

# EYE SECRETS

Spy in every blink

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## Telangana CM orders strict law against food adulteration



Hyderabad: Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Saturday, July 18, directed officials to draft a stringent law to curb the growing menace of food adulteration and spurious medicines.

Reddy, who held a meeting with senior officials, expressed serious concern over increasing cases of people falling sick due to widespread adulteration in vegetables, fruits, milk and other products.

He said people are suffering from ailments as chemicals are being used indiscriminately to extend the shelf life of leafy vegetables, vegetables, milk, and to artificially ripen fruits.

Chemical residues found in agricultural produce due to excessive use of fertilisers and pesticides could be one of the main reasons why some countries refuse to import such products, he said.

Observing that some products billed as organic are being sold at higher prices in the market, he said there is no proper system in place to verify the authenticity of the 'organic product' claims, an official release said.

The chief minister directed officials to visit countries which enacted strict and comprehensive laws to check adulteration and prepare a comprehensive report based on their study.

He said a draft law would be prepared based on the report, which would later be tabled in the state assembly for debate.

He suggested "appointing some people as whistle-blowers for collecting information on food adulteration and setting up a toll-free number to receive complaints".

Reddy told officials to initially implement measures against adulteration in the Core Urban Region (CURE) region comprising Hyderabad on a pilot basis.

## Thackeray camp suffers blow as LS approves merger of 6 rebel Shiv Sena MPs into Shinde faction

New Delhi, July 18

In a major political development, the Lok Sabha Secretariat on Saturday took a significant decision regarding the six rebel MPs who broke away from the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena to support Eknath Shinde's faction. The Secretariat has officially approved the merger of this six-member rebel MP group into Shinde's Shiv Sena.

Consequently, these six MPs, formerly aligned with Uddhav Thackeray, have now officially become MPs of the Shinde-led Shiv Sena. With this development, the Thackeray camp received a major blow.

The six MPs from the Thackeray faction, Omraje Nimbalkar, Sanjay Dina Patil, Sanjay Deshmukh, Sanjay Jadhav, Bhausaheb Wakchaure, and Nagesh Patil Ashtikar, had initially formed a separate group. Subsequently, this group merged with Shinde's Shiv Sena.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has now officially approved this merger. As a result, the disqualification threat looming over these six MPs has ended, and they will now function as official MPs of the Shinde faction. This development comes ahead of the commencement of the mon-

soon session of Parliament from July 20.

Reacting to the development, Deputy Chief Minister and Shiv Sena chief Eknath Shinde said the decision was taken in the interest of development work in constituencies.

He added that the six MPs joined his faction to advance their respective constituencies, and that substantial development funds would be allocated to them.

Ever since the six MPs rebelled against the Thackeray faction, questions were being raised about their political future. Anticipating the rebellion, the Thackeray faction had initiated legal proceedings.

The Thackeray group consistently claimed that, no matter

what happened, the rebel MPs would lose their Lok Sabha membership. However, the latest development has dealt a severe blow to the Thackeray camp with the official approval of the merger. The decision was finalised by the Lok Sabha Secretariat.

The six rebel MPs had distanced themselves from the Thackeray faction, formed a separate group, and submitted a formal letter to the Lok Sabha Speaker.

On the other hand, the Thackeray faction had also written to the Speaker, asserting that their party had not taken any decision to merge with any other entity and remains an independent party. They had requested the Speaker to hear their side before making any final decision. Despite their pleas, the latest ruling has

come as a massive setback for the Thackeray group.

The Lok Sabha Secretariat has approved the merger of the separate group formed by the six rebel MPs into the Shinde faction. With this, the six rebel MPs are now officially a part of Shinde's party, thereby boosting the Shinde faction's strength in the Lok Sabha. Following the rebellion, the Lok Sabha Secretariat has issued an official circular confirming the merger. Indian entertainment news

Following this blow, all eyes in Maharashtra are now on the Thackeray faction's next move. Thackeray faction leader Ambadas Danve, former Leader of Opposition (Council), said they would not let the matter rest and would fight the upcoming legal battle.



Hyderabad: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) incharge for party affairs in Telangana, Abhay Patil, on Saturday, July 18, held a meeting with Union Minister of State (Home Affairs) Bandi Sanjay Kumar and MP Eatala Rajender amid reports of differences between them. Senior leader and Rajya Sabha member K Laxman was also present during the meeting. Aerial view of a hilly landscape with roads, trees, and scattered buildings in a semi-urban area

## 'Article 370' Wins Best Film At 72nd National Awards

New Delhi: Bollywood movie Article 370, based on events surrounding the 2019 abrogation of the constitutional provision, was named best feature film at

Committee Kurrullu and Dhanush's Raayan were named the best Telugu and Tamil films, respectively. Captain Miller won the award for best film promoting national and social values, while the Telugu movie Chinna Katha Kaadu was named the best children's film.

Bhangaar won the best non-feature film award and Ram-Nami was selected as the best documentary.

In the music categories, Abhay Jodhpurkar won the best male playback singer award for "Navasachi Gauri Mazi" from Gharat Ganpati. Vaikom Vijayalakshmi was named best female playback singer for "Angu Vaana Konilu" from ARM.

Vijay Ganguly won the best choreography award for the song "Aaj Ki Raat" from Stree 2, while Manas Choudhury received the best sound design award for Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3.

Pushpa: The Rule Part-02 won the award for best original screenplay, while Swargandharva Sudhir Phadke was honoured for best adapted screenplay. The Telugu film Lucky Baskhar won the award for best dialogue.

"Pushpa: The Rule Part-02, Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3 and Stree 2 also bagged major honours, reflecting the diversity and excellence of Indian cinema," the information and broadcasting ministry said.

