

EYE SECRETS

Spy in every blink

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Modi: UK FTA Big Boost To Exports

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday described the coming into force of the India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) as a significant milestone in bilateral ties, with the pact providing duty-free access to a majority of Indian exports to the UK and phased tariff

processed foods are expected to benefit.

Modi said the agreement would provide momentum to farmers, entrepreneurs and MSMEs, enhance access to the UK market and strengthen cooperation in technology, professional services and innovation. He added that the social security agreement would support Indian professionals working temporarily in the UK.

Union commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal termed the agreement a "historic milestone" that would open new avenues for trade, investment and innovation.

The commerce department said the pact would expand market access for agricultural and processed food exports and strengthen agri-export clusters in states such as Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Punjab.

Commerce secretary Rajesh Agrawal said the agreement followed over 800 technical sessions and 14 rounds of negotiations, adding that goods worth \$140 million were shipped on the first day under the pact.

The UK described the agreement as a "watershed moment", stating that bilateral trade is expected to see an immediate boost, with improved access to goods and services in both countries.

British High Commissioner to India Lindy Cameron called the deal a "new gold standard" in trade agreements and said it would benefit multiple sectors. "From today, import duty on Scotch whisky has been cut from 150 per cent to 75 per cent, which should make a really significant difference to the price the consumer pays," she said.

To mark the implementation, a consignment of British goods, including cosmetics, food items and alcoholic beverages benefiting from reduced tariffs, arrived in Mumbai aboard a British Airways flight, according to an official statement.



reductions on British goods entering India.

The agreement, signed in July last year, is expected to double bilateral trade from the current level of about £48 billion by 2030.

"With the coming into force of the comprehensive economic and trade agreement (CETA) and the agreement on social security, our economic linkages are going to get even deeper. Together, these agreements translate our shared ambition into tangible opportunities for our people," Modi said in a post on X.

Under the pact, 99 per cent of Indian goods entering the UK and 90 per cent of UK goods entering India will either be duty-free or subject to reduced tariffs. Labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, leather, footwear, marine products, gems and jewellery and



CM Revanth inaugurates lithium-ion cell plant in Mahabubnagar

Hyderabad: Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Wednesday, July15, inaugurated Amara Raja Advanced Cell Technologies' Customer Qualification Plant in Mahabubnagar district.

With an initial capacity of 60 MWh, the facility will manufacture lithium-ion cells that customers can test and validate ahead of commercial production, Amara Raja said in a release.

Built with an investment of Rs 500 crore, the facility forms part of the company's broader Rs 9,500 crore, 16 GWh Gigafactory programme, it said.

The facility will manufacture lithium-ion cells in cylindrical and prismatic formats, using multiple chemistries, for qualification and approval by Original Equipment Manufacturers customers across the industry, the release said.

Cells from the facility are expected to be supplied to customers for validation beginning in August 2026, it added.

Together with the advanced research and engineering centre, ePositive Energy Labs, and the upcoming Giga 1 manufacturing facility, the Customer Qualification Plant brings Amara Raja close to completing the first phase of its Giga Corridor investment in Telangana, the release said.

Lithium-ion cells are used, among other applications, to power portable consumer electronics and electric vehicles.

"As the world reconfigures energy supply chains around resilience, security and advanced manufacturing, India's ability to develop, validate and manufacture advanced battery technologies will shape its role in the global energy transition," Jayadev Galla, Co-founder and Chairman, Amara Raja, said.

"Our CQP is a significant step towards creating these capabilities and laying the foundation for a

trusted, world-class energy ecosystem," he added.

Describing Amara Raja as a "glocal" organisation, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said it was "trying to compete globally with local talent".

He praised the company for drawing inspiration from countries such as China, Japan, Germany and South Korea while competing with China in the electric vehicle sector.

Highlighting that the "Telangana Rising 2047" growth story was unstoppable, he said the state government was improving infrastructure to attract more investments.

The CM said the government was carrying forward the policies introduced by the previous TDP government (1994-2004), the Congress government (2004-2014) in undivided Andhra Pradesh and the BRS government from 2014 to December 2023.

He said the government was adopting the best practices and policies of previous governments as it did not want the state to suffer from "policy paralysis".

The state government has introduced various policies, particularly to promote industry, tourism and healthcare, as part of its "Telangana Rising 2047" initiative, he said.

Announcing that the state government was holding talks with neighbouring states on irrigation issues, Reddy said he would soon share "good news" with the people of Mahabubnagar district.

Talks were in progress to secure an allocation of 90 TMC of water for the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme and 30 TMC for the Dindi project, he said. It is a medium-sized reservoir on the Dindi River, a tributary of the Krishna, near Dindi town in Telangana.



PM to Inaugurate Hitec City Railway Station Tomorrow

New Delhi, July 15 Prime Minister Narendra Modi will virtually inaugurate the Hitec City Railway Station on Friday. The station — redeveloped at `26 crore — will have modern passenger amenities.

Speaking to mediapersons, South Central Railway officials said the transformed station will be a reflection of a future-ready India, where infrastructure evolves alongside innovation, strengthening Hyderabad's position as a global technology destination while delivering a smarter, safer, and truly world-class rail travel experience.

In response to demand for increasing the MMTS services, the SCR officials remained non-committal and said the train schedule was finalised taking into consideration the peak office

times of employees.

Hitec City Railway Station is the second redeveloped station in Hyderabad after Begumpet Station and the fourth in Telangana after Warangal and Karimnagar stations. All the stations — redeveloped under the Amrit Bharat Station

scheme — were inaugurated by Modi.

According to the SCR officials, the Hitec City Railway Station will have a 12-metre foot-over-bridge, additional lifts, escalators, passenger-friendly signage, improved station façade, new portico, etc.

The station, which is reimagined with expansive passenger spaces, airport-like aesthetics, contemporary architecture, and intelligent commuter-focused planning, will deliver an elevated travel experience that complements the aspirations of Hyderabad's globally recognised IT corridor.

Telangana grants MoS rank to whips Dayakar, Balmoor Venkat

Hyderabad: The Telangana government has accorded Minister of State rank to Government Whips Addanki Dayakar and Balmoor Venkat, both Members of the Legislative Council.

The two MLCs were appointed as Government Whips of the Telangana Legislative Council with effect from March 18, 2026. Following this appointment, the government has now conferred on them the status of Minister of State, placing them under Article 18 of the State Warrant of Precedence.

According to a government order, this status is personal to Dayakar and Venkat for the duration of their term as Government Whips, and no formal amendment will be made to the State Table of Warrant of Precedence.

Not yet decided: Sule amid signs of NCP (SP) backing delimitation-womens quota Bill

New Delhi, July 15

The debate over the pending Constitution 131st Amendment Bill that links women's reservation in politics to delimitation took a fresh turn on Wednesday amid signs that Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP) may back it in the upcoming monsoon session. Though NCP (SP) leader Supriya Sule was quick to dismiss the talk of her party supporting the Bill, which is yet to be made public, the Congress did not appear amused. In fact, senior Congress leader P Chidambaram openly said late on Tuesday that the BJP was wooing the NCP (SP) and even the DMK for support to the controversial draft legislation that the government plans to pilot in the monsoon session of Parliament commencing from Monday. "Any support to the new version of the failed Bill will be a betrayal of the NCP (SP) and DMK's own conscience that guided them earlier," said Chidambaram, indicating divisions within the Opposition INDIA bloc on approach to the Bill that promises to raise current Lok Sabha seat strength of every state by 50 per cent to make way for 33 per cent women's quota in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies by the 2029 general elections. That the government is work-



ing to garner the numbers (a Constitution amendment Bill must be passed by two-thirds of the MPs present and voting) is no secret. Union Home Minister Amit Shah had already said during the April special session when the Bill was defeated by the Opposition that he was willing to make changes to assure everyone that no state would lose seats due to delimitation and southern states would indeed gain.

Bengaluru to launch ‘Safe Footpath’ drive in July, minister warns against encroachments

The Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) Wednesday announced that in coordination with the traffic police, it will conduct a ‘Safe Footpath Campaign’ between July 1 and 10 spanning a 2,000 km road network in the city. The announcement of the new campaign follows the ‘#1KmChallenge’ being held this month, under which residents are being urged to walk for trips under 1 km instead of choosing motorised transport. After holding a meeting with GBA and Bengaluru city traffic officers, Greater Bengaluru Development Minister Krishna Byre Gowda Wednesday said that Rs 70 crore has already been allocated for repair works and level corrections of footpaths. “The money will be exclusively devoted to the repair works of existing footpaths and not for the construction of any new pedestrian ways,” he added. Gowda also said that footpaths are not meant for parking vehicles and warned that erring vehicles will be towed away. The minister said the “Supreme Court had clearly

stated that the right to walk on a footpath is a fundamental right of every citizen, and had directed all local bodies across states to implement this.” Citing traffic police data, the minister said 30 per cent of every 1,000 road accident deaths reported in Bengaluru are pedestrians. Asking commercial establishments to clear signboards and other encroachments from footpaths before the launch of the drive, Gowda said, “If encroachments continue beyond that date (June 30), the corporation will remove them and impose heavy penalties as per rules.

“Talking about road repair, the Karnataka minister said GBA officials have been directed to fill potholes scientifically using the box-cutting method — cutting the affected area, filling with gravel, and tarring to match the level of the road surface. Unnecessary speed breakers near signals must also be removed, and no buses or other vehicles should be permitted to stop within 75 metres of traffic signals, Gowda added.

Ahead of Ganeshotsav, BMC approves AI crowd monitoring at key Mumbai tourist sites

Ahead of the upcoming Ganeshotsav, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has approved a pilot project to deploy an artificial intelligence-based crowd-monitoring system at key tourist and religious locations across Mumbai, including the Gateway of India, Siddhivinayak Temple, Juhu Beach, Dadar Beach and Girgaon. The AI-powered tourist footfall monitoring system will track and analyse the massive influx of floating populations and festive crowds in real time. Unlike Mumbai’s existing 10,000 standard surveillance cameras, this system will actively map crowd counts, movement patterns, and timing.

Officials said detailed reports will be prepared to determine the project’s costs and logistics, and tenders will be issued after the cost estimate is completed. “The absence of real-time crowd data often creates challenges in sanitation, drinking water supply, traffic management, public amenities, and security. Therefore, a pilot project will be launched in at least five major tourist or religious destinations using AI-powered CCTV technology to monitor visitor footfall in real time,” said BJP councillor Tejinder Singh Tiwana, who proposed the project. “Real-time crowd

analytics will improve public safety, optimise civic services, strengthen traffic management, and support Mumbai’s Smart City planning,” added Tiwana. Speaking to The Indian Express, a civic official said the BMC’s disaster management department currently monitors CCTV cameras. If this system is implemented, localised war rooms could be established. Officials hope that the project will facilitate efficient traffic management, improve crowd control through police deployment, and enhance safety measures for citizens visiting these locations during peak season.

A second AI initiative approved is the citywide ‘digital street museums’ via QR codes to educate citizens and tourists on the local history and the prominent personalities behind Mumbai’s street names. The BMC will install QR codes onto the blue nameboards across the city’s streets and junctions. Scanning the codes will redirect users to an interactive dashboard featuring short animations and videos. Under the Mumbai Municipal Corporation (MMC) Act, approximately 19,000 roads are named after historic freedom fighters, scholars, poets, and social workers. Tiwana said that these QR codes will also provide the local history of a particular area in Mumbai.

