

# Hindustan Times

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## US trade talks to stick to terms agreed earlier

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**NEW DELHI:** India and the United States are intensely engaged to conclude a mutually beneficial early trade deal by the end of this month, "strictly" within the bilaterally agreed framework of March 29, irrespective of the ongoing political rhetoric and independent of their strategic relationships with other countries, people in the know said on Sunday.

It may be part of the negotiations that India and the US may purchase and sell more energy as an outcome of the deal. But the agreed framework does not proscribe either nation from purchasing oil and gas from any third country of its choice, they said, requesting anonymity.

The two countries finalised the detailed terms of reference (ToR) to enter into negotiations of the bilateral trade agreement

continued on →7

→INDIA, U.S., EYE AFRICAN RARE EARTHS, P10

### Following the framework

#### Dynamics of energy trade

Energy security is one of India's key concerns. The trade deal may include increased energy trade between India and the United States. But the bilaterally agreed framework does not proscribe either nation from purchasing oil and gas from any third country of its choice.



Donald Trump's tariff diktat

Last week, US prez Donald Trump announced a 25% tariff on India and unspecified penalties for buying Russian oil. However, India's sourcing from Russia is unlikely to stop.

#### Negotiation road map

The two countries finalised the detailed terms of reference (ToR) to enter into negotiations of the bilateral trade agreement (BTA) on March 29 during their first physical round of talks in New Delhi. Later, on April 22, US Vice President JD Vance officially announced the finalisation of the ToR for bilateral "trade negotiations" during his India visit, and called it "a vital step toward a final deal" between the two sides.



### INDIA FINANCING RUSSIA'S WAR IN UKRAINE, SAYS TRUMP'S AIDE

Reuters

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**WASHINGTON:** A top aide to President Donald Trump on Sunday accused India of effectively financing Russia's war in Ukraine by purchasing oil from Moscow, after the US leader escalated pressure on New Delhi to stop buying Russian oil. "What he (Trump) said very clearly is that it is not acceptable for India to continue financing this war by purchasing the oil from Russia," said Stephen Miller, deputy chief of staff at the White House on Fox News' "Sunday Morning Futures." "People will be shocked to learn that India is basically tied with China in purchasing Russian oil," Miller said. →P9

→STOPPED WAR, TRUMP CLAIMS AGAIN, P9

### Oval test match tantalisingly poised



Prasidh Krishna celebrates after dismissing Joe Root on Day 4 of the fifth test at the Oval on Sunday. The hosts were 339-6, still 35 runs behind the target, with two new batsmen at the crease and all three results still possible when play was abandoned for the day due to rain. →P16 AFP

#### { SCHOOL FEE BILL TO BE TABLED }

## Delhi assembly session begins today

Paras Singh

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**NEW DELHI:** The Delhi government is likely to table the Delhi school fee regulation bill and two CAG audit reports of the works taken up by the previous Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government in the five-day Monsoon session

of the Delhi assembly slated to begin on Monday.

The session is set to be stormy as the opposition AAP will likely corner the government on the school fee bill, which it claims will lead to "windfall gains for private schools". The Congress is also likely to protest outside the assembly on the issue.

The session will mark multiple firsts: Delhi assembly's first fully digital session and the assembly complex being run entirely on solar power with Union law minister Arjun Ram Meghwal on Sunday kicking off the assembly's paperless initiative and inaugurating a solar power project on the House premises. →P3

### B'DESH TRIBUNAL COMMENCES TRIAL AGAINST HASINA

**DHAKA:** Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal on Sunday began the trial of deposed PM Sheikh Hasina in absentia over crimes against humanity related to the violent suppression of the 2024 student-led protests, with interim government-appointed chief prosecutor, Tajul Islam, describing Hasina as the "nucleus of all crimes", calling for the maximum penalty. The first witness in on of the cases, a man shot in the face during the protests, also testified on Sunday. →P13

### POLICE STATION BLIGHTED BY WATERLOGGING

Jignasa Sinha

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**NEW DELHI:** For the past seven months, police personnel of the Khajuri Khas police station have taken to a strange ritual: taking off their shoes, holding them in their hands, stepping on a cement slab and scaling a 10-15-feet-high wall — all to avoid knee-deep waterlogging of the Khajuri Thana Road. →P4

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### ARMY OFFICER ASSAULTS AIRLINE STAFF AT SRINAGAR AIRPORT, CASE FILED

Ashiq Hussain

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**SRINAGAR:** The Jammu & Kashmir Police has registered a case against a senior army officer for allegedly assaulting four employees of SpiceJet airline at Srinagar airport following a disagreement over payment of extra baggage charges on July 26, officers said on Sunday. In a detailed statement, SpiceJet said the passenger was carrying two pieces of cabin baggage weighing a total of 16kg, against the permitted limit of 7kg.

"When...asked to pay the charges, the passenger refused and forcefully entered the aerobridge without completing the boarding process," it said, adding that one of the employees suffered a spinal fracture from the alleged assault. Separately, the officer filed a counter-complaint alleging assault, following which police registered an FIR against the airline staffers. →P9

## 'Not issued officially': EC asks Tejashwi to hand over voter ID

Anirban Guha Roy and Dheer Chawla

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**PATNA/NEW DELHI:** The Election Commission on Sunday asked RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav to "hand over for investigation" a voter ID card that he claimed to be in possession, saying it was "not issued officially". The development came a day after Yadav claimed that his voter ID was not available in the new draft electoral roll.

"Our preliminary investigation suggests that the EPIC number you mentioned at the press conference on August 2 was not issued officially. You are therefore requested to hand over the EPIC card in original for detailed investigation," the letter to Yadav said. →P8

### K'taka CEO denies receiving Congress leader's complaint

**BENGALURU:** Ahead of the Congress's planned protest on August 5 over alleged manipulation of electoral rolls in Bengaluru's Mahadevapura constituency, former minister H Nagesh has written to the state chief electoral officer seeking copy of a complaint he claims was submitted in April 2023, accusing forged entries in voters' list. However, the CEO's office, in a letter, has denied receiving any such complaint from Nagesh in 2023. →P8

### 3 ARRESTED FOR POISONING SCHOOL WATER TO OUST MUSLIM PRINCIPAL

Hirekop Rajan Samuel

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**BELAGAVI:** Three people, including the leader of a right-wing group, were arrested for allegedly poisoning drinking water in the tank of a government school in Belagavi district of Karnataka in a bid to oust the school's Muslim headmaster, officials said. →P11

### 4 MISSING PEOPLE OF INDIAN ORIGIN FOUND DEAD IN U.S.

**NEW YORK:** Four members of a family of Indian-origin, who were reported missing since Tuesday, died in a car crash on Saturday, Marshal County Sheriff Mike Dougherty said. The victims were travelling to West Virginia from Pittsburgh. →P10

## 11 killed in UP as their vehicle skids off road, falls into canal

HT Correspondent

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**LUCKNOW:** Eleven people, including nine of a family, were killed and four others injured when a four-wheeler they were travelling in lost control and plunged into the Saryu canal in Gonda district of Uttar Pradesh on Sunday morning, senior police officers aware of the matter said.

According to Gonda superintendent of police (SP) Vineet Jaiswal, there were 15 people in the vehicle, a Mahindra Bolero, at the time of the incident, who were on their way from Siha-gawan to offer prayers at Pirthvinath temple in Ayodhya district. SP Jaiswal said the accident occurred near Rehra village under Itiyathok police station on the Seehgaon-Khara-gopur road, after the vehicle had travelled 25km, at 10am.



The accident happened around 10am near the Saryu canal in Gonda district of Uttar Pradesh on Sunday. P11

"Locals informed the police. Four people, including the driver and three children, have been rescued and rushed to a nearby hospital," the officer said. Eyewitnesses reported that the roads were slippery due to

rain, and as the vehicle neared the canal, the driver applied brakes but lost control, causing the vehicle to veer off the road and plunge into the canal. The canal is fairly deep and had

continued on →7

### DATA: NUMBER OF SCHOOL-GOING CHILDREN ON DECLINE IN INDIA

Abhishek Jha

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**NEW DELHI:** In June, the Uttar Pradesh government decided to merge some government schools in the state. The move triggered criticism from the opposition and also challenges intuitive reasoning. Without prejudice to Uttar Pradesh's decision of closing schools — government schools are mostly understaffed and under-resourced in India and children might have to travel longer distances to attend school — data is clear on at least one aspect of the debate: the number of school-going children might have already started falling in India.

State-wise age-group projections by the National Commission on Population suggest that the size of the 5-14 age group will decline between 2011 and 2026 in 19 of the 21 big states. →P2



NUMBER THEORY

Number of school-going kids dropping in country

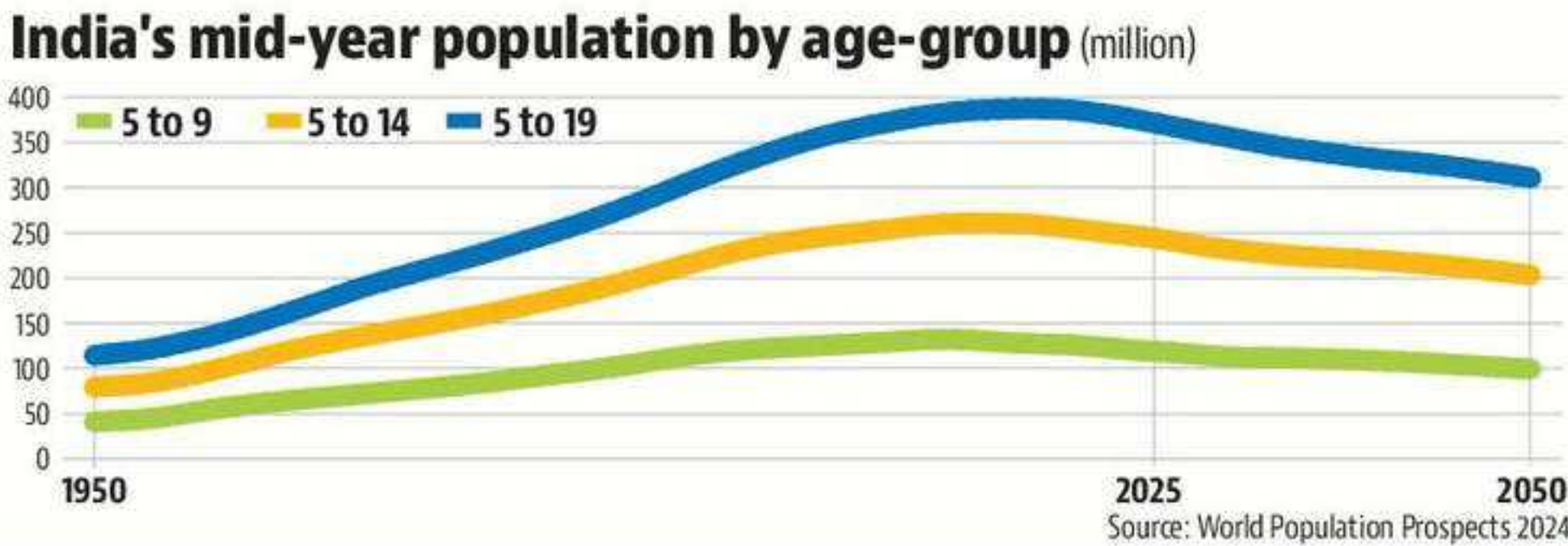
By Abhishek Jha

In June, Uttar Pradesh decided to merge some government schools in the state. The move triggered criticism from the Opposition and also challenged intuitive reasoning. UP is the most populous state in India and its population is still rising, given the fact that its total fertility rate (TFR) is still more than the replacement level of 2.1 and the second highest in the country after Bihar's. TFR is the average number of children a woman is expected to have and when it goes below 2.1 it entails a fall in population levels. Without prejudice to UP's decision of closing schools – government schools are mostly understaffed and under-resourced and children might have to travel longer distances to attend school – data is clear on at least one aspect of the debate: the number of school-going children might have already started falling in India.



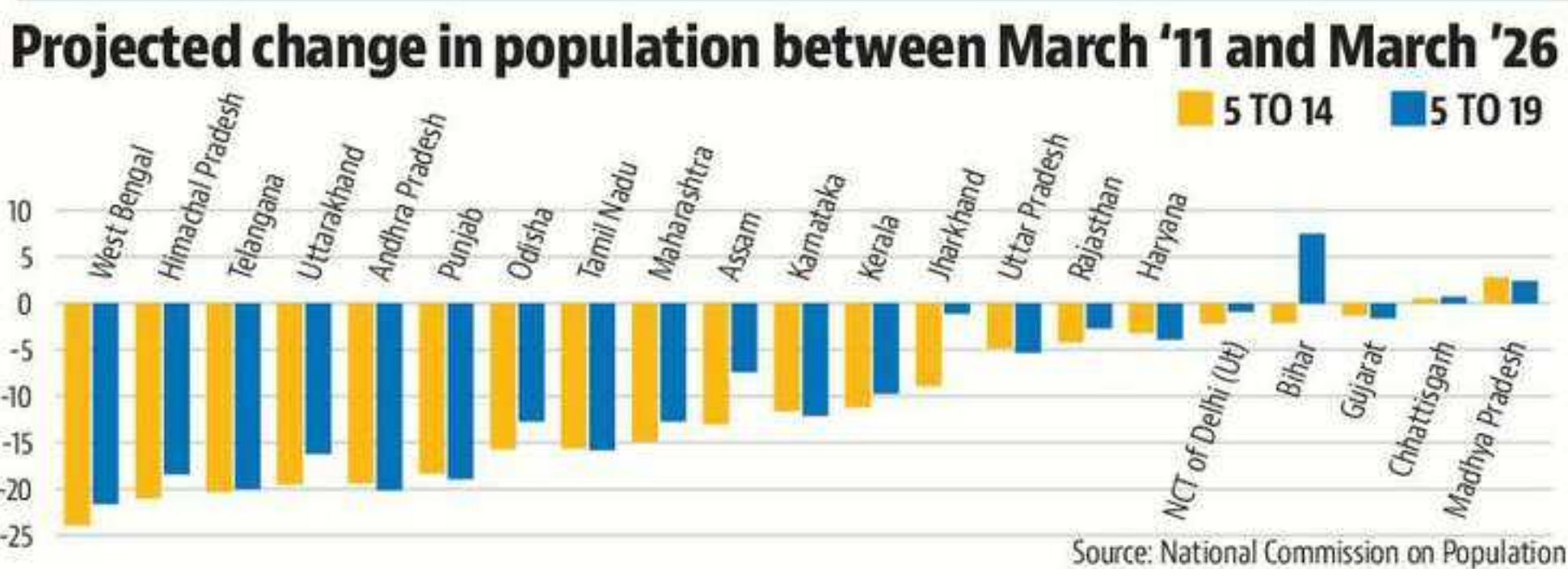
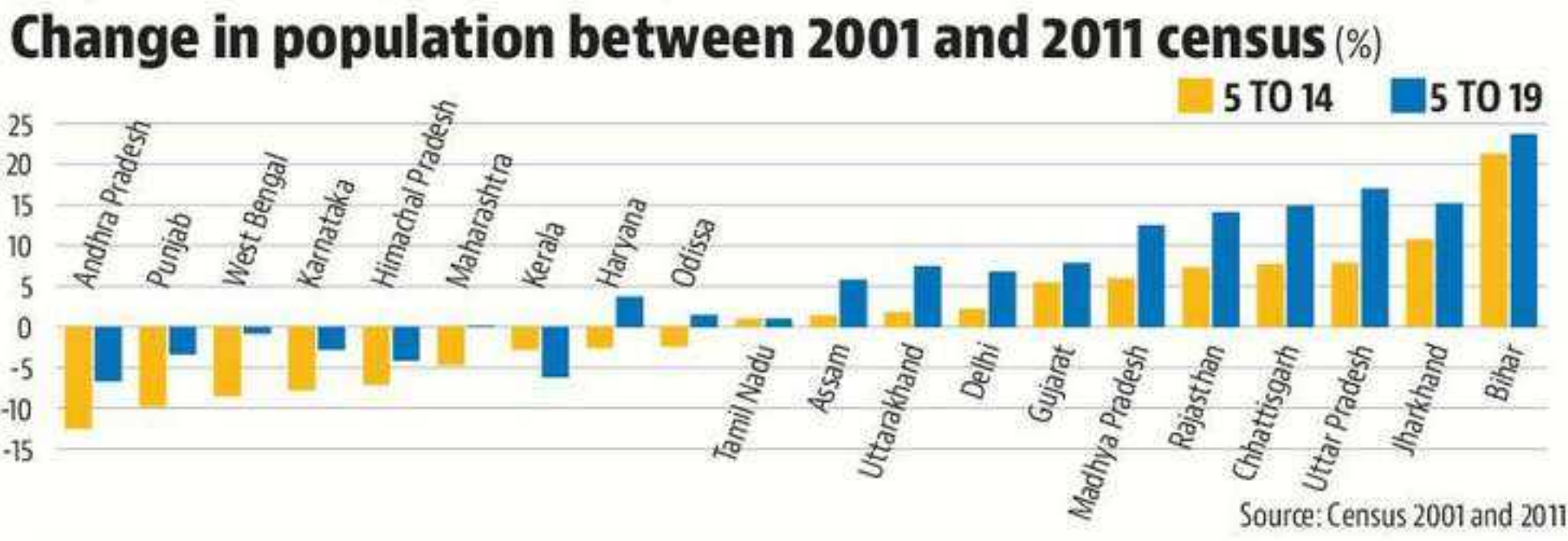
India's population of children is estimated to have peaked in the 2010s

According to population estimates released by the UN in 2024, India's total population and working age population (taken as the 20-64 age group by the UN) is expected to increase up to 2061 and 2049. Clearly, India is in no immediate danger of a declining pool of workers. However, its population of children is believed to have started declining in the 2010s. According to UN's estimates, the 5-14 age group (the Right to Education Act provides for free education for those in the 6-14 age group) started declining in 2012. The lower half of that broad group – those in the 5-9 age group – started declining in 2010. To be sure, people can be enrolled in schools even beyond the age of 14 years. However, even the 5-19 age group started declining in 2016. A definite picture of this decline will emerge only when the census is conducted in 2026. There was no decline seen in these age groups between the census conducted in 2001 and 2011. This is expected because the projected annual decline was very small and recent in 2011 for populations to fall below the level seen in 2001.



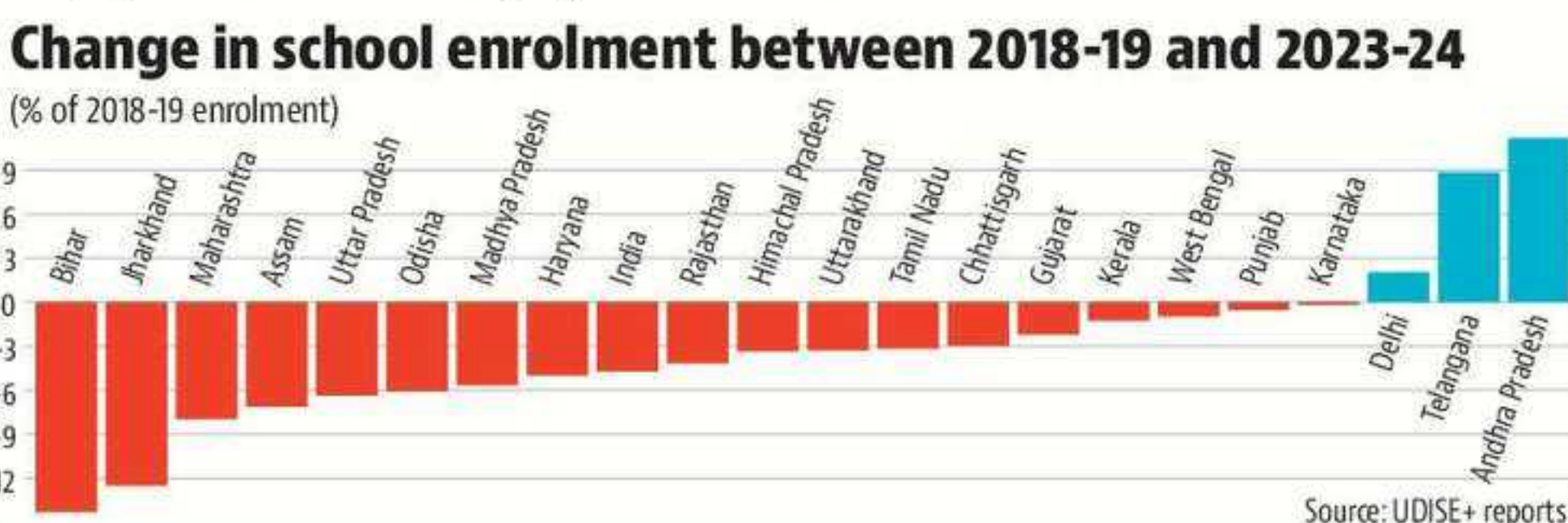
Population of children declined in nearly half the big states even in the 2011 census

While there was no decline at the national level in the 5-14 age group between the last two census years, nine of twenty big states recorded a decline. Even in the 5-19 age group, six states recorded a decline. To be sure, seven of the nine states that recorded a decline in the 5-14 age group had a total fertility rate under two in 2011, which means that even their broader population was already on the way to a decline. However, the population of some age groups can decrease even if the overall population is increasing. For example, the 0-4 age group declined in Uttar Pradesh between the 2001 and 2011 census although the total population didn't. State-wise age-group projections by the National Commission on Population suggest that the size of the 5-14 age group will decline between 2011 and 2026 in 19 of the 21 big states (Telangana counted as separate from Andhra Pradesh here). Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh are the only two states where the population of this age group is expected to increase. The 5-19 age group is also expected to shrink in all states except Bihar, Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh.



School enrolment decreased in the past five years across most states

As the discussion above suggests, it is not surprising that there are schools with low enrolment in Uttar Pradesh. The Unified District Information System (UDISE) data – it is the source of all school education statistics of the education ministry – also shows that school enrolment is falling in most states. 18 of 21 big states recorded a decline in school enrolment between 2018-19 and 2023-24, which is the period of the improved version of UDISE called UDISE+. While most of this change is because of pre-primary and primary levels, some states including Chhattisgarh and Punjab recorded a decline in middle or secondary and higher secondary level. UDISE+ data also shows that school enrolment may not always be correlated with the population of children. The only places where enrolment increased in this period were Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Delhi, where the population of children is projected to decrease.



While closing schools should not be a decision based on just the number of students, India will do well to recognise that the way to better exploiting its demographic dividend might have entered a phase of qualitative rather than quantitative expansion.

{ WORLD } TRIGGERS CONDEMNATION

Israel minister prays at sensitive holy site



A far-right Israeli minister visited and prayed at Jerusalem's most sensitive holy site on Sunday, triggering regional condemnation and fears that the provocative move could further escalate tensions. The visit came as hospitals in Gaza said 27 more Palestinians seeking food aid were killed by Israeli fire. Itamar Ben-Gvir's visit to the hillside compound threatened to set back efforts by international mediators to halt Israel's nearly two-year military offensive in Gaza.

{ MY INDIA } WITHIN HOURS OF EACH OTHER

PM, Shah meet President at Rashtrapati Bhavan



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday called on President Droupadi Murmu separately within hours at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. The meetings came against the backdrop of the logjam in Parliament over the Opposition's demand for a discussion on the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise in Bihar ahead of assembly elections in the state.

{ MY INDIA } INDIAN ENVOY TO U.S.

Gabbard, Kwatra discuss mutual ties



Indian ambassador Vinay Mohan Kwatra on Sunday met with US Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard and held an "engaging conversation" on various issues of mutual interest. "Pleasure to meet DNI Tulsi Gabbard and her husband, Abraham Williams; we had an engaging conversation on various issues of mutual interest," Kwatra said in a post on X. On Saturday, New Delhi opened eight more Indian Consular Application Centres in the US.

Dormant volcano erupts after 600 years in Russia



The Krashennikov Volcano in Kamchatka, Russia, erupted overnight for the first time in 600 years, Russia's RIA state news agency said on Sunday. An ash plume rising up to 6,000 metres has been recorded following the eruption. The volcano itself stands at 1,856 metres. The eruption has been assigned an "orange" aviation hazard code, Russia's emergency ministry said, meaning flights in the area may be disrupted.

Outlining the Assam connection in Nasa-SpaceX's latest space voyage

S Mitra Kalita

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Nearly three decades ago, a friend excitedly called to tell me our fellow Assamese American, Jhuma, had gotten engaged...to an astronaut.

"Is he Assamese?" I asked. "How many Assamese astronauts do you know?"

Good point. None. Like many of us second-generation Assamese born and raised on US shores, hers would be a blended marriage and, eventually, family.

On Friday, August 1, at 11:43am, the husband of Renita Saikia, my lifelong friend I've only ever called Jhuma, soared into space as a member of Nasa's Crew-11, on a six-to-eight-month mission. This week, I joined a few dozen of their family and friends at the Kennedy Space Center to wish Mike Fincke well. We began with a "wave across" staged in a parking lot, a rope separating the four quarantined astronauts from loved ones, allowing us to say goodbye and



Since the real Mike Fincke was in quarantine, a cardboard cutout was adorned with a gamosa at every chance.

PICTURE COURTESY: S MITRA KALITA

and Renita straddle and inherit, and the one I happen to share.

The Assamese infusion

"Do you know how to make that noise?" my friend Seebany Datta-Barua, another Assamese American at the launch, asked at the wave across.

She was talking about uruli, the Assamese tradition of making a high-pitched sound by moving the tongue back and forth. We do this at weddings, festivals, moments of joy—and departures.

"I don't, but I can try," I responded. And so we did.

Mike instantly responded by smiling in recognition, bowing his head and clapping his hands into a namaskar.

My husband and I, Seebany, and her daughter also had very American signs spelling out M-I-K-E, but on the backside of one, Seebany had written, in Assamese, "Mike, infinite blessings to you!"

We planned our outfits to include elements of Assamese flair. On the day of a pre-launch celebration, we wore mekhla chadors, the signature two-piece Assamese garment. I hesitated, especially in Florida's 100-degree

humidity, but my husband assured me the designs of the japi, an Assamese ornamental hat made of cane or bamboo, resembled flying saucers. Sold.

This mission marks Mike's fourth journey to space, and he has taken the gamosa up before as one of his sentimental items.

Mike Fincke's embrace of our people

As Mike has learned, and my own husband too, to marry an Assamese—at least a certain type of Assamese—is to enter a community that is so unique and tight-knit, where everyone knows everyone else due to the smallness of our diasporic population, a complex collective that teeters between parochial and progressive. Because so few people know where we come from, we quickly learn how to define ourselves and how to fit in.

