes	90 (230b, 8x4)
S Gill (c) c Smith b Archer	103 (238b, 12x4)
W Sundar not out	101 (206b, 9x4, 1X6)
R Jadeja (c) not out	107 (185b, 13x4, 1X6)
Extras (b14, nb 6, w2, lb2)	24
Total (143 overs)	425/4
FoW: 1-0 (Yashasvi Jaiswal, 0.4 ov), 2-0 (Sai Sudharsan, 0.5 ov), 3-188 (KL Rahul, 70.2 ov), 4-222 (Shubman Gill, 87.4 ov)	
Bowling: Chris Woakes 23-4-67-2, Jofra Archer 23-3-78-1, Brydon Carse 17-3-44-0, Liam Dawson 47-11-95-0, Joe Root 19-2-68-0, Ben Stokes 11-2-33-1, Harry Brook 3-0-24-0	

from that part of the pitch is more predictable. It works for a while but rotating strike comes with its own set of problems. Gill refuses a single, there is almost a mix-up between the two.

Challenge No.2 awaits India, the new ball is due. At 12.20, Chris Woakes is ready to have another go with the shining cherry. Ironically, Gill, the No.4, for the second time in this innings, is facing Woakes’s first over. Washington almost edges the third ball to slip, just like Jaiswal had done. The Indian section of the crowd cheers wildly as Gill hits Archer’s first ball for four. He’s in his 90s. Soon Old Trafford stands, the Indian captain raises his bat to reach his 100, kisses his bat and looks to the sky. The celebration is short, there’s a lot to do.

12.30 PM: INDIA — 206/3 IN 83 OVERS, TRAILING BY 105

Archer has settled now, is hitting the right spots and getting swing too. He is constantly testing Gill with in-swingers. Gill is playing this smartly, tracing the ball, moving with it and presenting a dead bat. There is chat among experts that the Dukes ball starts talking after a few overs. Washington is growing confident, he is knocking the ball around. He scores three straight 3s, the scoreboard is ticking.

And when it was thought India was recovering and a classic Test was unfolding, Gill has a misjudgement. Expecting that Archer would keep bringing the ball into him, he is foxed by a ball that went straight. He followed the ball, edged it and was caught behind. Across Old Trafford, hope died. “It is just a matter of time,” Ben Duckett could be heard saying from the stump mike. It sounded true till Jadeja and Washington had their say.

1 PM (LUNCH): INDIA — 223/4 IN 89 OVERS, TRAILING BY 68

Gill supports decision to deny Stokes’s first offer of draw



INDIA CAPTAIN Shubman Gill on Sunday said that Ravindra Jadeja and Washington Sundar were well within their rights to continue playing even after Ben Stokes offered to shake hands and call off the match before the start of the designated final hour.

India had fought tooth and nail to ensure that England were not going to win the series going into the final Test, Jadeja and Washington were batting on 89 and 80 respectively when the England skipper offered to end the game, but the Indians chose to continue batting. Gill said it was the two batsmen out there who took the call.

“Definitely, it was up to the boys, but we thought they batted brilliantly, you know, and both of them were on the 90s (actually 80s). So we thought they deserved a century there,” the captain said after the game.

There was a line heard on the stump mic: “Jaddu, do you want to get a Test 100 against (Harry) Brook & (Ben) Duckett?” which was attributed to Stokes later on in the post-match show by JioHotstar. Jadeja is then quoted as asking: “What do you want me to do, just walk off?” Zak Crawley then chips in saying, “You can, just shake your hand.”

Later, India head coach Gautam Gambhir said that there was nothing wrong in what his two players did.

“If someone was batting on 99 and the other on 90, don’t you think they deserve their centuries? Would England have not done that?,” he told the press conference. Stokes said he didn’t want to risk injuries to his bowlers: “All the hard work was done by India, they both (Washy and Jadeja) played incredibly well, and it got to that point where there was only one result possible. There was no chance I was going to risk any of my fast bowlers through injuries with one more game to go. Dawsy’s (Liam Dawson) bowled so many overs, his body started to cramp up in the legs.”

1 Shubman Gill became the first Test captain to record four centuries in an away series. Don Bradman and Sunil Gavaskar are the only other captains to record four tons in a series.

