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First hydrogen train chugs off from Jind as Modi lauds success of 'Make in India'

New Delhi, July 17

PM Narendra Modi on Friday flagged off the country's first hydrogen-powered passenger train from Jind, terming it the "longest and most powerful such train in the world".

Addressing a gathering at the HUDA ground after inaugurating the train, the PM equated the moment with the launch of the first-ever train in India during the British era in 1853, which ran between Mumbai and Thane. "The name of Jind has been booked in the annals of history as the first hydrogen-powered train has started operating between Jind and Sonapat," he said.

The PM said there were huge possibilities of the expansion of the hydrogen train after its launch between Jind and Sonapat. "We will continue to conduct research on it to bring down its cost and improve the efficiency," he said, adding that hydrogen-powered trains had started about seven-eight years ago and only three-four countries had the capability to operate such trains.

He said, "Every Indian will be proud to know that this is the most powerful hydrogen train with 3200 horsepower. This is also the longest train as the rest of the countries have just three-four coaches, while India has launched the 10-coach train."

The PM said this was an apt example of make in India as it was designed and manufactured by Indian scientists and a local company.

The PM said the recent changes in the Railways had proved beneficial for the country. He said due to the war in West Asia, the Strait of Hormuz had been affected for months, impacting the supply of petroleum products and



fertilisers.

"Had such a situation (the war in west Asia) arisen before 2014, the Railways would have been in a deep crisis because at that time, major operations of trains were dependent on diesel-run engines. However, that's no longer the case. Modi thinks in advance and also finds solutions," he said.

He said the electrification of the train network started in 1925 and by 2014, only about one-third of the network had been electrified, while nearly 70 per cent remained dependent on diesel. At that pace, it would have taken around 300 years to fully electrify the network, he said, adding that in the past 12 years, nearly 99 per cent of the railway network had been electrified. He said that was the reason why Indian trains had not taken a halt despite the diesel crisis.

The PM said a strong rail and road network had been created in the country, which had accelerated growth. "Jind has been connected by five national highways. It will allow connectivity to farmers for selling produce, and will create new jobs," he said.

The Prime Minister said efforts were being made for the Olympic Games to be held in India in 2036.

Modi said he held discussions with the governments of Australia and New Zealand on sports. "In the coming times, India will work together with both countries on several aspects, including the sports industry and training of athletes. This will greatly benefit the youth of Haryana as well," he said.

152 paper leaks in past decade but zero conviction: Rahul Gandhi

Dehradun, July 17

Stepping up the Congress' campaign over paper leaks, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Friday alleged that not a single person had been punished despite 152 paper leak cases over the



past decade, asserting that the system was failing millions of honest students. Addressing the second 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' (Voice of Students) rally at Dehradun's Bannu School Ground, Rahul claimed nearly 7.5 crore students had suffered because of repeated paper leaks while the conviction rate remained "zero".

He said there had been an average of one paper leak every month over the last 10 years, yet no accused had been brought to justice.

Calling paper leaks one of the gravest injustices faced by youngsters, Rahul alleged that a small section exploited corruption and money power to manipulate the examination system, leaving the overwhelming majority of students at a disadvantage. He claimed

honest and economically weaker students bore the brunt while those with influence found an alternative route to success through leaked papers.

The Congress leader further alleged that sophisticated technology was being used to facilitate paper leak rackets, claiming question papers were circulated through platforms such as Telegram and Signal for huge sums of money.

He said the reported cases represented only a fraction of the actual scale of the problem, arguing that many leaks never came to light.

Seeking to distance the event from partisan politics, Gandhi said the programme was not a political rally but a platform to discuss the future of students, the education system and the challenges confronting the country's youth.

He also interacted with students during the event and invited them to share their experiences and suggestions on tackling paper leaks.

Rahul also listed what he described as four major injustices confronting students -- the rising cost of education, shrinking opportunities, intense competition that leaves very few people successful, and the growing menace of paper leaks.

He said the discussion should now focus on identifying those responsible for the leaks and evolving solutions to restore the credibility of the examination system.

The Dehradun event, attended by around 15,000 students, parents and others, was the second edition of the Congress' 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' campaign after its launch in Kota, Rajasthan, on June 17.

Before Rahul arrived at the venue, the atmosphere resembled a concert, with several music performances and youth dancing to a series of songs. Rapper Karma also performed during the event, entertaining the crowd before the Congress leader took the stage.

Telangana Seeks Centre's Help To Fight El Nino

Hyderabad: The Telangana Cabinet on Friday decided to write to the Centre seeking urgent financial assistance and intervention to tackle the drought-like conditions prevailing due to the impact of El Nino. The Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy also decided to submit a report detailing the adverse impact of the rainfall deficit on agriculture, allied sectors, drinking water, irrigation, and the livelihoods of rural labourers.

Briefing the media on the details of the meeting, minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy said that the state government would urge the Centre to depute a special team to assess the ground situation and extend financial assistance for implementing El Nino contingency plans. The cabinet noted that Telangana was facing nearly a 40 per cent rainfall deficit, raising serious concerns over agriculture, water availability and



power supply.

Revanth Reddy directed all departments to prepare contingency action plans to address drinking water supply, irrigation, agriculture and uninterrupted power supply. In view of the India Meteorological Department's warning that the situation could worsen, he instructed all departments to remain fully prepared with advance measures.

The Cabinet directed collectors to ensure that

no drinking water scarcity arose anywhere. Officials were asked to respond promptly to public complaints and take measures to prevent hardship to the people. All available water in reservoirs and irrigation projects should be prioritised for drinking water needs.

The government also decided to ensure uninterrupted power supply. Officials were instructed to make adequate arrangements for power generation and purchase

electricity, if required.

Appealing to farmers to adapt to the prevailing conditions, the Cabinet advised them to avoid cultivating water-intensive crops and instead opt for crops that require less water. It also decided to conduct statewide awareness programmes and public meetings to educate people about the impact of El Nino, the prevailing drought conditions, available water resources and the precautions farmers should take.

Satish Reddy's Suspension Triggers Dissent Within Telangana Congress

Party Workers Question PCC's Decision, Demand Fair Inquiry Before Disciplinary Action

By Our Special Correspondent Hyderabad: The Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC)'s decision to suspend senior Congress leader and former Kukatpally constituency Congress president Sheri Satish Reddy has sparked widespread debate within the party. The move has drawn criticism from Congress workers and leaders, who claim the action was taken without following the party's established disciplinary procedures. "According to party members, the suspension was reportedly based on allegations that Satish Reddy collected money from a local builder. However, several Congress leaders contend that disciplinary action should have been preceded by a formal notice, an opportunity for explanation, and an inquiry by the party's disciplinary

committee. "Workers Question Due Process "Congress workers argue that the suspension sends an adverse message to grassroots leaders who have worked for the party for many years. They maintain that the Congress has traditionally encouraged internal democracy and believe disciplinary measures should only follow a transparent investigation. "Several activists also questioned whether acting on allegations raised by political opponents without an internal verification process could weaken confidence among party workers. "Supporters Highlight Long Association "Supporters described Satish Reddy as a committed Congress leader who remained with the party even during politically diffi-

cult periods. They said he has consistently worked to strengthen the organisation and supported party activities over the years. "Many workers expressed concern that such disciplinary action could demoralize long-serving leaders and grassroots activists ahead of important elections. "Demand for Leadership Intervention: Party workers have appealed to Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, senior Congress leaders, and the PCC leadership to review the suspension and ensure that any disciplinary action is based on a fair and transparent inquiry. "With Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) elections and other key political challenges approaching, several Congress leaders believe unity within the party should remain a priority.



Elephant trackers, face recognition database to scan ‘suspects’, drones to avoid stampede: What’s new in Ahmedabad’s 149th Jagannath Rath Yatra



Elephants that will be part of the 149th Rath Yatra procession to be held on July 16, will have a GPS tracker sound monitoring sensors, gyroscope based movement detectors and be under live surveillance to prevent incidents like last year when two elephants ran amok injuring two and trampling on a media crew camera, causing panic. Taking no chances the Ahmedabad City Police will be using advanced “Gajarakshak” Elephant Monitoring System to enhance both public safety and animal welfare.

Each of the 18 elephants that will take part in the 16-km-long procession, will be equipped with these devices for real-time monitoring from the Central Control Room. PI Dhenu Thakar told the Indian Express, “The system will enable early detection of abnormal movement, excessive noise exposure, and route deviations, allowing immediate response by police, mahouts, veterinary teams, and Quick Response Teams (QRTs).” Ahmedabad Rath Yatra is the largest after the Puri-Jagannath yatra which sees nearly one lakh participants and passes through the narrow streets of the old city, including areas known to be communally sensitive. Facial Recognition at temple entry The Ahmedabad City Police will use its in-house developed PINAC 2.0 Facial Recognition System at the main gate of the Jagannath Temple. The AI-enabled system is integrated with a database of over 65,000 known pickpockets and other criminals, enabling real-time identification of suspicious persons and strengthening preventive security measures for devotees during the festival. AI-Based Stampede Avoidance System The Detection of Crime Branch (DCB) will deploy more than 65 drones for continuous aerial surveillance across the Rath Yatra route, covering live crowd monitoring, procession movement, traffic regulation, sensitive locations, and critical junctions as part of AI-based Stampede avoidance System that was introduced in the 2025 Rath Yatra. It will calculate the density of people in a particular area of certain square metres and determine, based on space parameters, if a stampede is imminent or not. Based on the results of this system, alerts will be sent out to officers deployed in the Rath Yatra, to disperse crowds at certain places to avoid the unfortunate outcome of a stampede. A network of 3,465 CCTV cameras across 84 points will provide continuous monitoring of the entire Rath Yatra

route, with special focus on vulnerable and dark zones to ensure that no critical location remains uncovered. The integrated surveillance system will enable faster incident detection, improved coordination, and effective law-and-order management. Further, at least 2,862 Police personnel deployed during the Rath Yatra will have body worn cameras while there will also be vehicle-mounted cameras on modified Isuzu pick-up trucks and mobile control rooms. There will be 44 Public Assistance Stalls while personnel will have Pocket Voice amplifiers, and speakers to make announcements for public movement as well as to facilitate announcements regarding missing persons, emergency information, public advisories, and other important communications.

There will be more than 30,000 uniformed personnel and officers of the local and armed police deployed during the Rath Yatra, which comes to about 1,875 per kilometre of the Rath Yatra through the old city of Ahmedabad. These will include local police, State Reserve Police Force (SRPF), Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF), and Home Guards. There will be a total of 19 Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad (BDDS) teams, Dog Squad units, 15 Quick Response Teams (QRTs) as well as Chetak Commandos stationed in strategic locations across the procession route, said a statement shared by JCP Sector-1 Neerajkumar Badgujar. “An AI-Based Calling System has been implemented for the 149th Rath Yatra to automatically deliver deployment details to police personnel assigned to the Crime Moving Bandobast. Through automated voice calls, officers receive their duty point, reporting officer details, reporting time, deployment instructions, emergency contact information, and other important bandobast-related updates, ensuring accurate communication and efficient deployment,” said Inspector Dhenu Thakar. However, not all personnel will be at the procession route.