Being Assamese, I maintain, allows us to traverse lands, languages, and cultures because there's a universality in being unknown.

Except for the years he's been in space or quarantine, I see Mike at least once a year at our annual Assam Conventions. He and Renita make it a point to fly or drive from their home outside Houston, three children in tow, as a way of keeping tradition alive. My family feels similarly, and our children have often choreographed and danced the folk dance known as Bihu together.

In the years he can't physically join, Mike still makes an appearance.

In 2004, he called in from space—projected onto a screen in the hotel ballroom in Austin, Texas—to wish everyone well and perform a Bihu dance.

When the cameras aren't rolling, though, I can attest to Mike's sense of respect for our culture and people. I see it in how he treats his in-laws and elderly people like my parents. I see it in how he springs into action when my own daughter, who now attends college in Houston, gets stranded after a flight cancellation and he does not hesitate to go collect her from the airport—

at 2am. These are the stories of immigrant solidarity, of community building, that many of us grew up with—but have waned in recent years.

Some of it is understandable and more pragmatic (a taxi is a perfectly reasonable option from the airport) as our tiny Assamese population grows. But once upon a time, if you found a Kalita or Saikia in the phone book, chances were high that you would call as strangers and emerge as friends.

In the decades I have known Mike and Renita—who, it's worth noting, also works for Nasa—the behaviours I describe of immigrants are also traits I have come to associate with astronauts.

I was reminded of it this week as the escorts Nasa assigned to be with the families of the crew are astronauts themselves, in the unique position of knowing exactly the high stakes and high pressure and many emotions of a launch.

I watched them carry suitcases, drive loved ones to and fro, soothe fears, cook comfort food, answer lay questions. The flat hierarchy and sense of service are remarkable—and necessary—and challenge the oft-held notion that the smartest people in the room aren't always the most compassionate. Here, intellect and humanity are equal ingredients for success. I walked away from this week with new appreciation for space travel as a means of understanding what it means to be human.

Perhaps that study of said humans attracts the best humans in the process because their examination actually begins with themselves—and their daily actions.

So how many Assamese astronauts do you know? I know a guy who comes pretty close.

S Mitra Kalita is a veteran journalist, author, and commentator. This piece is published in collaboration with URL Media, a network of community media. Views expressed are personal.



# Monsoon Session of assembly starts today, in paperless mode

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**NEW DELHI:** Union law minister Arjun Ram Meghwal on Sunday kicked off the Delhi Assembly's paperless initiative and inaugurated a solar power project on the premises, clearing the decks for a stormy five-day Monsoon Session from Monday, during which waterlogging woes, CAG audits and new bills are set to be tackled.

According to the official list of business, on the first day, the government is likely to introduce the Delhi School Education (Transparency in Fixation and Regulation of Fees) Bill and table two Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India reports on the previous government's performance.

In the run-up to the session, Opposition Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) attacked the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government on the school fee bill, alleging it will lead to "windfall gains for private schools."

The Delhi Congress announced a march outside the Vidhan Sabha to protest demolition drives in slums and the alleged failure of the state government to start ₹2,500 monthly assistance to Delhi's women.

The session will mark multiple firsts: Delhi's Assembly's first fully digital session and the assembly complex being run entirely on solar power.

**Agenda: CAG, edu bill**

The assembly proceedings will commence around 2pm on Monday, with the assembly tentatively likely to convene over five days, between August 4 and 8. The list of business issued by the assembly secretariat states that

Legislature in focus

Commences 2pm, August 4

Tentative schedule August 4-8

AGENDA FOR DAY 1

CM to table CAG reports:

1 Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on 'State Finances for the year 2023-24'

2 Comptroller and Auditor General of India report on 'Welfare of Building and other Construction Workers' for the year ended 31 March 2023

Introduction of Bill

Ashish Sood, education minister, to introduce 'The Delhi School Education (Transparency in Fixation and Regulation of Fees) Bill, 2025

Others

Presentation of reports from Business Advisory Committee and Rules Committee; Annual accounts report of DERC

SOME FIRSTS IN THIS SESSION

First paperless meeting with implementation of digital assembly NeVA portal

500kW solar power plant launched; to run entirely on solar power

ARVIND YADAV/HT

Delhi Assembly will transition to completely paperless operations. This fusion of climate responsibility and administrative reform must begin at the heart of democratic institutions," he said.

Speaker Vijender Gupta said that the work of the E-Vidhan system was completed in just 100 days. "A trial run of the new system is scheduled for 11am tomorrow, followed by a House sitting at 2pm, which will be held entirely on solar power."

The first trial on Sunday offered firsthand experience of the digital interface, which includes smart delegate units with microphones and voting panels, RFID access, multilingual support, real-time document access via iPads, and an automated audio-visual system with cameras.

CM Gupta said Delhi's capital legislature must lead the way in India's transition to sustainable and efficient governance. "With the rollout of NeVA, the Delhi Assembly is poised to offer a more transparent, accessible, and digitally empowered legislative experience," she said.

**Solar power**

On Sunday, a 500kW solar power plant was launched on the assembly premises, making the complex fully powered by solar energy. It is expected to help save ₹1.75 crore annually.

Mehwal said: "Delhi Assembly's complete transition to solar energy has set a benchmark for legislative and public institutions nationwide."

Speaker Gupta said that the building was constructed in 1912 and housed the country's first Parliament, due to which "heritage and development will go hand in hand".

## Row as police refer to Bengali as 'Bangladeshi'

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**KOLKATA/NEW DELHI:** A letter by the Delhi Police to Banga Bhawan at Chanakypuri, seeking expertise to translate documents from "Bangladeshi" to Hindi and English, triggered a political row, with the West Bengal chief minister calling it an attempt to insult and defame West Bengal.

"Scandalous, insulting, anti-national, unconstitutional!! This insults all Bengali-speaking people of India. They cannot use this kind of language which degrades and debases us all. We urge immediate strongest possible protests from all against the anti-Bengali Government of India who are using such anti-Constitutional language to insult and humiliate the Bengali-speaking people of India," Mamata Banerjee, West Bengal CM, wrote on X.

The issue started when the Lodhi Colony police station in south Delhi arrested eight persons suspected to be Bangladeshis, illegally staying in India. An FIR was registered against them under various sections of the BNS, Aadhaar Act and Foreigners Act. Police also seized some documents from the accused persons.

During the investigation, the officer of the case wrote a letter to the officer-in-charge of Banga Bhawan seeking expertise to translate the documents. "The identification documents (seized from the accused persons) contain texts written in Bangladeshi and are needed to be translated to Hindi and English...It is requested that an official translator / interpreter proficient in Bangladeshi National language may kindly be provided for the aforesaid purpose," the letter by

THE TMC SOUGHT THE SUSPENSION OF INVESTIGATING OFFICER AND ALSO A PUBLIC APOLOGY FROM THE DELHI POLICE, BJP, AND HOME MINISTRY

the Delhi Police read.

The Trinamool Congress, the ruling party in West Bengal, has demanded the suspension of the investigating officer of the case and sought a formal public apology from the Delhi Police, Bharatiya Janata Party and the Union home ministry.

Delhi Police said they are investigating the matter. "The officer was investigating an illegal migrants case. Top officers have been informed and will take further action against the inspector," a Delhi Police officer, requesting anonymity, said.

On July 28, TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee launched a Bhasha Andolan (linguistic movement) to protest against the alleged harassment of Bengali-speaking people in BJP-ruled states.

In response, Amit Malviya, head of BJP's National IT cell, wrote on X: "It is beyond shameful that West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is defending a lawful police action against illegal Bangladeshi infiltrators by weaponising language and stoking sentiment. Let us be absolutely clear: all illegal Bangladeshi infiltrators and Rohingyas will be dealt with strictly, as per the law of the land. No political grandstanding or vote-bank politics will come in the way of protecting India's sovereignty and national security."

# Mob stabs two students in Vijay Nagar, three arrested

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**NEW DELHI:** Police said on Sunday they have arrested two men and apprehended a minor for allegedly stabbing two students during an altercation at a grocery shop in northwest Delhi's Vijay Nagar early on Thursday. A fourth suspect is absconding, officials said on Sunday.

The victims, aged 26 and 28 years and hailing from Manipur, were reportedly preparing for competitive examinations and had gone to a local shop in the area around 4am to buy a water can and groceries, officials aware of the matter said on Sunday.

According to the first information report (FIR), the altercation began after a group of three to four young men — aged between 18 and 22 — arrived on two motorcycles

They used abusive language and tried to shove us aside. When we objected, one of them stabbed us. The attack seemed deliberate with the intent to kill.

### ONE OF THE VICTIMS

without helmets and allegedly tried to push past the students at the shop counter.

"They used abusive language and tried to shove us aside. When we objected, one of them stabbed me in the abdomen and another attacked my friend on his left buttock with a knife," one of the victims stated in the FIR.

"They fled on motorcycles after the assault. The attack seemed deliberate and carried out with the intent to kill," the FIR added.

Deputy commissioner of police (Northwest) Bhisham Singh said the case was treated as sensitive, and special teams were deployed to track down the suspects.

"CCTV footage from nearby shops was analysed, and call detail records (CDRs) of suspected individuals were examined. Based on local intelligence and CDR analysis, a coordinated raid was conducted, leading to the arrest of three accused," Singh said.

According to police, the

arrested accused have been identified as Krishna Babu, Krishna Kashyap, and a minor. The fourth suspect is still on the run, and efforts are on to nab him.

During interrogation, police said the three accused confessed to the assault, claiming it began after one of the students allegedly punched their friend.

The knife used in the attack has also been recovered from their possession, officials said.

While both victims are from Manipur, investigators have said there is no indication of it being a hate crime so far.

"It appears to be a dispute that escalated violently rather than a hate crime," an investigating officer said, adding that a detailed investigation is underway to determine the exact sequence of events that took place on Thursday.

### { IN NORTH DELHI }

## Man charred to death inside car, 1 hurt

**Karn Pratap Singh**  
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**NEW DELHI:** A 40-year-old cab driver was charred to death while his friend suffered serious burn injuries after their Maruti Ertiga taxi hit a concrete barrier and caught fire on the Urban Extension Road (UER)-II near Narela in north Delhi early on Sunday.

According to police, the deceased was identified as Vipender and the injured Jagbir, both go by single name and residents of Haryana's Panipat. Jagbir, 40, is currently critical and undergoing treatment at Satyavadi Raja Harish Chandra (SRHC) hospital.

Deputy commissioner of



Burnt remains of the car after the crash.

HT PHOTO

police (outer north) Hareshwar V Swami said the Narela Industrial Area police station received information about a crash at Jhandra Chowk, near Holambi

Khurd village at around 2am on Sunday. When the team reached the spot, they found the charred body of a man in the driver's seat.

"Another person with burns was found in the front passenger's seat. Both were rushed to Babu Jagjivan Ram Memorial (BHRM) hospital, where Vipender was declared dead. Jagbir was later shifted to SRHC hospital," said a police officer.

DCP Swami said the vehicle had Haryana's registration number. Families of both the victims were informed about the accident.

Though the exact cause of fire was not ascertained till Sunday evening, police suspected the four-wheeler could be moving at a high speed and its driver could have failed to see the jersey barriers. The extension road is yet to be inaugurated and made operational for the public.

## SIRSA TO VISIT E-WASTE PARK IN NORWAY TO NOTE BEST PRACTICES

**Jasjeev Gandhiok**  
newreporters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** Environment and industries minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa arrived in Oslo on Sunday to study electronic waste (e-waste) management systems, ahead of the city's plan to develop an e-waste park in Holambi Kalan. The visit, facilitated in coordination with the Norwegian government, will take place on Monday.

On Monday, Sirsa will visit an e-waste park in Oslo where the entire chain of e-waste management — from collection to processing — will be assessed, including technologies in use.

"We will also visit an industrial area, in the middle of the city, to again study the best practices, ranging from waste management there to ensuring recycling and zero air pollution," Sirsa told HT.

The Delhi government is planning to build a dedicated e-waste park over 11.4 acres in north Delhi, aimed at processing over 51,000 metric tonnes of e-waste annually. A feasibility study for the ₹150 crore project will be undertaken soon.

## 24x7 markets and hospital push: CM promises reforms

**Paras Singh**  
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**NEW DELHI:** Chief minister Rekha Gupta, while inaugurating a Jan Seva Kendra (Public Service Centre) at the community centre located in Greater Kailash assembly constituency, said that the government is undertaking a series of administrative reforms and infrastructure upgrades for the development of Delhi and it will ensure that there is no shortage of funds for developmental work.

CM Gupta said that over the past five months, the face of Delhi has started to change with accelerated progress in sewage management, drainage, roadwork, water systems, pollution control, and other public services. "We have taken historic decisions to allow markets in Delhi to operate 24x7. With the introduction of a single-window system, administrative processes will be significantly streamlined. Traders will no longer need to make repeated visits to government offices for licences," Gupta said.

She added that from cleaning a drain, repairing a street, or



CM inaugurates a 'Jan Seva Kendra' at GK on Sunday. X-REKHA GUPTA

resolving local drainage issues, her government remains committed to fulfil even the smallest aspirations of Delhi's citizens.

Later in the day, CM Gupta inaugurated the state-of-the-art SSB Multi specialty hospital located at Kailash Colony. Gupta said that her government is committed to bring back the health system of Delhi on track, which has been languishing for years due to the neglect of previous governments. "The construction work of 24 under-construction

hospitals in Delhi has been started on a war footing. Soon these hospitals will not only provide health services to the people of Delhi but will also provide their services at the national and global level," Gupta said.

She added: "Today, there are not even two beds available per 1,000 people in Delhi. This is in violation of World Health Organisation standards. We aim to change this," she added.

The AAP did not respond to requests for a comment.

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Date: 04-08-2025 General Manager (Finance & Accounts)



# Hop, skip and jump: Khajuri Khas police's seven-month routine



Satellite map image shows the longstanding sewage backflow at the stretch; many who slipped and fell reportedly suffered itchininess and redness of skin, among other issues

Jignasa Sinha

htreporters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** For the past seven months, police personnel of the Khajuri Khas police station have taken to a strange ritual: taking off their shoes, holding them in their hands, stepping on a cement slab and scaling a 10-15-foot-high wall. However, this is far from a superstition; it is a necessity born out of constant knee-deep waterlogging of the Khajuri Thana Road and the area adjoining Shree Ram Colony.

Rain or no rain, an overflowing sewer line in the area has turned into a menace to everyone here.

During a visit by HT last Friday morning, policemen were seen parking their bikes and buses near National Highway 709B, rolling up their trousers and walking on the footpath to reach the police station. But, once at the entrance, their only option is to scale the wall as both gates of the police station could not be accessed due to the water.

A Delhi Police constable, who was recruited this year into the force and posted to Khajuri Khas, said, "I don't know how long this problem has been going on but for the last two months, I have never walked into the police station normally. I have to climb the wall. Only those with cars (with a higher ground clearance) can enter."

As the constable was sharing his experience, a group of women, walking to fetch their children from schools, chimed in to share their concerns.

Suneeta Singh, 29, a resident of Khajuri Khas, whose ward studies in a nearby government school, said, "It's a nightmare. I believe this has been going



Delhi Police personnel and the public navigate risky sewage-filled road, with many injuries also reported from the spot.

VIPIN KUMAR/HT PHOTOS

on for eight to nine months. For us, it affects everything around us. The sewer line water is so black and dirty. My son often slips and falls in the water when I am not here. I have to carry him home. He gets rashes and infections. The water level increases during rains. The government sent a few water pumping machines but you can see that nothing is happening."

Children and elderly people were spotted struggling, to jump on bricks, cement slabs, cement bags and rocks to cross the road. Many were seen holding one another to walk safely.

A group of policemen stopped a tractor, boarded it and asked the driver to drop them. One of them said, "How can we reach our own office without taking a bath in this water? This will go on for a long time..."

A passerby said that civic apathy has left residents with only tongue-in-cheek remarks to make. "Everyone must experience this beautiful black lake...they will feel blessed," another local said.

## Man-made problem

One of the main reasons for the over-

flowing sewer line is the construction of Delhi-Dehradun national highway last year, which covered an open drain, blocking water outflow. While the road comes under the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), the drain's maintenance is with the Irrigation and Flood Control (I&FC) department.

However, Kapil Mishra, Delhi cabinet minister told HT: "Yes, the waterlogging has been there for nearly a year but we have already started working on temporary solutions. We have cleared some of the sewer lines, put water pumps, installed valves and taken other measures. I know these don't help when there's heavy rainfall but on non-rainy days, these measures have helped us provide relief to locals. The issue is the national highway construction blocking the sewer line. Water from Shree Ram Colony and CRPF office has accumulated there and is tough to clear it."

He said that they have already given a tender to the I&FC department to install new sewer lines. "Within five to six months, the new drainage system will be built and the problem will be over. Till then, we are working on tem-



Police personnel said that given the constant sewage backflow, they have to scale the walls to avoid getting drenched.



A policeman risks navigating the stretch on his motorbike, even as many said that only cars have been able to access it.

porary solutions."

The I&FC department did not respond to requests for comment. NHAI also did not comment on the issue.

During the spot check, HT found at least three water pumps set up at the site, but were inadequate in tackling the sewage overflow even in the absence of rain. Given that the stretch from the highway to the police station slants downwards by two to three feet, locals said there needs to be better remedial measures.

Ashish Sharma, a head constable, stood near the national highway and said they have complained to senior officers and government departments.

"I can't take my bike because water seeps in...We have to scale the wall. Some days, the water level comes down, but it again increases after some time. This weather is the worst time for us. Our pants, socks, boots, uniform...everything gets dirty. The water is so bad that you can't stand in it for more than five minutes. My skin gets itchy and red. I hope the flood and irrigation department removes the water. We just want to enter our station nor-

mally" he said.

A senior officer, who refused to be named, said, "I used to get my car to the police station. Around June, it got stuck in water and then I had to foot an expensive bill to clear the water. I now walk through the water. My wife scolds me as I am old now and I often get cough and cold. Senior officers said they are working on this. They sent pumps too. We also get a few calls/information of people slipping and injuring themselves. I just worry about the small children who use the road everyday to walk back from their school..."

The Government Boys Senior Secondary School, Khajuri Khas, is located hardly 500 metres from the road and dozens of kids access this road every day.

Sumit (first name only), a supervisor at BSES' Khajuri Khas office, which is located in the vicinity, told HT: "This has been going on for almost nine months. Every day, I feel sad when I come here. I have to walk in dirty water to reach office. We can neither walk safely nor can we travel on bikes. The

water level is so high that it damages our vehicles. This stretch is a horror for anyone who visits."

Pawan Kumar Sharma, an advocate, was taking his elderly father for some work outside their house in Sonia Vihar.

He said: "We don't have any option but to take this road. The Shree Ram Colony area and roads are already flooded with garbage and dump. As part of my work, I have to visit the police station; but now, nobody can enter without a car. Locals can't access their own police station. How do we file complaints? Sit on waterlogged streets with policemen?"

A group of girl students of Class 10 said their white uniforms get dirty and they have to wash it and ensure it dries in time.

One of the students, not wishing to be named, said: "I only have two sets of uniform and want them to be clean or my teacher will scold me. The other day, a biker fell and hurt himself. Last month, our classmate slipped and fell on the road. We thought she was going to drown. Nobody should walk here..."

## WOMAN DIES BY SUICIDE, BLAMES SPOUSE, IN-LAWS IN VIDEO: POLICE

HT Correspondent

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**NEW DELHI:** A 20-year-old woman reportedly died by suicide at her residence in south-east Delhi's IGI Camp in Sunlight Colony on Saturday, according to the police. They said that the woman was found dead inside the house, while her husband and family members were away.

Police said their control room was informed about a suicide on Saturday evening. Family members told investigators that the woman got married a year and a half ago.

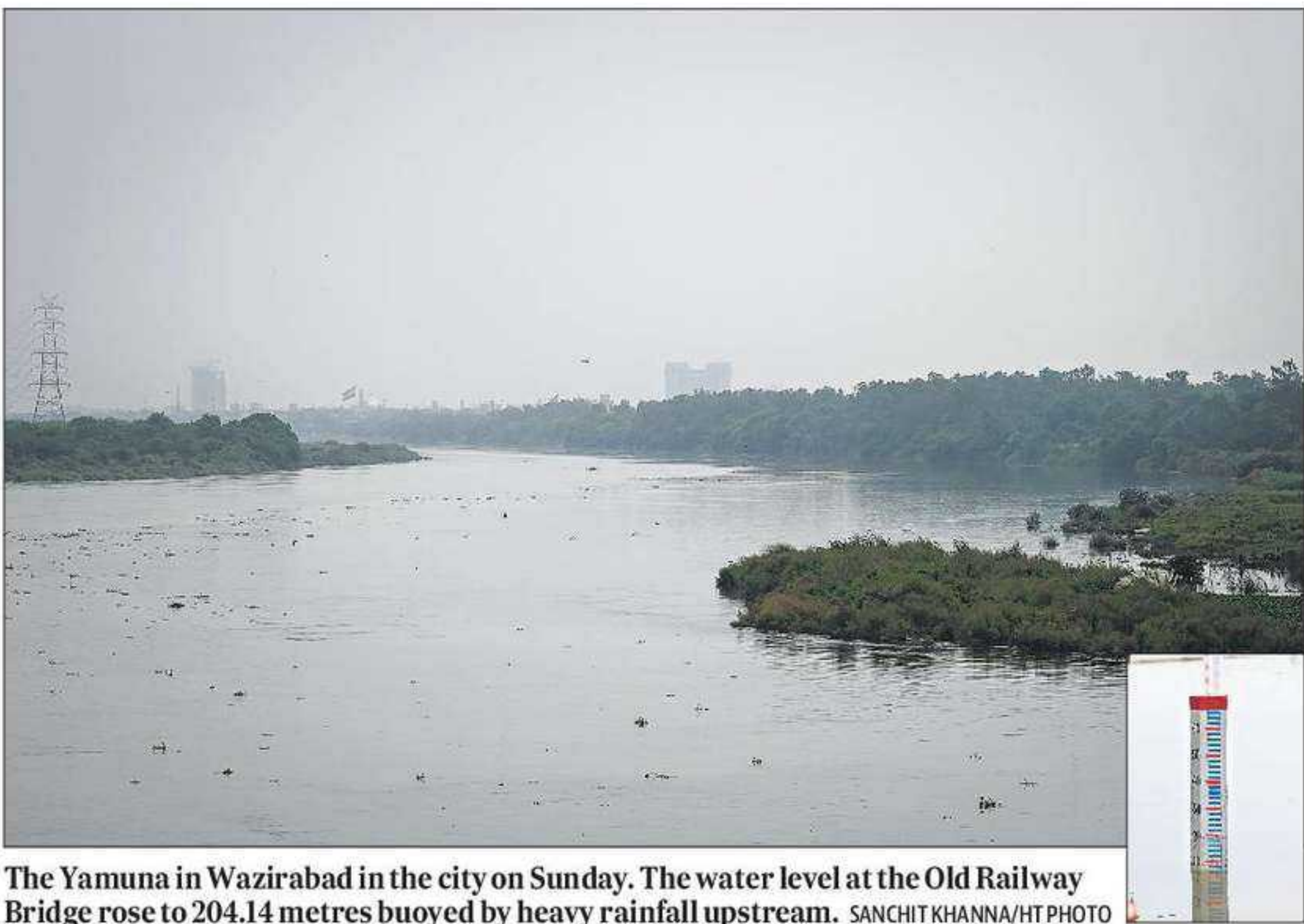
"A crime team reached the spot. The deceased's mother and SDM (subdivisional magistrate) were immediately informed as the suicide happened within seven years of her marriage. We have taken statements from the mother and brother, and the SDM also recorded their statements. An autopsy was done on Sunday," deputy commissioner of police (southeast) Hemant Tewari said.

In a video on her phone, the woman blamed her husband and in-laws for the act, alleging they would beat her over petty issues.

She also said in the video that their wedding anniversary was coming up, and the in-laws harassed her, as he had married her against their wishes.

The DCP said, "A video related to this incident came to our notice. Appropriate legal action shall be taken as per the report received by SDM Defence Colony."

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The Yamuna in Wazirabad in the city on Sunday. The water level at the Old Railway Bridge rose to 204.14 metres buoyed by heavy rainfall upstream. SANCHIT KHANNA/HT PHOTO

## Yamuna level at season's highest, short of 'warning'

Jasjeev Gandhiok

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**NEW DELHI:** The water level in the Yamuna rose to a season-high of 204.14 metres at the Old Railway Bridge on Sunday morning, buoyed by heavy rainfall in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand over the past 48 hours. Though the river's swelling prompted concern, it remained below Delhi's official "warning" level of 204.5 metres.

Central Water Commission (CWC) data showed the river had risen by over a metre since August 1. The peak level of 204.14m was recorded at 9am, followed by a slight dip afterwards. It stood at 203.08m at 4pm on Thursday, climbed to 203.54m on Friday, and surged to 204.04m by 4pm on Sunday.

Delhi categorises 204.5m as the warning level and 205.33m as the danger mark.

Experts, however, noted the water appeared visibly cleaner, thanks to the increased flow.

"The river is naturally cleaning itself. This seasonal surge flushes pollutants and improves water quality," said Bhim Singh Rawat of the South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People (SANDRP). "Such fluctuations will continue until September, and August is typically when peak flood levels are observed."

Last year, the river did not breach the warning level, peaking at 204.38m on September 26. But 2023 told a different story—on July 11, the Yamuna surged to a historic 208.66m leading to the river flowing out on the city's

streets. Water inundated parts of Mayur Vihar, ITO, Salimgarh Bypass, and Civil Lines, prompting the evacuation of over 23,000 residents in low-lying areas around the river and forcing the shutdown of three major water treatment plants—Wazirabad, Chandrawal and Okhla—that collectively supply around 25% of Delhi's drinking water.

This year, officials said they are keeping a close watch. "Preparations are in place in case the water level rises further. But we're not at the warning threshold yet," said an Irrigation and Flood Control (I&FC) department official.

For now, environmentalists find reason for optimism. "This is how rivers breathe," said Rawat. "Swelling is not always a sign of danger—it's cyclical."

## 'Wet start to month may persist, intensity to fall'

Jasjeev Gandhiok

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**NEW DELHI:** Residents in the city woke up to cloudy skies and light rainfall on Sunday, continuing the wet start to the month. The forecast by India Meteorological Department (IMD) suggests scattered light rain on Monday too.