6/13 Of the 127 Tests in history where teams batting second have earned a 300+ innings lead, only 13 matches have ended in a draw. India have converted 6 of those matches into draws after conceding 300-plus leads batting first.

417 KL Rahul and Shubman Gill faced 417 deliveries during their 3rd-wicket stand, the longest recorded partnership by an Indian pair for any wicket in England. —LALITH KALIDAS

Washington’s unconquered Manchester ton of monk-like composure

SANDIP G
JULY 27

THE CELEBRATIONS were understated for someone who completed his first Test hundred; and for someone who rarely gets the chance to reach the landmark. A shimmy for a single, short sprint to mid-on, a calm unfastening of the helmet and a wave of the bat with a face as cold as stone. There was no roar, no smile or even a grin of relief on Washington Sundar’s face. It was an extension of his batting as well a reflection of his personality, monkishly imperturbable, not prone to excessive outpouring of emotions, in both good and bad times.

The only streak of over-excitement in his career was verbal faux pas on the fourth evening of the Lord’s Test when he averred that India would wrap up the chase of 193 before first session on the final. It gloriously backfired, to almost the hue of Tim Paine’s “See you in Gabba taunt”. But he was quickly over it and played a defining role in the game. He was India’s sharpest bowler in the game, and he was the face of India’s defiance on the

fifth day. Then he is not a stranger to acts of tenacity. Take some of India’s most memorable Test matches in the last four years, he had been there, in the eye of a storm, in the heat and heart of the battle. In Brisbane first innings, on debut, he gritted 62 off 144 balls, laying the foundations of his country’s most memorable hour this decade. There are several other priceless but forgotten knocks — 85 not out on a Chennai turner, 96 not out in Motera, the 42 in Birmingham in the first innings. Even the 22 off 29 cameo in Brisbane had its own value.

But unless the scorecards are forked out, footages rewatched the contributions don’t strike, or the strokes he

essayed flash on the mind’s eye. Partly, it is down to his demeanour, self-effacing to a fault. He is that boy next door cricketer you bump so frequently in the maidans and streets. The boy who does everything, bat, bowl and field, without making a fuss about it, neither making it look ridiculously simple nor elaborately laborious. He is the name you pause in a scorecard, or ponder and forget.

Unless he is in the middle of winning or saving a game, which he often finds himself



Washington Sundar played a 206-ball knock with nine fours and a six on Sunday. PTI

in a Test match. It’s something of an occupational hazard when batting down the order. In 22 innings, the highest he had ever batted is at No.5 — in this very innings, necessitated by Rishabh Pant’s injury. The most familiar

number has been eight (11), closely followed by seven. He has once batted at six and thrice at nine.

But No 9 or 5, he remained just the same, as much as unexcited as unfazed. The enor-

mity of the moment did not crush him. He marked his guard with a faint smile that masked whatever nerves that boiled inside his head. He bunted a pair of runs straight away and then offered a blunt broad bat for the next half an hour. He is one of the few Indian batsmen in recent times who has shown the fading art of batting time. He is rarely edgy or jumpy, always behind the ball, sparsely attempting a flashy stroke, even though he first struck acclaim as a T20 gun for hire. Nothing is careless, impetuous or wasted. He has a full array of strokes, but he knows perfectly when, where and how to use them.

He judges, and seizes the moments. On Sunday, it came when Ben Stokes started bar-raaging short balls around the 110th over. By then he had faced close to a hundred balls and just to unsettle Stokes and prompt him to a different plan of attack, he got under one nailed a fierce pull over deep square leg for a six. Memories would have rolled back to 2021, when he clumped Pat Cummins for a similar six in the Gabba chase. Like when tall batsmen pull, there was an awkward elegance about it. The next ball was nailed

through the same area to defang Stokes. The over before, the England captain had produced a spiteful bouncer at Ravindra Jadeja, who somehow scrambled to safety. A decisive but mini battle was thus won. Soon after, India wiped England’s lead and the confidence swelled that they could escape the game without a humiliation.

He was largely in control, and when he was not, he ensured that the good balls didn’t haunt him. Archer made a ball leap into the splicex of his bat in the 92nd over. Liam Dawson made one spit from the rough. England sniffed a moment when they could burst through the resistance of India’s last recognised pair. He then thick-edged Dawson after misreading the drift, he wafted thin air when Archer snapped a ball past his stab. He survived the storm, and lived to tell the tale.