The cyber time Police will be at their stations monitoring social media and the dark web for rumours, conspiracies and disinformation that could cause problems in the biggest event of this city. The Rath Yatra will have 4 command and control vehicles, 17 Vajra anti-riot vehicles, 7 water cannons, and 8 Light Armoured Troop Carriers (LATCs). The Divya Netra Van that will be used this year, is an advanced mobile surveillance vehicle equipped with a 360-degree camera system, that will continuously monitor the surrounding area, automatically scan vehicle number plates for real-time identification. The process will include the three massive chariots of the deities, 18 bhajan mandalis, and 101 decorated trucks. The procession will leave from the Jagannath Temple and head to Jamalpur Darwaza, then to Vaishya Sabha, through Dhal Ni Pol to reach Raipur Chakla and from there to Sarangpur Chakla. From there, it will proceed to Khadia crossroads, Panchkuva Darwaza, and the Kalupur railway station to reach Kalupur circle. From there, it will proceed to Itwada circle to reach its destination at the Ranchhodji Mandir at Sarangpur crossroads.

Karnataka Lokayukta seeks governor’s nod to prosecute MLA Zameer Ahmed Khan



The Karnataka Lokayukta police, investigating a disproportionate assets case against former minister Zameer Ahmed Khan, have sought Governor Thawarchand Gehlot’s sanction to prosecute him under the Prevention of Corruption Act. The Lokayukta police wrote to the governor on July 9 seeking approval to file a chargesheet against the Congress MLA, sources said. Khan was a minister in the Siddaramaiah government but was left out of the new state cabinet under Chief Minister D K Shivakumar. In 2021, the Karnataka Lokayukta police registered a First Information Report (FIR) alleging that Khan had amassed wealth 2,031 times greater than his known sources of income. The FIR was based on information provided by the Enforcement Directorate, which claimed that the MLA had amassed Rs 87.44 crore disproportionate to his income. The central agency also wrote to the Karnataka Anti-Corruption Bureau in 2021, asking it to

investigate further. The Lokayukta probe has since found that Khan allegedly amassed Rs 26 crore of excess wealth, according to sources. Last year, the Karnataka High Court rejected Khan’s plea to close the Lokayukta investigation after he argued that the Lokayukta police did not conduct a preliminary probe to ascertain the ED’s corruption allegations. The Lokayukta police argued that there was no requirement for a preliminary probe, as the investigation was taken up on a central agency’s reference. The investigation covers Khan’s wealth accumulated while serving as a minister in the Congress government between 2013 and 2018. Meanwhile, Lokayukta police sources said the July 9 decision to transfer an IPS officer, who was a superintendent of police of a Bengaluru unit of the anti-corruption agency, was not linked to the move to seek prosecution sanction against Khan, but was linked to a decision to carry out a trap in the Vijayapura region, without the knowledge of Lokayukta Justice (Retd) B S Patil. On July 9, the Karnataka Lokayukta stated, “In the interest of the administration of the Karnataka Lokayukta, it is ordered that the services of Shri Shivaprakash Devaraju, IPS, who is serving as the Superintendent of Police in the Bangalore City-1 division of this institution, be returned to the Government with immediate effect...” A few days before the transfer order, the IPS officer reportedly carried out a trap operation against an assistant executive engineer in the Vijayapura district—it falls outside his jurisdiction of Bengaluru—without bringing it to the Lokayukta’s notice, sources said.

Bengaluru driver asks minister to get off bus, suspended for ‘rude behaviour’

The Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) suspended the driver-conductor of a bus Monday after he ordered Transport Minister Byrathi Suresh to get off for failing to provide the exact fare. BMTC took action against Ramakrishna T G after an inquiry into the incident last Saturday, when Suresh boarded a bus from the Hebbal bus stand on route 279E, Kempegowda Bus Station to Nagashettihalli. Suresh handed over Rs 100 to Ramakrishna, requesting two tickets to Bhoopasandra, and told him he did not have change. Ramakrishna asked him to pay Rs 12 for the ticket or get off the bus.

BMTC said it implemented the UPI-based ticket payment system in 2024, and at present, nearly 53 per cent of the corporation’s total ticket revenue is being collected through UPI transactions. “It has been viewed seriously that the driver-cum-conductor failed to inform the passenger, particularly the minister, about the availability of this facility,” BMTC said. BMTC said that when Suresh informed him he did not have the required change, Ramakrishna behaved rudely and discourteously. Suresh conducted a surprise check by posing as a passenger last Saturday. The minister travelled incognito for two hours across several major areas of Bengaluru, including Jayamahal, TV Tower, RT Nagar, CBI Road, Hebbal, Manyata Tech Park, Nagawara, Hennur, Hennur Bande, Byrathi Bande, and Geddalahalli, to assess actual road operations and crew behaviour. Suresh also observed,



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while monitoring another BMTC bus, that it did not stop near Fun World on Jayamahal Road after a passenger flagged it down. He then ordered the suspension of the driver and conductor. However, the inquiry revealed that there was no bus stop at the spot. From Monday, BMTC designated a new bus stop near Fun World.

Bodies of woman, gym trainer in canal near Delhi, and a bloody hammer mystery

Two bodies in a canal, their hands tied with a data cable, and an abandoned car with a blood-stained hammer in it: Agra Canal in Faridabad, about 80 km from the national capital, has become the site of two chilling deaths, and the police are now trying to unravel the mystery surrounding them. The dead have been identified as Rashmi (32), a resident of Sector 31 in Faridabad, and Akash (24), her gym trainer.

Rashmi had been missing since Saturday evening and her husband, Shivam Kumar, filed a police complaint, accusing Akash of harassing Rashmi. Kumar alleged that Akash had previously apologised after being confronted, but the alleged harassment had resumed over the past 10 days. According to police, Rashmi left home in her car around 2 pm on Saturday to meet Akash. “During the day, we received information that a man and a woman had jumped off the BPTP bridge (into the Agra Canal). Our teams reached the spot and looked around, but could not find them. We then roped in the State Disaster Re-

sponse Force and began intensive search operations,” Faridabad police spokesperson, Sub-Inspector Yashpal Yadav, told The Indian Express. He added that the two bodies were found on Sunday evening near Shahpur Kalan village, about 16 km from the bridge. “They had facial injuries, were bleeding, and the woman also had an injury to the back of the head,” the police officer said. A blood-stained hammer in car According to police officers, Rashmi’s car was found abandoned near the bridge. During a search of the vehicle, the police found two mobile phones and a blood-stained hammer. The phones and the hammer have been seized. The bodies were sent for an autopsy Monday evening, and have been handed over to the families. Police have said that Rashmi and Akash had been meeting for a while. Sub-Inspector Yadav said Akash’s family has alleged a murder conspiracy behind the deaths, but police are yet to find evidence pointing to this. Police said that according to the doctor, the injuries to the two bodies might have been caused during the fall into the canal.

Jhansi man lost Rs 25 lakh in online betting. What he did next landed him in jail

A 20-year-old Jhansi-based youth, along with three policemen posted in the neighbouring Jalaun district and five other associates, hatched a plan to execute a robbery to get back the money he had just paid to two brothers from Madhya Pradesh through their agent, officials claimed on Monday. The alleged mastermind, Suryash Yadav (20), two police constables and three of his accomplices were arrested for allegedly robbing the two brothers’ agent of Rs 24.90 lakh when he was transporting the cash. The arrests came a day after an FIR was registered against eight people, including three constables, in this connection. The third constable and two other accused are absconding, the officials said. A case was also registered against the businessmen from MP’s Satna, Nitin Tejwani and his brother Sanskar Tejwani, for allegedly running an organised online betting network, the investigators said. Apart from Suryash, those arrested were identified as constables Raghvendra Rajput (30) and Manoj (29), both posted at the Jalaun Police Lines, and Gaurav Yadav (26) of Datia district in MP and Jhansi residents Sukhbir (24) and Suraj Singh (24).

The police said they have recovered Rs 24.50 lakh of the stolen cash, along with an SUV used in the robbery. Efforts are being made to recover the rest of the missing money and nab the absconders, identified as constable Neeraj Rajput and Ankit Yadav, they added. Ramvir Singh, Circle officer, Jhansi, said, “We solved the case within 24 hours and arrested six per-

sons, including two police constables. The exact role of the absconding suspects would be established only after they are apprehended and questioned.” During his questioning, Suryash Yadav told the police that he was under mounting pressure to repay his debt to the Tejwani brothers after he incurred losses in online betting. In an effort to repay his debt, he conspired with his cousin Ankit Yadav and others to commit the robbery of the money he would pay them, the officials said. Ankit knew constable Raghvendra Rajput and it was Sukhbir who arranged the SUV used in the crime, the officials said, adding that Raghvendra enlisted the two fellow constables to get help in executing the plan. Suryash told the police that the Tejwanis operated the organised online betting network in which payments were settled through hawala. Suryash said as part of the alleged plan, he informed Sanskar Tejwani on July 9 that they could collect the payment from him, the investigators said. According to the police,

Sanskar then sent his agent, Kishan Dilipbhai Panchal, who hails from Ahmedabad in Gujarat and is now based in Jhansi, to collect the money. The police said after Panchal collected the money, his associates with the help of the three constables intercepted him and robbed him of the cash, adding that the money was subsequently returned to Suryash through Ankit Yadav. After Panchal filed a complaint on Sunday, an investigation was launched and multiple teams were formed.

After Deonar, BMC plans to lease Mulund landfill land for Dharavi project



The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), which has already handed over 124 acres of the Deonar dumping ground for the Dharavi Redevelopment Project (DRP), is now set to lease another 15 acres at the erstwhile Mulund dumping ground to the project’s special purpose vehicle (SPV) for setting up construction infrastructure. The proposal, which has been under discussion within the civic administration for the past few months, is expected to be placed before the BMC’s Improvement Committee later this month for approval. The civic body expects to generate nearly Rs 103 crore through the proposed five-year lease.

The land will be leased to Navbharat Mega Developers Private Limited (NMDPL), the special purpose vehicle jointly owned by the Adani Group and the Maharashtra government that is executing the Dharavi Redevelopment Project. Unlike the Deonar landfill, where housing tenements are being developed for families rehabilitated under the Dharavi Redevelopment Project, the Mulund land parcel will be used to establish a ready-mix concrete (RMC) plant and a casting yard to support construction activities. According to BMC documents, the proposal originated from NMDPL, which approached the civic body in February this year seeking a five-year lease for part of the land. “The BMC did not have any immediate plan for utilising such a large parcel of land. In the meantime, NMDPL approached us seeking the land for setting up a casting yard, following which the administration decided to lease out the plot as a means of generating revenue,” a civic official told The BMC had earlier handed over 124 acres within the larger 311-acre Deonar landfill

to NMDPL for rehabilitation housing under the Dharavi Redevelopment Project. Civic officials estimate that 50,000 to one lakh people from Dharavi will eventually be rehabilitated there. Under the proposal, the lease rent has been fixed at Rs 252 per sq m. NMDPL will pay Rs 9.17 crore in advance, equivalent to the first six months’ rent. Thereafter, it will pay Rs 1.52 crore every month, with the rent increasing by 6 per cent every six months. Over the five-year lease period, the BMC expects to earn Rs 103.47 crore. However, NMDPL will also remove the remaining waste mound at the site at an estimated cost of Rs 20 crore over 14 months. That amount will be adjusted against the lease rentals, reducing the BMC’s net revenue from the lease to around Rs 83 crore.