Safdarjung, Delhi's base station, logged 16.7mm in the 24 hours till 8.30am. No rain was recorded between 8.30am and 5.30pm.

Other stations which recorded light to moderate rain till 8.30am included Palam (20.7mm), Lodhi road (15.2mm), Ridge (22.2mm), Rajghat (24mm), Pusa (29.5mm) and Najafgarh (28.5mm). The highest—57.3mm was recorded in southwest Delhi's Ayanagar, followed by 48mm in east Delhi's Mayur Vihar.

"We saw light to moderate rainfall in Delhi, with isolated pockets almost recording heavy rainfall. Monday should see scattered light spells, with a chance of marginal increase in intensity again on Tuesday," an IMD official said.

With Sunday's early morning rain, Delhi has already logged 38.1mm in August—Delhi's wettest month in the year—while the month's normal is 233.1mm. This comes following the excess rains in May, June and July.

From Wednesday till Sunday, there is a possibility of scattered light rain, the IMD said.

Delhi's maximum temperature on Sunday was recorded at 34.3 degrees Celsius (°C), which



Overcast skies atop the Signature Bridge, as Delhi recorded 16.7mm rain overnight. SANCHIT KHANNA/HT

was around the normal for this time of the year and slightly up from 33.7°C recorded a day earlier.

Overcast skies were seen in the first half of the day, with sunlight peeking through in the second half. Humidity levels oscillated between 68% and 100% through the day.

Meanwhile, the minimum temperature in the Capital was at 24.2°C, which was three degrees below normal and over a degree short from Saturday's 25.7°C. Forecasts show overcast conditions will persist on Monday, with the maximum expected to hover between

32-34°C and the minimum between 23-25°C.

Mahesh Palawat, vice president at Skymet said with no significant weather systems active, only scattered showers are likely this week. "There are more chances of rain early in the morning and at night, with the sun coming out during the day. Some isolated pockets may see short but intense spells," he said.

May 2025 was the wettest ever on record, with 186.4mm of rain—far above the normal average of 30.7mm. In June, Delhi recorded 107.1mm of monthly rainfall—an excess of

45% over the long period average (LPA) of 74.1mm—data showed. Meanwhile in July, Delhi received 259.3mm—24% excess over the LPA of 209.7mm.

Meanwhile, the rain did not impact the air quality of the city on Sunday. The air remained "satisfactory", with the 24-hour average air quality index (AQI) at 79, same as it was on Saturday.

Forecasts by the Centre's Air Quality Early Warning System (EWS) for Delhi shows the AQI is likely to remain in the "satisfactory" category until Wednesday at the earliest.



{ GURUGRAM WOES }

# Sanitation crisis reaches Dwarka e-way

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**GURUGRAM:** The garbage crisis that plagued Gurugram's condominiums due to the departure of most migrant workers has now reached the rapidly developing sectors along the Dwarka Expressway—one of the most talked-about zones for premium residential development in Gurugram. Once envisioned as a symbol of urban progress, the expressway stretch near Sector 103, dotted with high-rises, is fast becoming an unregulated “kabadi zone”, thanks to rampant dumping of plastic, construction debris, and household waste.

“We are deeply concerned about the regular dumping of waste in the open area directly opposite our buildings,” said Mahesh Kumar, a resident of Hero Homes, Sector 104. “This location is steadily turning into an unregulated dumping ground with the quantity of waste increasing everyday. It’s a breeding ground for dengue and malaria with stagnant water and foul smells.”

The ongoing issue of open waste dumping began earlier this year when the agency contracted for door-to-door (D2D) waste collection failed to deliver on its commitments. Instead of carrying out direct collection,



An illegal dumping site along Dwarka Expressway in Sector-103 opposite a residential complex in Gurugram on Sunday. PARVEEN KUMAR/HT

the company reportedly tied up with unregulated local vendors, leading to unchecked dumping and garbage heaps mushrooming across vacant plots and roadside stretches. This mismanagement significantly worsened the sanitation condition, drawing

repeated complaints from residents. After months of delays, failed timelines, and growing public pressure, the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram (MCG) finally secured approval for a ₹402-crore D2D waste collection tender. The tender is expected to

be allotted by the end of this month. While special vehicles have now been deployed to clear accumulated waste, MCG officials estimate that it will take at least two more months to fully streamline the collection system and restore hygiene in the

affected sectors.

When approached, Municipal Corporation of Gurugram (MCG) officials claimed they had not received any formal complaint from residents. “We will get an inspection conducted on the stretch to verify whether it is a

secondary collection point or an illegal dumping ground,” an MCG official said.

Pradeep Dahiya, MCG commissioner, said, “Vehicles have been deployed for garbage removal. We are taking every possible step to address the issue and restore civic order.”

The waste problem in Sector 103, considered one of Gurugram’s promising neighborhoods, has spread as more families move into the high-rises along the Dwarka Expressway.

Amit Phuloria, another Hero Homes resident, said, “I stay on a higher floor, and the view of constant construction and demolition waste is a major eyesore.”

Residents have been trying to understand which authority—if any—has permitted such practices in a residential zone. The lack of regulation is a violation of solid waste management norms.

“Unregulated dumping or large-scale scrap storage is happening right across the road. This may soon pose serious hygiene and safety issues. This needs immediate attention,” said Sandeep Kumar, another local resident.

“If not addressed, the garbage will spread rapidly, degrading the living environment,” added Phuloria. “We bought homes here because of the promise of clean, modern living—this is the exact opposite.”

# Gr Noida varsity report on student suicide delayed

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**GREATER NOIDA:** A five-member internal complaints committee’s report from Sharda University in the suicide case of a 21-year-old second-year Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) student, that was to be submitted within five days, has been delayed by over 15 days, said police on Sunday, adding that the delay is also hampering the ongoing police investigation.

On July 18, the second-year BDS student from Gurugram allegedly died by suicide inside room 1209(C) on the 12th floor of Mandela hostel around 8.45 pm. The college authorities, without informing the police or parents for over 90 minutes, rushed the girl to Sharda Hospital, where doctors declared her dead and alerted Knowledge Park police via 112.

“We were informed that the committee submitted its report to the vice chancellor of the university. But it has not yet been handed over to the police. The university is delaying the report, citing its incompleteness,” said a senior police officer, requesting anonymity. “We have recorded statements from more than 15 people so far but have yet to pro-

ceed further due to the absence of the report,” the officer said.

“In our investigation, it is confirmed that the university did not inform the police or parents for more than an hour after the incident. Later, they alleged that she was not performing well in her studies and had low attendance. If this was the case, they would not have issued an admit card to the student for annual exams,” said the officer.

The statements of the deceased’s parents were also recorded by the committee and the police. “We were informed that the committee is unable to finalise the report. They (university) are powerful and not ready to listen anything,” said the deceased’s father.

Greater Noida, additional deputy commissioner of police, Sudhir Kumar confirmed that the investigation is getting delayed due to a delay in the committee report.

A case was registered against five faculty members of the college and assistant professor Shairy Vashist and associate professor Mahinder Singh Chouhan were arrested. Dr Ajit Kumar, the director of public relations at Sharda University, did not respond to HT for a response.



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Office of the Executive Engineer PCM Dhalipur, Dehradun invites online bids from interested parties. Brief summary of the tender is given below:  
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Name of work-1: Strengthening of Bhimawala Motorable bridge over power channel.  
2:- Strengthening of Court Bridge (Arch Bridge) over power channel near Civil Court at Dhakrani.  
3:- Strengthening of Asan Barrage Bridge and Head Regulator bridge (2 Nos), Dhalipur, Dehradun  
4:- Strengthening of concrete motorable bridge (Chainage 1.40 Km D/S of Asan Barrage)  
Estimated value of Tender: Rs. 48,37,090.25, Rs. 46,92,912.58, Rs. 2,67,79,156.90 & Rs. 48,20,923.26 respectively (excluding GST)  
Date & Time of availability of bid document on website -From 15:00 Hrs of 04.08.2025  
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**75 National Sample Survey**  
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## Data for Informed Policy Decision on Travel and Tourism

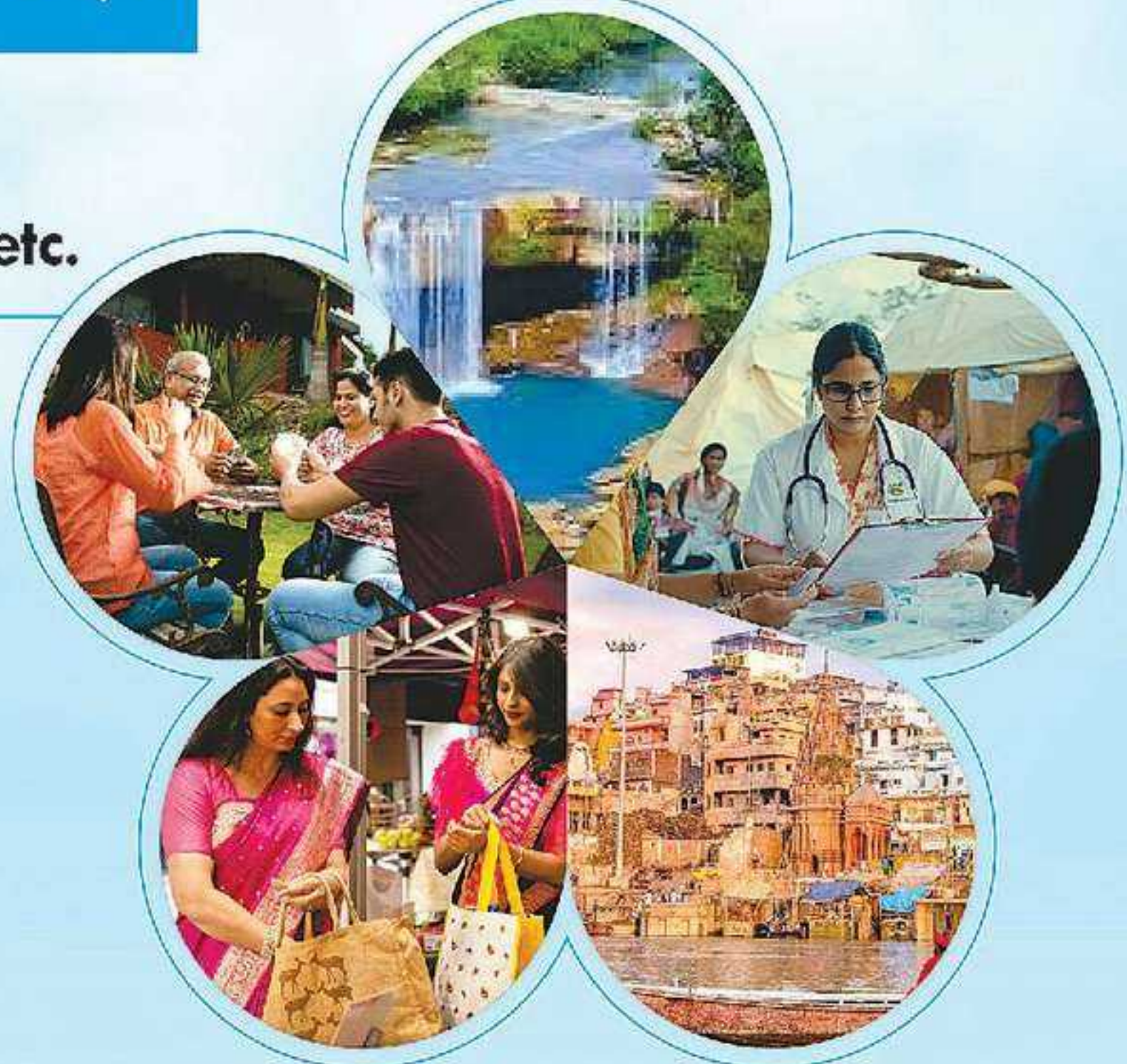
**Let us strengthen the National Statistical System**

National Statistics Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) is conducting **Domestic Tourism Expenditure Survey (DTES)** and **National Household Travel Survey (NHTS)** from July 2025 to June 2026.

### Domestic Tourism Expenditure Survey (DTES):

**Information being collected on:**


- Purpose of Trip - Holiday, Health, Pilgrimage, Shopping, Social, etc.
- Type of Trip - Package, Non-package
- Mode of Travel - Air, Rail, Water, Road Transport
- Type of Stay - Commercial, Non-commercial
- Destination - Within State, Outside State
- Trip services booked - Online, Offline
- Trip Expenditure



### National Household Travel Survey (NHTS):

**Information being collected on:**

- Purpose of Trip - For work/pursuing education
- Cost of trips
- Mode of travel
- Same-day trips (excluding work/education)
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{ SAROJINI NAGAR }

# DUAC rejects second package GPRA plan

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**NEW DELHI:** The Delhi Urban Art Commission (DUAC) has rejected the proposal for completion of second package of Sarojini Nagar General Pool Residential Accommodation (GPRA) colony citing lack of clarity, incomplete, and incomprehensible proposal.

The proposal was presented by NBCC Limited (government-run public sector undertaking), who is building the GPRA colony. Officials said that DUAC had initially approved the proposal for part 1 in its meeting on January 17, 2020. However, it did not accept the proposal for No-Objection Certificate (NOC) for part 2 of the ongoing work at its meeting on June 5. The second part of the project includes NOC for completion of nine residential buildings with two basements, ground and 12 floors, one community building with ground and two more floors and two guard rooms.

"The submitted photographs of the residential tower show a deviation in the colour scheme from that previously approved. The commission had given consideration to the design scheme — covering materials, finishes, architectural elements, and facade — at the formal approval stage. However, upon comparing the approved design with the actual built superstructure, as seen in the photographs submit-

**THE SECOND PART OF THE PROJECT INCLUDES NOC FOR COMPLETION OF NINE RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS WITH TWO BASEMENTS**

ted for the NOC, deviations from the formally approved scheme have been observed, thereby affecting the aesthetic and visual quality of the facade..." the DUAC noted while rejecting the application. Under the Sarojini Nagar GPRA project, over 10,000 flats are being constructed in phases. The occupancy certificates (OC) for around eight towers have been applied for while others will also be sought soon. The residential area includes five types of government quarters—type II, III, IV, V and VI. These will include around 160 towers with basement and service apartments. It is expected that after the redevelopment, the area will provide housing to an approximate population of 100,000. The project's design incorporates rainwater harvesting systems, sewage and water treatment plants, and solar-powered waste compactors encouraging eco-conscious living.

The first part was inaugurated by the PM in January. It included the GPRA type-II or 2BHK quarters at 28 towers with over 2,500 residential units.

The rejection order added that any deviations from the previously approved design scheme should be submitted to DUAC for prior approval before execution.

It mentioned that the submission also lacks terrace photographs that show the installed utilities as well as the provisions for solar energy generation. Additionally, the submitted photographs of the community building display exposed pipes at the upper levels, with concealment boxes that end abruptly and lack proper detailing, which negatively affects the visual appeal of the facade. "This treatment is neither appreciated nor acceptable," as per the DUAC order. "The architect is advised to ensure a clean and cohesive facade. When applying for the NOC, the architect must ensure that no external pipes, wiring, temporary concealment boxes, earthing plates, or unapproved signage are visible," the order added.

The installation of clear-story solar panels on a well-designed structural frame, integrated with the building design, is suggested by DUAC to ensure the effective utilisation of the space beneath. The commission has asked NBCC to submit the application again after making the required changes. It has also asked the agency to submit the terrace-level layout of the solar panels, structural details of the mounting frames and the proposed screening mechanisms, all illustrated through aerial 3D views.

## Six arrested for burglary at southwest Delhi residence

**HT Correspondent**  
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**NEW DELHI:** Police on Sunday said they have arrested six people for allegedly committing a burglary at a house in Sitapuri, located near Dabri in southwest Delhi, and stealing several items, including antique items, over a period of 11 days, starting June 20.

The house belonged to a 62-year-old man, who was out of India to meet his son, when

**COPS RECOVERED 40 TAPE RECORDERS, 8 MUSIC MIXERS, SIX KEYBOARDS, 35 RADIO SETS AND A SEWING MACHINE**

the burglary happened, officers aware of the case said.

They said that interrogation of the arrested people led to the recovery of 40 tape recorders,

eight music mixers, six music keyboards, a drum set, cassette decks, 35 radio sets and a sewing machine.

Two e-rickshaws that were used to transport the stolen items were also recovered.

The arrested people were identified as Alik Pandit, 24, Nandan Chhena, 19, Rahul alias Nonu, 25, Remo Paswan, 23, Phool Chand, 35, and Santosh alias Kalu, 30, according to deputy commissioner of police (Dwarka) Ankit Singh.

## Delhiwale

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## Sunder Nursery by numbers

The iconic park hits a milestone figure

**{ PUBLIC INTEREST }** **5 million** Number of footfalls Sunder Nursery has accumulated since the day it opened to us Delhiwale six years ago—according to Aga Khan Trust for Culture that created and now manages the park. The milestone was reached late last month. High time to statistically dissect a destination whose many gardens and monuments have become the capital's capital refuge.

**01/12/2018** Date of the park's opening

**15,000** Total number of park trees. 300 is the number of tree species. 10 of these are so unique to the park—such as Brazilian Ironwood and Satin Leaf—that you won't see them anywhere else in India. (Why so? Wait for a forthcoming dispatch!)

**177** Number of benches in the park. 97 of these are sandstone benches. The remaining 80 are of cast iron, acquired from antique dealers, and are part of the park's 'Dedicate a Bench' programme—I such bench memori-

alises late bookseller KD Singh with a Pablo Neruda poem.

**150** Number of bird species. In January 2015, an ultramarine flycatcher, super-rare in Delhi, was spotted in the park's so-called Wilderness Zone.

**90** Area of the park in acres.

**75** Number of gardeners in the park. This afternoon, 54 of those women and men are at work. They all sportingly agreed to pose for a joint portrait—see photo.

**44** Number of flower species. One of which is rose (obviously!), which itself has 20 varieties in the park.

**35** Number of butterfly species, ranging from Common Castor to Striped Pierrot.

**26** Number of dogs living in the park, fed twice daily.

**20** Number of monuments in the park. Sunder Burj, dating from 16th century, is the oldest. 18th century Mughal Pavilion is the youngest. 6 monuments are part of the Humayun Tomb UNESCO World Heritage Site; the

emperor's mausoleum stands beside the park.

**14** Number of gardens in the park, including Bagh-e-Bahar, the Flower Valley.

**14** In kilometres, the combined length of the park's walking pathways.

**14** Number of bee species in the park. 3 are honey producing bees. 9 are solitary bees, which means they don't live in a chatta. The park has created special residences for these loners in the form of dry twig hedges. 1 specie happens to be a desi variety that doesn't sting—this tiny Indian stingless bee has in fact 50 colonies in the park.


**13** Number of water bodies. These include 5 wells, 2 lakes, and 2 swimming pool-sized underground rain water harvesting tanks (over the years, the park's water table level has risen from 10 meters below the surface to 2 meters). The park's most striking monument to water has to be the beautifully named Hauz-i-Nilofar. It is Delhi's only existing Mughal-era lotus pond.

**PS:** The figures were compiled with additional help from author and butterfly scholar Gillian Wright, beekeeper Rakesh Gupta, and landscape architects Yogesh Kapoor and Geeta Wahi Dua.



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## HT Homage



**"BALBIR SAWHNEY"**  
(04.08.1916 - 29.08.2008)

*Goodbyes are only for those  
Who love with their eyes ...  
Because those who love with their heart & soul  
There is no such thing as separation !*

Rumi

*In Fond Remembrance,  
Manju Sawhney Mahindra  
Tower Insurance & Reinsurance Brokers (India) Pvt Ltd, Mumbai*



**In Loving Memory of**  
**S. BALWINDER SINGH BRAR**  
(08.09.1950 - 04.08.2017)  
Your passing away has left a huge void in our lives. Your memories are still fresh as ever. You remain an eternal source of inspiration and strength. May your soul rest in peace.

**MISSED BY**  
Sukhwant Brar (Wife),  
Daman & Aman Sidhi  
(Daughter & Son-in-law)  
Narinder Singh Gill  
(Brother-in-law) & Family  
Shireen & Mehtab  
(Grand Children)  
Staff & Members

**H.R. Industries**  
C-182, Naraina Industrial Area,  
Phase 1, New Delhi - 110028

## Man stabbed in IP Extn robbery bid

**Karn Pratap Singh**  
htreporters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** A 22-year-old man was apprehended on Saturday for allegedly stabbing a man while attempting to snatch his phone and bag at an isolated place in Indraprastha (IP) Extension in east Delhi on Thursday, police said. The incident occurred less than 200 metres away from the headquarters of deputy commissioner of police (east). The accused has been identified as Ajay Nepali.

According to police, Meet

(single name), 22, lives with his family in a highrise in Ghaziipur and works with a private company in Noida's Sector 16. At around 8pm on Thursday, while he was on his way back home, he was walking from the metro station towards his house when a man approached him.

"The man grabbed me by my t-shirt's collar, whipped out a knife from his pocket, and tried to rob me of my mobile phone. He then grabbed my backpack and tried to snatch it too. When I resisted, he stabbed me in my right arm. He then took my

headphone from my neck and fled. I was bleeding profusely so I went to local doctor and got the wound bandaged," Meet told police. He later approached the police station, from where he was taken to Lal Bahadur Shastri (LBS) hospital for medical attention. A complaint was registered on Saturday under sections 309 (4,6) (robbery) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita at the police station. "Ajay Nepali was arrested from his house in East Vinod Nagar. He confessed to the crime and his interrogation led to the recovery of the stolen head-

phone," the officer added.

In a similar robbery case, a 25-year-old labourer suffered a head injury when four people travelling in a van attacked him with an iron rod and robbed him of ₹6,000 near Bihari Colony bus stop in Shahdara on Saturday, police said. The victim, Mohit Kumar, had come to meet his brother and was waiting for him at the bus stop when he was attacked and robbed, the police said. The police apprehended two juveniles aged 17 and 15 and the third accused, Mateen Ahmed, 24, was arrested.

## POLICE ARREST TWO MEN FOR ROBBING WINE SHOP OF ₹6.5 L

**NEW DELHI:** The Delhi Police on Sunday said that they have arrested two men in connection with a case where unknown persons drilled a hole inside a wine shop in central Delhi's Patel Nagar on the night of July 30, and fled with ₹6.5 lakhs in cash.

The accused allegedly broke into the wine shop wearing masks, equipped with a drilling machine and rods. Police stated that they had been planning the burglary for several weeks. Nidhin Valsan, deputy commissioner of police (DCP) (central) said, "A team found the suspects leaving the area. The suspects identified as Ravi Kumar and Aruna Chhabra were caught in Tilak Nagar area with ₹4.81 lakhs and the tools and were held on Friday and Saturday.HTC

{ PROPOSALS PUT FOR APPROVAL }

## MCD schools, centres to operate as skilling hubs

**Paras Singh**  
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**NEW DELHI:** The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) is mulling to use the premises of over 1,100 schools and underutilised community halls to run skill development centres, and two policy proposals in this regard will be put up for the standing committee's approval later this week, officials aware of the matter said. A senior MCD official said that the policy mandates that the agencies take the equipment with them after use and clean the school premises daily to make it ready for teaching the next day.

"Many MCD schools are running in single shift operations where school premises are not being utilised after school hours. The space in these schools can be leveraged for the purpose of skill development and vocational

training. If institutions and NGOs with good credentials and desirous of using school premises, MCD can consider the request..." the proposal moved by the education department reads.

MCD runs 1,514 municipal primary schools from 1,186 building complexes, catering to around 700,000 students. The scheme will only be open to implement government schemes or CSR undertaken by public sector undertakings, such as Skill India mission, Pradhanmantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, Jan Shikshan Sansthan, Craftsmen training scheme, Vocational training programme for women and SANKALP scheme.

The senior MCD official cited above said: "They (those using the premises) will not be allowed any addition or alteration in the building structures. School premises will be available only

between 3pm and 8pm."

The official said that memorandum of understanding for one year is proposed initially.

The proposal moved by the community services department states that there are 299 community halls and eight community centres run by the department, of which 278 units are functional. Of these, 114 community halls and eight centres have been identified as vacant or underutilised. "If any community hall is allotted to the institution and that hall is booked by the citizen as per existing policy then the agency shall vacate the center in a clean manner," the proposal reads. The move follows a review meeting on the underutilisation of community centres and halls led by chief minister Rekha Gupta last month. Despite high demand, a large chunk of community centres remain severely underutilised.

## ARMED MEN ROB JEWELLERY SHOP OWNER, BUYER

**NEW DELHI:** A group of at least four unidentified men allegedly entered a jewellery shop at Chand Bagh in northeast Delhi, closed the shutter and robbed the store owner and a customer of jewellery items and cash worth lakhs of rupees at gunpoint on Sunday afternoon, police said. The shop owner in his complaint claimed that the robbers took away ₹5 lakh in cash and 300 grams of jewellery worth around ₹30 lakh. A case of armed robbery has been registered and multiple teams have been formed to identify and nab the robbers, said police adding that investigators are scanning CCTV cameras for clues that could help them identify and nab the robbers. HTC

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# EC counters Tejashwi over EPIC claim; BJP, RJD spar

Anirban Guha Roy and Dheer Chawla  
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**PATNA/NEW DELHI:** The Election Commission (EC) on Sunday asked Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Tejashwi Yadav to “hand over for investigation” a voter ID card that he claimed to be in possession of despite having been “not issued officially”, in a development that came a day after the Leader of Opposition in the Bihar assembly claimed that his voter ID card was not available in the new draft electoral roll.

Meanwhile, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) lashed out at Yadav, alleging that the RJD leader had two EPIC (Election Photo Identity Card) numbers and two Voter IDs, and termed his accusation against EC a “conspiracy to defame India.”

Addressing a press conference in Patna on Saturday, Yadav demonstrated an online search, with the EPIC number RAB2916120, to claim that his name was missing in the draft electoral rolls published as part of special intensive revision (SIR). The former Bihar deputy chief minister questioned whether he would be allowed to vote in the upcoming assembly elections slated to be held in October-November this year. EC, however, later clarified that Yadav’s officially registered EPIC number was RAB0456228 and he had used the same in his 2020 election affidavit.

“Our preliminary investigation suggests that the EPIC num-



RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav claimed that his name was missing from the Bihar draft polls. HT PHOTO

ber you mentioned at the press conference on August 2 was not issued officially. You are therefore requested to hand over the EPIC card in original for detailed investigation,” the sub divisional magistrate of Patna Sadar-cum-electoral registration officer for Digha assembly constituency said in a letter to Yadav.