The awards were announced by feature film jury chairperson Jayaraj, non-feature film jury chairperson Aseem Sinha and best writing on cinema jury chairperson A. Chandrasekhar. Joint Secretary (Films) Ajay Nagabhushan M.N. and principal director general of the Press Information Bureau Dharendra Ojha were also present.



the 72nd National Film Awards announced on Saturday. Yami Gautam Dhar won the best actress award for her lead performance in the film.

Malayalam superstar Mammooty and Kartik Aaryan shared the best actor award for their performances in the Malayalam film Bramayugam and the Hindi film Chandu Champion, respectively.

Rajkumar Periasamy was named best director for the Tamil film Amaran, while actor Randeep Hooda won the best debut director award for Swatantrya Veer Savarkar.

Sanjay Mishra won the best supporting actor award for Bhakshak. Ropashree Varkady, for Mithya, and Sachana Namidass, for Maharaja, shared the best supporting actress award.

Srikanth was adjudged the best Hindi film, while

## Nirmohi Akhara moves SC, seeks reconstitution of Ram Janmabhoomi Trust

New Delhi, July 18

Ahead of the Monday hearing on Ram Temple donation theft, the Nirmohi Akhara has moved the Supreme Court seeking reconstitution of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust that manages the Ayodhya Temple, alleging the present set up lacked accountability and was inconsistent with the 2019 Ayodhya verdict.

The Nirmohi Akhara — a prominent Hindu religious denomination which was one of the petitioners in the Ayodhya dispute — has sought a forensic audit of all financial and property transactions done by its board of trustees and restoration of the 1950 and 1982 idols at the site in place of the newly consecrated idol.

It also sought appointment of an independent panel to examine if the Supreme Court's directions in its November 9, 2019 Ayodhya verdict had been faithfully implemented by the Trust. The Akhara has filed a miscellaneous application in the disposed of Ayodhya title dispute seeking implementation of the directions issued by the Constitution Bench in its November 9, 2019 judgment.

While the judgment envisaged an "appropriate role" for it in the management of the temple, the scheme framed by the Central Government has ef-



fectively excluded it from both the governance of the Trust and the conduct of religious affairs, it contended.

Despite passage of almost seven years, the 2019 judgment has not been implemented in its true letter and spirit, it said, alleging that a private trust was established with some named members and some occupying posts ex-officio.

Referring to the recent allegations of large-scale embezzlement of cash and valuables offered by devotees, the Akhara alleged that some of the Trust members may have indulged in corrupt acts in relation to the property of the Deity

## Making Rahul Gandhi Prime Minister our goal, say Jagga Reddy, Rajgopal

Hyderabad, July 18

TPCC working president T Jagga Reddy on Saturday said that Munugode MLA Komatireddy Rajgopal Reddy should be given a ministerial position in accordance with the assurance given by the AICC.

He said Rajgopal Reddy's inclusion in the government would strengthen the party and help achieve the larger goal of making Rahul Gandhi the Prime Minister.

Jagga Reddy said the Congress needs to win a large number of seats in Telangana to support Rahul Gandhi's national leadership and added that



Rajgopal Reddy's contribution as part of the party team would benefit the organisation.

Clarifying reports regarding the Thungathurthi

issue, Jagga Reddy said the matter was not the main agenda of his meeting with Rajgopal Reddy. He stated that Rajgopal Reddy had made it clear

that he had not interfered in local affairs in Thungathurthi and suggested that local Congress leaders should resolve the issue themselves.



## Plea in Delhi HC seeks ‘force-feeding’ of Sonam Wangchuk: ‘Treating him like terrorist’



With activist Sonam Wangchuk on a hunger strike at Jantar Mantar for 18 days now, a practising advocate has moved a PIL in the Delhi High Court alleging that the government is treating him like a “terrorist” and seems to be “apathetic” to the situation. The advocate has sought the court’s direction to the government to provide “full proper and necessary aids” to Wangchuk to stop his “deteriorating health and life-threatening conditions” and “force feed him”. The PIL, which was due to be heard on Wednesday by Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia, has now been posted for Thursday owing to a strike by lawyers.

No lawyers from the Delhi or Central governments appeared before the court owing to a call to lawyers to strike work by the Delhi High Court Bar Association (DHCB), over an administrative decision to increase

the pecuniary jurisdiction of district courts in Delhi. The bench posted the matter for hearing tomorrow, “having regard to the urgency” in the matter. The court directed the Registry to serve the order passed by the court today — that it will hear the matter tomorrow — to the Additional Solicitor General and Delhi government standing counsel on the civil side.

The petitioner, advocate R K Saini, in his PIL, claimed the “government is treating him like he is a hardcore criminal, terrorist or traitor to the nation”, adding that the “government seems to be (apathetic) to the situation”. Noting that the “least the government can do and is expected to do” is ensure the affected protestor is given immediate full, proper and necessary medical attention, “even if forcibly”, to ensure his good health and to save his life”. “For this purpose, the simple thing to be done... is to take him to a government hospital and force feed him the necessary nutrients, vitamins and minerals, by way of a liquid diet which are necessary for a human body to survive,” Saini has said. He added that there are precedents from past where such steps to force feed fasting protesters has been taken. Wangchuk has been on hunger strike at Jantar Mantar since June 28 as 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 exam paper. In an interview with The Indian Express earlier this week, Wangchuk said the Prime Minister should be sensitive to students’ concerns, and called for the issue to be debated in the upcoming Monsoon Session of Parliament. “A resignation is merely the starting point,” he said.

## Woman, three children consume pesticide in Kapurthala, 6-year-old girl dies, three critical



A six-year-old girl died while her mother and two siblings are critical after they allegedly consumed pesticide at their residence in Punjab’s Kapurthala district, police said on Tuesday. Police have launched an investigation to ascertain the circumstances leading to the incident. Originally hailing from Katihar district in Bihar, the family has been living in Mallu Qadrawabad village in Kapurthala for 15 years, according to police.