“The land is owned by the BMC and has long been used as a conventional landfill. Since the SPV will assume responsibility for clearing the waste and restoring the site to a cleaner and more usable condition, we intend to adjust the lease rent against the cost of remediation. Otherwise, the BMC would have to bear the entire expense, especially as the court has directed us to clear the entire land parcel,” the official said. Mulund landfill remediation The 24-acre Mulund dumping ground remained operational from 1968 to 2018, when the Bombay High Court directed the BMC to scientifically close and remediate the landfill.

Since then, the civic body has been biomining nearly 80 lakh metric tonnes of legacy waste, of which around 50 lakh metric tonnes has been cleared. Biomining involves excavating old waste, treating it biologically and separating reusable material to reclaim landfill land. The BMC had initially targeted completion of the remediation within six years. Officials said the work was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, natural calamities and rising operational costs linked to global supply chain disruptions. By February this year, officials said the biomining exercise had reached nearly 90 per cent, after which the work stalled. The remaining remediation is expected to continue over the next decade. Pratip Acharya is a seasoned journalist based in Mumbai reporting for The Indian Express. With a career spanning over a decade, his work demonstrates strong Expertise and Authority in critical urban issues, civic affairs, and electoral politics across Eastern and

India backs Palestine’s UN membership bid: MEA

New Delhi: India has backed Palestine’s bid for United Nations membership and reaffirmed its support for a two-state solution to the festering conflict between the Palestinian people and Israel. New Delhi’s position on Palestine was appraised by Sripriya Ranganathan, a secretary at the external affairs ministry during a ministerial meeting of the Palestine Donor Group, held in Brussels on Monday.

India has been backing a vision of a “two-state” solution with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security within recognised borders, consistent with international law. At the Palestine Donor Group meeting, Ranganathan emphasised that India has been a long standing partner of the Palestinian people, and reaffirmed India’s continued support to a two-state solution as well as to Palestine’s membership of the UN, according to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).



She underlined India’s ongoing developmental assistance, including capacity building programmes and humanitarian assistance to the people of Palestine, noting that India’s projects are demand-driven and largely centred on healthcare, education, capacity building, and vocational training, it said.

EDITORIAL
POLITICAL CRISES

Supreme Court’s laudable move to check pendency

One of the glaring lacunae of the Indian model of democracy is the excruciatingly slow justice delivery system, as reflected in the alarming rise in the pendency of cases over the decades. This legacy problem costs the country more than 2% of its GDP. As of early 2026, the number of pending cases had crossed a staggering 5.8 crore. District and subordinate courts alone account for close to 4.9 crore of these cases. The High Courts collectively carry over 60 lakh, while the Supreme Court is straining under the weight of over 96,000 pending matters, with civil disputes making up for most of the burden. A steady rise in arrears, regardless of the periodic increase in judicial strength, has been a constant phenomenon since Independence. Against this backdrop, the apex court’s latest initiative — constitution of four special benches to exclusively hear its oldest pending civil and criminal cases — is a welcome move that will go a long way in tackling one of the major problems confronting the judiciary. Chief Justice Surya Kant’s initiative marks a structured attempt to ensure the disposal of decades-old disputes pending before the apex court. The bulk of the older backlog lies in the 10–to-20–year bracket, which accounts for 7,993 civil cases and 1,585 criminal cases. According to the new roster notification, two division benches comprising two judges each will focus solely on the oldest civil cases. Two other division benches will be dedicated to the oldest criminal matters. These special benches will operate on “non-miscellaneous days” which are Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. In the Supreme Court’s parlance, Mondays and Fridays are “miscellaneous days” reserved for fresh filings and preliminary hearings. By freeing these four benches from the regular burden of miscellaneous hearings, the court will be able to give uninterrupted judicial attention to its longest pending cases. There are multiple challenges to clearing the mounting backlog; the chief among them is the shortage of judges. Other contributing factors include lack of court management systems, poor infrastructure, frequent adjournments and indiscriminate use of writ jurisdiction. With the apex court becoming more accessible to citizens through e-filing and virtual hearings, case intake has risen exponentially. In 2025 alone, the total number of cases filed reached an unprecedented 75,402. The judiciary’s attempts in the past to reduce the overall pendency of cases and improve the speed and efficiency of the justice delivery system have yielded mixed results. During DY Chandrachud’s tenure as the CJI, several initiatives were taken to leverage technology to streamline the processes, including the launch of the SC-JUDICARE project to automate the classification of pending cases and group matters with similar legal issues so they could be heard together. It is heartening that the current CJI Surya Kant has vowed to formulate a unified national policy for disposing of pending matters.

Retired UP transport officer at centre of Rs 35 crore assets recovery arrested



Nearly a week after cash, jewellery and immovable assets worth Rs 35 crore were recovered during a search at his Lucknow residence, the Uttar Pradesh Vigilance Establishment, Lucknow on Monday arrested Lalit Kumar, a retired assistant regional transport officer (ARTO) in the case. The Vigilance investigation has found him to have acquired assets disproportionate to his known sources of income. An official said the accused was questioned on Monday in connection with the case and was asked to reveal the sources of the seized cash, gold, silver biscuits, jewellery and the property documents. Kumar, however, was unable to produce any supporting documents or give a satisfactory reply, he said. Following his arrest, the accused was produced in a court, the official added. Kumar was facing investigation in a case lodged against him in 2024 under provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act when he was posted as ARTO in Agra district. The agency had conducted a search at Kumar’s house in Lucknow’s Aliganj Colony on July 7 and 8. Rs 1.62 crore in cash wrapped in packets and concealed at different places in the house, gold and silver biscuits, besides jewellery made of gold, silver, and diamond were recovered from his residence. The gold and silver biscuits and jewellery weighing 13kg and 9 kg is valued at Rs 20 crore. Documents of significant investments made by the accused in movable and immovable assets, including records relating to a total of 15 plots, flats and parcels of farming land in Lucknow, Noida and Raebareilly worth Rs 13 crore, two cars, one revolver and accounts and deposits in various banks, post offices, mutual funds, fixed deposits were also found. After collecting evidence of the retired official having acquired assets disproportionate to his actual earnings, a report was submitted to the government and the agency was directed to conduct a detailed investigation after lodging a case against him.

‘Father waited on bridge’: Delhi cop who found IB staffer’s body during 2020 riots



Among the officers deployed was Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) Harish Kukreti, then posted at Khajoori Khas Chowk. Leading a platoon of around 20 personnel, Kukreti had received information that a man’s body had been dumped in the Khajoori Khas drain the previous day. As the team reached the Chand Bagh pulia (small bridge), he said they found an elderly man frantically searching for his missing son. The man was later identified as Ravinder Sharma, father of Intelligence Bureau (IB) staffer Ankit Sharma. At the time, Kukreti and his team did not know who Ravinder was. Chand Bagh was among the worst-affected areas during the riots. Officers tried to console Ravinder as he told them his son had been missing since the previous evening and that he feared a mob had killed him and thrown his body into the drain. “I called the Delhi Fire Service (DFS) and requested divers from the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). Within a few minutes, four to five divers from the Sonia Vihar Pushta arrived and began searching for the body. Although it was early morning, the locality remained extremely tense, with residents staying indoors,” recalled Kukreti, who has since retired. 53 people were killed in

the riots that rocked Northeast Delhi in February 2020. (Express Archive Photo: Praveen Khanna) 53 people were killed in the riots that rocked Northeast Delhi in February 2020. (Express Archive Photo: Praveen Khanna) The drain was about 1.6 km from Khajoori Khas Chowk. “I asked my team to cordon off the area. Paramilitary personnel were also deployed to maintain security as we had to conduct the search in a large drain that had turned into a swamp filled with mud, dirt and plastic waste,” he said. The divers searched for more than an hour before finally locating the body. By then, several members of Ankit’s family, who lived nearby, had also reached the spot. “His body was badly swollen, but his father, who was standing near the drain, identified him immediately. Emotions were running very high and the situation was tense. Somehow, I convinced the family to take the body to the hospital as quickly as possible,” Kukreti said. He said it was only during the search that he learnt the deceased was an IB man. The Dayalpur Police Station was informed about the recovery of the body, following which the legal proceedings were initiated. A case of murder and other relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) was registered. The investigation was later transferred to the Delhi Police Crime Branch. On Monday, former Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) councillor Tahir Hussain and four others were convicted by a Delhi court in the murder case. Hussain, who was suspended by the AAP soon after the incident, has been convicted of murder and rioting, among other charges. He was, however, acquitted of the criminal conspiracy charge. According to the police, a witness recorded a video from Hussain’s terrace that allegedly showed a group dumping Ankit’s body into the drain. The post-mortem report found 51 sharp and blunt force injuries on his body, police said.

Karnataka planning green data centres, India’s first public AI university: Shivakumar

The Karnataka government is considering creating two next-generation green data centres for artificial intelligence infrastructure, as well as a dedicated AI University, Chief Minister D K Shivakumar said at the opening of the Google I/O Connect India 2026 event on Tuesday. “We are establishing a next-generation green data centre in a coastal district as well as one near Bengaluru. This is a big discussion which we have taken up,” Shivakumar said while hinting at Google’s participation in the project. The chief minister, who positioned Bengaluru as a hub for AI innovation, also announced plans to create a government-supported AI University. “We want to lay the foundation for the first and the largest AI university by the government. We want to create and nurture an AI ecosystem that is world class,” Shivakumar said. According to Shivakumar, Karnataka aims to become an AI-native state, integrating AI into governance and public service delivery. “We want to create a big ecosystem where our talent is our biggest strength,” he said.

The announcement of green data centres comes at a time when the government is concerned about the environmental sustainability of energy- and water-intensive data centres, which form the backbone of AI technology. One of the locations being considered for the next-generation data centres is Hoskote, Bengaluru. A 500 MW data centre here would use 60 MLD of secondary-treated water from the Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board and solar power from the 2,000 MW Pavagada Solar Park. The other possible location is Mangaluru in coastal Karnataka. “AI must help teachers



teach better, doctors diagnose diseases earlier, farmers receive better advisory services, citizens access government services with dignity and speed, and small businesses compete confidently,” said Shivakumar, who became the chief minister in June. Shivakumar noted that 12,000 of Google India’s 18,000 workers are employed in Bengaluru. In May, Information Technology Minister Priyank Karge noted that the state was also looking at introducing a sustainable data centre policy to deal with the challenge of data centres’ energy and water demands. There are technologies that data centres can employ which are better for the environment, which are more energy efficient and emit less heat,” Karge stated. A committee of senior IAS officers has been constituted to submit a report regarding data centres in the state and to identify locations with access to renewable energy supplies, along with power evacuation lines and water.

Karnataka woman performs ‘black magic’ on judge’s dais to sway case, arrested



Karnataka black magic case, Chikkaballapura court, black magic in courtroom, Karnataka Prevention and Eradication of Inhuman Evil Practices and Black Magic Act, cChikkaballapura news, Karnataka news, Indian express news The white mustard seeds were later noticed by court staff, prompting court authorities to examine CCTV footage from the courtroom. Express Photo/Special Arrangement A 65-year-old woman was arrested for allegedly performing black magic on a judge’s chair and dais inside a court complex in Karnataka’s Chikkaballapura, believing the ritual would influence the outcome of a pending civil case. The police said Tuesday that the incident occurred around 9.40 am on July 9 inside the courtroom of the First Additional Senior Civil Judge and Judicial Magistrate First Class in Chikkaballapura.