Later, the RJD leader alleged that his EPIC number had been “changed”, but the same was refuted by Patna district magistrate Thiyagaraja SM. “The EPIC number in the electoral rolls is the one that was submitted by the honourable leader of the opposition in his affidavit in the 2020 assembly polls. If he is in possession of another EPIC card with another number as well, then it is a matter of investigation,” the DM said.

The ruling BJP lashed out at the Opposition over this issue, with party lawmaker Sambit Patra accusing Tejashwi Yadav of spreading misinformation

about the electoral process. “This means he (Tejashwi Yadav) had two EPIC numbers... Did he have two voter IDs? The way in which Congress and RJD are scathing an attack on the EC, is a conspiracy to defame India,” Patra told reporters in Delhi.

Though Yadav did not make any comment on the letter issued by the SDO Patna Sadar till Sunday evening, RJD spokesperson Chittaranjan Gagan alleged that the letter to the Opposition leader was a ploy by EC to divert attention from the questions raised by Yadav regarding alleged anomalies in the SIR exercise.

“...In the draft rolls issued in which Tejashwi’s name figures with a particular house number, several other electors’ names having different surnames have been mentioned having the same house number. Does one family have members with different surnames? This must be clarified by EC,” Gagan said.

## Cong leader demands complaint copy, poll body denies receipt

Press Trust of India  
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**BENGALURU:** Ahead of the Congress’s planned protest on August 5 over alleged manipulation of electoral rolls in Bengaluru’s Mahadevapura constituency, former minister H Nagesh has written to the state chief electoral officer seeking copy of a complaint he claims was submitted in April 2023, accusing forged entries in voters’ list.

However, the CEO’s office has denied receiving any such complaint.

In a letter dated July 31, Nagesh stated, “We had earlier during April 2023 submitted a list containing details of alleged forged entries in the voters list pertaining to our constituency 174-Mahadevapura. This issue is of grave concern as it affects the transparency and fairness of the electoral process.” He admitted that Congress did not have a copy of the submitted document.

“We have misplaced the list of documents. We do not have a copy of the submitted document for our records. We kindly request you to share a copy of the document which we had submitted,” he said.

## THE DEVELOPMENT COMES AHEAD OF CONGRESS’S PLANS TO PROTEST IN KARNATAKA ON AUGUST 5 OVER ALLEGED VOTER MANIPULATION

Responding to this, joint chief electoral officer Yogeshwar S, in a letter dated August 2, wrote: “With reference to your letter dated 31st July 2025, I am hereby directed to inform you that this office does not have records of any such letter received from you during April 2023 on the issue of electoral rolls with a list containing details of alleged forged entries in the voters list pertaining to 174-Mahadevapura Assembly Constituency, which you have suddenly raised now.”

The official added that a certified copy of the electoral roll was made available to all candidates, including Nagesh, during the election and is also accessible online. He pointed out that no legal remedy had been pursued by Nagesh under the Representation of the People Act, stating,

# Zero objections filed by parties to Bihar draft rolls: EC

Vrinda Tulsian  
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**NEW DELHI:** The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Sunday said that since the publication of the draft electoral rolls for Bihar on August 1, no political party has filed any claims or objections.

The poll body, however, said that it has received 941 requests claim and objections forms

directly from the electors. The draft rolls were released following the conclusion of the enumeration phase under the special intensive revision (SIR) of Bihar’s electoral rolls.

According to ECI, between 3pm on August 1 and 3pm on August 3, no political party submitted a request to add eligible voters or remove ineligible ones.

ECI said that the public has one month to submit claims or

## PARTIES, VOTERS HAVE TIME TILL SEPTEMBER 1 TO FILE CLAIMS TO ADD OR REMOVE NAMES FROM THE ELECTOR ROLL

objections and that no voter will be removed from the rolls with-

out documented justification.

**Poll body rejects Chidambaram’s claims**  
The poll body on Sunday dismissed as false former Union minister P Chidambaram’s claim about “addition” of 650,000 voters in Tamil Nadu.

Raising questions on SIR, Chidambaram in his posts on X, suggested that migrant workers were being registered as voters

in Tamil Nadu

In a post on X, ECI said such statements are misleading and baseless. It said there is “no need” for political leaders to “spread false information with respect to the SIR exercise being conducted by EC at the national level.”

“It has come to the notice of the ECI that such information is being deliberately peddled in the media with a view to obstruct the exercise,” ECI said.

## { GREAT NICOBAR PROJECT }

# Centre didn’t comply with NGT order: Plea

Jayashree Nandi  
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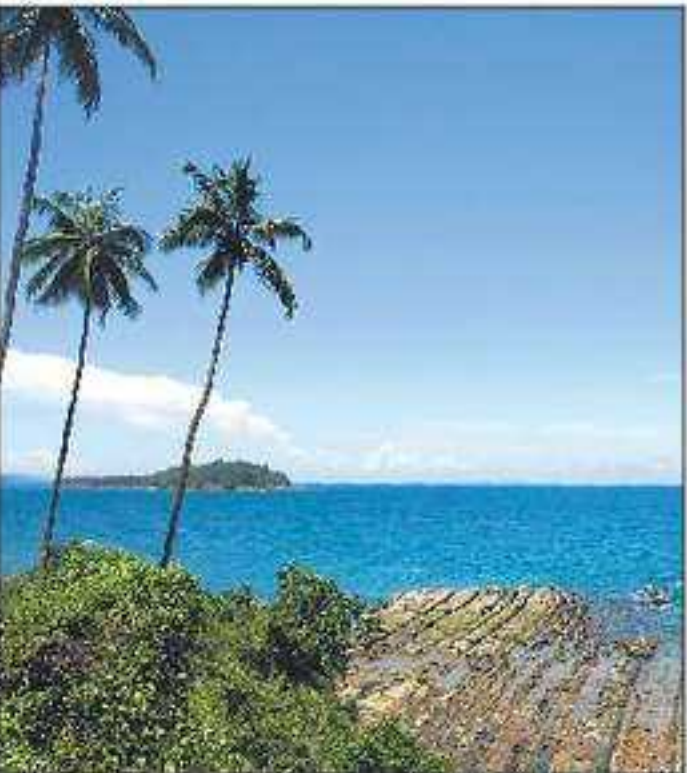
**NEW DELHI:** The Union government has not complied with the National Green Tribunal’s (NGT) April 3, 2023 order on revisiting the deficiencies in the environmental clearance granted to the Great Nicobar Holistic Development project, a petitioner challenging the green nod to the key project has claimed before NGT.

In a 39-page detailed submission made on July 24 by petitioner-environmentalist Ashish Kothari said the objective of this application is to seek the enforcement and implementation of the law. The petitioner highlighted that the three terms of reference for the NGT-appointed high-powered committee (HPC) were not met — specifically related to coral transplantation, environmental baseline data collection and review coastal regulation zone (CRZ) boundaries of the proposed port project.

On April 3, 2023, NGT directed that clearance dated November 11, 2022 be revisited in the light of “some unanswered deficiencies” pointed out by the appellants which need to be addressed. “By way of instance, it is pointed out that out of 20,668 coral colonies, 16,150 are proposed to be translocated without any mention of threat to the remaining 4,518 coral colonies. It is pointed out that ICRZ Regulations prohibit destruction of corals. Further, data collected for impact assessment is only of one season as against requirement of three seasons. It is also shown that part of the project is in the CRZ IA area where Port is prohibited,” the NGT had said.

HT had reported on April 7, 2023 that NGT had constituted a high-powered committee, headed by Union environment ministry secretary, to revisit the environmental clearance (EC) granted by the ministry to the Great Nicobar township and area development project. Experts, however, have questioned how a subordinate authority headed by the environment secretary revisit the green nod granted by its own ministry?

In the submission to NGT, the petitioner has pointed out that several clauses of the Island Coastal Regulation Zone (ICRZ) Notification, 2019 and its annexure prohibit the destruction of



The petitioner prayed that ecologically sensitive areas be excluded from project areas. AFP

corals. Annexure I to the notification prohibits destruction of corals, coral reefs and surrounding areas and allows coral transplantation activities only when necessary for regeneration after obtaining permission under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Activities like dredging and discharge of ballast water are also prohibited in and around coral reefs.

“Even according to the MoEFCC, the HPC has only looked at the Zoological Survey of India’s (ZSI) proposal to translocate coral colonies, and has agreed with the recommendation of ZSI. The mandate of the law, the fact that coral reefs are protected and that their translocation is not permitted by law etc. have not even been considered by the HPC,” the submission said.

Importantly, the petitioner has pointed out that fringing coral reefs around the island have been marked clearly in the draft ICRZ coastal land use plans prepared under the 2019 notification but they are not there in the approved land use plans.

“Even according to the MoEFCC, the ZSI’s report itself states that 16,150 coral colonies need to be translocated due to the port project. The ICRZ Notification, 2019 does not permit such transplantation to facilitate or clear the area for a port...” it added.

It further claimed that the second aspect of TOR was also not met. “The MoEFCC and the HPC have failed to see that the requirement of comprehensive EIA, i.e., an EIA based on three season data collection, is mandated under the ICRZ Notification, 2019 and the EIA guidance manual itself requires data collection of more than one season...” it said, adding

that the survey of ecology and biology was conducted between December 14 and 22, 2020, and the survey of leatherbacks was conducted between February 12 and 18, 2021 and hence the season was not covered.

The third ToR was to “Review the boundaries of the port project with respect to ICRZ Notification, 2019.” The tribunal in its April 2023 verdict has observed that “it is also shown that part of the project is in the CRZ IA area where Port is prohibited.”

The 2019 notification lists mangroves, corals and coral reefs, biologically active mud flats, turtle nesting grounds, nesting grounds of birds as CRZ IA — ecologically sensitive areas. “It is submitted that coral reefs, turtle nesting sites, megapode (bird) nesting grounds, mangroves, etc. do not and cannot magically disappear to suit the convenience of the project proponent. It is shocking that the HPC has relied only on a report of the NCSCM, the consultant of the project proponent, to come to the conclusion that no part of the project area falls under CRZ IA,” the submission said.

The petitioner also prayed that ecologically sensitive areas be excluded from project areas.

“Unless this tribunal directs the exclusion of admitted CRZ IA areas such as coral reefs along the coast, turtle nesting grounds, megapode nesting grounds, biologically active mudflats etc. from the project area, they will be converted and destroyed,” it said.

The matter was heard by NGT’s eastern bench on July 24. People aware of the matter said additional solicitor general (ASG) Aishwarya Bhati submitted that the ministry did not violate any law and was aware of the sensitive nature of the island’s environment and has ensured that sustainable development is achieved while keeping in mind the strategic requirements to ensure national security.

The hearing was adjourned and the tribunal directed the MoEFCC to produce the revised layout which excludes all the CRZ-IA areas from the port, according to lawyers. The matter will be heard again on August 6.

ASG Bhati did not respond to HT’s request for a comment on whether the ministry will be making a submission on other concerns raised in the application.

## Jagan slams Naidu for ending farmer scheme

Press Trust of India  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**AMARAVATI:** YSRCP chief Jagan Mohan Reddy accused Andhra Pradesh chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu of “betraying farmers” by scrapping the Rythu Bharosa scheme, which provided investment support, and reneging on key pre-election promises.

“Naidu is once again betraying farmers by dismantling the Rythu Bharosa scheme and going back on his pre-election promises,” Reddy said in a post on X on Saturday night.

Citing the death of over 250 farmers by suicide, which he attributed to the government’s “declining support,” Reddy alleged even basic relief had not been extended to the affected



YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, N Chandrababu Naidu

families. He accused the administration of showing “inhumanity and a lack of empathy.”

Reddy’s criticism comes on a day the state government launched the Annadata Sukhibhava-PM Kisan scheme, aimed at extending financial assistance of ₹14,000 to each eligible farmer towards inputs cost for the commencement of agricultural operations.

## Delhi HC stays derecognition of 660 teacher training institutes

Sanjay Maurya  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** A total of 660 teacher education institutions (TEIs) of the 2,962 derecognised by the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), for failing to submit online performance appraisal reports (PARs) for 2021-22 and 2022-23, have secured an interim stay on the derecognition from Delhi high court, NCTE said.

The court order allows these institutions to participate in counselling and admit students for the 2025-26 academic session, NCTE said in its various notices, issued between July 23 and August 1, containing names of these institutes.

NCTE had set a final deadline of December 30, 2024, for PAR

## THE TEIs WERE DERECOGNISED BY NCTE FOR THEIR FAILURE TO SUBMIT ONLINE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL REPORTS (PARs)

submissions after two extensions, requiring institutions to provide faculty details, financial statements, and geo-tagged documents. In February 2025, it formed a five-member panel to recommend action against defaulters. After issuing show cause notices in March and April, NCTE derecognised 2,962 non-compliant institutions in April and May.

The court, in its July 14 order, had asked NCTE to issue public notices and upload the list of institutions on its website whose derecognition order has been stayed and permitted to admit students in academic session 2025-26.

“...the Hon’ble High Court of Delhi while staying the operation of the impugned withdrawal orders till the next date of hearing has also permitted the Petitioner institutions to participate in counselling and admit students for the academic session 2025-2026,” NCTE said in its notices. The next hearing in the matter is scheduled in the third week of August 2025.

NCTE officials refused to comment on the development stating that “matter is sub judice.”

## { KERALA } CASE REGISTERED

# Pastor threatened over charges of conversion

Press Trust of India  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**WAYANAD:** A case has been registered in Wayanad district of Kerala after a group of right-wing activists allegedly threatened a pastor over accusations of religious conversion, officials said on Sunday.

Officials said the incident is believed to have taken place a few months back, and the case was registered on Saturday based on a video circulated on social media platforms in this regard.

In the purported footage aired by local media, a group of people can be seen confronting the pastor and issuing threats of physical harm.

According to the FIR registered by the Sultan Bathy police, the accused had tried to threaten a person alleging religious conversion, videographed the incident, and circulated it on social media platforms with the intention of destroying the peaceful atmosphere existing in the society.

The case comes at a time when the state is witnessing an intense political row over the recent arrest and imprisonment of two Catholic nuns in BJP-ruled Chhattisgarh, alleging religious conversion and human trafficking. An NIA court released the two nuns, identified as Preethy Mary and Vandana Francis, on bail on Saturday.



Lt Col Prasad Purohit on his return to Pune on Sunday. PTI

## PUROHIT RECEIVES WARM RECEPTION IN PUNE DAYS AFTER ACQUITTAL IN '08 BLAST CASE

Press Trust of India  
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**PUNE:** Not even an enemy can question my patriotism and loyalty towards the nation, Lieutenant Colonel Prasad Purohit, acquitted in the 2008 Malegaon bomb blast case, said in Pune on Sunday amid a rousing welcome by kin and well-wishers as he arrived home.

A special Mumbai court on Thursday acquitted Purohit, former BJP MP Pragna Singh Thakur and five others who were accused of involvement in a blast that killed six and injured 101 in Malegaon in Nashik district on September 29 that year.

Outside Shantisheel Housing Society on Law College Road, where he lives, the military officer was mobbed by friends, family members, supporters, members of various right-wing organisations and others.

“I never imagined that I would get such a grand welcome from all of you. I am speechless and unable to gather my thoughts or express my feelings,” Purohit said, addressing the gathering. “One can only imagine the pain one endures when false allegations are levelled. But I never had any difficulty in facing them.”

Through all these years, my kin, friends and a huge number of well-wishers always stood by me, the Lt Colonel added.

“As a soldier, what I can say with conviction is that even an enemy can question my patriotism and loyalty towards the nation. During my submission (in court), I insisted that I be called anything but not atankwadi (terrorist) or deshdrohi (traitor),” he said.

## { KOLKATA }

# British-era sewerage system turns a corner with precise restoration

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**KOLKATA:** Amalendu Biswas, a retired government employee from central Kolkata, was often forced to miss work after a downpour as the lane in front of his house would be inundated till waist. “The scene was almost the same in [various] parts of Kolkata. Photos of boats at Bodyguard Lines in Alipore after a heavy downpour were published in every newspaper,” Biswas said.

However, in 2025, Kolkata’s over 150-year underground sewerage system has turned a corner, overcoming silt and neglect thanks to a mix of technology and targeted restoration. There was hardly any water logging in July, even as Kolkata received the second-highest rainfall for the month since 2010.

Mechanisation has helped in faster and more efficient desilting, which was previously done manually. The work, which started in 2007-08 was scaled up

in the last 10 years.

The India Meteorological Department’s regional meteorological centre (RMC) recorded 669 mm of rain this July, against a normal of 371 mm. RWC head HR Biswas said that there were at least three days of intense rain in July when Kolkata received over 80 mm of rainfall within hours.

Large parts of Kolkata would earlier get inundated after moderate (15-64 mm) or heavy rainfall (64-115mm). Some pockets were waterlogged even after light rainfall (up to 15 mm).

A Kolkata Police constable said there was hardly any waterlogging in Bodyguard Lines despite the heavy spells of rain in July. “Earlier, police personnel would need rubber boats to reach the office after a heavy downpour. Now, at max, there’s ankle-deep water after a heavy downpour, but even that recedes fast,” he said.

Over ₹5,000 crore was spent over the last 10 years on the project. Kolkata now has around



Kolkata now has around 2,800-3,000km of underground sewerage and drainage system. HT PHOTO

2,800-3,000km of underground sewerage and drainage system, with the new tunnels reinforced with concrete.

British engineer William Clark designed Kolkata’s underground brick sewerage system in 1855. The sewer system was installed between 1860 and 1875, the first such mechanism in Asia

and the world’s third, after London and Hamburg, to discharge rainwater up to 6mm per hour.

Kolkata Municipal Corporation’s (KMC) former principal chief engineer Nilangshu Bhusan Basu said the heavy siltation, which was hardly cleared for almost a century, reduced the sewer system’s hydraulic capacity.

“The century-old brickwork was also in poor shape and on the verge of collapse in some stretches,” Basu said.

He said the pumping stations were too old to handle the pressure. “The runoff reaching the sewers was increasing because of the destruction of wetlands, which once acted as a sponge. Even the city’s outfall canal system was heavily silted,” the former KMC official added.

KMC member mayor-in-council (drainage and sewerage) Tarak Singh said the civic body refurbished the system by desilting clogged sewers using new machinery. He added that a complete overhaul was out of the question as it would take years and thousands of crores. “We did a targeted intervention in vulnerable and waterlogging-prone areas,” he said.

Officials said digging up the entire system and laying new pipes was infeasible in a city with a density of over 24,300 people per sq km and a road space of around seven per cent.

The sewers were heavily clogged with blockages of 70%-90%. There was hardly any desilting.

KMC director general Santanu Kumar Ghosh said the civic body repaired the system. “The tunnels were lined with glass-reinforced polymer (GRP). It was smoother than the brick walls and ensured a faster flow of water. The fast-flowing water would help the sewer be desilted for a longer time,” he said.

The sewers were unclogged before the repair. Singh said around 36,500 MT (metric tonne) of silt was removed in 2014-15. “In 2024-25, it rose to 228,600 MT... In the last decade, KMC removed around 1.77 million MT of silt to unclog the system,” said Singh.

At least seven types of machines, including gully-pit emptier machines, jet-cum-suction machines and blow-vac machines, were used to remove the silt. Singh said the number of gully-pit emptier machines has increased to 40 from 15 in 2004-05, jet-cum-suction from

seven to 63, and blow vac from one to eight.

A KMC engineer said stretches needing repair and reinforcement are dried by pumping out the water. “The cleaning team then goes down after taking safety precautions. Machines are used to extract the silt. Once the stretch is unclogged, the tunnels are repaired and grouted to restore their classic egg shape,” the official said on anonymity.

Jadavpur University School of Water Resource Engineering professor Pankaj Kumar Roy called unclogging a mammoth task. “In some stretches, the silt had become hard like rock and had to be cut. Unclogging the sewers and reinforcing them with GRP gave the sewers a fresh lease of life,” Roy said.

A former KMC engineer said the sewers should be declared a heritage, calling it an engineering marvel. “The brickwork in most stretches still holds strong. It should be declared a heritage,” he said.



# Army officer assaults airline staffers at Srinagar, booked

**Ashiq Hussain**  
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**SRINAGAR:** The Jammu and Kashmir Police has registered a case against a senior army officer for allegedly assaulting four employees of SpiceJet airline at Srinagar airport following a disagreement over payment of extra baggage charges during boarding, officers said on Sunday. The army officer also filed a counter-complaint alleging assault, following which an FIR against the airline staffers has been registered by the police.

Meanwhile, the Indian army in a statement said it is fully cooperating with the authorities in the investigations into the case. Stating that it is aware of the incident, the army emphasised its commitment to high standards of discipline.

A first information report (FIR) under Section 115 (voluntarily causing hurt) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) has been registered against the army officer of lieutenant colonel rank posted in Kashmir following complaint from the private air-



A video of the incident was shared widely on social media. PTI

line, alleging that the officer "grievously assaulted" its employees at the boarding gate of flight SG-386 from Srinagar to Delhi on July 26, officers cited above said.

The incident was caught on camera and a video has been shared widely on social media showed the enraged army officer hitting several airline employees with an iron stand. HT could not independently verify the veracity of the video.

The airline issued a detailed statement about the incident,

saying one of the four victims of the assault had suffered spinal injuries. It added that it has initiated the process to place the passenger on the no-fly list in line with civil aviation regulations.

"Our staff members suffered a spinal fracture and serious jaw injuries after being attacked with punches, repeated kicks and a queue stand," the SpiceJet statement said. According to the airline, one employee fell unconscious on the floor, but the passenger continued kicking and hitting the victim.

"Another staff member suffered bleeding from the nose and mouth after receiving a forceful kick to the jaw while bending down to assist the colleague who had fainted," it added.

The airline said the passenger was carrying two pieces of cabin baggage weighing a total of 16 kg, more than double the permitted limit of 7 kg.

"When politely informed of the excess baggage and asked to pay the applicable charges, the passenger refused and forcefully entered the aerobridge without completing the boarding process — a clear violation of aviation security protocols. He was escorted back to the gate by a CISF official," the statement said, adding at the gate, the passenger grew increasingly aggressive.

It could not be immediately ascertained whether the passenger was detained at the airport after the incident.

Army spokesperson in Srinagar Lt Col MK Sahu acknowledged the incident. "There has been an incident and the police have registered an FIR. We are cooperating in the investiga-

tions," Sahu said.

Though the airline has not released the identity of the army officer involved, officers aware of the matter said that he was posted with army warfare school at Gulmarg.

In a statement, PRO (Defence), Srinagar said: "The matter involving an alleged altercation between an Army personnel and airline staff at Srinagar Airport on 26 July 2025 has come to the notice of the Indian Army. The Indian Army is committed to uphold highest standards of discipline and conduct and takes all allegations seriously. Full cooperation is being extended to the authorities in investigating the case."

The army officer has not yet been arrested, police said.

Station house officer, Budgam, Tauseef Ahmad said an FIR has been registered in the incident. "The investigation is going on," he added.

SpiceJet also said that it has initiated the process to place the passenger on the no-fly list in accordance with civil aviation regulations.

# ICMR's anti-malaria vax still 6-7 yrs away

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**NEW DELHI:** The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has invited an expression of interest for technology transfer to commercialise its anti-malaria vaccine candidate that it is developing in partnership with the department of biotechnology, even though the vaccine is likely to take at least six to seven years to be ready for use, according to people familiar with the matter.

According to the projected timeline, accessed by HT, the "Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) production and toxicology studies" will take approximately two years; "phase I clinical trial, including regulatory approval", will take another two years; "Phase 2b and Phase 3 clinical trials" will take approximately two and a half years; and post-trial regulatory clearance and licensing for marketing would take approximately six months. (Each stage includes a buffer period of ± six months.)

The recombinant chimeric multi-stage malaria vaccine (AdFalcivax) is being indigenously developed against plasmodium falciparum — the parasite that predominantly causes severe and fatal malaria, according to ICMR. "In early stages, the vaccine candidate looks useful in preventing plasmodium falciparum infection in humans and minimising its community transmission," it added.

Malaria continues to pose serious challenges to public health and economies, particularly in the tropical and subtropical regions around the world. According to data shared by the government, globally in 2023, there were almost 263 million estimated malaria cases in 83 malaria-endemic countries, an increase of 11 million cases compared with 2022. India accounted for half of all estimated malaria cases in the

## INDIA ACCOUNTED FOR HALF OF ALL ESTIMATED MALARIA CASES IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA REGION IN 2023, ACCORDING TO OFFICIAL DATA

South-East Asia region in 2023.

ICMR has invited applications from organisations, companies, and manufacturers from across the country.

"ICMR-Regional Medical Research Centre, Bhubaneswar (ICMR-RMRCBB)— one of the constituent institutes of ICMR has led development of a technology entitled 'A recombinant chimeric multi-stage malaria vaccine (AdFalcivax) against Plasmodium falciparum ... and ICMR-RMRCBB has technical know-how of process to produce this technology. The pre-clinical validation of this technology has been conducted in collaboration with ICMR-National Institute of Malaria Research (ICMR-NIMR), another constituent institutes of ICMR, and National Institute of Immunology (NII), New Delhi, an autonomous research institute of the department of biotechnology. Government of India," the ICMR invite said.

AdFalcivax is the first indigenous recombinant chimeric malaria vaccine specifically designed to target two critical stages of plasmodium falciparum. Country's biomedical research regulator, however, emphasised that the vaccine candidate is in its early research and development phases and is not yet available for any clinical use or commercialisation.

The vaccine has shown excellent efficacy in the preclinical stage of development, ICMR said in a statement. "Preclinical data suggest that AdFalcivax may have advantages over existing

single-stage vaccines (such as RTS,S/AS01 and R21/Matrix-M), including: Broader protection by targeting two vulnerable parasite stages; lower risk of immune evasion and potential for better long-term immunity; extended thermal stability with functionality maintained for over nine months at room temperature; and cost-effective formulation using pharmaceutically acceptable carriers," it added.

ICMR further said it intends to licence the technology for AdFalcivax to eligible organisations and manufacturers for further development, manufacture, and commercialisation under non-exclusive agreements. This approach aims to enable wider outreach and maximise public health benefits, and all collaborations will adhere to ICMR's intellectual property policy.

ICMR would provide technical support through its team of experienced scientists in study planning, product development, development of study protocol, results or data analysis, outcome assessment, safety and efficacy assessment, product improvement, etc. "Subsequent to the execution of the agreement such companies/manufacturers shall be responsible to pay the Royalty @ 2% on Net sales, as applicable, according to the ICMR Guidelines for Technology Development Collaboration," it said.