2 held for Punjab BJP man’s clinic attack; Pak influencer Shehzad Bhatti named accused

Two people were arrested Thursday in connection with the petrol bomb attack on BJP leader Tarsem Garg’s clinic in Bathinda, even as the police named Pakistan-based social media influencer Shehzad Bhatti an accused in the case and the National Investigation Agency (NIA) stepped in to probe Monday’s incident. The police said Nakhul Kumar Rajput and Gurvinder Singh were arrested in Abohar based on CCTV footage and technical evidence. Rajput works in a rice sheller in Fazilka, while Gurvinder Singh is a daily wage labourer. Harjeet Singh, Deputy Inspector General (DIG), Bathinda range, said, “Raids are being conducted to arrest the third person, Sandeep Singh, who had hired these men to do the job. We have nominated Shehzad Bhatti too in the First Information Report (FIR).” According to the police, the two men allegedly attempted to escape while being brought to Bathinda. They got the vehicle stopped on a pretext and jumped off a flyover in a bid to flee custody, the police said. Gurvinder Singh suffered a leg fracture, while Rajput sustained an arm fracture, they added. The development comes a day after an NIA team from Delhi arrived in Bathinda to investigate the June 22 incident. The team met Dr Garg and sought details from him before visiting the scene of the incident. According to the police, Pakistani social media influencer Shehzad Bhatti, who has gangster links, had allegedly issued threats to Garg’s family after the attack. They said some time after the attack, Dr Garg’s wife, Dr Rajni Jindal, also a homeopath, allegedly received a WhatsApp call from a UK-based number displaying the name of Shehzad Bhatti at around 11.50 pm. “As a picture of Bhatti was seen in the

WhatsApp caller’s profile picture. We will investigate if he was the Pak-based Shehzad Bhatti or his namesake or anyone else,” DIG Harjeet Singh said. The attack took place at 9.40 pm on June 22 when two masked people arrived on a motorcycle outside Garg’s clinic. According to the police, one of them allegedly threw a lit petrol-filled bottle into the verandah of the clinic, while the other was allegedly making a video of the incident. A two-wheeler, parked in the verandah, and the plants kept there were damaged in the attack. BJP Bathinda district president Sarup Chand Singla said the caller told Dr Garg’s wife that it was just a trailer and the real picture was yet to come. “He had said that he would call after 5 minutes, but never called. Instead, he had sent a text message saying Hi on June 23 at 5 am on her number, to which she never replied.” Dr Garg had recently switched political allegiance. Garg, who was earlier the secretary of the trade wing of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), had joined the BJP during the local bodies elections. His wife had also unsuccessfully contested the municipal polls on a BJP ticket. On June 23, the Bathinda police registered a case under the provisions of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and the Explosive Substances Act for attempted murder, mischief by explosive substance, endangering life, and causing property damage. The police later invoked Section 113 of BNS, treating the petrol bomb attack that damaged a vehicle as a terrorist act and included Bhatti’s name. The offence carries a punishment ranging from five years’ imprisonment to life imprisonment and a fine not less than Rs 5 lakh.

Taratala warehouse collapse: CM Adhikari targets previous KMC administration

Kolkata: The plan for the construction of the warehouse at Taratala on the Southern outskirts of Kolkata that collapsed on Wednesday while it was under construction, was sanctioned by former Mayor of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) and ex-West Bengal Municipal Affairs and Urban Development Minister, Firhad Hakim. The accident has taken a toll of nine lives so far and left scores injured, Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari informed the West Bengal Assembly on Thursday afternoon. According to Chief Minister Adhikari, sanction for the plan for the construction of the warehouse was granted on January 17, and had the signature of Hakim and the KMC engineers concerned who examined the plan. “The previous Trinamool Congress government turned the ‘City of Joy’ into a ‘City of Death’ through rampant bribery and extortion. This is the result of your sins. You have not learnt any lesson from multiple accidents because of building collapses in the past. The signature of the former Mayor is there on the sanctioned plan. No one will be spared,” CM Adhikari informed the House on

Thursday. He also informed the House that besides the signature of Hakim, a four-time Trinamool Congress legislator, the sanctioned plan also had the signature of executive engineer, Ranjan Das, assistant engineer, Nirmalendu Sarkar and sub-assistant engineer, Aminur Sheikh. He also accused the former Trinamool Congress-controlled Board of KMC of not purchasing modern and sophisticated equipment to handle emergency situations. “They did not buy any sophisticated equipment to handle an emergency situation. They had already caused a lot of damage. Because of these deficiencies, we had to take the help of the Indian Army. The Bihar Regiment personnel came with proper equipment and started the rescue work,” the Chief Minister said. He also claimed in the Assembly that there was widespread corruption in the approval of various building plans in the KMC area. According to the Chief Minister, one person named Kali was behind the majority of such irregularities. “Once Kali is arrested, all the information will surface. Kali used to influence KMC’s sanction plans.

Adilabad police opens library for government job aspirants in remote tribal village

Adilabad: Police established a library meant for the convenience of aspirants of government jobs at remote Lokari village in Gadiguda mandal. SP Akhil Mahajan, who was the chief guest, formally inaugurated the facility on Thursday. Addressing residents of the village and aspirants, Akhil underlined the importance of education for tribal students. He opined that education was the most powerful weapon to transform the future of tribal children. He advised the students to be friendly with the books available in the library and bring about their lives.

The SP asked the aspirants to visit the library and

spend a few minutes every day. He urged parents to take the responsibility of sending their children to the facility and to improve their knowledge. He noted that 500 books, placed in the library were useful to not only aspirants of UPSC, but also Groups, SI and constable examinations.

The IPS officer wanted tribal youngsters, teachers and parents to cultivate the reading habit. He requested them to crack government jobs by utilizing the opportunity. He stated that similar initiatives would be launched in other parts of the district soon.

Delhi rape-murder: Accused waited 45 minutes for ‘right moment’ to abduct girl

Accused cab driver Bashu Kumar Singh, who allegedly raped and killed a 10-year-old, told police that he waited 45 minutes for the “right time” to abduct her, a police source said on Thursday. The incident took place in the early hours of Monday when the girl was sleeping with her parents on a footpath near a Metro Station in South Delhi. Singh, 29, has been in police custody for two days. During his questioning, police said he revealed the brutality of the crime. What accused told police Sources said Singh told investigators that he was heading to Gurgaon after dropping a passenger in South Delhi in the early hours of Monday. Around 3.30 am, he spotted the girl sleeping with her parents near the Metro station. Sources said he considered picking her up immediately but she was right next to her father. Her three younger sisters were also sleeping with her parents on the footpath, the accused told police. So he parked his vehicle and waited for 45 minutes until she rolled away in her sleep around 4.15 am. The accused claimed he covered her face, forced her into the already running car and

sped off. The girl’s father woke up hearing the commotion. He told police he heard his daughter cry out, “Papa, save me,” but by the time he tried to stop the car, the accused had driven away.

According to a police source, Singh claimed he slapped the girl when she tried to resist and threatened her. He then drove to an isolated spot near Mandi Village where he allegedly raped her. Police said he then drove back to the spot where he had abducted the child, but spotted police and the victim’s parents searching for her. Police said the accused claimed that he turned around, drove towards the Gurgaon-Faridabad border, strangled the girl with a “gamcha (scarf)”, and dumped her body near the Aravalli hills after smashing her face with bricks to conceal her identity. Later, Singh picked up another passenger and dropped them in Vikaspuri in West Delhi from where the Delhi Police nabbed him around 11 am — seven hours after the crime. Singh has been living in Gurgaon for the past 10 years; he is married, with two kids aged six months and four years. His family lives in Bihar.

From house visits to special classes: Panchkula police to ‘adopt’ the elderly

For hundreds of senior citizens spending their days alone behind locked doors in Panchkula, help may soon be a knock away. The Panchkula police have decided to step beyond their traditional law-enforcement role and become an “extended family” for elderly residents living by themselves. “A special ‘Senior Citizen Adoption’ drive will begin, under which police personnel will regularly stay connected with elderly residents and keep a watch on their well-being,” Pankaj Nain, Panchkula Commissioner of Police, told The Indian Express on Thursday.

The drive, which will begin on Friday, aims to ensure that no senior citizen feels isolated or vulnerable during emergencies. As part of the initiative, over the next 15 days, the police will conduct a comprehensive survey and audit of all senior citizens living alone. Their details will be compiled into a central directory, enabling police to respond swiftly whenever assistance is required. Officials say the database will help identify vulnerable residents and ensure timely intervention during emergencies. “Our beat staff will act as their extended family,” Nain said, underlining that the initiative is not just about policing but about ensuring dignity, security and companionship for senior citizens who often face the challenges of ageing alone.

Panchkula has a sizeable population of retired professionals, government officers and businesspersons who chose to settle in the city after retirement. Over the years, many of their children have moved abroad or relocated to metropolitan cities for education, employment and family commitments, leaving elderly parents to live independently. While most seniors manage their daily lives

Jailed in extortion case, man wins Youth Congress poll from behind bars

A Youth Congress leader lodged in jail in connection with a Rs 30 lakh extortion case has been elected vice-president of the organisation from the Baba Bakala Assembly segment, putting the party in an uncomfortable position and raising questions about its internal election process. Azad Singh, a resident of Butari village in Amritsar district, won the Indian Youth Congress election while being behind bars. According to results uploaded on the organisation’s official website, he secured 3,053 votes out of 4,812 polled, defeating rival Sukhpreet Singh Sukh Randhawa, who got 1,596 votes. The result is unusual because Singh has been in jail since his arrest in February this year by Amritsar Rural Police in an extortion case linked to an alleged Rs 30 lakh ransom demand made to a property dealer.

Police had arrested Singh after registering a case based on a complaint by Deepak Kumar Julka, a property dealer from Jandiala Guru. According to the FIR, Julka received a series of threatening WhatsApp calls from foreign numbers between January and February this year. The caller allegedly identified himself as gangster Lucky Singh Lodha and demanded Rs 30 lakh, threatening to kill Julka and his family if the money was not paid. Investigators said threatening videos, including one

showing a pistol, were also sent to the complainant. Police have claimed that technical evidence linked Singh to the case and that a mobile phone was recovered from him during the investigation. The police also alleged that Singh had been in contact with gangsters and had sought their support to influence elections.

Despite his arrest, Singh remained a candidate because he had filed his nomination papers before being taken into custody. Indian Youth Congress president-elect Shubham Sharma said the election process was already underway when Singh submitted his nomination. “He was not arrested when he filed his nomination. The arrest took place later, after the nomination process had been completed,” Sharma said. With Singh’s name remaining on the ballot, party members cast their votes and elected him to the post. Sharma said the organisation would examine the matter once the new team formally takes charge. “I am aware of the case. If the allegations are found to be true, we will recommend that his election be cancelled. We will not allow people with criminal tendencies to remain in the organisation,” he said. The victory has left the Youth Congress facing an awkward question: how did a candidate accused in a serious extortion case manage to win comfortably even after landing in jail?

Cops file 3,500-page chargesheet, deceased’s classmate named



The Vanrai Police on Thursday, July 9, filed a 3,500-page chargesheet against 12 of the 13 accused, including mastermind Ayush Vicky Sahitya and Mahesh Khemlani, in connection with the deaths of two management students during a music concert at NESCO in Goregaon suburb of Mumbai, Maharashtra. According to the police, the chargesheet lists around 110 witnesses, including some of the deceased’s classmates who had attended the concert. Twelve persons, including a classmate of the deceased students, a security guard, the event organisers and the alleged drug peddlers, have been named in the chargesheet. Police said two suspects remain wanted in the case. Last week, the Vanrai Police had arrested Dipesh Hemwani, 23, a resident of the Ulhasnagar area in Thane, after an investigation revealed that MDMA pills were delivered at his residence from abroad. He was later sent to judicial custody. The main supplier of the pills is still wanted in the case, said a police officer. The official added that Hemwani spent five days in police custody before being transferred to judicial custody two days ago.