Lavkush Kumar said that he returned home after completing work in the fields at around 11 pm. “I entered the house only to find my wife Santosh Devi semi-conscious and vomiting, and a bottle of pesticide lying close by. Inside the house, our three children were lying un-

conscious,” Lavkush said. “I immediately alerted neighbours and called the 108 ambulance service.” The four were rushed to the Civil Hospital in Kapurthala, where six-year-old Khushi died during the treatment, police said. Given their critical condition, Santosh, her eight-year-old daughter Amrita and two-year-old son were referred to the Amritsar Medical College for advanced treatment, police said. According to Civil Hospital sources, the trio are undergoing treatment by specialist doctors, but are still critical. Lavkush told police that he was not aware of any known family dispute. “My wife had spoken to my mother over the phone a day ago. I am not sure whether any disagreement ensued during the conversation.” Station House Officer (SHO) Ranjit Singh said that, according to the preliminary information gathered so far, someone had allegedly discarded an empty pesticide bottle, which was later picked up by the family. The family is suspected to have washed the bottle, filled it with water and consumed the water. Soon after, the woman and the children fell ill. The exact sequence of events is still being verified, and all angles are being investigated,” the SHO said. Police are recording the statements of family members, neighbours and other witnesses to establish the circumstances that led to the incident. Further legal action will be taken based on the findings of the investigation, the SHO added.

## Himachal crypto scam, 2.5 lakh duped: 69 of 76 held out on bail, trial yet to begin & 2 arrests by ED in 2 years

Two arrests in two years by the ED and 69 of 76 nabbed by the police out on bail — that has been the interminable track of investigations into the multi-crore multi-level marketing (MLM)-cryptocurrency scam in Himachal Pradesh. Flagged by then independent MLA in the Assembly in 2023, prime accused reportedly slaloming authorities and out of the country to Dubai, and around 2.5 lakh people debilitated by the fraud, the Shimla office of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) made its latest arrest on June 15. It had launched its probe in 2024 based on inquiries by the Himachal and Punjab Police.

Masoom Juneja, 41, was arrested by the ED from Punjab’s Mohali for his alleged role in the scam and booked under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). His father, Vijay Juneja, is already in Himachal Pradesh Police custody, an ED officer said. A Himachal Pradesh police officer said, “The actual number of victims range between 80,000 and 1 lakh, who were further linked to around 1.50 lakh people. For instance, the main investor would be issued a unique ID to keep a tab on her investment in cryptocurrency. That person enrolled 10 others, including relatives and friends, resulting in 10 other digital IDs being generated under the main investor’s ID. The investigation also established that in some of the cases, the unique ID holder invested under the IDs of her relatives and friends.”

Based on around 500 complaints received on a dedicated helpline launched in 2024, most victims were found to be from Kangra, Mandi, Hamirpur, Una districts of Himachal Pradesh and some even from Punjab’s Phagwara. They had invested the money received as compensation from the government for acquiring their land for various road projects. “The total amount from the complaints went up to an estimated Rs 1,740 crore in the MLM-related cryptocurrency between 2018 and 2022. We have filed multiple chargesheets against 76 accused in the response of almost 280 complaints. Many of the complaints are yet to be addressed,” a senior SIT officer said. In 2019 the fraud gained momentum, investigators said, with returns being churned out after a one-time deposit. The scammers fixed the price of the digital coin — the face value initially starting at nearly Rs 70 each would shoot up to between Rs 800 and Rs 4,000. They claimed that the cryptos would only be traded in dollars. In September, 2024, when the scam surfaced, the Himachal Pradesh Police constituted an SIT under then DIG (Northern Range), Dharamshala, Abhishek Dullar. At present, Dullar is IG (Law & Order), Himachal Pradesh Police in Shimla. The SIT exists under SP (CID) Rajesh Chhabra. Three main categories Apart from the latest ED arrest of Masoom Juneja, seven accused, including accomplices of Subhash, are still behind bars and their bail pleas have been rejected even by the Himachal Pradesh High Court, the SIT officer said. “The trial is yet to start



against any of the accused.” Another SIT officer said, “Besides the kingpin, there are three main categories of people in the scam. The first consists of those who earned the most. The second is the team leaders who worked on the ground to get investors. The third comprises the victims.” Abhishek Sharma from Una district, Syal, Sukhdev, Hemraj Thakur from Mandi — the first to be arrested by the ED — Amit Pratap Singh from Shimla, Milan Garg from Haryana and Vijay Juneja are in different jails in Himachal. Sukhdev and Hemraj were arrested in Gujarat on October 3. Paras Ram Saini and Gobind Goswami, who also worked directly under Subhash, were arrested from Himachal, Panchkula in Haryana and Zirakpur in Punjab. Vijay Juneja is among 76 accused so far arrested by the Himachal Pradesh Police over the past two years. Over a period of time, 69 accused, including four women, have been released on bail. “The multi-crore scam was spread across many states, especially in Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and in some parts of Haryana and Delhi. It came to light in 2023 after Himachal Pradesh Police registered four FIRs and Punjab Police one. The ED took cognizance of the scam in March 2024 and initiated proceedings under Section 17 (1) of the PMLA. So far, we have arrested two suspects — Hemraj Thakur and Masoom Juneja. As per our investigation, the mastermind Subhash Sharma, 44, is believed to be in Dubai. Our investigation is on,” an Assistant Director-rank officer of ED told The Indian Express. A senior ED officer told The Indian Express, “Our claim that the MLM scam... is of Rs 500 crore is based on the chargesheet of Himachal Pradesh Police. Indeed, around 2.5 lakh victims invested Rs 1,740 crore between 2018 and 2022 in the MLM through cryptocurrencies but most of them received their money back as returns. The fraud was calculated to be around Rs 500 crore.” Rewind: In the House In 2023, during the Monsoon Session of the Himachal Pradesh Assembly, then independent MLA from Dehra, Hoshyar Singh Chambyal, who later joined the BJP, first highlighted the scam and tabled a list of around 450 people who have been duped and demanded a police probe.”