It added that the introduction and rollout of malaria vaccines, such as RTS,S and R21/Matrix-M, have shown promise in reducing disease incidence, particularly among young children in high-burden areas. While significant progress has been made in combating malaria, the global burden remains substantial. In order to address the malaria elimination goal, an improved vaccine with better efficacy needs to induce protection against infection in human hosts as well as block or reduce transmission to the mosquito vector.

## TOP TRUMP AIDE ACCUSES INDIA OF FUNDING RUSSIA'S WAR IN UKRAINE

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**WASHINGTON:** A top aide to US President Donald Trump on Sunday accused India of effectively financing Russia's war in Ukraine by purchasing oil from Moscow, after the US leader escalated pressure on New Delhi to stop buying Russian oil.

"What he (Trump) said very clearly is that it is not acceptable for India to continue financing this war by purchasing the oil from Russia," said Stephen Miller, deputy chief of staff at the White House and one of most influential aides of Trump.

Miller's criticism was some of the strongest yet by the Trump administration about one of the United States' major partners in the Indo-Pacific.

"People will be shocked to learn that India is basically tied with China in purchasing Russian oil. That's an astonishing fact," Miller said on Fox News' "Sunday Morning Futures."

The Indian Embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Indian government sources told Reuters on Saturday that New Delhi will keep purchasing oil from Moscow despite US threats.

A 25% tariff on Indian products went into effect on Friday as a result of its purchase of military equipment and energy from Russia.

Trump has also threatened 100% tariffs on US imports from countries that buy Russian oil unless Moscow reaches a major peace deal with Ukraine.

Miller tempered his criticism by noting Trump's relationship with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which he described as "tremendous."

{ INCLUDING INDIA-PAK CONFLICT }

## Trump repeats claim he settled wars with trade

**Press Trust of India**  
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**NEW YORK/WASHINGTON:** US President Donald Trump on Sunday yet again took credit for stopping conflicts around the world, including the recent one between India and Pakistan.

Since May 10, when Trump announced on social media that India and Pakistan had agreed to a "full and immediate" ceasefire after a "long night" of talks mediated by Washington, he has repeated his claim several times.

Trump's latest claim comes days after White House Press



Donald Trump

Secretary Karoline Leavitt said Trump should be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for ending several conflicts around the world including the one between India and Pakistan.

On Sunday, in a post on Truth

Social, Trump slammed radio host and author Charlamagne Tha God, and said he (God) knows nothing about him or what he has done, "like just ending 5 Wars, including a 31 year bloodbath between Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, where Seven Million people have died, and there was no end in sight." "He didn't know that, or India and Pakistan or, wiping out Iran's nuclear capabilities, or closing the horrendous open Border, or creating the greatest economy," Trump said.

Just a day earlier, Trump said in an interview on Newsmax

that he has settled a lot of wars.

"You take a look at what's happened just over the last little while. We've settled a lot of, a lot of very beautiful wars have been settled... One of the wars India, Pakistan, nuclear," Trump said adding that he settled conflict between Thailand and Cambodia, and Congo and Rwanda.

"I settled that up. And I settled it up with trade. I settled a lot of them with trade. I said 'listen, you guys are going to fight...I mean, just fight your hearts out. But we're not doing a trade deal. All of a sudden they end up not doing a war,'" he said.

{ GREENPIECE }

## Delhi sets a precedent for public participation

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**NEW DELHI:** The Delhi government wanted to set up 150 air purifiers at the popular Nehru Park in South Delhi's Chankyapuri, and sought public responses over the project. I don't know about the government, but I was surprised by the public response.

The survey revealed that around 38% of voters only wanted trees in the park and 13% of them gave a firm no. Hence, 51% rejected the plan. The Delhi government then dropped the project as it wanted at least 80% in favour to go ahead with it.

This is a big step by the Delhi government. It is known that, in many cases, public participation is part of the solution. It is also important for a neglected city like Delhi to mobilise public opinion to find solutions that people can enable.

I'm not suggesting all pollution prevention solutions be

based on public opinion because it can often exclude marginal populations or be based on poor information. Yet, it is in the best public interest when the government treats the public as a partner.

The scientific evidence shows smog towers are not impactful in reducing air pollution. The data was widely debated, possibly pushing this response. The ₹23 crore smog tower at Connaught Place reduced AQI by just 17% in a tiny radius of 100 meters. Some estimates are Delhi needs at least 40,000 smog towers, each very expensive to operate.

The 131 non-attainment cities across India now have a model they can discard — the smog towers. And a model they must embrace — having the guts to ask the public and listen to its voice. Not easy, but a great step forward.

(The writer is the founder and director of Chintan Environmental Research and Action Groups)

## Day after girl dies due to burn injuries, Cong, BJD slam Odisha cops

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**BHUBANESWAR:** A day after the 15-year-old girl of Odisha's Puri district succumbed to her burn injuries at AIIMS Delhi, opposition parties on Sunday attacked the police for its statement that "no other person" was involved in setting the teenager on fire.

Police officers in Odisha familiar with the matter said that the post-mortem examination was conducted on the girl at AIIMS Delhi, and the body is likely to reach the state around 8pm. Preparations are going on in the village for the burial.

The girl was allegedly kidnapped and set ablaze on the banks of Bhargavi River in Puri district on July 19. With 70% burns, the teenager was airlifted to AIIMS-Delhi the next day but died on Saturday.

Hours after her death, police said in a post on X: "...According to the investigation conducted

so far, it is clear that no other person is involved..."

Opposition Congress and BJD, however, lambasted the state government and "rejected" the police statement that no other person was involved in setting the girl on fire.

Opposition chief whip in the Odisha Assembly and BJD leader Pramila Mallik said, "The police got slippers and a plastic bottle carrying an inflammable substance from the spot of crime, but they failed to nab the culprits. This is not acceptable."

State Mahila Congress president Meenakshi Bahinipati asked, "If the victim was capable of giving statements and recovering well, how did she die suddenly? The victim initially said that three people abducted her, but how did the narrative change?"

BJP spokesperson Manoj Mohapatra, meanwhile, alleged that the BJD and Congress are engaged in "vulture politics."

## SIT asks Dharmasthala 'burial witness' to file police complaint

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**BENGALURU:** The special investigation team (SIT) probing the Dharmasthala mass burial allegations has asked a man claiming to have witnessed the illegal burial of a teenage girl's decomposed body to lodge a formal complaint with the local police. SIT officials said the team can only begin its investigation once a case is registered at the jurisdictional police station.

A senior officer said, "The SIT is not a police station. We cannot take direct complaints. We investigate based on cases filed with the local police and then record statements."

The witness, Jayanth, a 48-year-old social activist from Ichlampady village in Puttur taluk, met with SIT officials on August 2. He was asked to return Monday to file a formal complaint.

Speaking to reporters, Jayanth said, "I have seen that girl's body, and it was buried without following any legal procedures. I know the spot where her body was buried. I do not know whether the girl was murdered, but her body was in a slightly decomposed state."



Skeletal remains have been recovered from one of the eight identified sites. PTI

He claimed the burial occurred 15 years ago and alleged that fear had kept many from speaking out. "Few more people will come forward to share similar disturbing experiences in the coming days before the SIT," he said.

Jayanth also told a local news channel that he is related to Padmalatha, a woman whose body was found nearly two months after she went missing in December 1986. "We have not got justice for the murder of Padmalatha in the past. So we had lost faith in this system.

Now, as an SIT has been formed to investigate the old case, we have gained faith. So I am filing a complaint. I am a witness to the girl being buried," he said.

The SIT was formed after a former sanitation worker alleged he was forced to bury multiple bodies in Dharmasthala, including those of women and girls who may have been sexually assaulted.

Skeletal remains have so far been recovered from one of the eight sites identified, with excavation ongoing at five more locations.

# Urban India turns to Artificial Intelligence to manage civic woes

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**NEW DELHI:** As India is poised to be the third-largest global economy, its cities, too, have undergone a steady makeover from their colonial aesthetics to a more modern avatar dotted with taller buildings, metro rails, and flyovers. However, one thing that has remained from the bygone era is the occasional appearance of stray cattle in the hustle and bustle of busy streets, and slowing down traffic movement. Worse, they cause deadly accidents.

While the problem is ancient, the city administration in Surat has deployed a modern solution of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to counter this menace.

The civic body uses an AI algorithm developed by National Institute of Technology (NIT) Surat to analyse the live video feed from cameras installed at major junctions in the city to detect stray cattle, said Jigan Patel, director of information technology at Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC).

"The alert is not issued when cattle are accompanied by a herder. But, whenever stray cattle are spotted, an alert is generated

with a timestamp and location," he said, adding that control room officials inform the on-ground dedicated municipal staff for catching stray cattle, who impound them.

Based on the directives of the Gujarat high court, SMC, in 2023, rolled out a free RFID tagging programme containing details of their owners for bovines before implementing a strict anti-stray cattle policy since November that year. The fine amounts increase progressively for repeat offenders, as part of a state law passed in the assembly in 2022 following the same high court directions.

So far, 1,545 incidents of stray cattle have been detected, with ₹18.4 lakh recovered as penalties. The same system is used by the city to detect incidents of littering and spitting, SMC commissioner Shalini Agarwal said that this technology-enabled monitoring has helped the city to achieve a high ranking in the central government's Swachh Survekshan.

Patel explained that offenders of spitting are often identified using their vehicle numbers detected through the ANPR (automatic number plate recognition) systems. He said so far, 12,120 challans for spitting and 35,382



The Smart City Mission and Safe City project has mainstreamed the use of AI-based integrated traffic management systems. HT PHOTO

incidents of garbage throwing were detected through this system, leading to the collection of ₹719 lakh and ₹18.4 lakh as penalties, respectively.

Just like the age-old problem of stray cattle and encroachments, another issue that plagues Indian cities is that of unaccounted loss of water or non-revenue water (NRW), primarily due to leaks in the water supply network. While globally, NRW stands at 30%, in India, many Indian cities report NRW as high as 50%. The Economic Survey of Delhi 2023-24 found that about 58% of the water produced by the Delhi Jal Board is

classified as NRW.

However, in Pune, over the last two years, several AI-enabled digital twin solutions have been applied to improve the situation.

An official with a major industrial conglomerate tasked with the revamp of the city's water supply said, as part of a trial, the company's solution was deployed in the Panchawati zone with a piped water network of around 10km. "By using the system, we could find leakages in our network and illegal users, which have now brought our NRW to 25% currently. We are aiming for further efficiency and bringing it

down to 20%," the official said on anonymity. Based on the success in Panchawati, the system will be deployed in 15 other zones.

The digital twin works on data from sensors in the water supply network to create a virtual replication of the water supply network. The AI/ML models process the live data of the sensors, pumping stations, and analyse the household water consumption information to detect leakages and unauthorised usage.

The Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) is also working on expanding an AI-based system to detect unregistered or illegal constructions by using a GIS (Geographic Information Systems)-based system and comparing it with property tax data, an official said.

Another city in Maharashtra, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar (formerly Aurangabad), has developed an AI-based chatbot — which works in Marathi and English — for its official website to cater to queries raised by residents.

Faiz Ali, project manager at Aurangabad Smart City, said the chatbot, unlike FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) based bots, is based on various e-governance

modules covering the issuance of birth and death certificates, department-related grievance redressal systems, and making property tax and water bill payment systems user-friendly. He said any complaint addressed to the chatbot or the city's 155304 helpline is automatically sent an SMS acknowledgement stating a timeline. On the backend, the complaint is tagged to the line department official.

If the complaint is left unaddressed within two weeks, then the AI-based system flags it for the city commissioner, who reviews the unresolved complaints regularly, Ali said.

In Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur, the city administration is using a 3D model system of the entire city area spanning 264 sq km, which is then compared with new imagery gathered through drone-based aerial surveys every five years. "Using the system, we can get accurate information on the expansion of buildings. In the latest revision ending March 2024, we found that there were additional structures in more than 20% of the properties," an official aware of the details said on anonymity, stating this led to an additional property tax collection of

₹30 crore.

While these cities have taken a lead in leveraging AI for different use cases, the Centre's Smart City Mission and Safe City project has mainstreamed the use of AI-based integrated traffic management systems (ITMS) and surveillance systems. The ITMS systems have AI-based applications to detect red light violations, helmetless usage of two-wheelers or triple riding, wrong-way driving, among others, and identify violators through ANPR. These systems have been incorporated by all tier I cities and many tier 2 cities.

Similarly, the Safe City project has cameras equipped with facial recognition technology to flag the presence of wanted suspects. New Delhi is soon expected to have an additional 3,500 AI-enabled cameras, along with 200 gunshot detection systems, from October 1 under the same project.

While the number of cameras installed increases, their maintenance and usage have come under scrutiny, even during the recent tragic incident involving the death of a Delhi University student, Sneha Deb Nath. It was widely reported that a series of cameras in and around the Signa-

ture Bridge was non-functional.

In the week leading up to the incident, HT reported how Delhi's Public Works Department (PWD) had found many of the existing cameras defunct or in need of urgent repair, while some of the previously acquired cameras were yet to be installed.

Debolina Kundu, acting director at National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) — a think-tank of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), said AI and ML are vital for predictive analytics that can not only improve service delivery, but also manage disaster risks.

In that line, she said under the CITIIS (city investments to innovate, integrate and sustain) 2.0 programme, 21 city-level climate observatories are being set up where real-time pollution and weather data among other datasets will be used along with historical weather data to predict localised weather forecasts and disaster reduction measures. "Integration of different layers of live and historical data is important for this," she said. Smart city command centres also have a large amount of data that can be further cultivated to gather actionable insights, Kundu added.



1



# BJP has never stayed silent on Prajwal rape case: Union min

**HTC and agencies**  
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**HUBBALLI:** Union minister Pralhad Joshi on Sunday said the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was never silent on former JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna, who got life imprisonment in a rape case, noting that the party has always maintained that whoever commits a crime should be punished.

"There is a law in the country and whoever has done mistake or has committed crime, the court has examined and court has given the verdict. It has to be accepted by everybody," he said.

When he was told that Congress leaders were alleging that the BJP was keeping mum on the issue because of its alliance with the JD(S), he said, "Where have we kept mum and why we have to keep mum? I have already spoken on it. If somebody does something wrong he has to face action."

Joshi's comments come a day after Revanna was sentenced to life imprisonment for raping a 48-year-old woman, who was employed as a domestic worker at his family's Hassan farmhouse.



Pralhad Joshi

The court had, on August 1, convicted the 34-year-old grandson of former Prime Minister and JD(S) patriarch H D Deve Gowda in one of the four sexual abuse and rape cases against him.

**Forensics, testimony helped secure conviction**

According to officials from the special investigation team (SIT) of Karnataka Police, which probed the case, and the court's order, investigators secured Revanna's conviction using forensics and the rape survivor's testimony despite the absence of direct visual proof linking him to the incident.

"The survivor stood like a rock. The defence tried every possible way to derail the proceedings, but she never

wavered even during grueling eight hour cross examinations," SIT chief BK Singh said, adding the survivor was "fundamental to the case and trial."

The video evidence in the case showed only the survivor, and Revanna's face was not visible.

To establish his identity, the SIT turned to forensic studies from Turkey and Japan that describe how physical characteristics of hands and genitals can be matched to confirm a suspect's involvement. "This method is commonly used in cases involving child abuse videos where the offender is not fully visible," said an officer involved in the probe on condition of anonymity.

Upon his arrest in May 2024, Revanna allowed general medical tests but refused to have images of his body taken.

Once judicial permission was granted, doctors photographed him. Investigators found ten identifiable marks on his body that matched those in the video, a senior SIT official said on anonymity.

A voice sample was also matched to the audio heard in the recording, the official added.

# ASSAM MAN DIES AFTER BEING 'BEATEN UP' BY BSF PERSONNEL

**NEW DELHI:** A 30-year-old man died after allegedly being beaten up by Border Security Force (BSF) personnel in Cachar district of Assam, triggering protests by locals, an official said on Sunday.

The incident took place on Friday night near the India-Bangladesh border in Katigorah, and the man succumbed to his injuries at a hospital on Saturday, the official was quoted as saying by news agency PTI.

"An allegation against BSF was raised that a youth, identified as Nirmol Namasudra, of Amtoli village in the border area, died on Saturday after being severely beaten up by a few BSF jawans a day ago. The BSF personnel took him to a local hospital on Friday night," the official said on anonymity.

"Although the administration took some steps to control the situation in Katigorah, tension prevailed with locals assembling at the circle office and demanding the arrest of the BSF personnel."

He, however, said no complaint has been filed by the family of the deceased and no case has been registered yet. The BSF could not be reached for comment on the allegation. **PTI**

**PACE NEWS** | Hindustan Times MEDIA MARKETING INITIATIVE

**Mount Abu Public School Celebrates Annual Appreciation Day 2025**

Mount Abu Public School, Sector 5, Rohini, celebrated its Annual Appreciation Day 2025 with great pride at the auditorium of Shaheed Sukhdev College of Business Studies. The event honoured student excellence across academics, innovation, arts, sports, and global exchange. Ravindra Indraraj Singh, Hon'ble Minister of Social Welfare, SC & ST Welfare, Cooperative and Election, Govt. of NCT Delhi, graced the occasion as Chief Guest. Applauding the school's dedication to value-based education, he remarked, "Every sincere effort, when rooted in dedication, creates lasting impact." Awardees received trophies, certificates, and saplings under the "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" initiative—promoting environmental sensitivity in alignment with Hon'ble PM Narendra Modi vision of sustainable living. Principal Dr. Jyoti Arora highlighted the school's holistic approach, encompassing international collaborations, innovation, health campaigns, and character building. She thanked parents for their continued support in shaping responsible global citizens. The celebration was a vibrant reflection of Mount Abu School's commitment to excellence, empathy, and environmental stewardship.

**Modern School, Vasant Vihar Launches Coffee Table Book 'Heritage to Horizon: 1975 to 2025 and Beyond'**

As part of its historic Golden Jubilee celebrations, Modern School, Vasant Vihar launched a landmark coffee table book 'Heritage to Horizon: 1975 to 2025 and Beyond' chronicling the illustrious 50-year journey of academic excellence, innovation, and transformative education. This meticulously curated publication serves as a testament to the school's enduring legacy since its establishment in 1975. Through nostalgic visuals, archival photographs, and compelling narratives, the book captures the evolution of the institution — tracing its rise from a visionary foundation to becoming one of the capital's premier centres of learning. The unveiling ceremony was attended by Members, Board of Trustees, Modern Schools, Members, Managing Committees, eminent alumni, dignitaries, former and present faculty members, and distinguished guests, all of whom have played a pivotal role in shaping the school's remarkable trajectory. The book captures not only the milestones and memories that define Modern School, Vasant Vihar, but also the ideals and values that continue to guide its path forward. This commemorative volume stands as a tribute to generations of students, educators, and visionaries who have contributed to the school's unparalleled legacy. It is both a celebration of the past and an inspiration for the future.

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**Springdales School, Pusa Road Opens Annual Knowledge Week with HT Lit Fest Preview**

Springdales School, Pusa Road inaugurated their annual Knowledge Week for the students from Nursery to Std XII. In collaboration with Hindustan Times, the event was also marked by celebrating the Annual Literature Fest. The theme for this year "Beyond Boundaries: Exploring, Engaging and Innovating" would be reflected in various workshops and activities during the entire week emphasizing the spirit of discovery and progress that transcends boundaries through curiosity, collaboration, and creativity. Principal, Dr. Mala Gupta and the renowned author Sutapa Basu inaugurated the celebratory week by lighting the lamp and the opening of the book of knowledge as the choir rendered a soulful invocation. Students responded with enthusiasm. Aashvi Lall, Class 6, shared, "Writing needs time and hard work. Commit yourself and work towards it." Class 12 student Yug Dargan reflected, "As a new author, it's reassuring to know that the mistakes I make are common—even seasoned writers go through them." The keynote speaker Basu spoke about the importance of reading and connected with the students through her pertinent speech. Principal, Dr. Mala Gupta praised the story writing efforts of the students under the guidance of Sutapa Basu and urged students to reflect, celebrate, and engage meaningfully. Basu shared with the audience vital techniques of story-telling. "When we discussed techniques of writing such as plot, character, setting or conflict, I could see the participants' imaginations working double time. They were already creating stories in their minds. I suppose that is the reason so many wonderful plot ideas were submitted by them for the Story Contest." This was more than a story writing session; it was a session on 'The Art of Writing Stories'.

**KIIT World School, Delhi Presents Research Papers at CBSE STEM DLD Workshop**

Three teachers from K-IIT World School, Delhi, presented their research papers at the CBSE STEM DLD Workshop held at K-IIT World School, Sohna Road. The workshop served as an excellent platform for educators and researchers to come together, exchange ideas, and explore new developments in education and technology. The teachers shared their work on three significant themes: AI for Social Good, Design Thinking, and AI in Mathematics. Each presentation highlighted practical ways to make learning more relevant, creative, and impactful for students. The paper on AI for Social Good explored how artificial intelligence can be used to address social challenges and contribute positively to communities. The session on Design Thinking emphasised the importance of a human-centred, solution-focused approach to problem-solving in classrooms. Meanwhile, the presentation on AI in Mathematics discussed methods to make mathematical concepts more engaging and accessible through the use of AI. It also reflects their dedication to preparing students for an ever-changing world by staying updated with the latest educational practices.

**3 held for poisoning water in K'taka school**

**Police said the three accused intended to implicate the headmaster by causing a health crisis among students**

**Hirekop Rajan Samuel**  
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**BELAGAVI:** Three people, including the leader of a Hindu right-wing group, have been arrested for allegedly poisoning the drinking water tank of a government school in Belagavi district of Karnataka in an effort to oust the school's Muslim headmaster, officials said.

The incident came to light on July 20 when 11 students from the Kannada medium government school in Huliakatti village of Belagavi fell ill and were hospitalised. During a probe into the matter, it came to light that pesticide was mixed with the school's drinking water tank, police said.

On August 1, three people, identified as Sagar Patil, Krishna Madar, and Magangouda Patil, were detained by police. During interrogation, the accused confessed to plotting a conspiracy to contaminate the school's drinking water supply in an effort to transfer the school's Muslim headmaster.

Belagavi superintendent of police (SP) Bhimashankar Gulead said the accused intended to implicate the headmaster by causing a health crisis among students. "Sagar Patil, the Sava-

datti taluk president of (Hindu right-wing group) Sri Ram Sena, wanted the Muslim headmaster to face serious charges leading to his transfer," Gulead said at a press conference on Saturday.

According to Gulead, the three accused allegedly purchased pesticide from a shop in Muna-valli village on July 18. To execute the plan, the accused roped in a student related to Patil and offered him ₹500 and snacks to mix the pesticide into the school's water tank.

To prevent the child from identifying the substance, the pesticide was transferred into a plastic soft drink bottle. After mixing it into the tank, the boy discarded the bottle nearby, the SP said, adding that the bottle was a key piece of evidence that helped investigators uncover the crime.

Police then traced the pesticide back to the point of purchase and, based on the shopkeeper's account, detained the three accused. During interrogation, they confessed to the conspiracy and were arrested, Gulead said.

The accused have been booked under section 123 (causing hurt by means of poison) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), and have since been remanded to judicial custody.

Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah condemned the incident, describing it as a "heinous act" rooted in communal hatred.

In a post on X, he said, "Religious fundamentalism and communal hatred can lead to heinous acts, and this incident, which could have resulted in the massacre of innocent children, is a testament to that."

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{ OUR TAKE }

# The measure of justice

Time-bound probe and completion of trial, as in the Prajwal Revanna rape case, is essential to build trust in the rule of law

The conviction and sentencing of Prajwal Revanna, a former Member of Parliament (MP) and the scion of a powerful political family in Karnataka, is significant for multiple reasons. First, the life sentence in the first of the four rape and sexual harassment cases against Prajwal Revanna, whose grandfather was a former PM, the father a former senior minister in Karnataka, and an uncle multiple times the CM of Karnataka, will, hopefully, send out a strong message to the powerful and influential in society that no one is above the law, and that the law will catch up with the guilty at some point in time. Prajwal Revanna, 34, has been convicted of raping a maid employed at his family residence multiple times, recording the act, and then blackmailing her with the videos. His immediate family, including his mother, has been accused of kidnapping the woman who chose to call out the young politician's crimes. The woman deposed before police under enormous pressure, including alleged threats to life, and courageously stuck to her deposition in court. Second, the probe and trial were completed in just over a year after the woman filed her complaint. Sure, the matter was heard by a special sessions court set up to hear complaints against former and present legislators, as mandated by the Supreme Court. Time-bound probe and a speedy trial — proceedings were held uninterrupted, unlikely in most proceedings that get endlessly delayed due to frequent interruptions and postponements — can help avoid problems such as probe documents disappearing and witnesses turning hostile, especially when the accused are wealthy and powerful individuals, and offer closure to victims.

Three, delayed and prolonged trials increase the cost of justice, and the process becomes a punishment for the complainants, especially when the latter come from the underprivileged sections of society, as in the Prajwal Revanna case. We regularly witness cases collapse in court, including in sensational terror cases, when investigators fail to secure crucial documents and records, and witnesses refuse to back their previous testimonies, as trials crawl for years. The forensics and other evidence gathered against Prajwal Revanna will be contested in higher courts. But a beginning has been made, which will assure the complainants in other cases too — trials are still to begin in two other rape cases — that they can trust the process and the system. That is no small victory for the rule of law — and the law-abiding citizen.

# Making school fee regulation work

Delhi's draft legislation to regulate fees charged by private unaided schools is a recognition of some realities of the school education landscape in the national capital. First, given private unaided schools' share of student strength (almost 40%, as per UDISE+ data), they are a critical pillar of school education in the national capital territory (NCT). So, some degree of oversight is needed. Second, grievances around fee-setting and hikes have found groundswell over the past few years, making policy intervention by the government necessary. Claims of arbitrariness in these decisions came against the backdrop of 15-18% annual hikes announced by some schools charging six-figure fees. Defined metrics for deciding fees, along with a rulebook on compliance and penalty — as prescribed by the Bill — could help address the issue. And third, there was a need for parent participation in fee decisions so that the concerns of this stakeholder group don't go unheard and unheeded. The Bill provides for parents' representation in the fee committees — in the first two tiers of a three-tiered system. The proposed regime must ensure it doesn't curtail schools' autonomy to the extent that it significantly impacts their operations. The criticism of the proposed 15% threshold for impacted parent numbers when it comes to challenging a school-level fee committee decision needs to be weighed against this tenet. The concerns of both parties — parents and school management — have to be heard. It is only a robust government school system — in terms of density, enrolment, outcomes delivered, student diversity, and teacher/pedagogy quality — that can bring about this balance. Private schools have to be an option available to students, not the only alternative to underperforming government schools. Competition in education must include public schools also to check the tendency for profiteering.