What’s the case? The case is linked to the deaths of

two second-year MBA students – Shreya Rai, 24, and Bismat Singh Amarjit Singh Bhasin, 28 – of a South Mumbai management institute, who had attended a techno music concert at NESCO on April 11 along with a group of friends, including one Sheetal Salvi, 25. The event was attended by as many as 3,000 to 4,000 people.

The three students complained of dizziness and discomfort while dancing at the event. They were taken to a trauma hospital around 12.30 am on April 12, and later moved to Bombay Hospital after their condition deteriorated. Rai died later that day. Bhasin, who was taken to Lifeline Medicare hospital, also died the same day. Salvi recovered in a week and was discharged from the hospital. Soon after the incident, the Vanrai Police registered a case of culpable homicide along with relevant provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. Investigators have identified Ayush Vicky Sahitya, 24, from the Kalyan-Ulhasnagar belt as the alleged mastermind behind the supply of “Mercedes” ecstasy pills. Four arrested accused – Ayush Sahitya, Anand Patel, Shubh Agarwal and Vineet Garelani – allegedly gained entry into the concert by bribing a security guard, identified as Pradeep Gupta, and supplied the pills to the students. Two suspects remain absconding. Two suspects, who are the employees of the NESCO Exhibition Centre, were granted bail by the Bombay High Court and a local court on June 12. Earlier, the event organiser was also granted bail by the magistrate court. The other eight continue to remain in judicial custody. The Indian Express had earlier reported that a Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) report had confirmed the presence of MDMA (ecstasy) in the toxicology reports of the two management students who died during the music concert.

EYE SECRETS
Editorial

Lives of life-sav-
ers in danger

Violence against doctors, nurses, and other healthcare workers has become a recurring concern in India. Such incidents often occur after the death of a patient, alleged medical negligence, delays in treatment, or disputes over hospital bills. While these attacks undermine the safety of healthcare professionals, they also disrupt emergency medical services and discourage doctors from serving in high-risk settings. Recently, a Shiv Sena corporator assaulted a resident medical officer and a woman gynaecologist at a hospital in Maharashtra's Thane district. This triggered state-wide protests by resident doctors' and nurses' associations. A few months ago, doctors were attacked by patients or their relatives at hospitals in Bidar, Karnataka, and Bikaner in Rajasthan in what has become a depressingly familiar pattern. The lifesavers have no protection for their own lives. A nation cannot expect its healers to serve fearlessly while leaving them defenceless. The absence of a strong central law to ensure the safety and security of healthcare professionals is a glaring gap. There is an urgent need for a stronger legal framework to curb such violence. Though as many as 19 States have laws aimed at protecting medical professionals and healthcare facilities, none has proven an effective deterrent, with very few complaints reaching courts and poor conviction rates. There is, however, no dedicated central law. Parliament did amend the Epidemic Diseases Act during the Covid-19 pandemic to make violence against healthcare personnel treating epidemic patients a cognisable, non-bailable offence — but that protection applies only during notified epidemics, not to routine incidents of hospital violence.The Thane episode reveals the vulnerability of medical staff to political intimidation. The attack was carried out in a fit of rage over the non-availability of a neonatal ICU bed. An FIR was registered only after widespread public outrage, video evidence that went viral and sustained pressure from the medical fraternity. The Shiv Sena led by Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has condemned the corporator's misconduct and promised disciplinary action. However, justice will largely depend on whether the police are allowed to complete their probe without political interference. Inadequate hospital security, especially in government hospitals, overcrowding, staff shortages, long waiting times, and poor communication with patients' families often trigger conflicts. Experts and doctors' associations have advocated a comprehensive central protection law that can be made applicable across India. The Indian Medical Association (IMA) drafted a model law in 2017, and two years later, a government-prepared Healthcare Service Personnel and Clinical Establishments (Prohibition of Violence and Damage to Property) Bill was floated after the Kolkata hospital attacks, but it never reached Parliament. After the August 2024 rape and murder of a trainee doctor at Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College, this demand resurfaced strongly but the Centre's stated position is that the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) already covers grievous hurt/assault adequately and that law and order is a State subject under the Constitution.

17-year-old NDA
cadet dies in Pune
after first physical
training parade



A 17-year-old first-term cadet at the National Defence Academy (NDA) died in Pune on Friday morning following a medical emergency during routine physical training, defence officials said. It is the third NDA cadet death since October last year. The cadet, Abhinav Bajpai, from Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, had joined the NDA on June 24, a press statement issued by the Defence Public Relations Office in Pune said.“During the routine morning physical training session, following the first official PT parade after joining the Academy, he complained of uneasiness and suddenly became unconscious,” the statement added.“The cadet was immediately evacuated to the Military Hospital, Khadakwasla, where intensive resuscitative efforts were undertaken by the medical team. Despite the best possible medical care and sustained efforts to revive him, he could not be saved and was declared deceased. A Court of Inquiry has been ordered to ascertain the facts and circumstances leading to the incident,” the release further said.Officials said the cadet's family had been informed, and the police were also notified. “The National Defence Academy extended their deepest condolences to the bereaved family during this difficult time,” the release said.In the fourth week of October last year, a first-term cadet at the NDA died during a swimming practice session. His death was reported two weeks after the death of an 18-year-old first-term cadet in an alleged suicide case.

In Ayodhya, CM Yogi Adityanath’s latest jab
at Opposition: ‘Namaz offered at temple’



In his first visit to Ayodhya since the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the Ram Mandir 'donation' theft was set up, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath Friday launched a sharp attack on the Samajwadi Party (SP) and Congress once again, alleging that during previous governments, namaz was offered on the steps of the Hanumangarhi temple.Addressing a public meeting in Bikapur after inaugurating and laying the foundation stone of 217 development projects worth over Rs 432 crore, Adityanath said, “Inhone hamare pavitra Hanumangarhi ki seedhiyon par namaz padhwane ka karya kiya tha. Kalpana kijiye, kya koi Jama Masjid mein Hanuman Chalisa ka paath karwa payega? Kya Samajwadi Party ya Congress yeh karwa payegi? (They had namaz offered on the steps of the sacred Hanumangarhi. Imagine, can anyone have the Hanuman Chalisa recited inside Jama Masjid? Can the Samajwadi Party or the Congress make that happen?)”The chief minister was apparently referring to claims of attempts being

made during the Mulayam Singh Yadav led-government in 2003 to facilitate offering of namaz near Hanumangarhi, a temple dedicated to Lord Hanuman.During his visit on June 19, before the SIT submitted its preliminary report and arrests were made, the CM had alleged that attempts were being made to defame the temple town and cast doubts on the functioning of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra, but the SIT constituted by the UP government “would bring out the truth”.He also spoke of the city’s “unprecedented transformation” under the BJP’s “double-engine government”.He asserted that Ayodhya had achieved in recent years what had remained unrealised for nearly 500 years, crediting the BJP government with ensuring the construction of the Ram Temple and undertaking continuous infrastructure development while preserving the city’s religious and cultural identity.Contrasting the present with what he described as the situation before 2017, Adityanath said, “Today, Ayodhya is unlike any other place in the three worlds. It is prosperous. The chain of ghats, Ram Path, Bhakti Path, and the international airport have given Ayodhya a new identity.”Claiming that the temple town had emerged as one of the country’s leading religious and tourism destinations, he listing major projects: the Maharishi Valmiki International Airport, Ram Path, Bhakti Path, improved ghats along the Saryu, expansion of Suraj Kund, beautification of Bharat Kund, enhanced road connectivity and Ayodhya’s development as a solar city.He said lakhs of devotees now visit the city every year and leave “overwhelmed” by its transformation. He said the Opposition was uncomfortable with these developments “because they themselves could never accomplish this”.

‘Saw hand protruding from water’:
3-year-old girl drowns outside Ghaziabad home



At 11 pm on Thursday, the narrow lanes of Sarvodaya Nagar, a neighbourhood in Ghaziabad, were silent. Residents sat on their haunches on staircases outside their houses, watching as the rainwater slowly receded. Every lane was caked in sludge and flanked by overflowing open drains, making it impossible to see what lay beneath each step.Suddenly, anguished cries broke the silence from a house in Lane No. 44. Inside, 26-year-old Khushboo lay huddled on a mattress. “Kahan gayi meri ladki? (Where has my daughter gone?),” she cried out to the women surrounding her in a circle.

Earlier that afternoon, she found three-year-old Manvi’s tiny fist protruding from a heavily waterlogged stretch of road outside their home, where rainwater had accumulated to an estimated depth of about three feet. The child was pulled out and rushed to two hospitals, where she was declared dead.2. Khushboo’s WhatsApp profile picture shows Manvi taking her first steps while balancing on a stone. She was the youngest of the couple’s children.(Express Photo by Gajendra Yadav) 2. Khushboo’s WhatsApp profile picture shows Manvi taking her first steps while balancing on a stone. She was the youngest of the couple’s children.(Express Photo by Gajendra Yadav)Shobit Kumar (26), the girl’s paternal uncle, said, “It had been raining since last night, and water had entered the entire house. After the water began to recede, Khushboo was cleaning the room... Manvi managed to get out... she must have walked into the lane... A while later, Khushboo noticed a tiny hand protruding from the rainwater that had accumulated outside...”The family, originally from Farukhabad, a town in Uttar Pradesh, shifted here for employment around six years ago. While

Khushboo is a homemaker, her husband is a vegetable vendor.Her husband was still at the hospital, waiting for Manvi’s post-mortem report.Khushboo’s WhatsApp profile picture shows Manvi taking her first steps while balancing on a stone. She was the youngest of the couple’s children.Assistant Commissioner of Police (Kotwali Ghaziabad) Upasna Pandey said around 2-3 ft of water had accumulated after heavy rainfall in Sarvodaya Nagar. “The girl drowned in the rainwater around noon. Her body has been sent for postmortem examination,” she said.According to the India Meteorological Department, Hindon recorded 28.5 mm of rainfall and Kamla Nehru Nagar 31.5 mm in Ghaziabad on Thursday.’Every year, our homes get flooded’Residents claimed this is not the first time the grief has struck the neighbourhood.Anil Sharma, in his 60s, who lives a few houses away, alleged that around three years ago, a boy on his bicycle fell into a drain. His body was recovered after 25 hrs, 1.5 km away.

“Every year, our homes get flooded with around three feet of water. Our doors, sofas, cupboards, and even the flooring get damaged,” he said.Residents here aren’t wealthy, he said “We struggle to even earn Rs 20,000 a month.”Though there is a network of drains, he claimed water from nearby areas flows here. “The drain is damaged and there is no boundary wall, so water from nearby neighbourhoods enters Sarvodaya Nagar,” Anil said, expressing anger over the alleged lack of action from the administration despite repeated complaints over the past years.“We’ve filed complaints at every level including with several administrative officials and the councillor. We have a thick file of RTI applications and documents dating back to 2012. But nothing has been done. It’s the same story every year,” he alleged, pointing to a house across from the toddler’s where a family had been using pumps and plastic pipes for nearly 10 hours to drain knee-deep water.”Another resident, Anagd (26), said, “Subah se makaan main paani bhar gaya hai. Na toh khaane ko mila hai, na toh peene ko mila hai, paani thoda khatam hua aur ye ghatna ghat gayi. Sab sadme main hai. (Since morning, our house has been flooded. We haven’t had anything to eat or drink. The water had only just started to recede when this incident occurred. Everyone is in shock.)”Back inside the house, Khushboo’s five-year-old daughter wandered around the room, seemingly unaware of the tragedy that had struck the family. Khushboo pulled the child into her arms and held her close.