## BJP Cadre Leads Strong Protest Demanding Immediate Housing for Musi River Displaced Families



““Hyderabad, July 19::The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) cadre, under the dynamic leadership of Bhagyanagar District BJP President Shri Niranjan Yadav, staged a powerful dharna today in front of the Saidabad Mandal Tahsildar’s Office, demanding the immediate allotment of 2BHK houses to the families displaced from the Musi River catchment area. ““Addressing the gathering, BJP MLC and Leader of the Opposition in the Telangana Legislative Council, Shri Alleti Maheshwar Reddy, expressed unwavering support for the displaced families and assured them that the BJP would continue its relentless fight until justice is delivered and every eligible family is provided with a permanent home. ““During the protest, the BJP delegation, led by the MLC, held discussions with the Tahsildar and urged the administration to ensure the immediate allocation of houses to all Musi displaced families without delay. ““The agitation witnessed enthusiastic participation from BJP leaders, office bearers, and dedicated

party workers, including Sam Reddy Surender Reddy, State OBC Morcha President Shri Anand, District General Secretary Edla Pandarinath, Bukka Madhusudan, Madhukar Reddy, Veerender Yadav, State Executive Member Subhash, State SC Morcha Secretary Baga Rajesh, Senior Leader Sahadev Yadav, Bhagyanagar District SC Morcha President Kaudi Surender, District OBC Morcha President Pradeep Chand, District ST Morcha President Gopi, Kisan Morcha President Laxma Reddy, Yuva Morcha President Bharat, Social Media In-charge Mahender Reddy, Lingala Hari Goud, District Treasurer Swapna, District Minority Morcha President Nisar, along with a large number of Musi river displaced residents, BJP cadre, and supporters. ““The massive participation of the BJP cadre reflected the party’s unwavering commitment to standing with the poor and ensuring that the voices of the displaced families are heard until their rightful demand for dignified housing is fulfilled

## Clean it or pay for it: Bengaluru civic body sets 30-day deadline to vacant plot owners

Bengaluru vacant plot cleanup, Greater Bengaluru Authority, Bengaluru waste management, Bengaluru vacant plot owners, Krishna Byre Gowda, Freedom from Waste campaign, BSWML, Bengaluru civic news, Bengaluru solid waste management, Bengaluru illegal garbage dumping, Bengaluru property tax Bengaluru Urban Development Minister Krishna Byre Gowda also announced a month-long Freedom from Waste campaign in August. (Express File Photo/Representative Image) The Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) Tuesday set a one-month deadline for owners of vacant plots to clear weeds, overgrown vegetation, and waste from their properties before August 15, failing which the civic body will clean the sites and recover the cost. During a meeting with officials of all five city corporations, Bengaluru Urban Development Minister Krishna Byre Gowda also announced a month-long Freedom from Waste campaign in August. “If the sites are not cleaned by the deadline, the respective city corporations will undertake the cleaning and recover the cost by adding it to the property’s tax dues,” Gowda

said. “The objective is to completely remove garbage, solid waste, construction debris, soil mounds, weeds, and other waste materials,” he added. While irregular garbage collection in many areas of the city has been a major contributor to waste being thrown into empty plots, many of them have been left unattended, allowing weeds and vegetation to grow. They have also been used as a dumping ground for garbage and construction debris. GBA will launch the month-long campaign throughout August to address complaints of illegal garbage dumping. To enhance Bengaluru’s cleanliness and aesthetics, the City Corporations, K-RIDE, Railways, metro, and other departments should coordinate and jointly implement the campaign during August,” Gowda said. Gowda said all vehicles engaged in transporting construction and demolition (C&D) waste must be compulsorily registered and installation of GPS tracking devices in all such vehicles will also be mandatory. Under the Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Limited (BSWML), approximately 22,732 tonnes of waste have been identified across 1,616 locations within GBA’s jurisdiction.

## Toxicology report finds MDMA, alcohol in law graduate’s samples

More than a month after a 28-year-old law graduate died after attending a techno music event at the NSCI Dome in Worli, a forensic report has confirmed the presence of MDMA and alcohol in his samples, prompting the Mumbai Police to widen their investigation to trace the source of the drug. The Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) toxicology report found traces of MDMA, commonly known as ecstasy, along with alcohol in samples collected from Rushil Gangurde, police and forensic sources said.

Gangurde had attended the June 6 concert with a group of around eight friends. Investigators said they will now summon the friends again to determine whether they knew about the alleged drug consumption, whether anyone else had consumed narcotics, and how the drug was procured. Worli concert death, Worli concert medical emergency, NSCI Dome in Worli, MDMA and alcohol, Mumbai Police, Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) toxicology report, Mumbai news, Maharashtra news, Indian express, current affairs The findings mark a significant development in the case. Soon after the incident, police had said there was no evidence of drug consumption and had sent Gangurde’s blood samples and viscera to the FSL in Kalina for chemical analysis. “There was tight security both inside and outside the venue. Our investigation so far suggests the deceased consumed the contraband before entering the event,” a police officer said. Police are also examining Gangurde’s call records, mobile phone data and WhatsApp chats to identify the alleged suppliers and establish the procurement chain. The findings mark a significant development in the case. Soon after the incident, police had said there was no evidence of drug consumption and had sent Gangurde’s blood samples and viscera to the FSL in Kalina for chemical analysis. Gangurde, a Mahim resident, fell seriously ill around 9 pm during the concert and was rushed to Breach Candy Hospital, where he died during treatment. A 25-year-old woman from Odisha also fell ill during the event and was admitted to Jaslok Hospital. She later recovered and was discharged. In her statement to police, she said she had consumed alcohol.