Municipal engineer arrested while accepting bribe of Rs 2 lakh in Peddapalli

Peddapalli: An Assistant Engineer from the municipality was arrested by sleuths of Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) while he was accepting a bribe of Rs 2 lakh from a contractor in Peddapalli town on Tuesday.

The ACB officials said that the engineer, Sathesh, was harassing the contractor seeking a bribe of Rs 3 lakh to clear the bill of a work taken up by the municipality. The contractor approached the ACB which in turn laid the trap and caught him red-handed. On July 9, An Assistant Engineer of Panchayat Raj department Paidi Sathish was trapped while accepting a bribe of Rs 10,000 in Gangadhara mandal centre. He demanded the bribe to process official records of works executed under Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme MGNREGS (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme).



An Assistant Engineer from Peddapalli municipality was arrested by the ACB while accepting a bribe of Rs 2 lakh from a contractor.

Jhansi man lost Rs 25 lakh in online betting. What he did next landed him in jail



A 20-year-old Jhansi-based youth, along with three policemen posted in the neighbouring Jalaun district and five other associates, hatched a plan to execute a robbery to get back the money he had just paid to two brothers from Madhya Pradesh through their agent, officials claimed on Monday. The alleged mastermind, Suryash Yadav (20), two police constables and three of his accomplices were arrested for allegedly robbing the two brothers’ agent of Rs 24.90 lakh when he was transporting the cash. The arrests came a day after an FIR was registered against eight people, including three constables, in this connection.

The third constable and two other accused are absconding, the officials said. A case was also registered against the businessmen from MP’s Satna, Nitin Tejwani and his brother Sanskar Tejwani, for allegedly running an organised online betting network, the investigators said. Apart from Suryash, those arrested were identified as constables Raghvendra Rajput (30) and Manoj (29), both posted at the Jalaun Police Lines, and Gaurav Yadav (26) of Datia district in MP and Jhansi residents Sukhbir (24) and Suraj Singh (24). The police said they have recovered Rs 24.50 lakh of the stolen cash, along with an SUV used in the robbery. Efforts are being made to recover the rest of the missing money and nab the absconders, identified as constable Neeraj Rajput and Ankit Yadav, they added. Ramvir Singh, Circle officer, Jhansi, said, “We solved the case within 24 hours and arrested six persons, including two police constables. The exact role of the absconding suspects would be established only after they are apprehended and questioned.”

During his questioning, Suryash Yadav told the police that he was under mounting pressure to repay his debt to the Tejwani brothers after he incurred losses in online betting. In an effort to repay his debt, he conspired with his cousin Ankit Yadav and others to commit the robbery of the money he would pay them, the officials said. Ankit knew constable Raghvendra Rajput and it was Sukhbir who arranged the SUV used in the crime, the officials said, adding that Raghvendra enlisted the two fellow constables to get help in executing the plan. Suryash told the police that the Tejwanis operated the organised online betting network in which payments were settled through hawala. Suryash said as part of the alleged plan, he informed Sanskar Tejwani on July 9 that they could collect the payment from him, the investigators said. According to the police, Sanskar then sent his agent, Kishan Dilipbhai Panchal, who hails from Ahmedabad in Gujarat and is now based in Jhansi, to collect the money. The police said after Panchal collected the money, his associates with the help of the three constables intercepted him and robbed him of the cash, adding that the money was subsequently returned to Suryash through Ankit Yadav. After Panchal filed a complaint on Sunday, an investigation was launched and multiple teams were formed. The breakthrough in the case came when CCTV footage from the crime scene and surrounding areas was analysed, it is learnt.

Project head arrested, safety officer booked in Pune building collapse case

The Pimpri Chinchwad police have arrested the project head of Antony Lara Renewable Energy Pvt Ltd and have booked a safety officer, invoking culpable homicide charges against them in connection with the deaths of nine people trapped inside a collapsed waste-to-energy plant building in Moshi.

The incident occurred on July 8 when a huge mound of legacy waste destabilised, moved, and collapsed directly onto the building following heavy rains. Legacy waste refers to accumulated, untreated solid garbage and industrial byproducts left in old landfills or dumpsites for long periods. Twenty-three employees of Anthony Lara Renewable Energy Limited, a private firm contracted by the Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC), were inside the building at the time.

Immediately after the accident, five employees on the first floor managed to escape. Hours later, a joint operation by the National Disaster Response Force, the Army, the PCMC fire brigade, and the Pune Metropolitan Region Development Authority successfully rescued nine workers alive. Subsequently, nine dead bodies were recovered. “Following a complaint filed by the officials from the Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation, we have invoked culpable homicide charges against the Project Head Ashokkumar Siyaramsharan Gupta, 59, working for Antony Lara Renewable Energy Pvt Ltd, and the safety officer Vijay Ramrao Sapkal, 38. Sapkal was injured in the incident and is currently being treated at a hospital. Gupta sustained minor injuries and has been arrested,” a Pimpri Chinchwad police officer said. The police have invoked Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita sections related to culpable homicide not amounting to murder and act endangering life or personal safety of others against Gupta and Sapkal. Gupta will be produced before the court on Tuesday.



Struggling with sleep? Here’s why strength training can help



Sleep has a direct relationship with your activity quotient. It comes automatically because the body does want to get into passivity after hyperactivity. Everybody has different ideas about how much sleep is sufficient. However, the average adult requires 7 to 9 hours each night.Many adults experience brief episodes of sleeplessness at some point. Days or weeks may pass during this time. Stress or a traumatic experience is typically the cause of short-term sleeplessness. But other people have long-term insomnia, also termed chronic insomnia. This continues for at least three months. The primary issue can be insomnia, or it might be connected to other illnesses or medications.Studies have now shown that strength training is better for sleep than simple aerobic exercise. Strength training or resistance exercises boost muscular repair, raising hormone levels that support deeper sleep and lowering stress and anxiety.

What happens when you do regular strength training?

It balances stress hormones like cortisol and melatonin, which controls sleep patterns. It can increase lev-

els of hormones like testosterone and growth hormone, which have been linked to deeper and more restful sleep. Your muscle fibres sustain tiny tears when you lift weights. These signal the brain to trigger deeper sleep, which is essential for muscle repair and recovery.

Why strength training is good for old-age sleeplessness

Older adults may have trouble sleeping due to chronic pain from ailments like arthritis or muscle weakening. Strength training can lessen pain and discomfort by increasing muscle mass and enhancing joint stability. Additionally, improving mobility via muscle and bone strength may lessen the restlessness that usually interferes with sleep.Strength exercises calm the brainStrength exercise improves mental health by lowering anxiety, boosting confidence and creating a sense of success. This can eventually lead to a more tranquil mind, which will make it simpler to unwind before bed.Other than strength training, massages also help because they are a passive exercise. People who do pranayama, yoga and functional training are certainly bound to get a good amount of quality sleep. Try recreational sports in the evening like badminton, volleyball, tennis or football, as both guarantee a good night’s sleep.

Which routines work best?

Lifting weights, working out using resistance bands, squats, push-ups and sit-ups work best. The key to effective strength training is repetition. You should perform sets of resistance exercises that include up to 12 repetitions apiece. Begin with one set of each activity per workout and gradually increase to multiple sets once they are comfortable.Squats are a great full-body exercise as they target the legs and core. Push-ups strengthen the chest, shoulders, and triceps. Rows target the back and biceps while an overhead press strengthens the shoulders and upper back.

Stress raises stroke risk in younger women: Neurologist tells you how to unwind

Stress is riskier for women than men as it triggers brain strokes in them, according to a recent study published in the journal Neurology. Researchers found a link between chronic stress and stroke risk in younger women (ages 18-49) but not in men. They also found that moderate stress levels were associated with a 78 per cent higher risk in women.While the team at Helsinki University Hospital, Finland, found an association between stress and strokes, they didn’t list it as a direct cause. However, even this association is important as stress can contribute to high blood pressure and inflammation, both of which are high-risk triggers for strokes. The researchers recruited 426 people between 18 and 49, all of whom had an ischemic stroke and about half of whom were women. The team had another group of 426 people who had never had a stroke. Surveys revealed that those who had strokes experienced significantly higher levels of stress.According to Dr PN Renjen, senior consultant, neurology, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, Delhi, “Women are more sensitive to stress hormones. Besides, they have more stressors as they multitask between work and home, still carrying the heft of care-giving.”

How is stress a big risk factor for stroke?

Chronic stress can elevate blood pressure, heart rate, and levels of sugar and fat in the blood, creating conditions for forming blood clots, which block blood vessels in the brain, leading to a stroke. Additionally, stress may lead to unhealthy lifestyle choices such as smoking, alcohol consumption, and poor diet, further increasing susceptibility to stroke.

Why do women tend to suffer more from stress than men?

Biologically, women are more sensitive to stress hormones like the corticotropin-releasing factor (CRF), with their neurons binding more tightly to these hormones and showing lesser adaptive responses than men. Socially, women face added pressures from caregiving responsi-



bilities, workplace inequities, and societal expectations. These cause depression, anxiety disorders and emotional exhaustion. Research highlights that younger women report higher stress levels due to limited coping strategies at earlier life stages.

What should women do to lower their stress levels?

Women can manage stress effectively by adopting healthy coping mechanisms such as exercise, mindfulness practices like yoga or meditation, and seeking emotional support from friends or professionals. Engage in hobbies or self-care activities. It is also important for women to recognize the signs of chronic stress early and address underlying causes such as workload or relationship issues through structured problem-solving or counselling.

What should your immediate response be to a stressful situation?

For immediate stress management, techniques like counting to ten before reacting, practising positive self-talk, or stepping away from the situation can help you regain composure. Just do deep breathing exercises to activate your body’s relaxation response, reducing heart rate and tension. Mindfulness meditation is another effective technique, encouraging focus on the present moment and breaking the cycle of anxious thoughts.

In Karnataka, efforts on to combat the challenge of a hidden disability in newborns: hearing impairment

As late identification of hearing problems among the newborns can result in permanent hearing loss, early screening is being done on a priority in Karnataka, with the Mysuru-based All India Institute of Speech and Hearing (AIISH), a premier institute in the field of speech and hearing, under the Union Ministry of Health and Family, successfully running a Newborn Screening (NBS) programme.

Under the NBS, newborns are screened for communication disorders before they are discharged from the hospital they are born in. To do this, AIISH has collaborated with several hospitals to conduct screening programmes to detect hearing impairment and other developmental disabilities that can affect speech and language development. The screening has been helping in early intervention for those identified with the disorders, as any delay in the identification poses a risk, and affects successful management of children with hearing loss, according to AIISH.AIISH has been running campaigns for early interventions and has joined hands with various hospitals in Mysuru and elsewhere in the State, besides select locations in other parts of the country. “Children born with hearing loss will not develop speech since they don’t hear it and therefore early interventions are a must,” said experts at AIISH here.AIISH Mysuru has been stressing on early identification and intervention on hearing issues among infants within three months of the child’s birth.