Maharashtra ATS launches statewide
crackdown on ISI-linked radicalisation network

The Maharashtra Anti Terrorism Squad (ATS) Friday launched a state-wide operation against an alleged terror network financed by Pakistan’s intelligence agency ISI for radicalisation and recruitment of Indian youths through social media platforms.According to the ATS, Pakistan-based gangsters Shahzad Bhatti, Amjal Gujjar, Abit Jat, Rana Husen, Abdul Menon, Farooq Khokar, Zafar Supari, Shani Tiger, Sheikh Salman, Sarfaraz Dongar alias Jorasingh, Abu Musa, Sarkar, and Munna Jhingada alias Syed Hussain, an Indian gangster from the Dawood Ibrahim gang, are allegedly using social media platforms to target and recruit vulnerable youth in India as per the instructions of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).A senior ATS officer confirmed that they have identified more than 200 individuals from different cities and districts in Maharashtra, including Mumbai, Pune, Ratnagiri, and other places, who are suspected to have liked, commented, or responded to the suspicious social media platforms operated by the gangsters based in Pakistan.

As a part of the operation, the ATS is raiding and questioning the individuals and giving them a stern warning to prevent their exploitation by Pakistani operatives for any anti-national and terrorist activities in India.“The raids would continue for the next few days,” a police officer said.The Maharashtra ATS had conducted similar raids in May this year at about 40 locations across the state, when the agency questioned over 55 individuals, who had allegedly interacted online with social media accounts linked to Shahzad Bhatti’s network. At least four people from Pune’s Chakan, Warje, and Shirur were questioned about their social media activities. No FIRs were registered against them, but their cell phones have been seized for further probe.According to ATS, the social media networks operated by Pakistani handlers try to identify individuals who are expressing unrest against Indian authorities or incidents in the country.These individuals or potential recruits are initially motivated to commit to small tasks. Those who get indoctrinated are later given bigger tasks for creating law and order problems, which



may cause a larger security threat, officials said.

Officials pointed out that the Delhi Police’s Special Cell in May had arrested several persons from Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, and Jammu and Kashmir for their alleged links to Bhatti’s network. Investigators had alleged that the suspects had plans to attack places like a historic temple in Delhi, a military establishment in Haryana, and drop drugs and weapons in Punjab using drones in border areas.

Also, in March 2024, Bhatti was alleged to be involved in the grenade attack near the residence of YouTuber Rozer Sandhu in Jalandhar. Bhatti was also allegedly known to have good relations with Lawrence Bishnoi gang member Zeeshan Akhtar, an accused in the sensational murder of former Maharashtra minister Baba Siddique in Mumbai in October 2024. Officials believe the relationship got damaged over Bishnoi’s anti-Pakistan statements after the Pahalgam terror attack last year.

Pune Army institute
revives injured ex-cadet’s
dream to become a pilot

Former NDA cadet Pune Army instituteAkiredy Sai Vedansh fractured his neck last year during routine training. While he did not require surgical intervention, he had to wear a neck brace that restricted his cervical spine movement.Akiredy Sai Vedansh had only one dream—to be a pilot in the Indian Air Force. That dream came to an abrupt halt last year when a severe cervical vertebra fracture left the young cadet medically unfit to continue training at Pune’s National Defence Academy (NDA).

In a first-of-its-kind initiative, the Army Institute of Technology (AIT), Pune, offered him a fresh start by admitting him directly into the second year of its BTech programme. Now, a year after the injury, with his neck brace removed and recovery progressing well, the 21-year-old is once again pursuing his ambition with renewed determination.“I hope to appear for the Combined Defence Services examination after my graduation and secure a direct entry,” Vedansh said, refusing to let the setback define his future.Coming from an armed forces family—his father is an officer—Vedansh grew up inspired by military life. “I had secured admission at NDA in 2024 and was pursuing a BTech in Applied Electronics and Communication,” he said.A fracture and the end of a dreamThe accident occurred in March last year. “It was a routine training. In the process, I fractured my neck,” he said. While he did not require surgical intervention, he had to wear a Philadelphia collar that severely restricted his cervical spine movement.The injury made him medically unfit for the rigours of military training, and he was discharged from the Academy. It was a challenging time for the family, but the AIT stepped in.The AIT is an engineering college affiliated to the Savitribai Phule Pune University and functions under the aegis of the Army Welfare Education Society. It admitted Vedansh under the ‘over and above’ seats provision in line with All India Council for Technical Education guidelines for genuine cases, after receiving approvals from various Army institutions.

Major General Uday Shankar Sengupta (ret'd), Director of AIT, Pune, told The Indian Express that the initiative was a first for the institute. “AIT takes pride in being more than an academic institution—it is a community that values compassion and determination,” he said.Despite the severity of his injury and prolonged hospitalisation, Vedansh completed all academic requirements for the second semester. “AIT not only gained a top-scoring student, but his admission and successful completion of one year is a proud milestone for the institute,” Sengupta added.

7 missing for 48 hours,
race against time after waste
mound collapses near Pune



At Pimpri Chinchwad, near Pune, where a waste mountain collapsed on part of a building on Wednesday, a race against time is underway. Of the 18 people trapped under the debris, nine have been rescued while one has been pulled out dead. Another body has now been spotted, but rescue teams said they will need time to reach that point. The remaining seven are still missing.Amid heavy rain in Pune and surrounding areas, the waste mountain in Moshi crashed into the building around 1.30 pm on Wednesday. At the time, 23 people were in the building, which serves as the administrative office of a waste-to-energy project. Five of them managed to escape in time, but the others were trapped.

The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) has been running a rescue operation at the spot for nearly two days now. NDRF officials have said that while one portion of the building has collapsed, another has lifted off the ground, creating a precarious situation. Rescue teams have made a duct on the lifted side for access inside the debris, where the missing eight are trapped.NDRF officials said they have been extremely careful while handling the rubble. “That is why we were successful in rescuing nine persons. We have worked both manually and with machines. We are making all-out efforts to pull out those who are missing,” said an NDRF official.The waste-to-energy project is part of an agreement between Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation and Antony Lara Renewable Energy Ltd. According to officials, the mound has ‘legacy waste’, meaning untreated solid waste and industrial byproducts left in old landfills or dumpsites for long.

The civic body has blamed heavy rain for the incident. City Engineer Sanjay Kulkarni, who also heads the civic environment department and the Moshi garbage depot, has said the building was built at least 30 metres from the garbage mountain. “It is wrong to say we had not taken adequate safety steps. We keep clearing it. We put soil into the garbage, and it is hardened. Even trucks and earthmovers climb atop it to clear garbage in a phased manner. We never thought the hardened stuff would loosen this way. It has never happened. Due to heavy rainfall, water entered the garbage mound, and it became loose,” he said. Asked why a wall was not constructed around the mound, Kulkarni said, “The building was at a safe distance from the heap of garbage; we never thought about it.”

y“The building should not have been built so close to the mountain of garbage. The civic body does not seem to have taken enough care to ensure the safety of those working in the garbage depot,” said Santosh Kumbhar, a relative of Mahesh Kumbhar, who remains missing.Mahesh Kumbhar works as a human resources professional in the building. Santosh said Mahesh married less than a month ago and was looking for a flat on rent so that his wife could shift to Pune with him. “We got a call at 1 am and I left at 2 am, reached here at 10 am. No official has met me till now.

The potential of AI-based Electronic Medical Records to transform healthcare delivery in India



A 33-year-old man recently visited a doctor after multiple hospital and specialist consultations, during which he had spent several days admitted, and had incurred expenses running into lakhs of rupees. He had been experiencing high-grade, intermittent fever for three months, accompanied by rashes and body pain. Extensive investigations had been conducted to rule out infections, cancers, and autoimmune diseases. The only notable findings in his tests were elevated ESR and CRP—markers of inflammation—and a high serum ferritin level, a test typically used to assess iron stores. When the tech-savvy doctor fed the patient's symptoms and lab reports into an AI-enabled EMR (Electronic Medical Record) the first diagnosis that the system suggested was Adult Onset Still's Disease, which is an auto-inflammatory condition. The patient was then treated with steroids and immune-modulating drugs, which provided a prompt resolution of symptoms. What several specialists missed over almost three months, the AI EMR picked up in seconds, at virtually no cost.

An AI EMR does the thinking for the doctor/nurse to ensure that an optimum diagnosis is made, and the ideal treatment options are provided. It ensures that every lab result is factored in, every datapoint considered, when arriving at its recommendations. (It can do the thinking for you, the patient too, but that needs accurate and comprehensive information about your condition to be made available to the system.) Hundreds of studies now show AI models outperforming physicians in real-life settings, medical MCQ examinations and even in the most complex of case scenarios. Yet, adoption faces huge roadblocks put up by a healthcare industry protecting its turf and livelihood. AI today, offers a massive opportunity for countries like India to transform the quality of healthcare that the poor and underserved can receive. It is inexpensive, phenomenally accurate already (and will keep getting even better) and most importantly, easily accessible. In short, it can largely solve the three major problems healthcare faces: accessibility, affordability and quality. AI to many means by default, Generative AI and the Large Language Models (LLMs) that have been created by the likes of OpenAI, Google and Anthropic. So the erstwhile, 'Have you Googled your symptoms?', is now, 'Have you checked your symptoms on ChatGPT?'. But AI has a lot more to offer for healthcare than just Gen AI. And an AI-based EMR is at the forefront of this revolution. An AI EMR can ensure creation of a unified health record for a patient easily. Currently, this is a massive challenge due to patients seeing different doctors over time, going to different labs etc., and all this data remaining in disparate com-

partments, affecting the quality of care received. Data and unstructured data at that, can now be instantly tagged to a patient's medical record and be extracted and made available for analysis. All that the patient needs to do is upload a PDF document of a lab report or take a photo using his mobile phone and upload the jpg images to the medical record. So, patients themselves can create their unified patient records and have them analysed using Gen AI within AI EMR systems. Though some of these technologies have existed before, their integration with AI has transformed them.

AI EMR systems can answer in simple, patient understandable language, every doubt that the patient may have and the doctor may not have time for. For example, how essential is the surgery my doctor ordered, what are the alternative options, what are the risks if I do not go in for it etc. are standard doubts. Earlier, you could get generic information. Now, you get accurate answers based on your medical data, your symptoms, your lab reports and condition, even your economic constraints. In short, an AI EMR or PHR (Personal Health Record) can be your regular health assistant, one that is far more knowledgeable than an individual doctor could ever hope to be. The big difference from earlier is in the specificity of the answers tailored to the individual's condition. AI EMR systems can take language out of the equation. Today, AI EMR's can support voice transcription of conversations between the doctor and the patient in any major language (and multiple languages too), extract the medical component of the data and even provide patient summaries in any major Indian language. Some EMR systems have patients talk to an AI assistant on their phone in their native language and it asks relevant questions based on symptoms and suggests the next steps or summarises the details for the doctor with great accuracy. Many of the technologies used in these processes are not AI (speech-to-text for instance, has been around for decades) but the integration of AI has given these technologies phenomenal power. AI interpretation of medical images within EMR systems has greatly improved. AI medical record systems today can read X-rays, CT scan images and the like, with a great deal of accuracy, in many documented studies, outperforming radiologists. As this technology gets even better, the reliance on the local doctor to interpret a report will decrease. AI EMRs also drastically reduce medical errors in hospitals and clinics. Doctors may be overworked and may forget critical data points that end up costing lives. AI-based models do not forget, do not get tired and are always available. As a patient safety tool, every hospital can benefit from using AI. AI is not 100% accurate and can make errors is the obvious caveat, but this should not be the deterrent to using it. The only question that matters is whether AI is better than existing healthcare providers at what it does. There is now overwhelming global evidence that it is significantly better. So, what is preventing the healthcare community from embracing AI EMRs? Could it be a perceived threat to livelihoods and the 'what's in it for me' attitude? Governments have a once in a millennium opportunity to transform healthcare delivery in a country like India through the use of AI EMRs but it is unlikely that they will antagonise the medical community and push for it in a big way. Eventually the use of AI EMR/PHR systems in healthcare will likely be patient driven.