The Tardeo Police had registered a case against Karan Singh (40), CEO, and Parag Narendra Uke (42), senior managers at event management company Space Bound. Both were questioned and released after being served notices. They have been booked under Sections 106(1) (causing death by negligence), 289 (negligent conduct with respect to machinery) and 3(5) (acts done



Gangurde, a Mahim resident, fell seriously ill around 9 pm during the concert and was rushed to Breach Candy Hospital, where he died during treatment. A 25-year-old woman from Odisha also fell ill during the event and was admitted to Jaslok Hospital. She later recovered and was discharged. In her statement to police, she said she had consumed alcohol.

by several persons in furtherance of common intention) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. Worli concert death, Worli concert medical emergency, NSCI Dome in Worli, MDMA and alcohol, Mumbai Police, Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) toxicology report, Mumbai news, Maharashtra news, Indian express, current affairs The case has also renewed concerns over drug use at large music events in Mumbai. According to police, the organisers had obtained the required permissions, including clearances from the fire brigade and the excise department. The Tardeo police had issued a no-objection certificate two days before the event based on these approvals. Around 6,500 people attended the concert, within the venue’s permitted capacity of 7,500. The case has also renewed concerns over drug use at large music events in Mumbai. In April, two management students died after allegedly consuming MDMA during a concert at NESCO in Goregaon. Earlier this month, the Vanrai police filed a chargesheet against 12 accused, including classmates of the deceased students, alleging they were part of a network that supplied and distributed MDMA at the event







EYE SECRETS  
Editorial

: When childhood takes the wheel – the hidden risks of underage driving

Underage driving continues to pose a serious threat to child safety on Hyderabad's roads. Recent data released by the Hyderabad Traffic Police revealed that 2,539 cases involving minors driving vehicles were registered between January and May this year. During the same period, road accidents involving children caused numerous injuries and claimed several young lives. In response, authorities have proposed stricter measures, including awarding negative marks to students found violating traffic regulations. These figures point to a growing problem affecting adolescents and public safety. The issue, however, extends beyond traffic enforcement. Underage driving is fundamentally a child-safety and developmental concern. When children who are legally ineligible to drive find themselves behind the wheel of motorcycles, scooters or cars, the problem cannot be explained solely by youthful recklessness. It reflects gaps in supervision, accountability and guidance.

Despite clear legal restrictions, adolescents continue to gain access to vehicles with surprising ease. In many communities, underage driving is viewed as a harmless sign of independence rather than a serious safety risk. Easy access to vehicles, rising ownership and social tolerance have all contributed to its persistence. The seriousness of the issue becomes clearer when viewed alongside recent accident data. According to the Hyderabad Traffic Police, 128 children were involved in road crashes during the first five months of the year, resulting in seven fatalities and numerous injuries. Authorities also suspended hundreds of vehicle registrations linked to underage-driving violations. These figures demonstrate that the problem is neither isolated nor occasional. It is a public-safety concern with potentially devastating consequences for young lives and their families.

The risks extend beyond the young drivers themselves. Underage driving endangers passengers, pedestrians and other road users. A moment of distraction, overconfidence or poor judgement can lead to injuries, lifelong disabilities or loss of life. Road safety is, therefore, not merely a personal matter but a shared social responsibility. Adolescence is a period of rapid physical, emotional and psychological development. Young people naturally seek independence and test boundaries. While these tendencies are a normal part of growing up, they can sometimes lead adolescents to underestimate risks and overestimate their abilities. Driving often becomes one such arena where confidence develops faster than judgement. Research in developmental psychology shows that the parts of the brain responsible for impulse control, risk assessment and long-term decision-making continue to mature throughout adolescence. As a result, young people may act on excitement without fully appreciating the consequences of their actions. The thrill of speed and independence can make driving appealing despite limited maturity. Peer influence further compounds the problem. Adolescents are often sensitive to social approval and group expectations. The encouragement of friends or the desire to impress peers can encourage risky behaviour. In such situations, the belief that 'nothing will happen to me' frequently overrides caution.

Plea in Delhi HC seeks 'force-feeding' of Sonam Wangchuk: 'Treating him like terrorist'

With activist Sonam Wangchuk on a hunger strike at Jantar Mantar for 18 days now, a practising advocate has moved a PIL in the Delhi High Court alleging that the government is treating him like a "terrorist" and seems to be "apathetic" to the situation. The advocate has sought the court's direction to the government to provide "full proper and necessary aids" to Wangchuk to stop his "deteriorating health and life-threatening conditions" and "force feed him".

The PIL, which was due to be heard on Wednesday by Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karla, has now been posted for Thursday owing to a strike by lawyers. No lawyers from the Delhi or Central governments appeared before the court owing to a call to lawyers to strike work by the Delhi High Court Bar Association (DHCBA), over an administrative decision to increase the pecuniary jurisdiction of district courts in Delhi. The bench posted the matter for hearing tomorrow, "having regard to the urgency" in the matter. The court directed the Registry to serve the order passed by the court today — that it will hear the matter tomorrow — to the Additional Solicitor General and Delhi government standing counsel on the civil side. The petitioner, advocate R K Saini, in his PIL, claimed the "government is treating him like he is a hardcore criminal, terrorist or traitor to the nation", adding that the "government seems to be (apathetic) to the situation".