According to AIISH, the first three years of life is the most crucial period for acquiring speech and language skills. Babies acquire speech and language from the time they are born, and one of the ways they learn is through hearing. If they have any problem with hearing and/or other disorders they may have delayed speech and language development, it explains.As part of NBS, over 60,000 infants are screened every year using state-of-art technology within seven days of their birth at the identified hospitals. The newborns who did not pass the screen-

ing test were evaluated in detail within two months of their birth to confirm the presence of hearing loss.Earlier data said about 3 in 1,000 newborns are known to have permanent hearing loss. But recent data from NBS says it is 5 in 1,000 newborns and for about two of these infants, the hearing loss is permanent These infants typically won’t have any overt signs due to which the hearing loss goes undetected unless a hearing screening test is conducted. It is important to know that hearing loss can be accurately identified right at birth through audiological tests, the institute said in a note during the expansion of NBS. “Over 95% of hearing loss cases stem from damage to the inner ear, which is often not visible to the naked eye. It is called a hidden disability,” explain AIISH’s audiologists Indira C.P. and Sandeep M., from the Department of Prevention of Communication Disorders.The only reliable methods for detecting hearing loss in newborns are objective tests like otoacoustic emissions (OAE) and auditory brainstem responses (ABR). Without these tests, hearing loss may go undetected, preventing children from developing speech. It is scientifically well-established that early intervention is crucial, they explain.Many hospitals in Mysuru are collaborating with the AIISH for newborn screening.The 1-3-6 rule recommends that all newborns undergo hearing loss screening at one month of age. At-risk infants should have a diagnostic assessment at three months, and intervention should start at six months. “Following these timelines will help children with hearing loss develop speech and communication skills on par with their hearing peers,” the audiologists advice, highlighting the significance of early identification of hearing loss in infants.However, AIISH, says that the age of identification in India is late -- beyond 3 years. It is said based on the reports that less than 1% of newborns in India are screened for hearing loss.By the time parents notice signs of hearing difficulties such as a lack of response to sounds, it is often too late. This leads to significant developmental challenges for the child and puts an immense burden of hearing disability on the family and society, according to experts at AIISH.

A many splendored nut: studying the health benefits of eating almonds regularly



Move over tea, olive oil, turmeric, and milk: there’s a tiny seed that might have just out-distanced all these foods in terms of most research being conducted on it. In the last couple of decades, the humble almond, it turns out, is right on top of a list of foods that are attracting a great deal of research and funding, as more benefits are being dragged out of its kernel, after splitting apart the hull and shell. Reportedly, over 200 peer-reviewed publications that link almonds to various health benefits have been out, these past 20 years. Among the benefits this nearly frenetic research has laid bare are protection for heart health, an edge in weight management, salutary effects on blood sugar, cholesterol, and gut health, and assisting with post-exercise recovery, not to mention, even skin care, and keeping wrinkles at bay.

The energy, and ostensibly, funding behind this activity comes from the Almond Board of California (ABC), established in 1950, and tasked with promoting almond consumption in both the domestic and international markets, but also with ensuring sustainable growing techniques, and of course, promoting research on the health benefits hidden in the nut. The Board actively works with nutritionists and dieticians across the world to work in an effort to integrate almonds, in some form, into the diet. About 4 % of the Board’s funds are budgeted for research and innovation, which includes nutritional research. To get a sense of the finances at play, the ABC successfully secured US \$ 7 million in funding from the United States Department of Agriculture, besides US \$ 3.41 million for market access and US \$ 2,21,000 in foreign market development and US \$ 250,000 in emerging markets funding in 2024. Key among the international locations that the ABC targets is India, a country, they acknowledge, that makes things easy for them, with the almond already embedded in local cultures, and food practices. It is also the second-biggest international market for almonds, after the United States itself. for In 2023-24, Indian shipments from California amounted to 400 million pounds, a four-time increase since a decade ago.

What’s in the nut?

Here are some basic facts about the almond, just to lay the ground for the powerhouse claims that researchers have made about the nut: one ounce or 28 grams of almonds, comprising roughly 23 nuts apparently pack in 6 grams of protein, 4 grams of fibre, 9 grams of monounsaturated fats, and a smattering of Vitamin E, calcium, potassium, phosphorous, riboflavin (Vitamin B), magnesium and iron. It is of course well known that proteins are building blocks, and help build and preserve and maintain bones, muscle, skin, nails, and confer satiety, while monounsaturated fats help lower harmful cholesterol, and increase protective HDL cholesterol. The multiple benefits that vitamins and minerals confer are also well documented. As Elena Hemler, the nutrition programme lead with ABC, says, “Almonds are incredibly nutrient dense.” She adds that emerging areas of research include sleep benefits, healthy ageing, and impacts on cancer. “Post COVID-19,” Clarice Turner, president and CEO, ABC, says, “there has been a great deal of interest in studying what we put on our plates, and healthy stuff in our bodies.” This has also spurred interest in scientifically establishing the perceived beneficial effects of almonds for humans, as a healthy snack.

With drug Empagliflozin going off patent, doctors look forward to price reduction, benefitting diabetic, heart and kidney patients

Earlier this week, German manufacturer Boehringer Ingelheim’s patent to manufacture Empagliflozin, a medication to treat type 2 diabetes mellitus, expired in India. Empagliflozin is sold under the brand name Jardiance.“Empagliflozin belongs to the SGLT-2i group of drugs. (Sodium glucose transporter inhibitor) drugs. These drugs have shown multiple benefits, including weight loss, control of diabetes, prevention of heart failures, heart attacks and kidney damage, said V. Mohan, chairman, Dr. Mohan’s Diabetes Specialities Centre, Chennai. “Now that the drug is going off patent, it will be prescribed more,” he said.Until the year 2000, Indian diabetologists prescribed only three classes of drugs – metformin, sulfonylureas and insulin. But these medications can cause hypoglycaemia. During this time, research to improve the control of diabetes was ongoing, and gliptins and gliflozins were the answers. These two new classes of drugs not only controlled blood sugar without causing hypoglycaemia, but also protected the heart and kidneys. Gliptins were introduced in 2006 but were expensive. A few years ago the manufacture of these drugs became universal.

With the end of patent, the price of 25mg tablet of empagliflozin which until till now cost ₹70 per tablet, could cost ₹15 to 20. A 10mg tablet will cost ₹10 to ₹15, surmised diabetologist A. Panneerselvam. “As a clinician, if 100 patients needed it, I would prescribe it for only 10 patients, because of the cost factor. Now we will recommend it for all patients who will benefit,” he said.The expected fall in price however, does not translate into a panacea for the ailment, he cautioned. People must adhere to diet and exercise advice, he pointed out.

What is the drug Empagliflozin?

Empagliflozin, marketed as Jardiance, is a drug for type 2 diabetes mellitus, manufactured by Boehringer Ingelheim, a pharmaceutical company headquartered in Germany.It is used as an adjunct to diet and exercise, to improve glycemic control and reduce the risk of cardiovascular death in patients with established cardiovascular disease, as per its website.The patent for the drug expired on March 11, and reports indicate multiple generics are expected to hit the market, at lower pricesThe

Almonds are also very versatile today, coming in as many as 14 forms, including oils, kernels, slivers, flour, milk, butter, coming with the shell, skin, blanched, or roasted and in multiple favours, with research on into charming, and tasty food pairings with almonds. Harbinder Maan, associate director, trade, marketing and stewardship, ABC, who spearheads the flavour side of the business says: “Today, almonds come in more forms than any other tree nut.” The almond industry might have also benefited, in recent times, from seemingly increasing gluten allergies among people in different parts of the world, as it provides flour and milk that are gluten free, and vegan options, explains Emily Fleischmann, vice president, global market development, ABC. As far as allergies go, while nut allergies might be increasing, studies show that less than 1 % of the population have a tree nut (as is the almond) allergy, and less than 0.5 % have almond allergies, thus not of significance to hamper use of the nut itself, Ms. Hemler explains.

Two recent Indian studies, the results of which were published in 2023, showed a strong correlation between good blood sugar control and eating a fixed quantity of almonds. One study led by Anoop Misra, Professor and Chairman, Fortis-C-DOC Centre of Excellence for Diabetes, Metabolic Diseases, and Endocrinology (New Delhi) and Seema Gulati, head, Nutrition Research Group, National Diabetes, Obesity, and Cholesterol Foundation showed that study participants who ate 20g of almonds 30 minutes before a meal showed significant improvements in glycemic control compared to those not eating almonds before meals over three months. The study recommended that almonds can be part of a nutritious dietary solution offering good potential for the reversal of prediabetes to normal glucose regulation in some Asian Indians and therefore potentially prevent or delay the development of diabetes in people with prediabetes. The other study by Viswanathan Mohan, president and chief of diabetes research at Madras Diabetes Research Foundation in Chennai, India, with collaborators R. M. Anjana, of the MDRF; Richard Mattes, from Purdue University; Jordi Salas from the Universitat Rovira i Virgili; and Walter Willett, MD, Harvard University, showed good control of blood glucose levels. The results of the study indicated that eating almonds daily for 12 weeks reduced insulin resistance and improved pancreatic function besides the positive impact on blood glucose levels. In the control study, the treatment group also achieved significant reductions in body weight, body mass index, and waist circumference during the study period, and lowered total cholesterol levels.

In 2024, a paper by Mark Kern, professor of exercise and nutritional sciences at San Diego State University, showed that snacking on two ounces (57g) of almonds for eight weeks modestly reduced pain ratings, helped maintain muscle strength, and reduced muscle damage after exercise. Another study, this time by Oliver C. Witard, Senior Lecturer in Exercise Metabolism and Nutrition at Kings College London, suggested that snacking on almonds for eight weeks reduced perceived feelings of muscle soreness during recovery from muscle-damaging exercise, resulting in better maintenance of muscle functional capacity. Almonds’ impact on weight loss has also been evaluated by Alison Coates, Professor of Human Nutrition and Director of the Alliance for Research in Exercise, Nutrition, and Activity at the University of South Australia. She argued in a couple of papers that they may also support weight loss as part of a reduced-calorie diet among adults with overweight or obesity.

Currently research is focussed only on benefits from oral consumption of almonds, explains Ms. Fleischmann, and not really into deriving compounds from almonds that can enter pharmacology, and be used as therapeutics. “We don’t want almonds to be looked upon as medicine,” she says, while Ms. Hemler reasons that the angle is that the whole, raw almond as a package can today be a wonder food.However, she makes it very clear that nutritionally dense as it is, it is not a silvery bullet.



India diabetes care drugs market was estimated to be worth USD 1.7 billion in 2024 and is expected to reach USD 2.01 billion by 2029 Rajaram Anantharaman, consultant cardiologist with Kauvery Hospital said research on the drug had revealed its protective effects for the heart. Studies showed that the drug helped people at risk for heart disease even if they did not have diabetes. “In the past 20 years we had no new major heart medication. These SGLT 2 inhibitors prevent glucose absorption in the kidney. The fluid collection in the lung is therefore reduced, and hospital admission with heart failure comes down. Overall deaths also drop,” he explained.

Cardiologists use four different medications for heart failure. They are beta blockers, ARNI inhibitors, mineralocorticoid receptor antagonists and SGLT2 inhibitors. The other three drugs are already available in generic form, Dr. Rajaram said. “We call them the four pillars of heart failure (treatment). With empagliflozin becoming cheaper, the medications will reduce symptoms, deaths and hospitalisations. “We do have a lot of heart failure patients in India. This drug will help in terms of symptoms and improving quality of life,” he added.Rajan Ravichandran, senior consultant nephrologist with MIOT, said: “For some unknown reason the drug also protects the kidney. The drug’s mechanism reduces protein leak into urine. When sugar is removed along with water, the heart function will improve. Once the tissue oedema goes away the organ functions better. That applies to kidneys also,” he explained.