Why don't birds get electrocuted on wires?

If we tried the same thing, the result would be... well, shocking. So what makes birds different? Let's understand how electricity works. Electricity flows through metal wires, just like water flows through pipes. It moves from a place with high voltage (electric pressure) to a place with low voltage. For electricity to flow, it needs a complete path — from a power source, through wires, and back again. It usually travels smoothly toward the ground, which has zero voltage. But if something touches the wire and the ground at the same time, electricity can flow through that object — which can be dangerous. The bird's trick? When a bird is sitting on a wire, it's perched with both feet on the same wire. This means its body is at the same voltage as the wire. Since there's no voltage difference across its body, electricity has no reason to flow through it. In simple terms, the bird becomes part of the wire, not a path electricity wants to travel through. When it becomes dangerous? Birds are safe when they sit on just one wire, because there's no voltage difference across their body. But things change when a bird (or person) touches two points at once — like: Two wires with different voltages, or a wire and something connected to the ground, like a pole or tree. In both cases, the body creates a complete path for electricity to flow. Electricity moves from high voltage to



low voltage or ground, and if the body is in the way, it becomes the path. This sudden flow of electricity through the body causes a shock or electrocution. That's why power lines are spaced apart and kept high up — to prevent birds and people from touching more than one point at the same time.

What about humans? Unlike birds, humans stay in contact with the ground. If a person touches a wire while grounded, it creates a path for electricity to flow. That's why people can get shocked easily near power lines. Linemen wear special gear and follow safety rules to stay safe. Birds avoid shocks by not touching the ground or multiple wires — and that's their trick!

Visakhapatnam Junction to have 14 platforms to cater to the growing demand

The redevelopment of Visakhapatnam Railway Station, which is among the top 20 stations in India in passenger revenue for the financial year 2023-24, has begun after much delay. Visakhapatnam Junction will have 14 platforms to cater to the growing demand. In fact, Visakhapatnam Junction was the highest revenue earner among all the railway stations in the Bhubaneswar-headquartered East Coast Railway (ECOR) during 2022-23 and 2021-22 financial years also, according to data obtained by Kanchumurthi Eswar of Duvvada under the RTI Act.

It may be recalled that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had laid the foundation stone for redevelopment of Visakhapatnam Railway Station, at an estimated cost of ₹456 crore, on November 12, 2022. The redeveloped station is designed to cater to the needs of 75,000 passengers a day. The work commenced in the first quarter of 2023 but was subsequently held up reportedly due to issues with the contractor. Notwithstanding the delay, there is enough reason for people of the city to cheer up. The redeveloped Visakhapatnam Junction will have six new platforms taking the total to 14. It may be recalled that a survey for construction of new platforms was conducted more than a decade ago to reduce the congestion at the station. There were demands for construction of four additional platforms ever since.

The station redevelopment plan originally included provision for construction of two new platforms. A revised DPR submitted to make Visakhapatnam Junction as a



terminal station with six additional platforms, major yard remodelling works to prevent criss-crossing of trains, leaving and entering Visakhapatnam Railway Station, is under consideration of the railways, according to sources. Visakhapatnam Railway Station redevelopment work in progress outside the Gnanapuram entry. It is learnt that of the six new platforms, two would be terminal platforms for the operation of Vande Bharat Express trains, which do not require engine reversal. A coach maintenance depot would be established in Visakhapatnam for the maintenance of Vande Bharat express trains. "The revised master plan for redevelopment of the entire station, including yard redevelopment, provision of new escalators and 12 m wide FOB have been submitted, and it is under consideration of the authorities concerned.

99% of Indian people on LinkedIn have one complex ambition



Your favourite weekend columnist is currently on extended leave from work and other livelihood-related shenanigans. Things have been very busy indeed for the last many months. And I thought it was time to take a well-earned break to rest and recuperate. (If anyone reading this is looking to hire a handsome Malayali youth — a Mamdani from Malabar if you will — with an eclectic resume and reasonable salary expectations, please contact me immediately.) And how have I been spending this hard-earned period of professional respite?

Yes, exactly. I have been lavishing away hours on end browsing LinkedIn. I am trying to figure out what all my long-forgotten best friends and sworn enemies — from secondary school, bachelor's, all the way up to master's — have been up to in their careers. Am I doing this in order to come up with characters for my next novel? How dare you? Do not insult me with such baseless allegations. (Yes.) But friends, let me ask you one question: what is your ultimate ambition in your professional life? I am a child of the 1990s. I grew up at a time when there was no Internet, most telephones were rotary, Indian bowlers were only fast if they were travelling by train, and one's greatest source of entertainment were latest Malayalam films. My professional ambitions when I was a child were simple: become any type of engineer except Civil, any type of doctor except surgeon, or, like Mohanlal in *Yodha* (1992), travel to Nepal and become a warrior-monk who rescues the next incarnation of the Buddha from the clutches of a dark wizard before romancing the heroine. Ideally Simran, but Manju Warrior is also okay. Not a deal-breaker. But friends, as I have spent more and more time on LinkedIn,

One Big Beautiful Bill: US passes 1% foreign remittance tax, how will it impact Indians?



The U.S. Congress passes Donald Trump's "One Big Beautiful Bill" on The legislation, which takes effect on July 4, 2025, introduces a 1% levy on remittances made through cash, money orders, or cashier's cheques. It targets international money transfers made by non-U.S. citizens, including green card holders and temporary visa workers like those on H-1B or H-2A visas. The proposed levy will not be applicable to U.S. citizens. India stands as the world's top remittance recipient. Other major recipients include Mexico, China, the Philippines, France, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The proposed U.S. tax on remittances sent abroad by non-citizens is raising alarm in

Access, the greatest asset of a reporter

If a reporter's currency is their byline, their greatest asset is access — whether to leaders in corporate India, to officials within the government, to actors, or to sportspersons. However, access is a complicated thing. It involves building trust and establishing contacts over the years. It is equally shaped by how a reporter and their organisation they work for are perceived. After a stint in a smaller, digital-only media platform, I returned to The Hindu recently. The difference in access is stark. Back then, I would struggle to chase after companies, big or small; and I would have to cajole them to comment on a news development. Sometimes they would give me interviews, but more often than not, they would ignore me for days.

The same thing happened with government officials. As I enjoyed a personal rapport with some of them, they were open to having conversations. But those who did not know me did not care. Now, the situation is different. The same companies I had hounded, and the several others that I did not, seem all too eager to organise 'relationship building meetings'. For every data release or policy development, I get bombarded with quotes and press releases on what the heads of these companies have to say.

The government's attitude has also changed, though not as radically. While earlier requests for meetings with Secretaries and Joint Secretaries fell on deaf ears, they are now more likely to be entertained. However, this is not a privilege I take for granted, since I have seen what happens when one does that. My first stint at The Hindu coincided with the time when Arun Jaitley was Finance Minister. Jaitley gave reporters more or less a free writ to roam the halls of the Ministry for stories. This policy carried over briefly when Nirmala Sitharaman took over as Finance Minister. However, it soon stopped because the privilege was grossly abused. It was brought to the Minister's attention that several reporters were ordering food from apps to be delivered directly to North Block, which not only houses the Home Ministry, but is also located opposite the Ministry of Defence and the Prime Minister's Office. Some reporters went as far as to tail government officials on their way to the bathroom, hoping to get a quote from them. Ms. Sitharaman decided to go the other extreme. She banned entry of all media persons to the Ministry, unless they had an official appointment. Those appointments, too, became rare. It took the media several years to regain her reluctant trust. Things are still far from where they were during Jaitley's time, but they are certainly better than what they were in 2019. Access also depends very much on the journalist's work. Once I reported a foolish remark by a Minister. The news item was carried on

have come to realise that 99% of all Indian people on LinkedIn have a particular ambition. It is a complex ambition. And it very much deserves a word by itself in the English dictionary. The first part is to get a high-profile job in a high-profile company. It should come with a glamorous title and corporate travel. Once you get this job, you will share all kinds of glamorous details of your lifestyle on LinkedIn. You will share pictures of conferences in Kuala Lumpur, award ceremonies holding certificates, and intense pictures of intense office meetings where you discuss intense things with your intense colleagues. Of course, you will also share pictures of yourself on holiday with your family in assorted domestic and international locations. Now you might think: wait this is a perfectly fine ambition. In fact, this is my own ambition. Let me explain the second part of this ambition: to also relentlessly convey the fact that you cannot afford anything because you are simple and humble and will not spend money. Friends, this combination is the ultimate ambition of 99% of Indian people on LinkedIn: 1. To be able to indicate that you have a lot of money: "Guys, just feeling so blessed today that I could book Chinnaswami Stadium for a simple private ceremony to celebrate my appointment as Chairman and Managing Director of Labour Price Arbitrage Software Corporation of India. I just want to say thanks to my wife who you can see in the photo sitting on her diamond." 2. But to also then say that your quintessential Indian values mean that you will not spend a single rupee on anything due to intense humility and simple upbringing: "Guys, I was leaving the First Class lounge at Heathrow last night, and then had to run back because I left my Rolex on the table. But I fell down and broke my water bottle. But did I buy a new one? Never. I am not one of those western decadents. Instead, I asked the lounge for a simple Bisleri bottle and reused it for 12 hours. This is a picture of the humble water bottle held in my hand wearing a Rolex. It reminds me every day to keep my Indian feet on the ground." I have come up with a term for this absolute she-nanigans: fauxsparsity. Example sentence: "Rajesh's latest post about flying business class to Singapore but still eating dal-rice from tiffin box because of his village upbringing was peak fauxsparsity." Are you someone whose ambition is to achieve fauxsparsity in your life? Do you know any fauxspurious people yourself? Immediately send me your LinkedIn profiles, along with Internet banking login and password, if possible.

India, which stands to lose billions in annual foreign currency inflows if the plan becomes law," the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said. GTRI said that the loss would tighten the supply of U.S. dollars in India's foreign exchange market, putting modest depreciation pressure on the rupee. In a relief to Non-Resident Indians (NRI), the tax rate was originally set at 5%, but was reduced to 1% in the final version of the Bill. The Bill also exempts remittances made from "an account held in or by a financial institution" and those "funded with a debit card or a credit card issued in the United States".

How does it impact India?

Reserve Bank of India data shows the U.S. is the largest source of remittances to India, accounting for 27.7% or \$32.9 billion of the remittances that flowed into the country in 2023-24. In States like Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar, millions of families rely on remittances to cover essential expenses like education, healthcare, and housing. "A tax on remittances would certainly dent the remittances coming into India," a government official told The Hindu. "But the government has not yet made an assessment of what that dent will be." The official also added that India has also not yet taken a call on whether to approach the U.S. for some relief in the matter or not.



the front page and I was immediately blacklisted. I no longer had access to off-the-record insights. It finally took a change of personnel in the Minister's office for me to regain some semblance of access. The attempt to gain greater access remains ongoing. Several media houses and journalists have ample access to officials simply because they write what the government wants them to.

Kothagudem village auctions single belt shop to curb illegal liquor sales

Kothagudem: Residents and sarpanch of Chinthiriyala gram panchayat (GP) in Aswapuram mandal in Kothagudem district have found a unique solution to curtail liquor belt-shops mushrooming all over the GP.

It might be noted that liquor sales through unauthorised outlets commonly known as 'belt shops' have become rampant in both rural and urban areas across Telangana. With the same situation prevailing in Chinthiriyala GP, the locals are worried over youth becoming addicted to alcohol leading to social issues. Women, in particular, faced significant difficulties as liquor is easily available in every grocery store in the GP. According to the locals there are over 20 belt shops under the limits of Chinthiriyala GP that has three villages Chinthiriyala, Chinthiriyala Colony and Kattamvarigudem. The panchayat sarpanch, A Usha Rani held a meeting with Kattamvarigudem village elders and panchayat members; a decision was made to shut down all the belt shops and allow only a single belt shop to operate in the village.