{ STRAIGHTFORWARD }

Shashi Shekhar



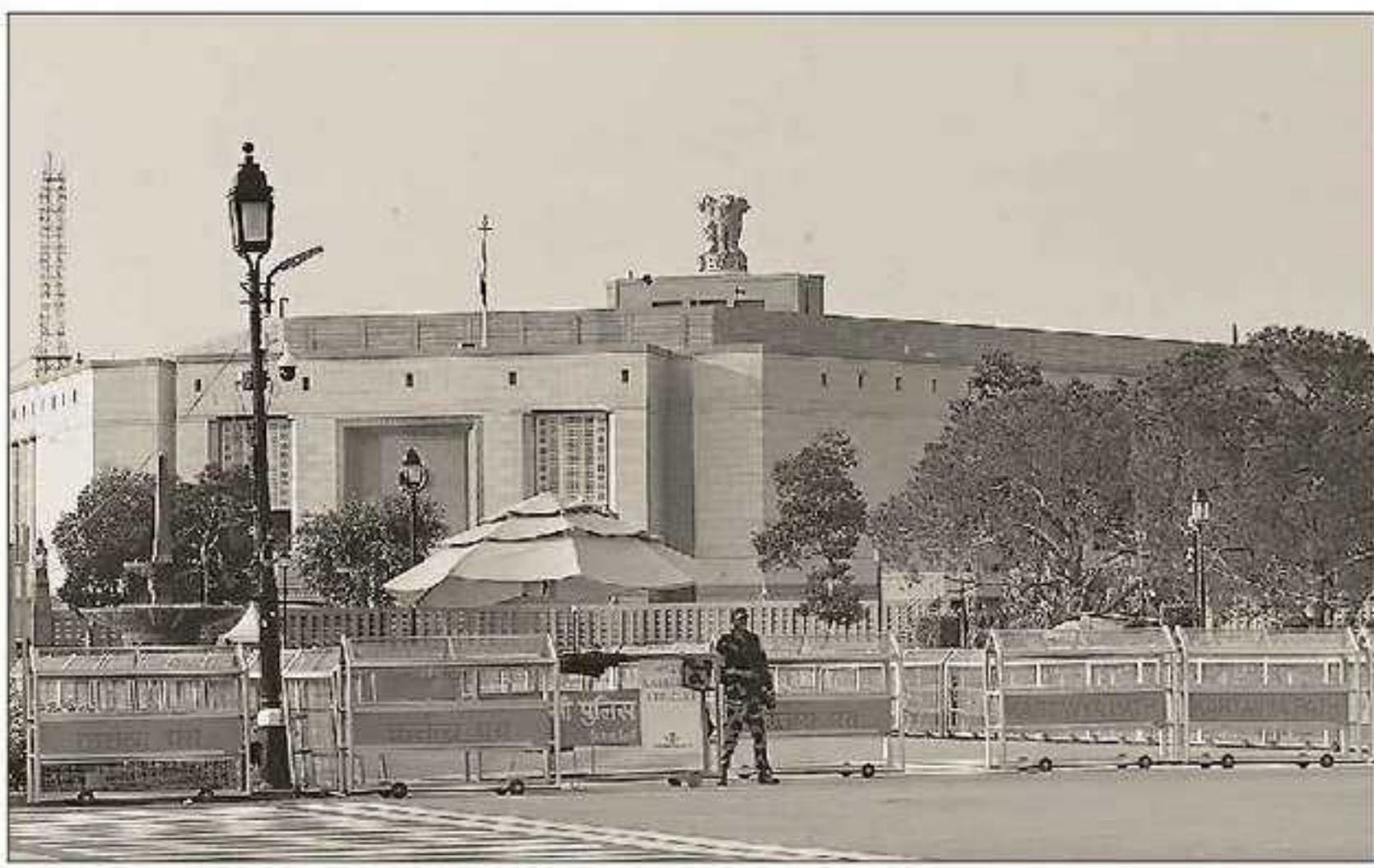
# When politics reeks of bitterness, misconduct

From events in Parliament to the ruckus over the Election Commission's actions, there are reasons to worry

Eleven days from now, India will be celebrating its 78th Independence Day. Eight decades is a long enough time to take stock of our democracy and polity. Are we moving in the right direction? Are today's politicians working towards strengthening our democracy as envisioned by the founding fathers of the Republic? What better way to celebrate the approaching Independence Day than to seek answers to these probing queries? Let's address the first question. Have a look at the debate over Operation Sindoor. Indians were hoping for the ruling party to put all the facts in the public domain while the Opposition would articulate its criticism and chip in with constructive suggestions. However, what unfolded was completely different. The Opposition got a fair chance to put their views forward in both houses. The ruling dispensation showcased all their facts, but the entire exercise fell far short of clearing the doubts assailing the minds of

the citizens. We, as citizens, have some basic expectations from our Parliament. It should not be reduced to an arena of vote politics. Unfortunately, that's become the norm now. I have been a student of parliamentary debates. Our politics has been steadily degenerating. Bitterness has seeped into it, and politicians speak irresponsibly. Political parties of every hue are equally responsible for it. Even before the debate started, the first week of the monsoon session was a wash-out due to vice-president Jagdeep Dhankhar's surprise resignation. The media corridors were rattled by Dhankhar's resignation bomb at the end of the first day of the monsoon session. Political developments that day unfolded like a suspense thriller. No one could figure out the climax till the very end. In the morning, he came as usual to the Rajya Sabha, conducted its proceedings, and met leaders from the treasury benches and the Opposition. In the afternoon, he met BJP president JP Nadda and parliamentary affairs minister Kiren Rijju. It seems the talks couldn't be concluded, so another meeting was convened in the evening. Nadda and Rijju didn't attend, but the minister of State for parliamentary affairs, L Murugan, was present. What transpired in the afternoon meeting? Why didn't the senior minis-

ters attend the evening meeting? Was there any difference of opinion between them and Dhankhar? Did the vice-president resign on his own? Or was he forced to quit? What will Dhankhar's next move be? Will he follow in the footsteps of former Jammu and Kashmir governor Satya Pal Malik? Or will he quietly bow out? Queries, conjectures, and concerns remain. It seems we are turning into a democracy that's bogged down in a maze of uncertain, dubious, and unnecessary debates. Dhankhar came into the limelight when he was made the governor of West Bengal. From the moment he entered the Raj Bhawan, he trained his guns on the chief minister, Mamata Banerjee. His words and deeds didn't go down well with those who preferred political propriety. This was the reason when he was made the vice-president, his detractors thought he had been rewarded for what he did in West Bengal, as Banerjee is considered the BJP's prime foe. As vice-president, it was his responsibility to conduct Rajya Sabha proceedings fairly and impartially. The way he conducted the proceedings in his early days raised many eyebrows. Accusations were levelled against him, but he was unfazed. Those opposed to the BJP said he was doing all this as he had



We, as citizens, have some basic expectations from our Parliament. It should not be reduced to an arena of vote politics. ARVIND YADAV/HT

an eye on the President's post. Initially, people were surprised by his sudden exit, but there's very little sympathy for him now. Unfortunately, such unpleasant incidents are growing. Look at the recently concluded session of the Bihar Assembly. It was the last session of the current term, a time to say polite goodbyes and warm wishes for the journey ahead. But it too degenerated into a mudslinging fest peppered with debased language, creating situations where it felt as if the leaders would come to blows. Bihar will go to the polls later this year, and the elections may turn into an ugly battle of bitterness and allegations. The Election Commission of India (ECI) undertook a special intensive revision of the electoral roll. The Opposition alleges it's a conspiracy to delete their voters from the list. The ECI didn't budge. Chief election commissioner Gyanesh Kumar curtly retorted: Should the ECI list the dead and foreigners in the roll? The Supreme Court also questioned the timing of the revision. The Opposition had alleged something completely different during the Maharashtra assembly elections. It's not

clear who's right or wrong, but it's clear that those gracing constitutional posts are more interested in confrontation than building consensus. Let's address the second question. Are we heading in the right direction? At a time of ever-expanding hate and the normalisation of debased language and political misconduct, it would be tough to suggest that our journey ahead will be smooth. Political parties have devoted decades to creating linguistic, regional and social divides instead of bridging them. They have conveniently forgotten that the growing divides can drown them as well. Dhankhar is only its latest victim. Let's address the third question. The future is shaped by the present; the actions of today build the foundations of a new order. That's the law of nature. If so, can anyone bet confidently on the future when the present is roiled by discontent, inconsistency, incongruity and apprehension?

Shashi Shekhar is the editor-in-chief, Hindustan. The views expressed are personal.

{ GRAND STRATEGY }

Happymon Jacob



# Misunderstanding India's advocacy for multipolarity

A growing number of liberal American geopolitical analysts and Donald Trump, whom they despise, have a few things in common — they are opposed to India's relationship with Russia, its association with BRICS, and advocacy for multipolarity. Trump's criticism of India is sharp and direct, of course. The Trump presidency will end in another three-and-a-half years, but this rare consensus in Washington DC, on India's search for multipolarity will remain. This is something, therefore, Indian strategic thinkers must reflect on. Put differently, with or without Trump around, India's advocacy for multipolarity will continue to haunt New Delhi, particularly given the structural transformations underway in the international system today. Let's begin by unpacking some important aspects of multipolarity, given its many layers of complexity and ambiguity. First, notwithstanding the general perception about the virtues of multipolarity, it is becoming somewhat clear that a multipolar world is not as pretty as we had imagined it to be. Even the imperfect multipolarity that we have today — with poles of various sizes and influence competing for power — seems messy, incoherent, confusing and hard to navigate. If this is what a system that is not even really multipolar looks like, what will a true multipolar system look like? Second, notwithstanding the messy nature of the quasi-multipolar order today, New Delhi remains committed to a multipolar world. The desire for multipolarity is deeply entrenched in India's tradition of non-alignment, which is one of the first principles of Indian foreign policy. When faced with a difficult choice, the first strategic instinct of political New Delhi is to be non-aligned, neutral, and multi-aligned. Mostly in that order. I would not view that as strategic escapism. It is very much part of the DNA of Indian foreign policy. It would also be wrong to mistake non-alignment (or a variation thereof) as not valuing friendships, loyalty or solidarity: In fact, India's foreign policy history is rich with examples of friendships, loyalty and solidarity. In that sense, India's foreign policy is not about indecision; it's a constant search for autonomy, balance and agency. This is where the country's fascination with a multipolar world becomes crucial, for there is no genuine autonomy, balance and agency in world affairs without true multipolarity. Third, India's complaints about American unipolarity are on a steady decline, even as the rhetoric remains. It would be a mistake, however, to view New Delhi's rhetoric against unipolarity as merely, or primarily, directed against the US because today, New Delhi is less anxious about America's global unipolarity than a potential Chinese unipolarity in Asia. While America's declining global unipolarity is mostly a theoretical concern for New Delhi, the prospect of a China-led unipolar Asia is the true source of anxiety. In that sense, New Delhi's desire for multipolarity is also an attempt at ensuring the absence of a unipolar (China-dominated) Asia. Therefore,

even if New Delhi is more focused on countering Chinese unipolarity in Asia rather than US unipolarity globally, opposing regional unipolarity without opposing global unipolarity will ring hollow. There are two reasons why New Delhi would be concerned about China's unipolarity in Asia. One, this could mean that China might set the rules of geopolitical engagement in Asia. Once much of Asia falls under China's influence, it will be harder for New Delhi to push back Chinese hegemony. Two, a rise of Chinese unipolarity in Asia might prompt the US to think of accommodating China in a G2 format, especially if the American nativist and isolationist tendencies persist. In an ideal world, New Delhi's articulations must make a clear distinction between American unipolarity and Chinese attempts at unipolarity in Asia, but doing so is not easy for a variety of reasons, including that New Delhi continues to resist aspects of American unipolarity and is not yet willing to acknowledge the possibility of Chinese unipolarity in Asia. But New Delhi's rhetoric against American unipolarity and hegemony, without openly resisting the growing Chinese regional hegemony or a potentially unipolar Asia, could have unintended consequences. Some US administrations, especially the current one, might interpret India's rhetoric against American unipolarity as personal rather than an academic exercise, for the most part. This could prompt an unhappy Washington to undercut India's geopolitical standing in the region, thereby indirectly aiding China's attempts at regional hegemony. This creates a paradox: India aims to counter Chinese unipolarity in Asia by promoting global multipolarity, which annoys the US, prompting it to marginalise India in the region, thereby ultimately aiding Beijing's efforts to establish hegemony in Asia. New Delhi's rhetoric against American unipolarity and hegemony could also prompt the US, which is losing influence in various parts of the world, to seek ways of strengthening its influence in spaces where it can — this could lead to accepting Chinese unipolarity in Asia. More so, if the US reacts negatively towards India, as it is doing now, it could create a fertile ground for China and Russia to fan the Indian rhetoric against the US, encourage India to proactively participate in forums and arrangements aimed at undermining US unipolarity, and generate confusion within India's strategic community about the true motives behind India's multipolarity rhetoric. All of this will further drive the geopolitical wedge between New Delhi and Washington DC. There is no easy way out. New Delhi will need to have a lot more conversations and build trust with the US. That is not easy when a president like Trump occupies the White House.

Happymon Jacob is the founder and director of the Council for Strategic and Defense Research and the editor of INDIA'S WORLD magazine. The views expressed are personal.

{ TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS | DIRECTOR GENERAL, W.H.O.



In these divided and divisive times, health is one of the few areas in which countries who are otherwise political and economic rivals can work together to build a common approach to common threats.

At the 6th World Conference of Speakers of Parliament



# Attacks on Indian migrants are against Ireland's values

India and Ireland share deep historical and cultural roots that have allowed our two countries, despite our vastly different sizes, to form close and enduring bonds. Today, India and Ireland share a relationship built on shared values and strong educational and economic ties. Central to this are the tens of thousands of Indian nationals who call Ireland home. Outside of citizens from the UK or EU, Indians account for the largest migrant population in Ireland. The Indian community is an integral and valued part of Irish society. Indians living in Ireland are contributing immensely to our economy, our education and health care sectors, our research institutions, and our cultural life. From IT professionals and scientists, to doctors, nurses, students and entrepreneurs, Indians are helping to shape our present and our future. Their contribution is not only recognised — it is appreciated and celebrated. That is why Ireland has been so stunned by a number of recent assaults on Indians living in Dublin, our capital city. These assaults have been widely reported, both in Ireland and India, and have rightly caused deep concern across both our nations. As Ireland's ambassador to India, I wish to express our strongest condemnation of these appalling and senseless acts. These attacks — carried out by a small number of young people fuelled by misinformation — are deeply at odds with the values of the Irish people. I understand that each incident reported to Ireland's national police service is being investigated rigorously, with a view to apprehending the perpetrators and ensuring that justice will be served for the victims. The Irish embassy in New Delhi and the Irish foreign ministry in Dublin are in close and continuous contact with the Indian embassy in Dublin to share updates and express our support for affected individuals. We understand the anxiety and concern that these recent incidents have caused, both among Indians living in Ireland and their families back home in India. We are taking this matter with the utmost seriousness. These mindless actions could not be further from the values Ireland holds dear. They have generated widespread outrage across Irish society. They are not representative of

who the Irish are as a people or as a country. Following a recent assault on an Indian man in the Dublin suburb of Tallaght, the local community responded by holding a rally attended by hundreds of people showing their solidarity with their Indian neighbours. Shamrock Rovers, Ireland's largest and most successful football club, invited members of the Indian community as special guests to their UEFA Conference League match at Tallaght Stadium. This initiative sent a strong, unambiguous message: Hate has no home in Ireland. The gesture by Shamrock Rovers embodied the Ireland we know — a country rooted in decency, openness and respect. Ireland has long been a nation shaped by migration. Five million people live in Ireland, but around the world, 70 million people claim Irish heritage. We are a migrant nation. This history has made us deeply aware of the immigrant experience and instilled in us a lasting commitment to inclusion and empathy. We are proud of the growing Indian diaspora in Ireland and want to see them live in safety, prosperity, and with a sense of belonging. That is, I strongly believe, the experience of the overwhelming number of migrants, from India and elsewhere, in Ireland. Ireland has long prided itself on its warm welcome and hospitality. The overwhelming majority of Irish people welcome migrants into their society, workplaces, and homes. The emergence over recent years of a tiny — but sadly vocal — anti-immigrant movement, largely fuelled by online misinformation, is a new phenomenon for us. We are grappling with it. Thankfully, the vast majority of people utterly reject their attempts to sow division. There is virtually no public support for their manifesto of hate. The hateful actions of a few must never overshadow the goodwill of the many. Let us not allow the voices of division to drown out the voices of friendship, solidarity and respect. The people of Ireland stand with the Indian community and will continue to stand firmly against racism in all its forms.



Kevin Kelly

Kevin Kelly is Ireland's ambassador to India. The views expressed are personal.



# Crimes against humanity: Tribunal starts Hasina trial

**Agencies**  
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**DHAKA:** Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) on Sunday commenced the trial of deposed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in absentia over crimes against humanity related to the violent suppression of the 2024 student-led protests.

According to a UN rights office report, up to 1,400 people were killed between July 15 and August 15 last year as Hasina's government ordered a security crackdown on protesters.

The interim government-appointed chief prosecutor, Tajul Islam, in his opening statement, described Hasina as the "nucleus of all crimes" and called for the maximum penalty. The prosecution also named Hasina's two top aides — former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal and former Inspector General of Police Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun — as the co-accused in the case.

The ICT commenced the proceedings against Hasina on several charges, with the major one being killings and tortures to tame last year's Students Against Discrimination (SAD)-led violent street campaign that eventually toppled her Awami League government on August 5, 2024.

While Hasina and Kamal are being tried in absentia, Mamun is in custody and has agreed to be the "approver" in the case.

The prosecution said it would present testimonies from individuals injured during the



Anti-government protesters display Bangladesh's national flag as they storm Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's palace in Dhaka on August 5, 2024.

protests and eyewitnesses to the violence in the coming days.

### First witness testifies

The first witness, among the 11 cases that the prosecution is expected to present to the court, was Khokon Chandra Barman, whose story reflects the violence of the protests.

The 23-year-old wears a mask to conceal his face, which was ripped apart by gunshot during the culmination of the protests on August 5, 2024, the same day that Hasina fled Dhaka by helicopter. "I want justice for the ordeal I've been going through, and for my fellow pro-

testers who sacrificed their lives," he told the court.

Barman lost his left eye, while his right eye was damaged, as well as his lips, nose and teeth. A video showing Barman's blood-covered face was played in court, with the opening statements aired on the state-run broadcaster.

Attorney General Md Asaduzzaman said he wanted a "fair trial", speaking to reporters outside the court. "People were killed and maimed — we demand the highest punishment for the crimes committed," Asaduzzaman said.

Amir Hossain, the state-appointed lawyer for Hasina, noted that Barman was shot during the chaotic final day of the weeks-long protests. He pointed out that several police officers were also killed in clashes with protesters

and it was "unclear who actually shot Barman".

Hasina fled Bangladesh on August 5 last year amid escalating unrest and is currently residing in India. Former home minister Kamal reportedly too later took refuge in the neighbouring country. The interim government led by Muhammad Yunus has sought Hasina's extradition, but India has yet to respond to the request.

The ICT, originally established to prosecute war crimes from Bangladesh's 1971 Liberation War, indicted Hasina, Kamal, and Mamun on July 10.

Last month, Hasina was also sentenced to six months in prison in absentia in a contempt of court case by the ICT. It marked the first time that the 77-year-old Awami League leader has been sentenced in

any case since she left office in August last year.

### Rallies held ahead of 1st anniversary of uprising

Activists of the National Citizen Party (NCP) and the BNP's student wing held separate rallies in Bangladesh on Sunday ahead of the first anniversary of the "July Uprising" that toppled the Sheikh Hasina-led government on August 5 last year.

The newly-floated National Citizen Party (NCP) unveiled the party's 24-point manifesto during its rally in Dhaka's Central Shaheed Minar. The NCP is a major offshoot of Students Against Discrimination (SAD), which led last year's violent campaign to oust Hasina's Awami League regime.

The Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), the student wing of former prime minister Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), called first-time voters to cast their inaugural ballots in favour of the party during its rally in Dhaka's Shahbagh area.

Both groups said their rallies marked the first anniversary of the so-called "July Uprising", which led to the ouster of the government led by 77-year-old Hasina on August 5, 2024, forcing her to flee to India.

They, however, agreed to shift the site and time of their respective, near-simultaneous rallies to prevent overlapping or possible clashes.

Law enforcement agencies also enforced a strict vigil and deployed additional forces.

NCP Convener Nahid Islam unveiled the party's 24-point manifesto, which calls for "New Bangladesh", the formation of a "Second Republic" and the adoption of a new Constitution.

# Trump tariff rates unlikely to change: US trade adviser

**Agence France-Presse**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**WASHINGTON:** New US tariff rates are "pretty much set" with little immediate room for negotiation, Donald Trump's trade adviser said in remarks aired on Sunday, also defending the president's politically driven levies against Brazil.

Trump, who has wielded tariffs as a tool of American economic might, has set tariff rates for dozens of economies including the European Union at between 10 and 41% come August 7, his new hard deadline for the duties.

In a pre-taped interview broadcast on Sunday on CBS's "Face the Nation", US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said "the coming days" are not likely to see changes in the tariff rates.

"A lot of these are set rates pursuant to deals. Some of these deals are announced, some are



Jamieson Greer

not, others depend on the level of the trade deficit or surplus we may have with the country," Greer said. "These tariff rates are pretty much set."

Undoubtedly some trade ministers "want to talk more and see how they can work in a different way with the United States", he added. But "we're seeing truly the contours of the president's tariff plan right now with these rates".

Last Thursday, Trump announced hiked tariff rates on dozens of US trade partners.

They will kick in on August 7 instead of August 1, which had previously been touted as a hard deadline.

Among the countries facing steep new levies is Brazil. South America's largest economy is being hit with 50% tariffs on exports to the United States — albeit with significant exemptions for key products such as aircraft and orange juice.

Trump has openly admitted he is punishing Brazil for prosecuting his political ally Jair Bolsonaro, the ex-president accused of plotting a coup in a bid to cling to power. The US president has described the case as a "witch hunt."

Greer said it was not unusual for Trump to use tariff tools for geopolitical purposes. "The president has seen in Brazil, like he's seen in other countries, a misuse of law, a misuse of democracy," Greer told CBS. "It is normal to use these tools for geopolitical issues."

## 4 DIE AS SECTARIAN CLASHES FLARE UP AGAIN IN SYRIA

**DAMASCUS:** Renewed sectarian clashes in southern Syria's Druze-majority Sweida province killed at least four people on Sunday, a war monitor said, in the first deadly incident since a ceasefire last month.

The province witnessed deadly clashes between Druze fighters and Sunni Bedouins in July that drew the intervention of government forces and tribal fighters who came to support the Bedouins.

A ceasefire put an end to the week of bloodshed — which killed 1,400 people, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights — but the situation remained tense, flaring into violence again on Sunday. **AFP**

# Epstein's former girlfriend shifted to Texas prison camp

**Associated Press**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**WASHINGTON:** Jeffrey Epstein's former girlfriend, Ghislaine Maxwell, has been moved from a federal prison in Florida to a prison camp in Texas as her criminal case generates renewed public attention.

The federal Bureau of Prisons said on Friday that Maxwell had been transferred to Bryan, Texas, but did not explain the circumstances. Her attorney, David Oscar Markus, also confirmed the move but declined to discuss the reasons for it.

Maxwell was convicted in 2021 of luring teenage girls to be sexually abused by the disgraced financier, and was sentenced to 20 years in prison. She had been held at a low-security prison in Tallahassee, Florida, until her transfer to the prison camp in Texas, where other inmates include Theraanos founder Elizabeth Holmes and Jen Shah of "The Real Housewives of Salt Lake City".

Minimum-security federal prison camps house inmates the Bureau of Prisons considers to be the lowest security risk. Some don't even have fences.

The prison camps were originally designed with low security to make operations easier and to allow inmates tasked with performing work at the prison, like landscaping and maintenance, to avoid repeatedly checking in and out of a main prison facility.

Prosecutors have said Epstein's sex crimes could not have been done without Maxwell, but her lawyers have maintained that she was wrongly prosecuted and denied a fair trial, and have floated the idea of a pardon from President Donald Trump. They have also asked the US Supreme Court to take up her case.

Trump said on Friday night that no one has asked him about a clemency for Maxwell. "I'm allowed to do it but nobody's asked me to do it," he told Newsmax in an interview broadcast on Friday night. "I know nothing about it. I don't know anything about the case, but I know I have the right to do it. I have the right to give pardons. I've given pardons to people before, but nobody's even asked me to do it."



Ghislaine Maxwell

## EU, FRANCE AND GERMANY SLAM HOSTAGE VIDEOS RELEASED BY HAMAS

**Agence France-Presse**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**PARIS:** The European Union (EU), France and Germany on Sunday condemned Hamas's videos of two emaciated Israeli hostages held in Gaza, with leaders insisting the Palestinian group must have no role in the territory's future.

Hamas and its Islamic Jihad ally have recently released three clips showing captives Rom Braslavski and Eyyatar David, who were seized during the October 7, 2023 attack on Israel that triggered the war.

French President Emmanuel Macron said the release showed the Palestinian militant group's "inhumanity without bounds" and "abject cruelty".

Macron and German leader Friedrich Merz said that Hamas must have no role in ruling the coastal strip once the war ends.

"We must have the total demilitarisation of Hamas, its complete exclusion from any form of governance and the recognition of Israel by the state of Palestine," Macron said.

In the footage shared by the Palestinian Islamist groups, 21-year-old Braslavski, a German-Israeli, and 24-year-old David both appear weak and malnourished. The footage of David showed him digging what he said in the video was his own grave, triggering particular outrage.

The European Union's top diplomat, Kaja Kallas, also condemned the videos as showing Hamas's "barbarity", insisting the Islamist militants disarm and release remaining hostages.

Ukraine's foreign minister Andriy Sybaha added his voice to the outrage, insisting that "Hamas's inhuman treatment of the Israeli hostages deserves a very strong condemnation".

# Israeli armed forces kill at least 23 Palestinians seeking food in Gaza

**Associated Press**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**GAZA STRIP:** Israeli forces killed at least 23 Palestinians seeking food on Sunday in Gaza, according to hospital officials and witnesses, who described facing gunfire as hungry crowds surged around aid sites, as the malnutrition-related death toll also rose.