CSK and Stephen Fleming end 18-year partnership, MS Dhoni's role in focus



Ever since the franchise failed to qualify for IPL Play-offs for a third straight time this season, Fleming's future as head coach was uncertain, with the management weighing its options. And after a review conducted alongside Major League Cricket, where CSK's sister franchise, Texas Super Kings finished bottom, it is understood that they took the decision to seek a new coach. "We had an honest discussion and where we evaluated the season, and we decided to part ways mutually," CSK MD Kasi Viswanathan told The Indian Express. Although the name of Hemang Badani has emerged as a possible successor, Viswanathan said the franchise hasn't started the process yet. "We have just finished this process, and we will start exploring the next options. We have not decided on any particular name yet," he said, revealing that they are open to candidates from home and overseas. Stephen Fleming has stepped down as CSK coach after 18 years. (CREIMAS) Stephen Fleming has stepped down as CSK coach after 18 years. (CREIMAS)

Dhoni's role The Indian Express understands that MS Dhoni could play a vital role in the road ahead, but it is not clear at this stage whether he has played his last match or not. With Fleming vacating the chair, the future of the rest of the support staff is also not certain. "The new head coach will decide the support staff. It is only fair if he gets to bring his own support staff or if he wishes to carry on someone from within," Viswanathan added. The Indian Express understands there is a strong chance the franchise could look at Indian coaches as the role of local players has become prominent. Dhoni, who is currently in the UK, is expected to be involved in the process, and there is a strong likelihood he will meet a few alongside The Hundred.

It's Muchachos vs Wonderwall in the battle of Arg vs Eng anthems, with the Falklands looming large

A schoolteacher in Buenos Aires, Fernando Romero, was cooking his breakfast when the lines gushed out of his mind: "I was born in Argentina, land of Diego and Lionel. Of the kids from Malvinas, which I will never forget." He set the lyrics to the background score of a popular song *Muchachos*, composed by the reggae and punk nine-piece band *La Mosca* Tse-Tsé at the stroke of the century. What Argentines refer to as *Islas Malvinas* and claim sovereignty over, are the Falkland Islands – a self-governing British Overseas Territory now, but also the cause of the 10-week war in 1982.

Little did Romero then know that, in December 2020, a week after Maradona's death, his song would become his country's sporting anthem, rendered passionately by the fans in stadia, players in the locker room and by masses in the streets. Romero was not the first one to adapt the song which meant "Boys, we will get drunk"; several adaptations could be heard during club games in most stadia around Buenos Aires. But this became the most iconic one, and the band, which was disbanded several years ago, reunited to re-record the song with Romero's lyrics. He wanted to sing during a World Cup qualifier between Argentina and Bolivia inside Estadio Monumental in Buenos Aires. But he couldn't procure tickets. He and his friends started singing the song outside the arena, which a local television crew captured and the original band members happened to watch and later re-recorded. The band won the equivalent of a national award and Romero was invited to sing this song to an audience that included Lionel Messi. His only regret, he told Argentina media outlet EFE, he could not take a picture with Messi. In the streets, people stop him and thank him. "They've told me that I did more for them with the song than the last 40 years of democracy," he told EFE. For this edition he tweaked the chorus again to suit the context. "I want to win the third one, I want to be a world champion again," Messi, though prefers his original one penned for the 2022 World Cup. The song still resonates with the fans, and most of them have internalised the lines, and hum it in public spaces. In fan zones, parks, supermarkets and airports, flooded with Argentiniens for the semi-final against England on Wednesday, fans have the song on the tip of their tongues. In the corner of Atlanta airport, Lorenzo Alberto was watching a reel his friend had sent him from Argentina's round-of-16 bout against Egypt a few days ago in the city. He was waiting for his flight to Kansas for the quarterfinal. He briskly took his ear phones out and said: "You should watch this without the earphones, and you feel you are in the stands again." He then recited almost the full chorus of Muchachos. He explained its connection among the fans: "it fills us with energy and belief. It's something of an identity," he said, raising the volume, to the ire of a security guard's piercing glance. He doesn't stop, and she doesn't care. "Even if you are the only man in the stadium, or if I happen to be amidst non-Argentina fans, I will sing it. Even if it's the English fans," he says. But the reference of the Falklands War, or Malvinas War as the Argentines say, wooed controversy after videos of Argentina footballers singing Muchachos in the dressing room. The victory over Switzerland ensured a contest between football's bitterest rivalry for the first time in a competitive game since 2005. But the FIFA decided not to impose any sanction, even though they insist on taking stringent action against "political expression within stadiums."

Forty four years have passed since the war that cost 9,000 lives, for the archipelago in South Atlantic. The angst might have faded, but old timers still nurse it. Says John Byers, from Birmingham, who has watched every World Cup since 1994, from the stands: "What happened to the war? They captured it and we took it back a few days later. The people were happy and it was totally needless intrusion. It's like how Argentina has always defeated us. By cheating!"¹¹ It must have happened long ago, but not forgotten. We can't keep politics away from this game," he adds. Politicians have fanned up the rivalry, too. Ministers of both nations exchanged verbal ammunition. After the semifinal run-in was finalised, Argentina's foreign minis-

After being knocked out again this season, CSK's management was keen on retaining Fleming at least till the end of the cycle. However, with the franchise's performance dwindling across leagues (IPL, MLC and SA20), it is understood that a new direction has been sought. "On behalf of everyone at the Super Kings franchise, we extend our deepest gratitude for his unwavering commitment, passion, and leadership. While our journey together on the field comes to a close, he will always remain an integral part of the team's legacy," CSK owner Rupan Gurunath said. The decision to part ways with Fleming brings to an end a long and successful stint that any coach has had in the IPL. Fleming, who played the maiden IPL season, took over as head coach from Kepler Wessells ahead of the 2009 edition and is the most decorated coach in the IPL with five titles and two Champions Leagues. However, ever since Dhoni stepped down as captain after the 2023 season and passed the baton to Ruturaj Gaikwad, Fleming's role has gained prominence in the set-up. But in each of the three seasons that followed, CSK failed to make the play-offs, even finishing at the bottom of the table in 2025. While Fleming enjoyed unwavering support, in the recently concluded season, there was plenty of disquiet among the fans. While the former New Zealand captain acknowledged the noise, the franchise's performance and the players picked at the auction had remained a hot topic. For a franchise that built its foundation on experienced players, in the previous mega auctions, they took a slightly different route and were found out of their depth. Then, ahead of the last season, in the mini auction, they went for new young players, and again ended up with a below-par season.

Stephen Fleming CSK Stephen Fleming head coach of Team Chennai Super Kings during post match press conference after Match 37 of the TATA Indian Premier League 2026 between Chennai Super Kings and Gujarat Titans at MA Chidambaram Stadium, Chennai, India, on April 26, 2026. (CREIMAS) For a franchise that was known to build strong squads at the auction table, none of their recent picks have been able to deliver the consistency that the team is known for. Similarly, there were a few notable omissions when Matheesha Pathirana was let go, a player whom the franchise had invested plenty in and one who enjoyed Dhoni's backing. The decision to bring in a new coach now means that, before the mega auction that is likely to take place after the next IPL season, CSK will have a clear picture of their core.



ter Pablo Quirno claimed the 2013 referendum in the Falklands "was artificially implanted by the occupying power." As much as 99.8% of the population said they were happy with British governance. But Quirno wrote in *La Nacion*: "Time does not transform an illegitimate occupation into sovereignty. Nor will it divide the territorial unity of the Argentine Republic," he wrote. Downing Street promptly retorted on Monday. "The UK's position is clear. The islanders have repeatedly expressed their wish to remain a British overseas territory, and their right to self-determination is paramount," the Prime Minister's spokesperson said in a statement. Often vilified as provocateurs, Argentina's fans are desperate to shake off the image. "We are not for anything violent. We will celebrate, but we won't hurt, even though the atmosphere could be tense," says Marco Allan, who has flown with his son Benjamin for the game. Social media is also replete with sections of Argentina fans cheekily appropriating a Spanish Wonderwall. But it is the Muchachos, he says, that would drown out any other noise in the arena, where 30,000 English fans are expected to be among the audience, armed with their song. "It's time we avenged for the Hand of God, maybe we should pay them back in the same coin," says Byers. A place in the final awaits the winner, but it's that well-worn cliché. The match is more than just a game.

FIDE Chess World Cup format changes – duration, participants, time Control & prize pool

The International Chess Federation (FIDE) has approved a significant change to the Chess World Cup format, effective from the 2027 cycle. The revamped tournament will be shorter, feature a larger field, and introduce a Swiss-system qualification stage.

The new format reduces the World Cup from 27 days to 19 days. The tournament will now be played in two stages. The opening stage will consist of Swiss-system tournaments played with a fast classical time control of 45 minutes plus a 30-second increment per move. The Open World Cup will feature four Swiss pools, while the Women's World Cup will be divided into two pools. Each Swiss tournament will be played over nine rounds across five days.

The top players from each pool will advance to the knockout stage. In the Open World Cup, the top four players from each of the four pools (16 players total) will qualify. In the Women's World Cup, the top eight players from each of the two pools (16 players total) will advance.

The second stage will retain the traditional knockout format. The Round of 16, quarterfinals, semifinals, and final will be played using the existing World Cup format and classical time controls. A rest day will separate the Swiss and knockout stages, with two additional rest days scheduled during the knockout phase. Previously, the World Cup followed a single-elimination knockout format with 206 players competing over eight rounds. Each round spanned three days, with two classical games followed by tie-breaks on the third day. The top 50 seeds received byes, while players seeded 51 to 206 competed in the first round.

Connections vs Organisation: France vs Spain a battle of football philosophies



France have illuminated the 2026 FIFA World Cup through the irreplaceable brilliance of their front four: Kylian Mbappé, Désiré Doué, Ousmane Dembélé and Michael Olise; footballers who flourish in freedom and recoil from rigidity. It is a fitting image for a nation that has so often celebrated those who challenged convention and defied rules — from the Revolution to Surrealism and the Nouvelle Vague. France are first in shots on target and assists, second on goals and expected goals. Nobody is surprised. Yet, such has been this tournament that even the team that is the very antithesis of France — Spain — has also been successful, with the fewest goals conceded — just one in six matches. A team built on an unwavering faith in organisation, where the shift outweighs the individual wearing it. After winning the 2010 World Cup, Vicente del Bosque had said there is no room for individualism in Spain's philosophy of collective football. His disciple, Luis de la Fuente has remained steadfast to that creed. Spain are first in passes and possession control. Nobody is surprised. On Tuesday, hence, football will not witness merely another game of 22 men chasing a ball. It will witness a battle of two contrasting philosophies. And, only one will prevail. Mbappe France's Kylian Mbappe (10) celebrates with teammates after scoring his side's third goal during the World Cup round of 32 soccer match between France and Sweden in East Rutherford, N.J., near New York, Tuesday, June 30, 2026. (AP Photo/Yuki Iwamura) The fluidity of Deschamps Didier Deschamps has not always been an apostle of attacking football. Quite the opposite. Defence was the bedrock of France's 1998 World Cup triumph — of which Deschamps was a part. Fabien Barthez kept the most clean sheets. Not even Ronaldo and Rivaldo's Brazil could score against them. Two decades later, Deschamps won the trophy again as manager with a similarly robust blueprint. Hugo Lloris finished with the joint-most clean sheets in Russia. And then came a campaign for change. At the 2024 Euros, France scored only four goals, of which two came off opponents, and one was a penalty. For a nation blessed with a conveyor belt of attacking talent, it was an unacceptable outcome. The verdict was out: either Deschamps would have to evolve, or French football

How Sinner out-served a faster, harder-hitting Zverev at Wimbledon

The difference wasn't power, it was what each man did with the points that followed. Sinner won 80 per cent of points on his first serve to Zverev's 71, and 65 per cent on his second to Zverev's 61. He also out-returned Zverev, 43 return points to 34. Whenever the match needed deciding, Sinner had more ways to decide it. That efficiency has been rebuilt from close to nothing. Two years ago this would have sounded absurd. At the 2025 US Open final, also against Carlos Alcaraz, Sinner's first serve landed just 48 per cent of the time. He lost. Days later, leaked practice footage showed him back on court working on the shot that had failed him under exactly that pressure. He won his next tournament.