Why does Ab de Villiers think Samson was closer to the ODI squad for ENG tour



Sanju Samson finished the T20 World Cup 2026, scoring three back-to-back half-centuries. During the Indian Premier League 2026 season, he was in sublime form for the Chennai Super Kings, scoring two centuries, including 477 runs at an average of 43.36. Former South African cricketer AB de Villiers opined that the call to omit Rishabh Pant was obvious, but he felt Samson was close to returning to the ODI format for the England series. "Ishan Kishan, KL Rahul the two top wicket-keepers. The big thing there is no Pant, no Samson. Samson must have been close, closer than Pant, as he had a really good IPL but also prior to that, showing signs of form. Not a lot of

surprises there, but just for Samson, I feel he was close," he said on his YouTube channel.

De Villiers also mentioned the omission of Yashasvi Jaiswal, who scored a century in his previous game against Afghanistan. "Virat Kohli back. Little bit of a tough one on Jaiswal, who was back in Virat's place, scoring the hundred and now he's got to make way. No complaints there but it just a little bit harsh on players sometimes when your King comes back, when the man players come back, there is a process they are looking at. So truly makes sense for Virat to step in there and make sure he maintains the kind of form he showed in the IPL," he stated. Kohli, who sustained a hamstring injury during the IPL 2026 final in Ahmedabad last month, will be available for the series only after obtaining the necessary fitness clearance, the BCCI announced in its statement. Star all-rounder Hardik Pandya was ruled out of the series after failing to regain fitness from the injury sustained during the IPL season with the Mumbai Indians. India ODI squad for England tour: Shubman Gill (Captain), Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli*, Shreyas Iyer (Vice-Captain), KL Rahul (WK), Ishan Kishan (WK), Washington Sundar, Axar Patel, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Kuldeep Yadav, Jasprit Bumrah, Prasidh Krishna, Harshit Rana, Arshdeep Singh, Gurnoor Brar.

How an imperfect South African team qualified for the World Cup knockouts

Barely any facet of South Africa's 1-0 win over South Korea resembled perfection. Certainly not their football. They had 31.5% ball possession — the lowest ever for the team at a World Cup game. The goal itself was hardly perfect, either. The goalscorer, Thapelo Maseko's first touch was much heavier than ideal. His shot was laced with venom and spite, but it could have been saved if the goalkeeper had positioned himself correctly. Yet, for all their imperfections, South Africa have qualified for the knockouts of the 2026 FIFA World Cup — a statement you would not have believed, had it been furnished in the immediate aftermath of their embarrassing defeat to Mexico. It raises an intriguing question: would they have achieved what they have, becoming only the seventh African nation to reach a World Cup knockout stage, had they been perfect?

Maseko most definitely has not had a perfect career so far. It once seemed it would. He was the youngest player in South Africa's 2023 AFCON squad. Given his inexperience, not many expected him to play. Not only did he do so, but he also scored. That, too, with his family in attendance. The same tournament, however, delivered a cruel twist. Maseko ruptured his hamstring and disappeared from the national team picture for two years. By the time he returned, South Africa had found alternatives, and Mamelodi Sundowns FC could offer him little more than a place in their developmental setup. Had he not forced himself to leave the country and join Cypriotic side AEL Limassol on loan, Maseko would not have been at the World Cup. When news of his selection arrived, his mother reportedly cried so uncontrollably that an ambulance had to be called.

Sphephelo "Yaya" Sithole's campaign at the World Cup has been anything but perfect. His mistake led to the opening goal of the tournament. It was only one of the unwanted firsts attached to his name that day. His red card was also the first of the tournament, and the first since 1994 where a marching order was brandished in the opening encounter. Sithole assumed his career was all but over when he fractured both his tibia and fibula. Like Maseko, he lost his place in the national team. Upon recovering, Sithole acknowledged: "I thought the injury was the end of my career. It was tough mentally because if you are injured, you can't do anything." Today, he ran his socks off. And we do not mention the phrase generically. Data backs the claim — 11.43 kilometres covered,



1.88 kilometres of those in high speed; 53 passes, 49 of those successful. In all of these metrics, he leads the charts among South Africans. South Africa defeated South Korea to make their way into round of 32. (AP) South Africa defeated South Korea to make their way into round of 32. (AP) Coach Hugo Broos has not had a perfect career either. He was sacked as Cameroon manager barely ten months after guiding the nation to its first AFCON title in 15 years. Following a disappointing Confederations Cup campaign, FECAFoot replaced him with Rigobert Song.

His first application to become South Africa's coach was rejected. SAFA went with Stuart Baxter. Only at the second attempt did South Africa hand him the reins. Today, he is second to only Ephraim Mashaba in points-per-game among Bafana Bafana managers to spend at least a year in charge. Neither of these men has been perfect, nor has their game against South Korea. Perhaps, though, imperfection is something the country has become accustomed to having accentuated. At a White House meeting last year, US President Donald Trump accused South Africa of committing the "opposite of Apartheid." In his defence, Cyril Ramaphosa did try to put up a case on why the allegations of 'white genocide' are false, but he was not listened to. The imbalance of power meant Ramaphosa was never likely to dominate that conversation. Not against arguably the most powerful man in the world. But when Broos was asked the same question — bizarrely, in the pre-match press conference that had nothing to do with politics — he came up with a genius reply. "I will answer that question," he said at first. Silence filled the room. Now, the Americans were listening. Learning.

Prayers, a letter from the coach and redemption: Jyothi Yarraji seals Asiad spot

In the women's 100m hurdles final at the Inter State National Championships, Jyothi Yarraji stared at the big screen after the race. Once it flashed 12.99s in front of her name, she fell on the track, virtually hugging it and feeling it. The celebration showed how much it had meant to return to the track after a year-long layoff due to an anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injury. She breezed through the hurdles to breach the Asian Games qualification mark and go under 13s in the final to claim the national title. Last year, Jyothi was bound for the World Championships, but a freak injury during training, where she hit a hurdle, kept her away from the track.

"I felt so good today. Interestingly, exactly one year back, I got injured and today I am here clocking sub 13s, it means a lot for me," Jyothi told the reporters after her race. "I was expecting a better race. Something around 12.6s, but that's okay. I have been praying every day since I got injured on this day." Jyothi was expected to return at the Federation Cup last month. However, a hamstring pull delayed her comeback. "I was planning to come back at the Federation Cup, but I pulled my hamstring. A big thanks to AFI, who allowed me to compete and always encouraged me," said Jyothi.

Jyothi's injury came as a big setback for Indian athletics, given that the calendar was packed with the Commonwealth Games and the Asian Games. "During my recovery, I was praying every day. A lot of thoughts came into my head. Is this the end of the journey? Is it all over for me? But I told myself that, no, there is a lot more for me there," said Jyothi. When she got back on track, removing the mental fear became more important than the physical recovery. "When I started training again, I was scared of the hurdles. I used cushioning on the top of hurdles, so it doesn't hurt me. Even during the first race today, I was a little scared. But once I completed the race, my nerves calmed down," said Jyothi. The one-year recovery has seen Jyothi return mentally tougher than before. "The reason I was able to run under 13s today is because I'm mentally stronger. While I'm not sure how much physically I have improved, this injury has made me 10 times strong mentally," she said. Team behind recovery

Jyothi, who trains at Reliance Foundation, received consistent support from her coach, James Hillier and the team behind the scenes working on her recovery. "When



I was injured, my coach, James, was not here. He was in Europe. He immediately said that I'm sorry for not being there, but don't worry, you'll make a comeback," said Jyothi. "As I was preparing for my comeback, coach James wrote a letter for me. Gave me my favourite blueberries and told me that I would become a champion. Such small gestures mean a lot to me. My team of Tanvi, Janki and Siddharth sir have been a constant support for me. I couldn't have come back without these guys," she added further. Recently, Jyothi started working with renowned strength and conditioning coach Wayne Lombard, who aided her recovery. "I have been working with Wayne, sir, for the past two months, and his addition to the team has made a big difference. I think as my fitness improves, I will go further low in my timings," she said.

Ryan Cook steps down as Netherlands head coach

Amsterdam: Ryan Cook has stepped down as head coach of the Netherlands men's cricket team with immediate effect, the Royal Dutch Cricket Association (KNCB) announced on Thursday, bringing an end to a four-year tenure that oversaw some of the most significant achievements in Dutch cricket in recent years. Cook leaves at a time when the Netherlands remain firmly in contention in the Cricket World Cup League 2 competition, sitting third in the standings with 32 points from 28 matches.

Memo Ochoa walked onto the Azteca pitch. The crowd of 80,000 erupted



Mexico were 2-0 up against Czechia, the group already won, 12 minutes left. The chant started somewhere in the upper tier and spread. "Ochoa, Ochoa, Ochoa." Over 80,000 voices, singing as one, pleading for one last look at the man with the curls and the headband — known across Mexico simply as Memo and after that one afternoon in Fortaleza in 2014, as San Memo. Coach Javier Aguirre had left him on the bench for the first 78 minutes. The crowd had been patient. Now they were not. What followed was louder than any of the three goals Mexico had scored that evening — louder than anything the Azteca had produced all night, a volcanic eruption that drowned out everything else in the stadium. Ochoa, already on the verge of tears, walked onto the pitch he had played on for Club America as a teenager. He could barely keep it together. Every time the ball came to him the crowd exploded. In the final minutes they sang "Ole, Ole, Ole, Memo, Memo" over and over, not because of anything he did with the ball but because of everything he had done to get there.

He has been going to World Cups since 2006. He was a substitute in Germany, watching Oswaldo Sanchez play every minute. He watched all of South Africa 2010 from the bench after a poor friendly against North Korea cost him his place. "I had pictured myself on the pitch," he said years later. In 2011 a false doping allegation cut short his Gold Cup — the charges were later dropped, but his tournament was already over. At his first actual start, in 2014 against Brazil in Fortaleza, he made four saves — a Neymar header pushed round the post, a

Paulinho shot, a second Neymar effort, a Thiago Silva header in the 86th minute that the whole stadium assumed was a goal. Pele, watching, said the Neymar save was "almost the same" as Gordon Banks' save against him at the 1970 World Cup — widely considered the greatest save ever made. Ochoa's Wikipedia page was updated that night to describe him as the Mexican Jesus. "It was the match of my life," he said, visibly moved. He was 28. He is 40 now. He got here this time by going to Cyprus. His coach told him last year that if he wanted to be in the World Cup squad he needed a club — any club. He had been a free agent for months after leaving Portugal. He found AEL Limassol. He played 24 games. He earned his place.

Mexico goalkeeper Guillermo Ochoa (13) is celebrated by his team after the World Cup Group A soccer match between Czechia and Mexico in Mexico City, Wednesday, June 24, 2026. (AP Photo/Natacha Pisarenko) Mexico goalkeeper Guillermo Ochoa (13) is celebrated by his team after the World Cup Group A soccer match between Czechia and Mexico in Mexico City, Wednesday, June 24, 2026. (AP Photo/Natacha Pisarenko) At Qatar 2022, in the dying seconds of a group stage match against Saudi Arabia, he hesitated on a cross. Salem Al-Dawsari scored. Mexico went out at the group stage for the first time since 1978. "There are good things here," he said immediately after. "We should not tear everything down." He was 36. Everyone wrote the last chapter for him. He refused to read it.