The knock could be the one that would finally make the audience begin appreciating the traits that make him a valuable member of the eleven. He is a deluxe cricketer most teams would covet. A proper Test batsman and off-spinner, the fight and grit masked beneath his boy-next-door charms.

In the Endgame now

While first game was a tale of missed chances for Divya, second leg saw a different approach from Humpy, who opted for a non-risky opening with white

MAYANK
NEW DELHI, JULY 27

IF THE FIDE Women's World Cup 2025 was n't already a physically exhausting and mentally draining tournament, it became all the more so on Sunday after Divya Deshmukh and Koneru Humpy took their all-Indian final clash into an extra day in Batumi, Georgia. The second classical game of their final ended in a draw, pushing the decider to a tiebreak on Monday.

While the first leg was a tale of missed opportunities for Divya, the second leg saw a different approach from Humpy, who opted for a non-risky opening with White. She began with knight to f3 from the right flank, choosing a well-known English opening, sticking to her strength, which is positional chess, in the hope of grinding Divya down later in the game.

The players quickly exchanged all minor pieces, except for Humpy's dark-squared bishop, which she retained in exchange for Divya's knight, with queens still on the board for counterplay. GM Pravin Thipsay analysed Humpy's opening choice: "It was expected that Humpy would try to press for an advantage, and that's what happened. She began with the English opening but eventually transposed into the regular Queen's Gambit Declined, the Semitarash variation," Thipsay told *The Indian Express*.

Explaining Humpy's middle-game strategy, Thipsay added: "I expected her to play for a better pawn structure, as she excels at exploiting weaknesses. But on move 9, she had a choice between a bishop-over-knight advantage or a superior pawn structure and she opted for the former. In my opinion, a pawn structure advantage would have suited her better."

By the 22nd move, the players entered an endgame with equal pawns, though Humpy sought an edge with her active bishop, placing it on long diagonals. She even sacrificed a central pawn to keep the position sharp and pressure Divya into an error.

"Divya exchanged one of Humpy's knights



Koneru Humpy (R) and Divya Deshmukh played out another draw in the World Cup final on Sunday. It will now be decided in a tiebreak. Anna Shtourman/FIDE

for a bishop on move 9, and on the 12th move, she gave up her second bishop for a knight, leading to a complex but roughly equal position in a symmetrical pawn structure," said Thipsay. "Double bishops are generally better than double knights, but this was a semi-open position with central pawns. I've played this structure many times, and the advantage isn't significant. Divya correctly exchanged rooks, and by the 20th move, a draw seemed inevitable. But Humpy took bold decisions. She sacrificed a pawn on move 23, putting Divya in a tricky spot. Divya missed the best 24th move, which would have forced a draw. After that, Humpy had chances, especially on move 28, where she could have regained the pawn with some advantage."

However, Humpy allowed Divya's position to improve before regaining her pawn, by which point she also forced Divya to end the game by perpetual checks. In the all-Chinese battle for third place, Tan Zhongyi prevailed over top seed Lei Tingjie, clinching her spot in the 2026 Candidates Tournament.

What to expect in tiebreaks

Though both players are drained after nearly a month of relentless chess, one can

still expect a high-octane tiebreak clash, with neither player likely to back down until the very end. Humpy holds an edge in shorter time controls as a two-time and reigning World Rapid Champion. However, the odds aren't entirely skewed as Divya has never lost to her in Rapid chess. In their two recorded rapid encounters, Divya has one win and one draw. Things will change though, if the tiebreak heads to the Blitz round, the gulf between the two players widens. Humpy, the 2022 World Blitz Championship runner-up, has dominated Divya in this format, winning four of their five blitz games.

Five-time World Champion Viswanathan Anand analysed their strengths ahead of the tiebreak. He said, "On paper, Humpy has better results, but Divya has more momentum. Humpy's wins have been shakier, but since the 2024 Olympiad (where Humpy didn't play) she's won the Women's World Rapid Championship, the Pune Grand Prix, and performed strongly at Norway Chess. Divya, though, must be relieved this tournament is finally here. Everyone's been waiting for her breakthrough, and both seem pleased with how things are unfolding," Anand said on ChessBase India YouTube stream.

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