The rebuild started in 2022, under Riccardo Piatti, with a platform serve, feet planted wide, the racket arm arriving from well behind the body. First-serve percentage sat below 60. When Piatti gave way to Simone Vagnozzi, the serve was the first thing he wanted to fix. Jim Courier remembers cornering him at the 2022 Miami Open to ask the plan. “The serve, it’s got a hitch in it,” Vagnozzi told him. “We’ve got to get rid of the hitch and smooth it out. I want the toss more in front so he can be more offensive.”

By mid-2023, Vagnozzi and Darren Cahill had switched Sinner to a pinpoint stance, back foot drawn up to meet the front at contact, modelled on John Isner, a six-foot-ten American who serves nothing like Sinner otherwise plays. It made no obvious sense on paper. It took years to show in the numbers: gains in 2023, more in 2024, and by 2026, a first-serve percentage above 65% with roughly 80 per cent of those points won. Jannik Sinner of Italy celebrates after winning a point against Alexander Zverev of Germany men's singles final at Wimbledon Tennis Championships in London, Sunday, July 12, 2026. (AP Photo/Kin Cheung) Jannik Sinner of Italy celebrates after winning a point against Alexander Zverev of Germany men's singles final at Wimbledon Tennis Championships in London, Sunday, July 12, 2026. (AP Photo/Kin Cheung) Paolo Bertolucci, the former Italian Davis Cup player who has watched the rebuild unfold in *Gazzetta dello Sport*, has pointed to smaller, recent adjustments beneath the mechanical one, the toss brought closer to the body, the right elbow held further back while loading. Together, he has written, they turned the serve from a shot Sinner had to protect into one that protects him. You cannot attack Jannik Sinner's first serve," Djokovic said after his own straight-sets semi-final defeat, in which he lost only five points behind it. "You can try to read it, block it, get it back and play." Asked to explain the



shift, he didn't stop at mechanics. "It's become an incredible weapon in the last two years. Very unpredictable, great variety, great balance. He is using his height extremely well."

The scale of it becomes clear against history. Sinner is the first Wimbledon champion since Roger Federer in 2003 to win without losing a single service game across the semi-final and final. Across both matches, he faced exactly two break points, one against Djokovic, one against Zverev, and saved both. Sinner's own account, offered after beating Jan-Lennard Struff in the quarter-final, was plainer: he and his team changed the motion, the toss, the timing, "many things," not chasing pace so much as learning "the right serve at the right moment." That composure had a specific test on Sunday. Two hours forty-two minutes in, locked at 3-3 in the third set, Zverev earned his first break point of the match, thirty-one straight holds between them to that point. He didn't get to use it. Sinner played a drop shot, Zverev pushed off to chase it, and slipped, hyperextending the same knee he'd injured two years earlier. Sinner helped him up. Play resumed, but something had changed. "I was struggling to push off on the serve," Zverev said afterward. "My serve speed went down... the fall didn't help me in the third set." Two games later, serving with a compromised push-off, he was broken for the first time all match. Sinner served out the set. In the fourth, Sinner created three break points in a single, gripping seventh game, at one point scrambling to the turf to keep a rally alive, converting the third, an in-form Zverev cracking under sustained pressure this time, not misfortune. Sinner faced one break point in the entire final, and saved it. Carlos Alcaraz, sidelined all season by a wrist injury, is still to come back to a tour where the one man who might have beaten this version of Sinner hasn't had the chance to yet.

India enters nine finals at Asian Under-19 Boxing Championships

Hyderabad: India continued its dominant run at the Asian Under-19 and Under-23 Boxing Championships, with nine boxers advancing to the finals in the Under-19 men's and women's categories, while six boxers secured bronze medals following the semifinal bouts in Jakarta. In the Under-19 women's category, all eight Indian boxers delivered outstanding performances to reach the finals. Chahat (60kg) secured a commanding 5-0 win over Pei-Chun Tsai (TPE), while Anshika (75kg) registered an RSC win in the first round against An-Chi Tseng (TPE). Megha Sheekad (80kg) advanced after her opponent from Vietnam was unable to continue (abandoned bout), and Prachi Tokas (+81kg) sealed her place in the final with an RSC victory in the first round against Shu-Shian



Wang (TPE). Along with the earlier winners, India confirmed all eight finalists in the Under-19 women's category. In the Under-19 men's category, two Indian boxers progressed to the finals. Aditya (55kg) delivered a strong performance, defeating Korea's Hyeonmin Lee via RSC in the second round.

Ranveer’s Dhurandhar opens to under 900 viewers in Japan after Rs 1,300 cr run worldwide



After rewriting box office records in India and several overseas markets, Ranveer Singh’s Dhurandhar has hit an unexpected roadblock in Japan. The action thriller, released in the country as Operation Dhurandhar on July 10, witnessed a muted opening, attracting fewer than 900 moviegoers on its first day despite a wide release and a high-profile promotional campaign. The film debuted across nearly 80 screens in Japan through local distributor Twin. According to trade reports and data from Japanese box office tracker Mimorin, Dhurandhar had sold 449 tickets by 2 pm while playing in 57 locations. Although the release later expanded to around 80 locations, audience turnout remained largely flat through the evening. The film ended its opening day with fewer than 900 admissions, missing a place in Japan’s daily top 25 box office rankings. It also failed to break into the chart over its opening weekend. The slow start came despite a dedicated promotional campaign aimed at Japanese audiences. Ahead of the release, Ranveer Singh recorded a special video message calling Dhurandhar the biggest Indian film ever

made, while the marketing focused on its espionage-thriller narrative rather than its record-breaking collections. The film was released with Japanese subtitles instead of a dubbed version. While there is no official explanation for the weak response, some Japanese viewers suggested online that the absence of a dubbed release may have affected its reach.

The disappointing debut also kept Dhurandhar out of the list of Indian films with the biggest opening-day admissions in Japan. To enter the top 10, the film needed to surpass the 1,300 admissions recorded by Salman Khan’s Tiger 3, which currently occupies the final spot on the list. At present, RRR remains the biggest Indian opener in Japan with 8,230 admissions, followed by Saaho (6,510), Kalki 2898 AD (3,700), Pathaan (2,220), Salaar (2,200), Jawan (1,960), Rangasthalam (1,610), Devara (1,550), Baahubali 2 (1,380) and Tiger 3 (1,300). Like Dhurandhar, Pushpa 2 had also failed to make the top 10 during its release in Japan. A rare setback for a Rs 3,100 crore franchise. The Japan numbers are a sharp contrast to the franchise’s phenomenal global performance. The first Dhurandhar, released in December 2025, earned more than Rs 1,307 crore worldwide, while its sequel, Dhurandhar: The Revenge, collected Rs 1,813 crore globally to become the second highest-grossing Indian film ever after Dangal. Together, the two films have grossed over Rs 3,100 crore worldwide. About the franchise. Directed by Aditya Dhar, the Dhurandhar films are produced by Jio Studios and B62 Studios. The franchise stars Ranveer Singh alongside Akshaye Khanna, Sanjay Dutt, Arjun Rampal, R. Madhavan, Sara Arjun, Rakesh Bedi, Gaurav Gera and Danish Pandor. While Indian blockbusters such as RRR have found an enthusiastic audience in Japan, Dhurandhar’s opening underlines that strong global collections do not always translate into success in one of the world’s most unpredictable overseas markets.

‘Sanjay Dutt was trembling with fear’: Ujjwal Nikam on what actor said after he was sentenced



When actor Sanjay Dutt was arrested for illegally possessing weapons procured from underworld operatives, some of the country’s biggest lawyers defended him in court. Yet, he was sentenced to prison—a verdict that prosecutor Ujjwal Nikam says came after he strongly opposed any leniency for the actor. Recalling the day the verdict was pronounced, Nikam said Sanjay was trembling with fear while the media portrayed the prosecutor as the villain for pursuing a strict punishment.

‘Media turned me into a villain’ Speaking to Lallantop, Nikam said, “Every time Sanjay Dutt cried, people held me responsible for that. The media can build a public perception about someone. When the court pronounced its verdict against Sanjay Dutt, he was naturally scared. He was out on bail, but the court ordered that he be taken into custody.” Explaining his stand in court, Nikam said, “My argument was that Sanjay Dutt should not get the benefit of the Probation of Offenders Act. He was convicted under the Arms Act, though the court acquitted him of conspiracy charges, and we had no objection to that. However, I argued that he should be sentenced to seven years under the Arms Act. His lawyer contended that since it was his first offence, he should be released on bond. I objected because the pistol he possessed had come from the number one shooter of Dawood Ibrahim. If he accepted a weapon from such a person, he was fully aware of his criminal background. The benefit of the Probation of Of-

fenders Act is meant for first-time offenders who are genuinely innocent but get trapped in unfortunate circumstances. That was not the case with Sanjay Dutt.” Nikam further recalled that Sanjay had hired the country’s top legal minds to defend him. “He engaged the very best legal luminaries of this country while I was the prosecutor. Ultimately, the court agreed with me and sentenced him to seven years in prison,” he said.

‘Sanjay Dutt was trembling’ Describing Sanjay’s reaction after the verdict, Nikam said, “When the judgment was delivered, he was trembling. He kept saying, ‘No sir, I didn’t do anything wrong, sir. I will come back.’ He was virtually shaking. I was standing nearby and told him, ‘Sanju, the media is watching, please stand straight.’ Then I asked the police to take him away. Had I not motivated him at that moment, the media would have made me the villain. Everyone was against me.” Despite seeking a strict sentence, Nikam clarified that he never considered Sanjay Dutt a terrorist. “I want to clarify that Sanjay Dutt is not a terrorist. It was his childishness. You could see it in his eyes. He was curious about weapons, and during that time many people were fascinated by the underworld. Being associated with them was seen as a flex,” he said.

However, Nikam said his biggest disappointment was that Sanjay could have helped prevent the 1993 Mumbai serial bomb blasts. “When Abu Salem came with a truck full of weapons, Sanjay Dutt kept some and returned the rest. My point is that if he had informed the police immediately, we could have stopped the bomb blasts. The conspiracy could have been exposed, many lives would have been saved, and those involved could have been arrested. That was my grievance against him. But he was not a terrorist.” Despite their courtroom battle, Nikam said the two now share a cordial relationship. “I met him after he was released. I have met him several times since. He respects me. Once, I was at a hotel when he came up to me and spoke with me. I have no personal enmity against anyone,” he said. This article reflects personal recollections and historical court commentary shared during an interview for general informational purposes.