"These are my final few hours as a national team player," he said before this tournament. "So I wake up, I give thanks, I smile and I enjoy myself." Outside the Azteca before the match, a fan named Rogelio, 41, stood in a tricolor curly-haired wig. "Today he's going to play," he told Sports Illustrated. "Maybe just 10 minutes, but he's going to play. We want one final memory of his final game." Another fan, Enrique, also 41, was almost insulted by the question of whether Ochoa would get minutes. "He's a legend, a legend of Mexico," he told Sports Illustrated. "He has to have a good farewell, at the Azteca, at his home." At the final whistle Ochoa kissed the goalposts. He embraced his fellow goalkeepers Rangel and Acevedo, who encouraged the crowd to keep chanting his name. He took a knee on the pitch, tears running down his face.

Joy on the streets in South Africa as Bafana Bafana make World Cup history

In the seconds after the final whistle blew in Monterrey, Mexico, people took to the streets thousands of kilometres away under dark skies in South Africa as their football team progressed past the group stage of a FIFA World Cup for the first time. The victory was made even sweeter by the fact that they had defeated the heavily favoured South Korea, who are placed 26 spots above Bafana Bafana in the world rankings. Thapelo Maseko scored in the 63rd minute to put South Africa ahead. After that, it was mostly South Korea with the ball but they struggled to create any clear cut chances and challenge South African goalkeeper Ronwen Williams. There was a late header from Park Jin-Seob that Williams saved and when the final whistle blew, the South Africans streamed onto the pitch from the bench while those who were playing sank to their knees. Social media was flooded with videos of people dancing on the streets back home in South Africa in the wee hours of the day. The time difference meant that the sun was yet to rise in South Africa when the match was done but, going by the visuals on social media, that made little difference. Hugo Broos, the grizzled veteran who is head coach of South Africa, was reduced to tears at the end of the match. "It was an emotional moment. We came here to Mexico and we wanted to survive the group stage... And that for me was really a moment of emotions, not only because we won



the game, but also for me, because as I've said in the past it probably will be one of my last games of my career," he said. The 74-year-old, who was part of the Belgium squad that finished fourth at the 1986 World Cup in Mexico, had said before the start of the tournament that he will be retiring after it. One would've expected the last match of his managerial career to be this game against Korea considering the gulf in individual quality between the two teams, and that South Africa were rank underdogs in a group that also had Mexico. Instead, Broos will now be leading his team on June 29 in Los Angeles to face Canada in the Round of 32.

Japan's genius lies in reducing chaos. The World Cup is finding that out

For years, Japan's football story has been told through its soft edges. The fans who stay back to clean stadiums after matches. The players who leave dressing rooms spotless. The nation that fell in love with football through manga. Even now, mention Japanese football and most people instinctively reach for tales of discipline, humility and order. They are wonderful stories. They are also a distraction. Because somewhere along the way, Japan became very good at football. Good enough to draw with the Netherlands at this World Cup. Good enough to dismantle Tunisia 4-0.

Japan's Daichi Kamada (15) celebrates scoring his side's first goal against Tunisia during the World Cup Group F soccer match in Guadalupe, near Monterrey, Mexico, Saturday, June 20, 2026. (AP Photo/Matias Delacroix) Japan's Daichi Kamada (15) celebrates scoring his side's first goal against Tunisia during the World Cup Group F soccer match in Guadalupe, near Monterrey, Mexico, Saturday, June 20, 2026. (AP Photo/Matias Delacroix) Good enough that opponents now spend more time worrying about Japan than Japan spends worrying about them. And yet, outside Asia, they remain curiously underrated. "Many people underestimate Japan," Netherlands coach Ronald Koeman said after their match last week. "But for the 100,000th time, if you underestimate them, that's your problem. You think that Japan's strength was overexaggerated before the match? Let's wait until the end of the World Cup to see who's right."

It is perhaps understandable why Japan are not mentioned in the same breath as European and South American heavyweights. They have, after all, never gone beyond the Round of 16 at a World Cup. At Qatar 2022, they had another remarkable start that ended in a penalty shootout against Croatia. In 2018, they ran into Belgium's golden generation. They have produced memorable upsets and attractive teams, but have never been genuine contenders. Until they break through that ceiling, the traditional powers will not take them seriously. The current squad, though, may be the strongest argument yet that Japan belongs in a different conversation. The old stereotype was that Japan produced technically gifted midfielders but lacked the physicality, the depth and, above all, the centre-forward needed to compete consistently against elite opponents. Ueda's emergence has begun to change that. The striker has provided a focal point that previous Japanese teams often lacked, giving

all that possession and movement a decisive end product. Around him is a squad built almost entirely in Europe's top leagues. Not a handful of exports, but an entire generation raised in the Bundesliga, Premier League, Ligue 1 and Eredivisie. Take Ao Tanaka. As a schoolboy, he and Kaoru Mitoma wrote that they wanted to become professional footballers and represent Japan together. They did. Mitoma is missing this World Cup through injury, but Tanaka remains part of the side carrying those ambitions forward. Or Junya Ito, now 33 and still one of Japan's most dangerous attacking players. He was never considered a prodigy. He came through university football, developed later than many of his peers and still found his way to the international stage. In many countries, that pathway barely exists. In Japan, it is part of the system. And that is the key word: system. Japan's Koki Ogawa (19) and Shogo Taniguchi (3) celebrate their side's second goal against the Netherlands during a World Cup Group F soccer match in Arlington, Texas, near Dallas, Sunday, June 14, 2026. (AP Photo/Julio Cortez) Japan's Koki Ogawa (19) and Shogo Taniguchi (3) celebrate their side's second goal against the Netherlands during a World Cup Group F soccer match in Arlington, Texas, near Dallas, Sunday, June 14, 2026. (AP Photo/Julio Cortez)

Japan's success is not built around a golden generation. It is built around a production line. For decades, Asian football relied on exceptional individuals. Japan invested instead in structures. The JFA required professional clubs to develop academies. Schools and universities became part of the talent pipeline. Coaches trained under a common philosophy. Players moved overseas earlier and in greater numbers. The result is a national team that moves and thinks as one unit. Watch them for 10 minutes and certain traits become obvious. The first touch is clean. The passing angles are already prepared before the ball arrives. Players rotate positions instinctively. Full-backs know when to invert. Wingers understand when to stay wide and when to attack central spaces. The collective is always more important than the individual. That is why Ueda's header against Tunisia mattered. There was nothing spectacular about it. No outrageous dribble. No 30-yard thunderbolt. No moment destined for highlight reels. Instead, it was the product of countless hours spent teaching players where to move, when to move and why to move.

‘I was cancelled, people said I was done’: Samantha on her lowest phase, relationship ordeal



Samantha Ruth Prabhu at the Maa Inti Bangaaram success meet in Hyderabad, where she spoke about the struggles behind the film and shared her views on relationships Samantha Ruth Prabhu at the Maa Inti Bangaaram success meet in Hyderabad, where she spoke about the struggles behind the film and shared her views on relationships Samantha Ruth Prabhu used the success meet for Maa Inti Bangaaram on Wednesday to talk about a period of her career and personal life that she had largely kept to herself until now, describing the time leading up to the film as one of the hardest stretches she has been through. "It was a very difficult and stressful time. I have seen the lowest, I have seen people cancel me. I have read thousands of comments saying I was done as an actor, and for a period of time, it was true," Samantha said. She went on to describe the resolve that carried her through it. "I wanted to fight back, to give my hundred percent to this film. I was supported as well, to be able to give that hundred percent." She was equally candid about how uncertain the film's commercial prospects looked at the time. "Honestly, I didn't know if I could sell even one ticket. We recovered our budget before release, and anything beyond that was a bonus. What a bonus it has turned out to be," she said. Explaining the actress' ordeal, director BV Nandini Reddy added,

"Samantha refused to believe that her film has gained positive response from the audience until a few days later. She truly believed only after seeing the reception in later part of the week." According to her husband Raj Nidimoru, Samantha did almost all the action sequences in a single take, as he appreciated her for being a good actress, and that he always believed in her skills. "This how 'Ma Inti Bangaaram' came into existence, we drew inspiration for the character from Samantha," Raj remarked.

About love and marriage Later in the event, Samantha was also asked to share her thoughts on love, marriage and relationships. "Sometimes relationships are complicated, and it is not always in your control. It takes two people to make a relationship work. What I have understood is that the most important thing for a woman to do is to have confidence in herself, to be complete as a person. Then you will find the right person," she said. She elaborated further on what she meant by that. "If you wait for someone else to complete you, and you expect that person to complete you, it puts a lot of pressure on the other person, and that's not right. Anyone who is in a relationship, or who wants to get into one, should be complete on their own first. Then a relationship usually works," she added. The remarks come at a moment widely seen as a turning point in Samantha's career and personal life. She has spoken in the past about her diagnosis with myositis, an autoimmune condition affecting muscle strength, and about her divorce from actor Naga Chaitanya in 2021, both periods that drew heavy public scrutiny and speculation about her future in the industry. With Maa Inti Bangaaram now past ₹750 crore worldwide and Samantha having confirmed her pregnancy with Nidimoru at the same event, the success meet doubled as both a professional milestone and a far more personal one for the actress. Maa Inti Bangaaram, directed by B.V. Nandini Reddy, was created by Raj Nidimoru. The film follows a woman who is an ex assassin and is pulled back into that world when danger from it resurfaces and threatens the family she has built. It was produced under Samantha's own banner,

Mirzapur The Movie teaser: Ravi Kishan adds namak to Pankaj Tripathi's blood-and-bullets tale

Mirzapur The Movie teaser: After three successful seasons on Amazon Prime Video, Mirzapur is all set for its first feature film, and the teaser for the movie dropped online on Thursday, June 25. While the new teaser does not disclose the plot of the film but it does declare, it firmly puts it in the same sandbox of violence, blood and gang rivalries. We see visuals of Pankaj Tripathi's Kaleen bhaiya ruling Mirzapur. Ali Fazal had told SCREEN that the film is set before the show, which explains the return of actors Rajesh Tailang, Sheeba Chadha and Divyenndu. Jitendra Kumar steps into Vikrant Massey's shoes here as he plays Bablu. Divyenndu's Munna, a fan favourite character who died in the show, returns to wreak havoc and drop some whistle-worthy dialogues. Ravi Kishan has also joined the franchise with this film and gets two scenes in the teaser. Mirzapur The Movie is all about complicated relationship between fathers and sons — whether it's Kaleen bhaiya's disappointment with his son Munna, or the disapproval of Guddu's father for the life of crime he wants to pursue. Ravi Kishan also plays a gangster as he asks for namak (salt) to pour on the injuries of a rival. People are killed, bullets are fired and Mirzapur continues to be the fiefdom of gangs who rule with fear.

In an earlier chat with Variety India, writer Puneet Krishna said that he always envisioned Mirzapur as a film. He also acknowledged that this was the first time a streaming show was being adapted for the big screen and shared, "It's the first time this is happening. Everyone's still figuring out how a show turns into a film in India. It's a



new format, and everyone's excited" He also shared that they are trying to make the film in a manner so even those who have not watched the show can understand the relationships within the universe. Puneet also shared that while many original characters have died on the streaming show, the film plans to bring them all back so the fans will get a chance to see Divyenndu playing Munna. Bablu, played by Vikrant Massey, who died in the first season will also be returning, but Vikrant will not be reprising the character. Starring Pankaj Tripathi, Ali Fazal, Divyenndu, Shweta Tripathi, Shriya Pilgaonkar, Ravi Kishan, Jitendra Kumar, Kulbhushan Kharbada, Rasika Dugal among others, Mirzapur The Movie, directed by Gurmmeet Singh, releases in theatres on September 4.