Noting that the "least the government can do and is expected to do" is ensure the affected protestor is given immediate full, proper and necessary medical attention, "even if forcibly", to ensure his good health and to save his life."

For this purpose, the simple thing to be done... is to take him to a government hospital and force feed him the necessary nutrients, vitamins and minerals, by way of a liquid diet which are necessary for a human body to survive," Saini has said. He added that there are precedents from past where such steps to force feed fasting protestors has been taken. Wangchuk has been on hunger strike at Jantar Mantar since June 28 as 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 exam paper. In an interview with The Indian Express earlier this week, Wangchuk said

Karnataka CM Shivakumar urges PM Modi to send team to assess drought situation



Karnataka Chief Minister D K Shivakumar has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking his intervention in sending a Central Government team to assess the emerging drought situation in Karnataka, citing a "sluggish" July monsoon that has severely affected the state's agriculture and raised concerns over the ongoing kharif season. "Such a visit would provide a first-hand appreciation of the severity of the emerging drought conditions

and reassure the farming community that the Government of India stands with them in this difficult period. Early assessment and timely support from the Government of India would greatly strengthen the State's efforts to mitigate the adverse impacts of the evolving drought situation," the Karnataka CM stated in a letter dated July 14.

While outlining the emerging crisis in the state, Shivakumar stated that Karnataka received 203 mm of rainfall on July 11 as against the normal of 292 mm, registering a 30 per cent rainfall deficit. "The progress of the South-West Monsoon over Karnataka has been notably sluggish," he said. Eighteen out of the 31 districts in the state had recorded "deficit to large-deficit rainfall" until July 11, while 141 out of 240 taluks also fell into this category, indicating that the rainfall deficiency is widespread across the state, he stated. "As of the first week of July 2026, kharif sowing has covered only 28.36 lakh hectares, representing merely 34 per cent of the seasonal target of 84.10 lakh hectares, reflecting the growing impact of the deficient monsoon on agricultural operations," Shivakumar said in the letter. Any significant decline in production due to the drought conditions is likely to have wider implications for the national availability and prices of pulses, especially tur dal, he said. The combined storage in Karnataka's 14 major reservoirs was also only 303 TMC as of July 10, which is merely 34 per cent of the total gross storage capacity of 895.65 TMC, he said.

Chandigarh civic body asked to compensate resident for not providing water connection despite collecting charges

The District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, Chandigarh, has directed the Municipal Corporation (MC), Chandigarh to refund the balance amount of Rs 2,237 to a Sector 7 resident and pay her Rs 10,000 as compensation for harassment and litigation expenses after authorities failed to provide a separate water connection despite collecting charges. The order was passed by the Bench of President Amrinder Singh Sidhu and Member B M Sharma on a complaint filed by Geeta Kapoor, a resident of Chandigarh. According to the complaint, Kapoor had applied for a fresh water connection for the first floor of her house and deposited Rs 8,230 (Rs 5,770 with the B&R Department on August 8, 2024, and Rs 2,460 with the Public Health/Water Supply Department) on September 12, 2024. She was subsequently informed that a separate water connection for the first floor was not feasible due to the existing pipeline system.

The complainant submitted that since no connection was provided, she applied for a refund on October 14, 2024, after submitting all the documents sought by the authorities. She stated that despite repeated personal visits, phone calls, emails and written representations, the authorities failed to process the refund. Kapoor further submitted that she approached the Right to Service Commission, Chandigarh, and also lodged grievances on the Government's CPGRAMS portal but received only vague responses. She further pleaded that during the pendency of the matter, she received only a partial refund of Rs 1,103 on July 18, 2025, leaving a balance amount of Rs 7,127 unpaid. According to the complaint, further representations and legal notices also failed to yield any result. She alleged that the failure of the authorities to refund the balance amount despite continuous follow-up for over one-and-a-half years constituted "gross negligence and deficiency in service", causing financial loss, inconvenience and mental harassment. The Commission noted that MC Chandigarh and the Executive Engineer, B&R Department, failed to file their written version within the statutory period despite being granted opportunities, following which their defence was struck off. The Executive Engineer, Public Health/Water Supply Department, also failed to contest the complaint and was proceeded against ex parte.

The Bench observed that it was undisputed that the complainant had deposited Rs 8,230 for the proposed water connection, which was never provided as it was found to be technically unfeasible. It also noted that de-



spite repeated representations, legal notices and grievances before various authorities, the refund was not made within a reasonable time. During the proceedings, the Commission noted, the authorities refunded the amount in instalments. While Rs 1,103 had been credited on July 18, 2025, the MC later placed on record a communication showing that another Rs 4,890 had been credited to the complainant. Kapoor admitted receipt of the amount in her written submissions but maintained that Rs 2,237 still remained unpaid. The record clearly establishes that although the MC Chandigarh, and its departments) accepted the application and collected the requisite charges, they failed to verify the technical feasibility of providing the water connection before accepting the amount. If the proposed connection was not feasible, the authorities ought not to have accepted the application and charges in the first place. Their own failure cannot be made a ground to retain the complainant's money for nearly two years," the Commission observed. It further held, "The retention of a consumer's money without rendering the promised service amounts to deficiency in service. Further, unjustified delay in refunding the amount despite repeated requests also amounts to unfair and arbitrary conduct." The Commission also observed that "the subsequent refund of substantial amount during the pendency of the proceedings clearly establishes that the claim of the complainant was genuine. However, such belated refund cannot absolve the OPs (opposite parties) of their liability for the prolonged delay and the harassment suffered by the complainant." Partly allowing the complaint, the Commission directed the Municipal Corporation and its officials to refund the remaining Rs 2,237 to the complainant and pay a lump sum compensation of Rs 10,000 towards the harassment caused as well as litigation expenses.