Desperation has gripped the Palestinian territory of more than 2 million, which experts have warned is facing famine because of Israel's blockade and nearly two-year offensive.

Yousef Abed, among the crowds en route to a distribution point, described coming under what he called indiscriminate fire, seeing at least three people bleeding on the ground. "I couldn't stop and help them because of the bullets," he said.

Southern Gaza's Nasser Hospital said they received bodies from routes to the sites, including eight from Teina, about three kilometres away from a distribution site in Khan Younis, which is operated by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), the private US- and Israeli-backed contractor that took over aid distribution more than two months ago.

The United Nations reported 859 people were killed near GHF sites from May 27 to July 31 and that hundreds more have been slain along the routes of UN-led food convoys.

The GHF launched in May as Israel sought an alternative to the UN-run system, which had safely delivered aid for much of the war but was accused by Israel of allowing Hamas, which guarded convoys early in the war, to siphon supplies.



Demonstrators, including WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange (centre, wearing red tie), cross the Sydney Harbour Bridge during a pro-Palestinian rally against Israel's actions and the ongoing food shortages in the Gaza Strip, in Sydney on Sunday.

Israel has not offered evidence of widespread theft. The UN has denied it.

GHF says its armed contractors have only used pepper spray or fired warning shots to prevent deadly crowding. Israel's military has said it only fires warning shots as well.

Israel's military did immediately responded to questions about Sunday's reported fatalities. GHF's media office said there was no gunfire "near or at our sites".

## Six more die of hunger in Gaza

**CAIRO:** Six more people died of starvation or malnutrition in Gaza over the past 24 hours, its health ministry said on Sunday as Israel said it allowed a delivery of fuel to the enclave, in the throes of a humanitarian disaster after almost two years of war. The new deaths raised the toll of those dying from what international humanitarian agencies say may be an unfolding

famine to 175, including 93 children, since the war began, the ministry said.

Egypt's state-affiliated Al Qahera News TV said two trucks carrying 107 tonnes of diesel were set to enter Gaza, months after Israel severely restricted aid access to the enclave before easing it somewhat as starvation began to spread.

COGAT, the Israeli military

agency that coordinates aid, said later in the day that four tankers of UN fuel had entered to help in operations of hospitals, bakeries, public kitchens and other essential services.

Gaza's health ministry has said fuel shortages have severely impaired hospital services, forcing doctors to focus on treating only critically ill or injured patients. **REUTERS**

# Far-Right minister prays at flashpoint site

**Agencies**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**GAZA STRIP:** A far-Right Israeli minister visited and prayed at Jerusalem's most sensitive holy site on Sunday, triggering regional condemnation and fears that the provocative move could further escalate tensions.

With Israel already facing global criticism over famine-like conditions in the besieged strip, the visit by Itamar Ben-Gvir to the hillside compound in east Jerusa-

lem threatened to further set back efforts by international mediators to halt Israel's nearly two-year military offensive in the Gaza Strip. The area, which Jews call the Temple Mount, is the holiest site in Judaism and was home to the ancient biblical temples. Muslims call the site the Noble Sanctuary. Today it is home to the Al Aqsa Mosque, the third-holiest site in Islam.

Visits are considered a provocation across the Muslim world and openly praying violates a

longstanding status quo at the combustible site.

Under the status quo, Jews have been allowed to tour the site but are barred from praying, with Israeli police and troops providing security. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said after Ben-Gvir's visit that Israel would not change the norms governing the holy site.

During his visit to the hilltop compound, Ben-Gvir called for Israel to annex the Gaza Strip

and encourage Palestinians to leave, reviving rhetoric that has complicated negotiations to end the war. Ben-Gvir's previous visits to the site have been explosive and prompted threats from Palestinian militant groups.

His Sunday visit was swiftly condemned as an incitement by Palestinian leaders as well as Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

Israel occupied and annexed east Jerusalem in 1967, in a move not recognised by much of the international community,

## 54 migrants die as boat sinks off Yemen's coast

**ADEN:** At least 54 migrants died when a boat carrying around 150 people sank off Yemen's coast in bad weather on Sunday, with dozens still unaccounted for, health officials said. The boat capsized off the Ahwar district in Yemen's southern Abyan province on the Arabian Sea, security sources said. **REUTERS**

## Pak, Iran agree to boost trade volume to \$10bn annually

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistan and Iran on Sunday agreed to enhance bilateral trade volume to \$10 billion from the current \$3 billion annually as they signed 12 agreements and MoUs after talks between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the visiting Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian. **PTI**



# Profiteering worries cast a cloud over GST cuts

Caution stems from many companies raising prices after tax cuts earlier

**Gireesh Chandra Prasad**  
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**NEW DELHI:** The spectre of profiteering is holding back a new round of tax cuts, as the federal council for indirect taxes fears businesses will pocket the savings instead of passing them on. At stake is lower taxes on insurance premiums and an end to the 12% GST slab, two proposals that have gained broad support in recent times.

The caution stems from the previous experience of some real estate, multiplex and consumer goods companies raising prices when taxes were cut, denying benefit to the consumer, two people familiar with the matter said. The national anti-profiteering body formed as an interim measure to check such practices was wound up in November 2022, and no suitable alternative is in place yet.

"The ways of ensuring that businesses pass on the benefit of tax cuts to the consumer will get built into any decision on further lowering taxes. The council will ensure that the benefit will be passed on to consumers, or there will be no tax cut. If businesses cannot ensure that the tax relief meant for the consumer is passed on to them, why should the exchequer sacrifice revenue that could be used for welfare and development?" said one of the persons quoted above, who spoke on the condition of ano-



The GST Council is keen on reducing tax rates on insurance, and shifting many products in the 12% slab to 5%.

nymity.

Queries emailed to the finance ministry and the GST Council Secretariat on Friday seeking comments remained unanswered.

The standoff highlights a key challenge for the council: balancing the desire for economic stimulus and consumer relief with the need to prevent companies from undermining the policy's intent.

While some experts believe market competition will force businesses to pass on the benefits, the council remains cautious, with state ministers previously voicing concerns.

The GST Council is keen on reducing tax rates on life and health insurance, and shifting many products in the 12% slab to 5% under a tax rate rationalization drive.

The concerns on profiteering have come up in previous GST Council meetings and if they persist, the council is unlikely to go

ahead with the proposed tax cuts, the two people said.

"Members of the GST Council from all states are very sensitive to this issue and some have aired their concerns at meetings in the past," the person cited earlier said, adding discussions are on at the level of political leaders, and a final proposal is yet to be crystallized.

Kerala finance minister K.N. Balagopal and Uttar Pradesh finance minister Suresh Kumar Khanna have raised concerns around profiteering with the GST Council chairperson and Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman in recent council meetings, as per publicly available information about the meetings.

The concern is that an increase in the base price of products, which companies are free to revise in a free market economy, cancels the benefit to the consumer from a tax cut. In the past, the National Anti-prof-

iteering Authority (NAA) has investigated several high-profile cases, involving Hindustan Unilever, Indiabulls Real Estate, and Patanjali Ayurved.

Experts believe efficient markets will ensure that companies compete in terms of price and quality to retain their market share.

"The majority of the products in the 12% slab are consumer products and consumers are very price-sensitive. Market forces play a key role in making sure that businesses transfer the benefits of tax rate reduction to consumers," said MS Mani, partner, indirect taxes, Deloitte India.

Queries emailed to the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), a leading industry chamber, remained unanswered.

Worries about GST profiteering have surfaced as anti-profiteering measures have been directed against profiteering by the indirect tax regime stabilized over the last eight years.

The NAA, which was set up as a transitional arrangement to ensure that businesses passed on the benefit of tax credits available to them in GST system and the benefit of tax rate cuts to the consumer, functioned for five years till November 2022, after which the mandate was given to Competition Commission of India (CCI), but the anti-trust body could not handle it as it was designed as a regulator of market competition and efficiency rather than pricing.

Subsequently, the principal bench of the GST Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT) was entrusted to adjudicate on GST-related profiteering disputes.

# Oil marketers tap US LPG cos for supplies from '26

**Rituraj Baruah & Dharendra Kumar**  
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**NEW DELHI:** India's state-run oil marketers are in joint discussions with US firms to secure cooking gas supplies beginning next year, three people aware of the development said, indicating a potential deepening of energy ties. The companies—Indian Oil Corp. Ltd, Bharat Petroleum Corp. Ltd and Hindustan Petroleum Corp. Ltd—are likely to sign near-identical contracts with the selected partners, the people said on the condition of anonymity.

The negotiations, happening against the backdrop of the US tariff on Indian goods, support the target set by both countries earlier this year to increase their energy trade to \$20 billion.

"Indian OMCs are in talks, collectively, with at least a dozen LPG suppliers in the US. The negotiations are for supplies starting January next year, and the discussions are progressing well," one of the three people cited above said. The person added that although deals may be signed separately, given that talks are happening at a combined level, the nature of deals would be largely the same.

Some of the major American LPG suppliers are Texas-headquartered Targa Resources and Enterprise Products and Oklahoma-headquartered ONEOK. Queries emailed to the Union ministries of petroleum and



The US so far has been supplying India LPG in small volumes via spot deals.

commerce, the Indian oil marketing companies, and the US LPG suppliers went unanswered.

India traditionally imports most of its LPG from West Asia including Qatar, the UAE and Saudi Arabia through long-term contracts, while other major LPG importing countries source it from the US. The US so far has been supplying India LPG in small volumes through spot deals.

The talks with the US firms is seen as indicating a thaw in ties between the two, even as talks on the Bilateral Trade Agreement remain active but are stuck on intractable issues such as dairy and agriculture.

"India is a huge importer of LPG. US is a large producer of LPG which is produced as natural gas liquids along with shale gas. So, US can be a significant supplier of LPG to India," said Prashant Vasishth, senior vice president and co-group head,

corporate ratings, ICRA Ltd. He added the price of LPG won't be very different and will be competitive compared to the West Asian LPG on a landed basis in India.

LPG used in India comprises 60% butane and 40% propane. West Asian exports are better suited for this as they are primarily butane-dominated, since their LPG production is a byproduct of oil processing. On the other hand, US supplies are primarily propane-dominated, as US LPG production is the byproduct of natural gas processing. "India may source the required propane from the US, which would be 40-50% of the composition and the butane may continue to be imported from the Gulf countries," an industry executive said on the condition of anonymity.

Ajay Srivastava, former Indian Trade Service officer and founder of the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), said, "Those engaging with US oil firms for the deal should ensure certainty of supply and competitive pricing, as the US has over-committed to supplying oil and gas to various countries, but currently lacks adequate production of petroleum products and LNG. The contract must guarantee supply certainty and include penalties for failure to deliver on time."

In a bid to diversify import sources amid geopolitical tensions and regional instability in West Asia, Indian buyers have been forging new ties.

# No directive to stop Russian oil imports

**Bloomberg**

feedback@livemint.com

India hasn't given the country's oil refiners instructions to stop buying Russian oil, according to people familiar, as officials grapple with meeting energy needs and maintaining ties with Moscow without further angering US President Donald Trump.

No decision has been taken as yet on stopping imports from Russia, the people said, asking

not to be named due to the sensitivity of the matter. Both state-run or private refiners are allowed to buy from their preferred sources, and crude purchases remain a commercial decision made by them, several of the people said.

Trump blasted India on Wednesday for continuing to purchase most of its military equipment and energy from Russia.

The US leader imposed a sur-

prise 25% tariff on India and threatened an additional penalty for its close ties with Moscow. Two days later, Trump told reporters he "heard" India would no longer be buying oil from Russia, calling it "a good step."

India has maintained its energy purchases are driven by market forces and price. Last week, refiners were told to come up with plans for buying non-Russian crude, people familiar said to Bloomberg.

# LENSKART ENTERS SMALLER TOWNS AS IPO NEARS

**Sakshi Sadashiv**

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**MUMBAI:** Lenskart, the country's largest eyewear retailer, is doubling down on physical stores in smaller cities and towns as it prepares for a public listing—betting on lower rents, untapped markets and early-mover advantage to offset rising lease liabilities and growing metro competition. Offline retail contributes around 75% to Lenskart's revenue and store distribution has shifted in favour of smaller markets. As of FY25, the firm had 698 stores in tier 2 cities and beyond, 469 in tier 1 cities, and 900 in metros—categories defined separately in its draft red herring prospectus.

Metros include India's largest cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru; tier 1 covers secondary but sizable cities including Jaipur, Lucknow and Indore; tier 2 and beyond span smaller towns and rural localities.

These smaller markets now account for 34% of Lenskart's domestic footprint, up 45% from 483 stores in FY23, according to the DRHP.

Queries sent to the company remained unanswered.

Lenskart's expansion push reflects a broader shift in the geography of Indian consumer demand. India's smaller towns are becoming more viable retail markets, driven by rising incomes and digital adoption. Rural and semi-urban India now contributes nearly 47% of GDP, according to a joint study by the RBI Innovation Hub and Boston Consulting Group, while digital payment adoption has reached 30% in these regions, according to a Bain-CCI study.

For Lenskart, the opportunity lies not just in demand, but in cost advantage and competitive white space, analysts say.

"Tier-2 locations offer rents that are sometimes 40–60% lower, so reaching breakeven in these markets is faster than tier-1," said Varma.

"Almost 75% of their sales come from offline stores, and at least 75–80% of their orders are below ₹10,000, with around 60% falling in the ₹2,000 to ₹10,000 range—that's their main pricing band," said Satish Meena, co-founder, Datum Intelligence.

# Tax rules on foreign travel you must not ignore

Planning an international trip? If your foreign travel expenses exceed ₹2 lakh in a financial year, you're required to file an income tax return—even if your income is tax-free—to dodge the tax department's radar.

Compiled by **Apurita Sharma**  
apurita.sharma@livemint.com



## CASE STUDY

**Mr. A**, his wife and children go on a foreign vacation

- Wife books the tour package from her own bank account

**Cost: ₹5 lakh**

- Wife doesn't fall under income tax brackets
- She still receives a notice from the Income Tax Department

- Because ITR filing is mandatory if your foreign travel expenses are more than ₹2 lakh.
- Tour operators report the PAN of buyers in their statement to the I-T department.

Why?

## Disclosing foreign travel expenses in ITR

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Spent less than or equal to ₹2 lakh on foreign travel                  | No disclosure required                               |
| Income below taxable limit, but foreign travel spend more than ₹2 lakh | ITR filing becomes mandatory due to Seventh Proviso* |
| Income above taxable limit, and foreign travel spend more than ₹2 lakh | No disclosure required                               |

\*It triggers mandatory ITR filing in certain conditions even if total income is below basic exemption limit

## WHAT IF TCS IS NOT DEDUCTED ON CARD SPEND

- Banks may not do it for credit card transactions
- No need to pay TCS directly to the government
- Penalty for non-collection to be levied on banks

## When abroad on a business trip

- Foreign income is taxed in India unless you qualify as NRI#
- Is daily allowance from employer taxable? Matter still under dispute\*
- Claim foreign tax credit in India to avoid double taxation
- Don't engage in business abroad on a tourist visa
- This income is taxable in India, regardless of residency status

## TCS on overseas tour packages (From 1 April 2025)

Threshold	Rate
Up to ₹10 lakh	5%
For value above ₹10 lakh	20%

TCS - Tax collected at source

## TCS on card transactions for foreign travel\*

Threshold	Rate
Up to ₹10 lakh	No TCS
Above ₹10 lakh	20%

\*Barring education/medical expenses

#More than 182 days abroad or 60 days in a year and 365 days in last 4 years in India

\*Karnataka High Court: Should not be taxable if reasonable and aligns with the lifestyle of employees

Graphic: Paras Jain/mint

# MANIPAL SEEKS CCI NOD FOR ₹6.4K-CR SAHYADRI BUY

**Press Trust of India**

feedback@livemint.com

**NEW DELHI:** Healthcare major Manipal Hospitals has sought approval from the fair trade regulator CCI to acquire Pune-based Sahyadri Hospitals from global investor Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan Board in a deal pegged at around ₹6,400 crore.

The companies did not share the deal size, but industry sources estimate the transaction to be in the range of ₹6,200-6,400 crore. "The proposed transaction envisages the acquisition of up to 100 per cent shareholding by the acquirer (Manipal Hospitals Pvt Ltd) in the target (Sahyadri Hospitals Pvt Ltd) in multiple tranches," according to a notice filed with the Competition Commission of India (CCI).

Manipal Hospitals and Sahyadri Hospitals said the "proposed transaction does not have any impact on any relevant market in India, let alone any appreciable adverse effect on competition (AAEC), and therefore, the definition of the relevant product and geographic market may ultimately be left open. In any event, in order to aid and assist the CCI in its assessment".

# Soon, climate finance taxonomy to be released

**Rhik Kundu**

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**NEW DELHI:** India will launch its own system this month to identify which investments qualify as climate finance, said two people familiar with the matter, providing vital clarity to mobilize capital for clean energy and net-zero goals.

The final climate finance taxonomy will identify the assets, activities, and projects needed to deliver a low-carbon economy consistent with the Paris Agreement goals of mitigation, adaptation, and financing commitments.

"The consultation process, with inputs from experts, academia, industry, global institutions, and government departments, is now complete. Comments were received by June-end," the first of the two people cited above said, requesting



It aims to mobilise finance for climate mitigation, adaptation, and the decarbonization of hard-to-abate sectors.

anonymity. "The comprehensive taxonomy for climate finance is ready for launch in August."

The Draft Framework of India's Climate Finance Taxonomy was earlier released by the Department of Economic Affairs. The final version, shaped by extensive expert and public input, will pave the way

for sector-specific guidelines and regular updates, positioning India to mobilize global and domestic finance for its climate and development goals.

A ministry of finance spokesperson didn't respond to emailed queries.

In her budget speech in February 2024, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said India

will develop a taxonomy for climate finance to enhance the availability of capital for climate adaptation and mitigation, which will support the achievement of the country's climate commitments and green transition.

"It's a major step towards building a credible, India-specific framework to channel climate finance towards clean energy, adaptation, and the decarbonisation of critical sectors," the second person mentioned above said, also speaking on the condition of anonymity. "It will serve as a key tool to align investments with India's net zero and energy security goals."

That draft features a phased rollout, a hybrid classification model for both climate-supportive and transition-supportive investments, a strong focus on adaptation finance and micro,

small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), robust guardrails against greenwashing, and firm alignment with national climate targets and indigenous innovation. "The objective is to facilitate greater resource flow to climate-friendly technologies and activities, enabling achievement of the country's vision to be Net Zero by 2070 while also ensuring long-term access to reliable and affordable energy," said the draft.

The draft framework also aims to mobilize both public and private finance for climate mitigation, adaptation, and the decarbonization of hard-to-abate sectors, in line with India's development vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

It also proposes a two-stage rollout, a foundational taxonomy defining principles and methods, followed by detailed sector-specific annexures.

## { THE CROSSWORDS }

### CRYPTIC CLUES

#### ACROSS

- Accentuates a clue in places (10)
- Thus can Algeria provide a navigable channel (5)
- Tried hard the way Verdi composed (7)
- The defendant made charges (7)
- Poems about some old salts (5)
- In their own fields the French are unbeatable (6)
- Back at sea (6)
- Cruel process shows a profit (5)
- Include in a show of affection (7)
- His visitors may take a dim view of him at first (7)
- Berate Lincoln about his country (5)
- It's not often the present combines with the past (3,3,4)

#### DOWN

- It puts an end to any ill-feeling (7)
- Covers overhead (5)
- Enid is upset internally (6)
- Fit to work like a horse (7)
- Avoids spending reserves (5)
- The first orphans (4,3,3)
- German leader has the opportunity to turn up (10)
- A show presented before the show (7)
- An age certain to get wiped out (7)
- Forwarded foreign money not rising (4,2)
- Agitate a liquid container (5)
- It's most desirable to enclose a wild animal (5)

## YESTERDAY'S SOLUTIONS (17241)

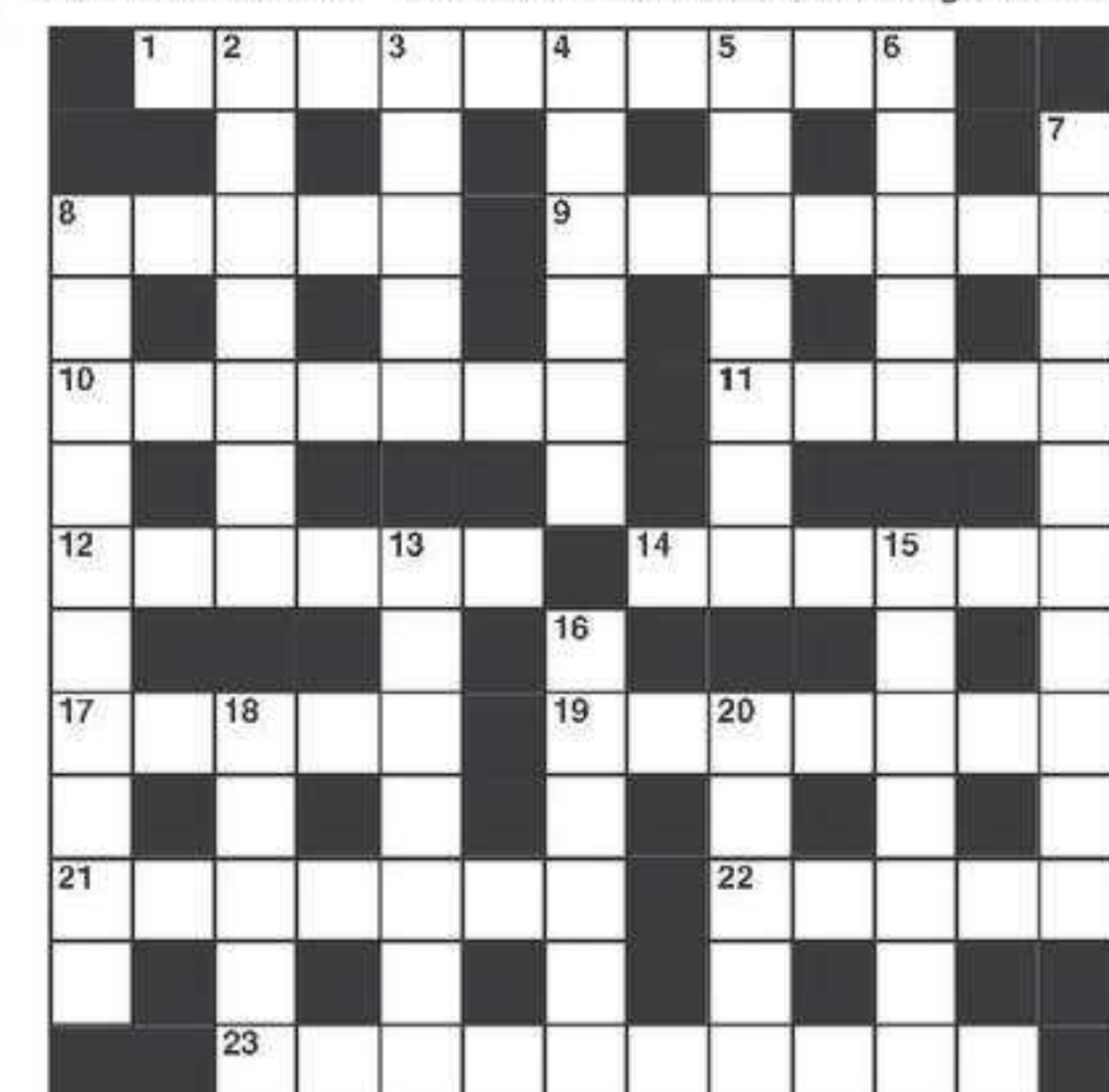
**CRYPTIC**

M	A	D	A	M	E		H	U	M	O	U	R
A	H	U	H	R	G	R	V	E	I			
C	H	O	L	E	R	A	G	R	E	E	N	
A	T	Z	I	E	R	G						
W	H	I	Z	Z	I	A	D	I	A	T	E	
S	I	D	R	E	C	H	E	R				
L	A	U	N	D	R	B	I	L	L	O		
A	L	E	L	L	O							
F	E	R	I	O	U	S	H	E	R			
R	W	U	S	H	E	R						
A	V	A	S	T	E	M	B	A	R	G	O	
I	Y	D	R	E	A	T	L					
D	E	S	P	O	T							
G	R	A	Z	E	S							

**QUICK**

D	I	N	G	H	Y		B	U	D	G	E	T
E	O	I	A	P	R	E						
B	E	S	I	D	E	S						
A	E	E	L	E	D	C						
A	I	S	O	I	N	T	O	U	C	H		
E	U	K										
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E	F	I	N	D	H	I						
F	O	R	U	M								
U	E	B	T									
L	I	E	L	O								
T												
S	T	A	P	L	E							

## PUZZLE 17242 © Gemini Crosswords 2018 All rights reserved



## QUICK CLUES

### ACROSS

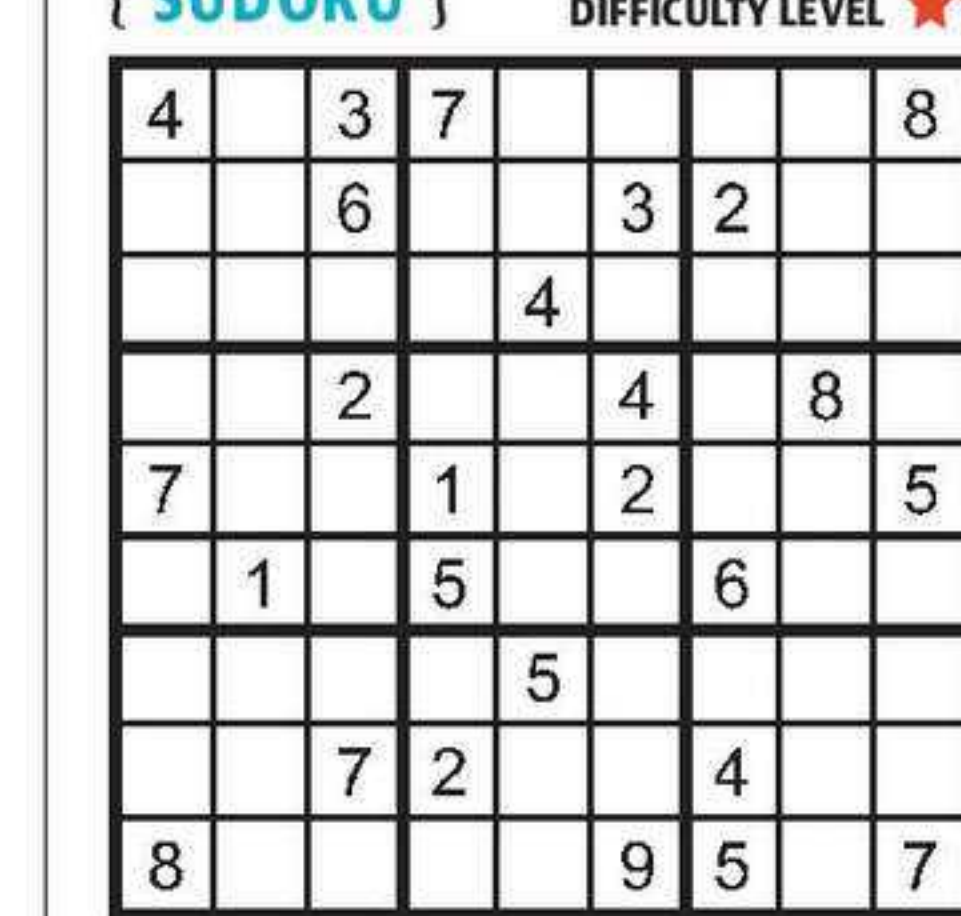
- Bank-and-file membership (5,5)
- Give false idea of (5)
- Select group in society (7)
- Exceed limit of (7)
- Indian evergreen tree (5)
- Unfaltering (6)
- Weaken (6)
- Goddesses of arts and sciences (5)
- Set right again (7)
- South American country (7)
- Accumulate (5)
- Australian backwoods outlaw (10)

### DOWN

- Bring aid to (7)
- Diaphanous (5)
- Disavow former opinion (6)
- Best possible (7)
- Temptress (5)
- Situation of agreeable ease (3,2,5)
- Develop promisingly (7,3)
- To debate (7)
- Ordinary (7)
- Entreaty (6)
- Small firefighter (5)
- Atttracted (5)

## { SUDOKU }

DIFFICULTY LEVEL ★★★



Fill in all the squares in the grid so that each row, column and each of the 9x9 squares contains all the digits from 1 to 9.