Exhibitor claims Ranbir Kapoor's Ramayana can break Dhurandhar's Rs 3300 cr record



Exhibitor claims Ranbir Kapoor's Ramayana can break Dhurandhar's Rs 3300 crore record Exhibitor claims Ranbir Kapoor's Ramayana can break Dhurandhar's Rs 3300 crore record Aditya Dhar's Dhurandhar franchise had a historic run at the box office, concluding at a worldwide collection of over Rs 3300 crore. The Ranveer Singh starrer became the second highest grossing film in Indian cinema after Aamir Khan's Dangal, and no other film has even come closer since. Having said that, Ranbir Kapoor's upcoming mythological drama Ramayana is expected to break Dhurandhar's record. In a recent interview, film trade analyst and theatre owner Vishek Chauhan opened up about the 'commercial masala entertainer' approach of Dhurandhar, and how Ramayana is the only project which can top the film in the near future.

During a chat with Siddharth Kannan on his podcast, Chauhan praised Aditya Dhar's skills and called his action spy-thriller drama 'phenomenal'. "Whenever you make a film which has all emotions, every element, with

all genres, you will reap fantastic results, case in point — Dhurandhar. It sits right up there. It has all the masala ingredients, everything out together. Dhurandhar is outstanding, just phenomenal. People say that part two was weaker than the first part, but the second one was classic commercial filmmaking, taken a few notches higher," he said.

The exhibitor further added, "It was absolutely brilliant. When I was watching it, I knew that the film will break records, it is fire. This one is unstoppable, and you can't say when it will stop. It has great sensibility. I was made to recall the filmmaking of Rakesh Roshan and Manmohan Desai. There was a satisfaction in killing the villain also, audience gets catharsis from such things." He mentioned that its Nitesh Tiwari's epic Ramayana that can smash the box office again. "The buzz is very good, it is a subject very close to people's hearts. The way Ranbir is looking and the kind of star cast the film has — including Sunny Deol, Yash, the director is also good. So, I have no doubt that the film will break records. And if that film is able to land, you'll see that it will smash Dhurandhar's record. The range of that film is crazy. People will come to the cinemas from everywhere, even from villages," he said.

Chauhan continued, "It will operate on a different level. It just has to land properly and connect with the audience. Like Adipurush couldn't connect with people. It missed the mark. But still, it had an amazing opening, around Rs 35 crore in Hindi language. So, I feel that sky is the limit with Ramayana. Knit pickers can keep picking VFX and other things, we will keep doing our business." Produced by Namit Malhotra's Prime Focus Studios and DNEG, Ramayana will feature Ranbir Kapoor as Rama, Sai Pallavi as Sita, Yash as Ravana, and Sunny Deol as Hanuman. The first part of the two-part film is set to hit the theatres on November 6, around Diwali. Made on a combined reported budget of Rs 4,000 crore, the magnum opus created a lot of buzz among fans after its first teaser's release.

Sonali Bendre, Madhuri Dixit, Karisma Kapoor: How OTT is reimagining '90s leading ladies



John Matthew Matthan's 1999 cop thriller Sarfarosh was way ahead of its time. The grit and grime in Aamir Khan's character of Ajay Singh Rathod is in the same zone as the no-nonsense investigators in the best streaming shows today. Its political astuteness is also as apt as the most layered police procedurals on OTT. While watching another such crime thriller, Raakh, on Prime Video India, I couldn't believe how starkly different roles Sonali Bendre played in both the projects. Of course, it's a testament to her range as a performer, but also speaks volumes of Bollywood's tendency in the 1990s to paint its leading ladies in candy-coated colours without exploiting the depth they always had. Rising from the Raakh

No wonder that Sonali said she was reduced to "comic relief" in Sarfarosh. While she didn't completely make a fool of herself with her ceaseless "don't mind" chatter, the heavy lifting was reserved for Aamir and Naseeruddin Shah. Even Surekha Sikri had more impact in her cameo as the mother of Sultan. It was pretty much the same case with Mahesh Bhatt's Zakhm (1998) the year before, where she served as just a sounding board for Ajay Devgn's character. Even though he won a National Award for his performance, the film truly belonged to Kunal Kemmu (then a child artist), Pooja Bhatt, and even Nagarjuna. It's a pity that Sarfarosh and Zakhm, the two films mentioned in shining letters in Sonali's filmography, did gross disservice to her talent. In fact, she never even got the chance to showcase her acting chops because she was running from one vacant blockbuster to another for leading lady duties.

Which is why it's not wrong to say she made more of a mark within a short role in one of her last Hindi films, Nikkhil Advani's 2003 romantic comedy Kal Ho Naa Ho, where she played the doctor of Shah Rukh Khan's protagonist Aman. By investing more in his treatment than him, and stomping her feet when he wouldn't take her seriously, she asked him to stay back and fight when contrary to popular opinion, all Aman wanted to do was take a flight. So, it's no surprise that actors like Sonali don't make a 'comeback' in Bollywood after tying the knot or becoming a mother. That's because they're victims of a so-called creative industry that doesn't know not only what to do with them beyond a certain age (30 back then), but also is clueless about what to do with them even when they're younger.

Sonali returned to acting only almost two decades years after Kal Ho Naa Ho with Vinay Waikul's news-room drama The Broken News on ZEE5 in 2022. What had changed? Firstly, streaming had entered India. Long-form stories by lesser known creators and with fresher faces were being told, consumed, and appreciated. Secondly, Sonali had undergone a drastic physical, mental, and spiritual metamorphosis herself, having recovered from stage 4 metastatic cancer, diagnosed in 2018.

Having found a new lease of life by becoming cancer-free in 2021, Sonali didn't want to let her rebirth go waste. So, she approached The Broken News with a newfound vigour, playing Ameena Qureshi, the editor-in-chief of a neutral, thus struggling, news channel. She went beyond the b*tchy lady boss stereotype that female actors have been restricted to all this while (think Kitu Gidwani in Fashion and Bipasha Basu in Corporate), and struck that fine line between authority and vulnerability. She was firm, but never as unhinged and aggressive as

Jaideep Ahlawat's character. She was also proud of her job, but never lost sight of her objectivity like Radha (. Similarly, when you watch her in Raakh, you see Sonali Bendre shed another stereotype — the hapless mother. When the dead bodies of her kids are carried to her home, she insists on uncovering their faces, although her husband (Aamir Bashir) has already recognized them. As soon as she sees them, she rushes to the adjacent room (one would imagine it's to cry unconsoably like any mother would), but she just pours herself a glass of water, downs it, turns around with no expression on her face, and says, "These are not my kids. Please bring them back. You promised." A schoolteacher, she goes about her job from the very next day. To make matters worse, her kids studied in the same school. But she remains decidedly objective and lifeless, until she's forced to return home by the principal, worried about her mental health. Her denial is not a steely resolve — but practical and matter-of-fact. In the scene, when she finally snaps out of that state, the cries that come out of her are as ironically guttural as labour pain. Sonali's contemporary Madhuri Dixit is also reinventing herself on streaming, but she's just having fun. Of course, she's been a symbol of joy and celebration, having made India dance to songs like "Ek Do Teen" to "Aaja Nachle". But now, it feels like when she dances, it's a form of self-care instead of servicing the gaze of gawking men. Even when she danced to "Choli Ke Peeche" in Khal Nayak, she insisted on her agency to give away her heart to someone who loves her instead of those who lust her. But the song was dubbed a vulgar track because of the male gaze that's inextricably conjoined with it. It was interesting to see Madhuri enter the world of streaming with The Fame Game in 2022, in which she, a leading actor, plots her own disappearance because she wants to live away from the arc lights. That's something she did IRL, quitting her career at its peak to relocate to Denver with her husband Shriram Nene in the early 2000s. "That's when I actually started living. I had no life before marriage. I was only working," she told SCREEN recently.

Madhuri brings those lived-in experience to screen now, as she plays characters who are everyday, yet as interesting as larger-than-life. Whether it's playing a lesbian in Maja Ma (2022), a sans-makeup serial killer in Mrs Deshpande this year, or most recently, a sleeveless blouse-clad mother in Maa Behen, who's more rebellious and out-there than even her millennial and Gen-Z daughters. She invokes the superstar within when she enters the narrative, with "Dhak Dhak" playing in the background, but leaves the complicit audience second-guessing their gaze by the end of the film. She's also a house on fire when she bickers with her onscreen daughters, played by Triptii Dimri and Dharna Durga. It's a pity that she seldom got the chance to enjoy such well-rounded arcs with her female co-stars back in the day, whether it was that one scene and song with Aishwarya Rai in Devdas (2004) or "The Dance of Envy" with Karisma Kapoor in Dil To Pagal Hai (1997). But now, unlike the '90s, female actors are no longer pitted against each other, also because they've all lived a life that tells them they know better. Karisma's choices on streaming have been sparse, but interesting nonetheless as well. In Ekta Kapoor's Mentalhood (2020), she played a woman frustrated with motherhood, and finding her tribe in fellow moms who crave something deeper than their domesticated roles. In Homi Adajania's Murder Mubarak (2024), she was constantly drawn to streaks of (mellow-)drama and shards of light as a has-been actor — only to reveal a dark past at the end. But in her latest series Brown on ZEE5, she completely embraces the darkness. Having lost her partner and unborn child, she finds herself in a loop of smoking, drinking, and pill-popping fits — a role that would dampen even her least glamorous turns yet, like in Fiza (2000) or Shakti: The Power (2002). It's a travesty that Bollywood hasn't been able to catch up with streaming in terms of the roles it has in store for its leading ladies. All these women, and several more, have galvanized the silver screen and made it richer for decades. To reduce them to character roles or make them play mother to the male co-stars they were once paired with is a gross disservice to their storied contributions.

Raj Nidimoru: 'Maa Inti Bangaaram earned me greater appreciation than Stree, Family Man'



Raj Nidimoru and Samantha Ruth Prabhu at the Maa Inti Bangaaram success meet, where he spoke about the film's reception and his creative process on the project. Raj Nidimoru and Samantha Ruth Prabhu at the Maa Inti Bangaaram success meet. Raj Nidimoru, the filmmaker who has delivered several hits with his partner Krishna DK, remarked that none of those projects prepared him for the kind of response Maa Inti Bangaaram has received. Speaking at the film's success meet on Wednesday, Nidimoru said the film, which stars his wife, actor Samantha Ruth Prabhu, had reached audiences in a way his more widely seen work had not.

"Maa Inti Bangaaram earned me wider and greater appreciation than Stree and The Family Man. This movie reached every household, across every district," the filmmaker said, referring to two of his best known projects, Stree (2018) and the Amazon Prime Video series The Family Man, both made with his longtime collaborator Krishna DK under their Raj & DK banner. He went on to describe the uncertainty that comes with every new film,

regardless of past success. "For me, making every film is a risk, because we create the stories and produce the films ourselves. We were genuinely scared about things like the OTT deal," he said. Talking about how Maa Inti Bangaaram was shaped around its lead actor Samantha Ruth Prabhu, he added, "When we were designing the movie, we wanted to use her skill set to elevate the film, but we had budget constraints and a tight schedule. There was also a risk, because people were saying so many things about her at the time." Raj Nidimoru also spoke about the process of getting Samantha on board for a film he had written with her specifically in mind, describing himself as the one pushing for the project to happen. "I was the one pushing her to make this film, and once she heard the story, she got excited about it," he said, adding that the project did not have the backing of his industry connections outside the south. "I didn't get any leverage from Bollywood for this. Samantha never wanted to make more films, but I asked her to do one more," he said. Asked whether he planned to continue making solo projects without Krishna DK, his usual creative partner, Raj Nidimoru said he had not given it serious thought yet. "I haven't thought that far ahead. This was supposed to be a one time thing I did for Samantha. But DK and I will continue working together, because we have so much on our plate right now," he said.

Kiran Abbavaram's 'Chennai Love Story' set for worldwide release on July 24

Hyderabad: The makers of director Ravi Namburi's eagerly awaited Telugu romantic entertainer 'Chennai Love Story', featuring actors Kiran Abbavaram, and Sri Gouri Priya in the lead, have now announced that the film will hit screens on July 24 this year.