36 lakh Haryana voters face exclusion EC extends SIR deadline by 10 days

With Haryana facing the possible exclusion of nearly 36 lakh voters as of the July 14 deadline for submission of Enumeration Forms (EFs) under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has extended the deadline by 10 days to July 24 following a request from the state's Chief Electoral Officer (CEO). Of the around 36 lakh voters yet to be cleared, Booth Level Officers (BLOs) are still awaiting Enumeration Forms from nearly 2.88 lakh electors. The remaining more than 33 lakh voters have been placed in the ASDD (Absent, Shifted, Duplicate or Dead) category. The officials said the exact number of deceased voters would be known only after the ASDD category is bifurcated. Election officials are optimistic that many of the 2.88 lakh voters who have not yet submitted their forms will do so during the extended period. While they expect fewer claims from voters already categorised as ASDD, the extension has been provided to ensure that anyone wrongly classified under the category gets an opportunity to submit their Enumeration Form or establish their eligibility before July 24.

Haryana Chief Electoral Officer A. Sreenivas told The Indian Express that Enumeration Forms have been received from around 1.70 crore electors, accounting for 82.38% of the state's 2.06 crore registered voters till 6 pm on Tuesday, and all the forms received so far have been digitised. "We requested the Election Commission because people in urban areas such as Gurugram and Faridabad were still submitting Enumeration Forms. Residents, particularly those living in high-rise apartments, have continued to come forward. We did not want to rush the exercise. We want to ensure that not even a single eligible elector is left out," Sreenivas said. The Haryana CEO wrote to the Election Commission on Tuesday seeking an extension, and the Commission approved the revised schedule later the same day. Under the revised schedule, the house-to-house verification by BLOs, which was originally scheduled from June 15 to July 14, will now continue till July 24. Rationalisation and rearrange-



ment of polling stations will be carried out on July 24, while the draft electoral roll will be published on July 31. The period for filing claims and objections will run from July 31 to August 30, with their disposal taking place between July 31 and September 28. The final electoral roll will be published on October 3. Officials said the ASDD category includes electors who were found absent during house-to-house verification, those who have shifted from their registered addresses, duplicate entries, and deceased voters. Information regarding deceased voters has largely been obtained from their family members.

In cases where BLOs delivered Enumeration Forms to a registered address but did not receive the completed forms back despite repeated visits, such electors have been provisionally categorised as "shifted". Duplicate entries, meanwhile, are identified automatically during the digitisation process. "In the case of duplicate voters, the moment the details are entered into the system, it flags the record as a duplicate entry," Sreenivas said. The ASDD category accounts for nearly 16.15% of Haryana's electorate, or around 33 lakh voters. When combined with the 82.38% of electors who have already submitted their Enumeration Forms, the coverage under the SIR exercise stands at 98.60%.

Law student who flung papers in Supreme Court, hurled abuses, arrested



Following observations made by the Supreme Court after the incident, both accused were referred to the Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences (IHBAS) for medical evaluation. Following observations made by the Supreme Court after the incident, both accused were referred to the Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences (IHBAS) for medical evaluation. Delhi Police have arrested two law students from Lucknow University in connection with the alleged disruption inside the Supreme Court during a hearing on July 10.

An FIR has been registered at Tilak Marg Police Station under several charges, primarily for assaulting, threatening, and obstructing a public servant from performing official duties. According to the police, the main accused, 24-year-old Prabal Pratap Singh, a third-year law student, allegedly used abusive and objectionable language during proceedings in Court No. 13 of the Supreme Court. He is also accused of throwing papers inside the courtroom, causing a disruption to the hearing. Police further alleged that when security personnel intervened, Prabal used force against an on-duty staff member. The second accused, Chander Bhan, 23, a second-year law student at Lucknow University, was also arrested in connection with the incident. Following observations made by the Supreme Court after the incident, both accused were referred to the Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences (IHBAS) for medical evaluation. The medical report reportedly found that neither individual required immediate psychiatric treatment, police said. Investigators also claimed to have recovered pamphlets containing objectionable language from the accused during the course of the probe. Both men have been remanded to two days of police custody. Police said further questioning is underway and that the investigation is continuing.

The incident took place on Friday when Prabal, appearing in person, shouted at the bench and flung papers before being removed by security. The incident occurred before Justices K V Viswanathan and Alok Aradhe while they were hearing a special leave petition by Prabal. When asked whether he was the party in-person, Prabal affirmed and addressed the bench aggressively, at one point ordering the judges to register an FIR against an ACP in Lucknow. He alleged a company was running a nationwide cyber crime syndicate and claimed supporting material was contained in the file he carried. He then pulled out several pages and tossed them into the air, demanding they be handed to the Chief Justice and using expletives. Court security intervened immediately and escorted him out. The bench declined to take further action against him, saying that, considering his condition, they would not proceed with punitive measures. After perusing the records, the court found no basis to interfere with the impugned order and dismissed the petition, disposing of all pending applications, including those for permission to appear and file petitions. Court sources said the petitioner is from Etawah, Uttar Pradesh. In a similar disruption last year, an advocate attempted to throw a shoe at the then CJI.

36 lakh Haryana voters face exclusion; EC extends SIR deadline by 10 days

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## Pakistan may eliminate JAAC leadership to crush PoK protests: Intelligence



New Delhi: There is credible Intelligence to suggest that the Pakistani establishment is hell-bent on finishing the top leadership of the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) in a bid to put an end to the protests in Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir (PoK).The JAAC which is leading the protests against the systematic failure of the Pakistan establishment to provide the people of the region a decent life have remained adamant. Despite warnings and threats from the top leadership, the JAAC has refused to budge.