**GAME ZONE:** Scan the QR code for more daily puzzles and brain teasers

## { WEATHER }

TEMPERATURE • HIGH • LOW

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
Generally cloudy sky with moderate rain	Thunderstorm with rain	Thunderstorm with rain
33°C   24°C	32°C   25°C	33°C   25°C

## ALMANAC

Today is

- 49th August 2025
- 09 Saffar 1447
- 25 Shrawana, Shukla Paksha 10
- Samvat 2082
- Sunset: Monday at 07:09 p.m.
- Sunrise



# Antim makes the cut for worlds, eyes second medal

Many young talents make their mark at the women's trials as India look to build the squad for LA Games

**Avishhek Roy**  
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**NEW DELHI:** Antim Panghal cruised through the selection trials to confirm her spot at the Wrestling World Championships, scheduled to take place in Zagreb, Croatia from September 13 to 21. The gap between Antim and her rivals in the 53kg category was evident at the IG Stadium here on Sunday. She dominated the competition, defeating Pooja 6-0 and then overpowering Hinaben Khalifa of Gujarat 11-0 in the final. At just 21, Antim has already made her mark on the global stage, winning a bronze medal at the 2023 World Championships. While she has no real domestic challenger at the moment, her true test lies in asserting herself consistently at the international level. With her recent performances, Antim is widely regarded as India's top woman wrestler and seen as the natural successor to Vinesh Phogat – one of the most prominent figures in Indian wrestling. A two-time world junior champion, Antim has made a seamless transition to the senior circuit. Her medal-winning performances at the 2023 Asian Games and World Championships, besides qualifying for the Paris Olympics, underline her rising stature in the sport. However, the Paris Games campaign was a disappointment. Apart from her first-round exit, her behaviour off the mat also drew criticism following an off-field controversy involving her personal coaching team. This season, Antim has let her performances do the talking, although there were some disci-

### Making a mark

Antim Panghal (53kg), the 21-year-old wrestler seen as India's new big hope in women, qualified for the worlds in September. A look at her career so far:

#### WOMEN'S TEAM FOR WORLD C'SHIPS

- Ankush (50kg)
- Antim Panghal (53kg)
- Nishu (55kg)
- Tapasya (57kg)
- Neha Sangwan (59kg)
- Manisha (62kg)
- Vaishnavi Patil (65kg)
- Radhika (68kg)
- Jyoti Berwal (72kg)
- Priya Malik (76kg)

**ANTIM PANGHAL**

Now I am able to execute my plans better. Earlier, I was just going there and competing without much understanding of the game situation and my opponents

**ANTIM PANGHAL'S MEDALS:**

- GOLD** U-20 World C'ships, 2022
- GOLD** U-20 World C'ships, 2023
- BRONZE** Asian Games, 2023
- SILVER** Asian C'ships, 2023
- BRONZE** World C'ships, 2023
- BRONZE** Asian C'ships, 2025
- GOLD** Budapest Ranking Series, 2025

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

plinary concerns because of her absence from the national camp, which prompted the Wrestling Federation of India to issue a stern warning. A proposal to train abroad with her personal coach was also not entertained. Antim seems to have put all that behind. She is boosted by winning two UWW international ranking series events this year. "World Championships is the main competition this year and I am happy that I was able to seal the berth. I won a bronze in 2023 and my aim is to improve the colour of my medal," Antim told HT. This season she has competed in three meets and finished on the podium in all of them. A bronze at

the Asian meet in Jordan in March was followed by gold at Ulaanbaatar Open in May and Polyak Imre & Varga Janos Memorial in July, where she won 10-0 against Turkey's Zeynep Yetgil, who eliminated her in Paris. "I think I am at a good level. I was able to comfortably beat her (Yetgil). Earlier, I was just going there and competing without much understanding of the game situation and my opponents." "This is a comeback for me and I am looking at bigger goals. Yes, the World Championships is the first target, then Asian Games and LA 2028 qualification." While Antim is the most experienced and strongest medal

prospect for the worlds, there were some promising junior wrestlers who made it to the squad. The WFI, on the suggestion of the national coaches, allowed the medalists of U20 Worlds and U20 Asian meets also to participate. "We are building the team for the LA Olympics and that's why the juniors were also asked to appear for the trials. The result is impressive. It's mostly a young team (18-20 year-olds) full of exciting new talents who have replaced the seniors," said chief coach Virender Dahiya. "We want to win medals but we will keep an eye on how they progress at this world championships," he said. Paris Olympian Nisha Dahiya

(68kg) lost the trials to eventual winner Radika, while four juniors Tapasya (57kg), Jyoti Berwal (72kg), Neha Sangwan (59kg) and Priya Malik (76kg) won in different categories. They won the world junior trials a week ago and the senior trials on Sunday. All eyes were also on Vaishnavi Patil (65kg), the wrestler from Maharashtra who made it to the team beating Haryana's Muskan 7-2 in the final. Vaishnavi might not be from wrestling powerhouse Haryana but she has been training in Hisar at Sushil Kumar Akhada. She switched base four years back as there were not many academies with good facilities in Maharashtra and the move has paid off.

# Norris wins in Hungary to cut down Piastri's lead

**Agencies**  
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**BUDAPEST:** Lando Norris trimmed McLaren team-mate Oscar Piastri's lead in the drivers' world championship to just nine points on Sunday when he switched tactics to lead him home by just 0.698 seconds in a thrilling finish at the Hungarian Grand Prix. The 25-year-old Briton, who moved from a two-stop strategy to one stop, held off series leader Piastri, on fresher tyres, over the closing laps of a strategic contest to claim McLaren's 200th victory and their record 13th win in Hungary. It was Norris's first win at the Hungaroring in the event's 40th race, avenging his 'team orders' defeat in 2024 when Piastri claimed his maiden success, his fifth victory of the season and the ninth of his career. The dominant McLaren pair finished 22 seconds clear of third-placed George Russell of Mercedes with pole sitter Charles Leclerc of Ferrari fourth, grumbling at the Italian team's poor planning after he slipped



McLaren's Lando Norris after winning the Hungarian GP. AFP

out of the leading position. "I wasn't planning to do a one-stop," said Norris. "But it was the only option to get back into things and it was tough. Oscar was pushing all the way." Piastri said he had done all he could to triumph. "It was great racing," he said. "Lando did a great job." His drive brought McLaren their fourth consecutive 1-2 finish. Two-time champion Fernando Alonso came home fifth for Aston Martin ahead of Sauber's Gabriel Bortoletto, Lance Stroll in the second Aston Martin, rookie Liam Lawson of Racing Bulls and frustrated four-time champion Max Verstappen of Red Bull. Mercedes' rookie Kimi Antonelli was 10th ahead of Racing Bulls' Isack Hadjar with seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton 12th in the second Ferrari, 24 hours after declaring himself undeserving of their race seat. Heavy overnight rain had 're-set' the track on a breezy afternoon in front of a big crowd at the Hungaroring.

# Marchand, McIntosh dominate as US end worlds with record

**Agence France-Presse**  
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**SINGAPORE:** Leon Marchand and Summer McIntosh sealed their golden swimming world championships with dominant victories on Sunday's final day as the US signed off with a relay record. Eight days of competition in Singapore wrapped up with French superstar Marchand and 18-year-old Canadian sensation McIntosh underlining their supremacy. Marchand, who won four individual golds and was the face of Paris Olympics, added the 400m individual medley crown to 200m medley title this week.



Summer McIntosh. AFP

The 23-year-old arrived in Singapore with a lighter programme in an effort to smash Ryan Lochte's 200m IM world record from 2011 – and he did just that. Marchand on Sunday cruised to victory in the 400IM, powering to the wall in 4min 04.73sec, more than three seconds ahead of Japan's Tomoyuki Matsushita (4:08.32), with Russian Iliya Borodin (4:09.16) third. Not to be outdone, McIntosh was similarly emphatic in winning the women's 400IM for her fourth gold in Singapore, to go with triumphs in the 200m medley, 200m butterfly and 400m freestyle. The world record holder led from start to finish to romp to victory in a championships-record 4:25.78, with Australia's Jenna Forrester and Japan's Mio Narita sharing silver (4:33.26). McIntosh's only defeat came on Saturday when she finished third in the 800m freestyle.

# Have fun with facts on Sundays

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## TWTW

THE WEEK THAT WAS

A quiz on the week's development.

NEW DELHI  
SUNDAY  
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Sunday Hindustan Times



### TWTW

THE WEEK THAT WAS

#### Take a cue from the clues

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



Natasha Rego

Author of the children's book Alice and the...  
...created it?



FIRST VOICE. LAST WORD.



# England need 35 runs, India need a spark

Centurions Brook and Root's 195-run stand almost takes the Oval Test away but Indian bowlers strike late to take game into Day 5

**Somshuvra Laha**  
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**KOLKATA:** The wheels seemed to be coming off when Akash Deep tried stopping Harry Brook's drive with his feet and ended up kicking into the ropes for a four. A ball later, Brook raced to a hundred that should have been curtailed at 19 but for Mohammed Siraj stepping on the ropes after catching him at long leg.

Tired legs and tired minds translated to a tired defence of 373. Unimaginative as well, considering spin was held back till the 43rd over, and when it did come into effect there were no close-in fielders to press home the message that India meant business.

Brook had scented blood by then. He smashed a 91-ball hundred, his 10th in Tests, added a swift 195 for the fourth wicket with Joe Root, who then scored his 39th Test hundred and was all set for glory. Till Jacob Bethel chopped Prasidh Krishna onto his stumps.

Two overs later, Root was sent back by Krishna, this time by a back of the length ball that he tried to steer on his back foot but ended up guiding to the outstretched hands of Dhruv Jurel. England were coasting but India were still not ready to throw in the towel.

That and the timely intervention of the fickle English weather meant the fifth and final Test at the Oval would head to a fifth day with the hosts needing 35 runs and India four wickets.

Not three as anticipated because even though Chris Woakes was seen walking around in a shoulder sling, there have been suggestions that he might just do a Malcolm Marshall and bat one-handed should things come to a head for England.

It certainly didn't seem so during the post-lunch session when England added 153 runs at well over five runs per over but such has been the cyclical nature of this riveting Test series that India had to bounce back at some time. When they did, runs dried up for England. In the brief post-tea session, England faced 10.2 overs, lost two wickets and

scored only 22. At stumps, Jamie Overton — he has a Test fifty and a first-class hundred — and Jamie Smith, who has already scored a hundred this series, at Birmingham, together. And even though 35 runs may not look much on the board considering this England team is used to overhauling big scores, India will be well rested Monday morning and the second new ball will be due in 22 balls.

An hour of cricket and who knows how this Test might transpire if India catch an early break or two. It might be too much to expect with too little to defend but miracles have been conjured in the past with fewer runs in the bank.

That said, India can't be absolved of the way they lost the plot despite getting two early wickets. The start was as usual promising with Siraj, the only fast bowler from either side to play all the five Tests of the series, bowling probing lines. So meticulously was he getting the ball to leave Ben Duckett, clearly England's most dangerous batter in this series, from over the wicket that his dismissal was waiting to happen.

That came when Prasidh got Duckett to poke the ball to KL Rahul at slip. Ollie Pope is always a nervous starter but the boundaries he got early into his innings suggested that he was probably primed to play a captain's knock this time.

Siraj dashed that hope with a wobble-seam delivery that pitched on good length and nipped in to trap Pope leg-before. Pope reviewed it but Hawk-Eye suggested it was hitting middle of middle, giving Siraj his 20th wicket of the series and sending him clear of the rest of the pack. In came Brook and then came that dropped catch. Fortune favours the brave though. And Brook was valiant this time, gearing up to a pace of scoring so maverick that it started toying with India's psyche.

The same over he was dropped, Brook scored two more boundaries to rub salt in Prasidh's wounds. A desperate slash flew through slip and gully for a streaky boundary but Brook didn't care as he raced fifty off 39 balls. Wary of his batting approach, Shubman Gill started spreading the field, prompting Brook to drop the ball close and start taking easy singles. If anything was too short, Brook would pick the midwicket area, but otherwise England's scoreboard kept ticking because of the singles and twos conceded by a hapless India.

Root was the ideal anchor during this time, playing chanceless cricket, milking the gaps and taking the occasional boundaries. The 100-run partnership came in 108 balls before Root got to his fifty in 81 balls. Akash Deep was a dud with the old ball, allowing Root to slowly accelerate.

Once Brook was dismissed, he took over, hit consecutive boundaries to reach 98 before tucking Akash towards long leg for two runs and completing a memorable hundred in front of his family. It should have been smooth sailing for England from there. But India still had one last fight left in them for the day.



Just when India were making a comeback into the match, rain stopped play on Day 4 of the fifth Test at the Oval on Sunday. England's Jamie Smith walks back to the pavilion with India players.

## A signature Brook knock in Bazball counterpunch

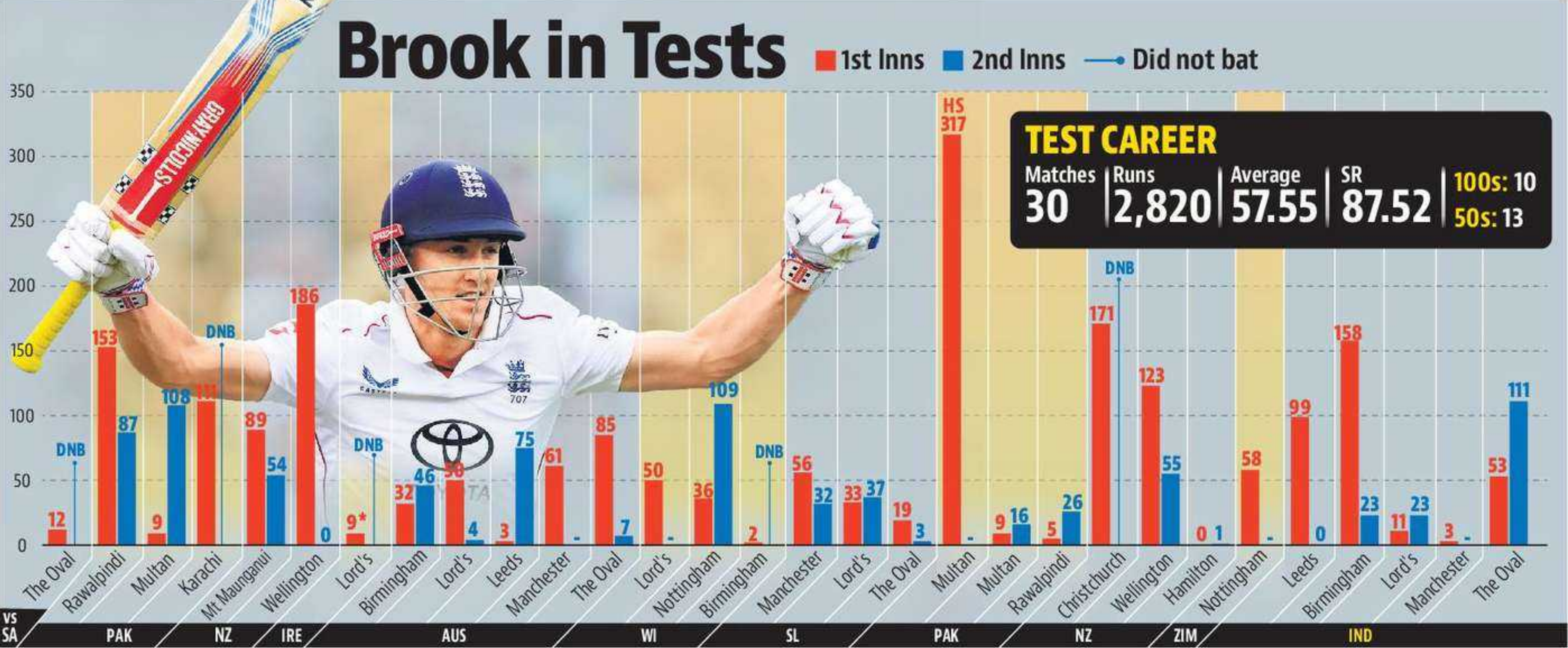
**Rasesh Mandani**  
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**MUMBAI:** As rain, bad light and India's late surge of wickets stopped England from racing to another 370-plus run chase and forced the series result into the 25th day of the five-Test saga, Harry Brook might be wondering if his exhilarating hundred on Day 4 at the Oval will after all be categorised as heroic or not. Strangely enough, India's comeback was sparked by Brook's dismissal, charging Akash Deep, which ended his 195-run fourth wicket stand with fellow centurion Joe Root (105).

Every staggering English run chase in the Bazball era has had one headman. Jonny Bairstow was at the front and centre against India in Birmingham 2022. Ben Duckett took Indian bowlers to the cleaners at the start of the Anderson-Tendulkar Trophy at Leeds. At The Oval, it was England's future leader Brook's turn to play a signature innings — (111-98b, 14x4, 2x6) — in true Bazball style. England were 339/6 chasing a target of 374.

Brook signalled his arrival in Test cricket spectacularly in 2022 with three aggressive hundreds in Pakistan and added a triple ton on another tour to that country. He was as good an ambassador as head coach Brendon McCullum could find, to showcase the brand of cricket he wanted his team to exhibit.

Several of the 26-year-old's



hundreds — he's already scored 10 in 30 Tests — have come in batting friendly conditions. But one of Bazball's distinguishing features is scoring against the grain of play. If the ball isn't doing as much, don't accumulate, but double down on scoring. That's what Brook did to India. When he arrived at the crease, England had lost their third wicket and were still 268 runs away. But because the ball was softening and India had only the three seamers to play with, Brook counter-attacked. What if and

run chase pressure were parked aside. He had tried being funky against Akash Deep at Lord's and failed. Coming at a crucial juncture in the match, he was lambasted by the pundits. But it's unlikely he would have been censured by his dressing room. They would have wanted him to go again, if that put the opposition off. He did just that on Day 4 by going after Deep again, as well as Prasidh Krishna.

His is a high risk game and his innings aren't always chanceless.

If Mohammed Siraj had not stepped over the boundary rope while taking a catch at fine leg off Krishna, Brook would have been dismissed for 19. But come the next Test, he would try it again. And England's next Test will be the Ashes where they hope this powerful right-handed ball striker who drives with panache, charges fast bowlers, is quick on his feet against spin will prove to be their counter punch against Australia's skilful bowling attack Down Under.

Once Brook was let off, after

lunch, he began to stroke boundaries taking fewer risks. With the assured presence of Root at the other end and tired legs of India's fast bowlers giving in, it became all too evident that Brook's calculated assault in the first session had shifted the momentum in England's favour.

England pick their personnel with care so that there are enough volunteers to pull off heists. If England go on to win the fifth Test — India need 4 wickets (though Chris Woakes is unlikely to bat) and England 35 runs — this

will be the first of Brook's hundreds in a winning run chase. Then, he would truly join the brigade and consider it a badge of honour.

And this may only be a start. Already England's white-ball captain, it may not be long before they name him Stokes' understudy as called by former England captain Michael Vaughan.

First and foremost he would hope England cross the line on Monday. Brook wouldn't want his heroic knock to turn into one in a losing cause.



Yash Dhull of Central Delhi Kings celebrates his ton.

## Dhull lights up DPL with 56-ball century

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**NEW DELHI:** Yash Dhull lit up Delhi Premier League Season 2 with a sensational century to guide Central Delhi Kings to a commanding 8-wicket victory over North Delhi Strikers on Sunday.

Chasing a target of 175, Dhull scored an unbeaten on 101 off just 56 deliveries.

Earlier, batting first, the North Delhi Strikers posted an impressive total of 174/7, thanks to Sarthak Ranjan (82) and Arnab Bugga (67).

In the second match of the day, Anshuman Hooda picked up a five-wicket haul but in vain as North Delhi Tigers defeated

Outer Delhi Warriorz by 40 runs with Shivam Gupta (89) and Himmat Singh (69) helping Tigers post 222/7.

In the opener on Saturday, South Delhi Superstarz and East Delhi Riders delivered a thriller. South Delhi Superstarz posted a competitive 169/6. In reply, East Delhi Riders openers Arpit Rana and Sujal Singh put on a 33-run stand in 4.3 overs before Rana fell for 20 off 15.

Skipper Anuj Rawat (55) and Mayank Rawat (30) kept the scoreboard ticking. Needing 15 off the final over, Rohan Rathi and Kavya Gupta held their nerves, with Rathi smashing a six off the last ball to seal a thrilling 5-wicket win for the Riders.

## How India juniors ended a 13-yr wait

**Rutvik Mehta**  
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**MUMBAI:** Soon after the Indian men's team lost to Korea in the quarter-finals of the 2024 World Squash Junior Championships to stumble one step short of a medal, Harinder Pal Sandhu, coach of the team for the first time, set his mind on the next edition. That not only entailed hunting for the next crop of young probables but also making a quiet promise.

"To never have that feeling again, if ever the opportunity came up again," said Harinder.

It did, against the same team at the same stage. This time in Cairo, up against a more fancied, third seeded Asian champion Korea, the Indians would script a 2-1 upset and secure a medal. Although they lost to USA in the semi-finals, the bronze by the boys added to 17-year-old Anahat Singh's individual bronze from the recent world juniors.

The team medal was equally significant, if not more, given that the last time an Indian men's team medalled at the prestigious event was in 2012 (bronze). Sandesh PR, Yusha Nafees, Arianth KS and Aryaveer Dewan ended a more than decade-long wait, and showed promise in the men's game to go with Anahat's potential among the women in a sport that will make its Olympic debut at Los



India junior team after winning bronze at the World Squash Junior Championships.

Angeles in 2028.

Of the four medallists, only Arianth was part of the previous edition in Houston. The other first-timers were zeroed in by Harinder, a former top-50 pro whose career was curtailed by a severe back injury in 2018. The 36-year-old coach's "eyes were locked on" the national and Asian circuit over the last year.

"I would study their games in every tournament, or whenever

they came to play in Chennai. And then I would speak to each one of them every day," Harinder said.

Aryaveer, 16, won the U-17 individual gold at the Asian Junior Championships in July. He is also a 2023 U-15 US Open winner. Arianth, 18, was the India No.1 in the U-15 age group. He beat Korea's Lee Jong-hyeok in the decider, after the tie was locked 1-1. Yusha, 17, was India

No.1 in the U-17 category. He gave India the 1-0 lead. Sandesh won the U-19 title at the WSC Classic Open in January.

Each has different personalities and plays a different game, said Harinder. Sandesh, the No.1 player in the team, was down on confidence after a below-par individual outing. He asked Harinder to drop him down in the team order. The coach refused. Instead, he engaged the teen in

plenty of talk that was at times polite and angry yet always honest.

For Arianth and Sandesh, this was their last junior cycle as they prepare to step up into the demanding pro world.

"Both showed they're ready to play on the pro circuit. The game that they played over the last week was very professional, and different to what the juniors play. I hope they will reach top 100 and 50 soon," said Harinder.

"As for Yusha and Aryaveer, they have the chance to be in the team next year too, provided they keep their level up. This was a good experience for them, and now they know how much they need to work harder if they have to change the colour of the medal."

Harinder, a multiple Asian Games medallist, singled out mindset as the biggest challenge in translating junior promise at the pro level, where many talented youngsters have faltered. In these four though he sees potential to take forward the men's game in the country.

As for his coaching career, also in its young days, the team bronze is a tick but not bold enough. "I'm thankful that SRFI (squash federation) and SAI gave me another opportunity to get this medal," he said. "But the satisfaction will come when I can get an Indian or Indians in the final two."

## Windies hold their nerves to beat Pak

**LAUDERHILL:** Jason Holder took four wickets and then smashed a boundary off the final ball of the game to lift West Indies to a thrilling two-wicket victory over Pakistan and level the three-match T20 series. The veteran allrounder bowled an inspired spell to take 4/19 off four overs, as Pakistan struggled to 133/9. The West Indies reply also stumbled as Pakistan's spinners kept scoring difficult but late cameos by Gudakesh Motie and Romario Shepherd kept West Indies just about in the contest before Holder's heroics off Pakistan talisman Shaheen Shah Afridi's final delivery clinched it.

## Teen Mboko stuns top seeded Gauff

**MONTREAL:** Canadian teenager Victoria Mboko took down top-seeded American Coco Gauff 6-1, 6-4, thrilling the home crowd as she reached the quarter-finals of the WTA tournament. The 18-year-old wild card saved all four break points she faced, and broke reigning French Open champion Gauff three times on the way to a victory.