Satluj’s Honey Trehan, Diljit Dosanjh top IMDb popular Indian celebs list after film’s takedown



Three days after Honey Trehan’s period investigative thriller Satluj was pulled down from ZEE5 around the world, its director and cast members have found a place in IMDb’s list of Most Popular Indian Celebrities this week. While Trehan tops the list at #1, actors Diljit Dosanjh and Suvinder Vicky have claimed the third and the 11th positions, respectively.

Why is Satluj making waves?

Earlier this month, Indian OTT platform ZEE5 released Satluj across the globe, seemingly ending the three-year censorship battle it’s faced. However, merely two days after the film released on streaming, the Indian government pulled it down within the country, claiming that it bypassed the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), even though the OTT release of a film doesn’t merit CBFC certification in India. A committee formed by the Centre to review Satluj also claimed that it can serve as “fodder” for “hostile elements” outside India to use it against national interests, which is likely to “threaten” the country’s “secu-

urity”. Satluj was then subsequently also removed internationally from ZEE5.

Satluj is a biopic of Sikh human rights activist Jaswant Singh Khrala (played by Dosanjh), who in the late 1990s, exposed over 2,500 extrajudicial killings and cremations in Punjab, with the involvement of the state police. Khrala was eventually abducted and murdered. Suvinder Vicky plays the film’s primary antagonist, a high-ranking officer in Punjab Police. Diljit, who’s currently staying in the US, hinted that Satluj may not remain available for viewing merely one day after the film dropped on ZEE5. After its ban, the actor asked his fans, who had downloaded the film, to share it extensively to spread the word. Sikh bodies have also been holding public screenings of the film at gurudwaras. Earlier this year, speaking on SCREEN Spotlight, director Honey Trehan revealed that the CBFC not only demanded 127 cuts from the film, then titled Punjab ’95, but his fellow producer, Ronnie Screwala of RSVP Movies, was also barred from holding private screenings, premiering the film at the Toronto International Film Festival, and even going to court. “Those at the CBFC are definitely taking advantage of what they do. They’re misusing their power.

They’re trying to please the sitting government so much that they’re trying to control the narrative. Uss poori chakki mein koi na koi toh pis hi raha hai. Not only me, there must be other filmmakers also,” he said. Trailing Trehan on IMDb’s list of most popular Indian celebrities this week is Sharvari, who recently starred in Shiv Rawai!’s spy thriller Alpha. Her co-star Alia Bhatt, however, is far below on the 14th spot. Rajkumar Hirani’s JioHotstar show Pritam and Pedro also has several cast members on the list — his son and debutant actor Vir Hirani on #4, Shruti Marathe on #5, Arshad Warsi on #7, and the chief antagonist, Vikrant Massey on #12.

Zeenat Aman urges government to open dialogue as Sonam Wangchuk’s fast enters day 17



Veteran actor Zeenat Aman has extended her support to educator and climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, who is on an indefinite hunger strike at Delhi’s Jantar Mantar. As Wangchuk entered the 17th day of his fast, Aman shared a note urging the government to open a dialogue with him, saying India cannot afford to remain silent while “one of its greatest minds” continues to suffer. Zeenat Aman backs Sonam Wangchuk Taking to Instagram, Zeenat said her thoughts were with Wangchuk as reports suggested his health was deteriorating. “My thoughts today are in the country’s capital city where @wangchukworld is entering the 17th day of his indefinite hunger strike.”

Referring to reports about his condition, she wrote that Wangchuk had “started losing muscle mass and is in immense pain.” She also recalled his response to those urging him to end the fast. “Don’t ask me to end my fast.

‘Phunsuk Wangdu may die’: Omi Vaidya, Naseeruddin Shah urge Wangchuk to end hunger strike



Educationist and climate activist Sonam Wangchuk’s indefinite hunger strike has entered its 17th day at Delhi’s Jantar Mantar. It is a part of the protest organised by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), seeking the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over the leak of NEET-UG questions. As per the latest updates, Wangchuk has lost 8.5 kgs till now, and his blood pressure has dipped to 109/70. As support for Wangchuk continues to grow, celebs from the film industry have urged him to end the strike. 3 Idiots’ actor — the film’s protagonist was inspired by Wangchuk — Omi Vaidya has urged people to support the cause.

Writer Arundhati Roy, actors Naseeruddin Shah and Ratna Pathak Shah, and economist Jayati Ghosh, urged Wangchuk to end the strike, while extending their support for the cause. In a joint statement on Monday, they said that they were “immensely grateful” to the protesters for fighting against the government, but expressed concern over their deteriorating health. “We salute your sense of purpose, the determination and courage with which you are spearheading this movement for students and youth across the country,” the statement read, according to PTI. Appealing to the protesters, they added, “We request you to please consider ending this hunger strike immediately in the interests of the longer and more difficult struggle ahead. This battle is a marathon, not a sprint, and we need you, your strength and leadership in the days to

Ask the government why they won’t even have a dialogue.” Calling Wangchuk a visionary, Zeenat highlighted his work as the founder of SECMOL, inventor of the ice stupa, an education reformer, environmental activist and the real-life inspiration behind Amir Khan’s beloved 3 Idiots character Phunsukh Wangdu. Appealing directly to the Centre, she wrote, “With respect to Mr. Wangchuk’s wishes, I implore the Indian government to open dialogue on this matter that concerns the future of all India.” She added, “We must not become a society that sits back and watches one of its greatest minds be sacrificed. India has a long history of peaceful protest; those who wield power are obliged to meet such protest with peaceful dialogue.” Actor Omi Vaidya, who played Chatur Ramalingam in 3 Idiots, also voiced his support for Wangchuk. Sharing a video on social media, he reminded people that Aamir Khan’s character Funsukh Wangdu was inspired by the Ladakhi innovator and urged them to pay attention to his deteriorating health, saying, “I don’t want Phunsukh Wangdu to die.” Celebrities rally behind Sonam Wangchuk As Wangchuk’s health continues to deteriorate, several public figures have voiced their support. Before Zeenat Aman and Omi Vaidya, actor Prakash Raj had urged the government to engage in dialogue with the activist. More recently, actor Naseeruddin Shah and author Arundhati Roy also appealed to Wangchuk to end his hunger strike, while urging the government to address his concerns through meaningful discussions rather than allowing his health to worsen. Wangchuk joined an ongoing protest at Delhi’s Jantar Mantar on June 28, where he began an indefinite hunger strike in support of students protesting alleged irregularities in the NEET-UG examination. The demonstration, led by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), is demanding the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and compensation for the families of NEET aspirants who allegedly died by suicide following the controversy. Alongside education reforms, Wangchuk has continued to press for statehood for Ladakh and inclusion of the Union Territory under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, arguing that both issues require urgent government attention. According to the latest health bulletin shared by the organisers, Wangchuk has lost 8.2 kg, while his blood pressure has dropped to 107/70 and his blood sugar level to 67.

come.” The signatories shared that they are worried the silence to the demands from the government’s side could further worsen the health of those on hunger strike. “We worry that their negligence in responding to your demands will only worsen the already fragile state of health that many of you are in,” the statement concluded. The appeal came on the 24th day of the Cockroach Janta Party’s protest at Jantar Mantar and the 16th day of Wangchuk’s indefinite hunger strike. AISA activist Deepak, who was also on a hunger strike since June 28, was admitted to the RML Hospital on Monday after his health deteriorated. The statement also appealed to the people of Delhi to participate in the CJP’s proposed march to Parliament on July 20.

Omi Vaidya supports Wangchuk Actor Omi Vaidya, who played the role of Chatur Ramalingam or Silencer in the film 3 Idiots, urged people to pay attention to the cause Wangchuk is fighting for. Referring to the much-loved character of Phunsukh Wangdu which was inspired by Wangchuk’s life, Vaidya shared an emotional video on his Instagram account. “I don’t want Phunsukh Wangdu to die,” the title read. Recalling their interaction, he said in the clip, “I’ve met this guy. He’s a pretty interesting character. He has done some incredible stuff in his life and he seems pretty humble, which is kind of fantastic. I suggest you look him up and see what he’s up to because right now he is on a very long hunger strike. It’s over many, many weeks and his blood sugar has gone down very much.” The actor then mentioned that support for Wangchuk should go beyond political or ideological differences. “Whether you agree with him or not, I don’t really want this guy to die. I think he’s a pretty impressive person and I would like for him to live.” “We’re just regular people and we have regular lives and sometimes we’re too busy to deal with this stuff. But if you look into these issues, I think that you may agree with him and you may see yourself having the same issues, or your family members or your friends, or maybe you’ve had these issues in the past,” Vaidya concluded. Sonam Wangchuk and CJP’s strike Wangchuk and the Abhijeet Dipke’s CJP have drawn support from many political leaders as their strike continues in Delhi. The protest commenced on June 20, with Wangchuk joining the movement on June 28. The group is demanding the resignation of education minister Pradhan and Rs 1 crore compensation for the families of students who allegedly died by suicide after leaked examination papers.

Alia Bhatt’s excited to explore a character in rich, mysterious world of Tumbbad with ‘Tumbbad 2’

Mumbai: Bollywood star Alia Bhatt, who has officially come on board for the sequel of “Tumbbad” in a pivotal role, said that she is looking forward to exploring a character that belongs to a story as rich, mysterious and unforgettable as Tumbbad. Alia said in a statement: “Tumbbad has stayed with me ever since I first watched it. Very few films create a world that feels this original and immersive, and even fewer continue to grow in people’s imagination years after they’ve released. That’s what makes this opportunity so exciting.”

She added: “To now become a part of that world is incredibly special. I’m looking forward to working with Sohum and Nawaz, two artists I’ve admired for a long time, and to exploring a character that belongs to a story as rich, mysterious and unforgettable as Tumbbad. I can’t wait for audiences to experience what we’re creating together.” Tumbbad is a rare cinematic phenomenon that redefined the folklore fantasy genre and has only grown in stature since its release. The upcoming film also stars Nawazuddin Siddiqui. Alia’s collaboration with actor-producer Sohum Shah, the creative force behind the Tumbbad franchise, alongside the formidable Nawazuddin, promises an exciting new chapter for the much-loved universe.

Sohum Shah said, “Having Alia Bhatt come on board for Tumbbad 2 is truly delightful for all of us. She is undoubtedly one of the most talented actresses of this generation, and I am sure the audience will get to witness something unique with her in the film.” “We have all witnessed her incredible performances on screen right from her debut. This is my first collaboration with her, and I am genuinely looking forward to working together.” Producer Dr Jayantilal Gada said, “Alia Bhatt is undoubtedly one of the finest actresses in our industry, and her joining Tumbbad 2 is truly incredible. This also marks our third collaboration with Alia after the phenomenal success of Gangubai Kathiawadi and RRR, making it even more special for us.” “She is the perfect choice for this film, and the audience will see her in a way like never before. She is a remarkably accomplished actor who immediately understood our ambition behind the project. Having her on board will elevate both the film.” Tumbbad 2 is being spearheaded by actor-producer Sohum Shah under his banner Sohum Shah Films, in collaboration with Pen Studios, headed by veteran producer Dr. Jayantilal Gada. The film is directed by Adesh Prasad, who is helming the highly anticipated next chapter of the Tumbbad universe.