An Intelligence Bureau official said that the patience of the establishment, especially that of the Pakistan Army is running out. Field Marshal Asim Munir who heads the army is refusing to budge and even pressurising the Pakistan government not to give in to the demands of the people of PoK. He is growing increasingly frustrated and it is just a matter of time before he orders the killing of the top leadership, the official said.Even during Munir's earlier meetings with the security forces, he had instructed them to use brute force to put down the movement. Munir is under immense pressure and with the issue being spoken about on the international stage, the army chief is hell bent on putting an end to the protests and project to the world that everything is normal in the region.Officials say that the JAAC leadership is aware of this and told the people that they are prepared to face force and were not

## Pune marine engineer missing after Strait of Hormuz vessel attack confirmed dead

Pune: Heramb Karmarkar, a marine engineer from Pune who had gone missing following an attack on the merchant vessel 'GFX Galaxy' near the coast of Oman in the Strait of Hormuz, has died, his family confirmed on Wednesday.The commercial vessel GFS Galaxy, carrying Indian nationals off the coast of Oman, was attacked on Sunday. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) had stated that 10 of the Indian nationals on board were rescued, while one person is still reportedly missing.Karmarkar's father-in-law, Vivek Tandon, verified the report of his death.Speaking to IANS, Vivek Tandon said, "He was a 30-year-old young man, not an elderly person. Our only request to the Government of India is that his body be handed over to us intact and brought home."Earlier, India condemned the attack, terming the continuous incidents of attacks on commercial shipping in the region "deeply worrisome."

The MEA said that the Indian Embassy in Oman is closely monitoring the situation and coordinating with the Omani authorities in the ongoing Search and Rescue operation. It also thanked the Omani authorities for their support.In a post on X, the Indian Embassy in Oman said that it is closely monitoring the incident involving the vessel GFS Galaxy. It further said that its officials are in close contact with the Omani authorities, the vessel's management, and the concerned stakeholders, and is extending all possible assistance.US Central Command had said that GFS Galaxy, a Cyprus-flagged container ship, was

## INS Sudarshini showcases India's maritime heritage at SAIL Boston 250



Boston: Indian Naval sail training ship INS Sudarshini has made a landmark appearance at SAIL Boston 250, with the Consulate General of India in Boston highlighting the vessel's participation as a symbol of India's maritime heritage, naval capabilities and growing India-US maritime cooperation.The Consulate General of India in Boston said on X on Tuesday that a media briefing was held during the Captain's Reception aboard the ship. "At the Captain's Reception on board INS SUDARSHINI participating in SAIL250, @IndainBoston held a media briefing."Addressing the gathering, Consul General Raghuram S. underlined the significance of INS Sudarshini's participation in the international maritime event commemorating the 250th anniversary of US Independence.According to the Consulate, the Consul General highlighted that "SUDARSHINI is the only Naval tall ship to participate from Asia & the wider Indian Ocean Region" and noted that the vessel "sailed for 5 & a half months to reach US East Coast to participate in 250th Anniversary of US Independence."

The mission also emphasised the ship's sailing capabilities, stating that it "showcased India's naval capabilities, as it sailed on its masts for 18 consecutive days."Highlighting India's indigenous shipbuilding strengths, the Consulate said: "Every part, equipment & fabric of SUDARSHINI was designed & manufactured in India, showcasing India's ship building capabilities."It added that the vessel "functions as a training vessel for Indian Naval Cadets who sail & undergo training."Earlier, announcing the ship's arrival in Boston, the Consulate posted: "Ahoy Boston—Sudarshini arrives! INS SUDARSHINI entered historic port of #Boston flying in the majestic Parade of Sails as part of SAIL Boston 250."The mission further said that Consul General Raghuram S. boarded the vessel at sea to witness

afraid of death. However, the leaders made an emotional appeal to the people.The JAAC top leadership said that even if all of them are killed, the people should continue with the movement. It should become a peoples' movement, the JAAC leadership also said. The JAAC has been protesting over rising living costs, political discrimination, atrocities against minorities and administrative neglect.

The JAAC blames the establishment of suppressing dissent instead of addressing public concerns. India has also raised concerns over the use of force in PoK. New Delhi has been calling out the atrocities being committed on the people.Spokesperson for the Ministry of External Affairs, Randhir Jaiswal said, "Rather than addressing the legitimate grievances of the local populace, the Pakistani state has responded with extreme police brutality, including against helpless women and children, blocking essential supplies, including food and medicine, enforcing internet blackouts, and deploying lethal force against unarmed civilians that has resulted in tragic fatalities."Another official said that the situation is bound to get worse today with the JAAC announcing a massive march. Women and children, too, would take part in the march and also continue with their sit-ins. The official said that the Pakistani security forces have not spared even women and children, but they have showed immense resistance and have not given up on their fight.

The Pakistani security forces have put up blockades and warned that any attempt to breach it would be met with immediate and stern kinetic action. However, the JAAC has decided that it would go ahead with its march even if there is a direct threat to its leadership. The JAAC will not surround Muzaffarabad at any cost despite the situation being extremely dangerous to its leaders.Officials say that the nature of the protests is changing with each passing day. It began as a normal demonstration during which the people made certain demands. When the same was not met, the people mobilised in large numbers.Despite the heavy crackdown the people remained firm and today the movement only focusses on resistance.



attacked by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) when transiting the Strait of Hormuz, leaving a crew member missing"Iran was provided yet another opportunity to demonstrate adherence to the Memorandum of Understanding after being held accountable for earlier attacks on commercial vessels but has again failed. In response, the United States is imposing a heavy cost by continuing to degrade Iran's ability to attack civilian mariners and commercial ships freely transiting the strait. The strikes are being carried out at the direction of the Commander in Chief," it had said.The incident occurred amid heightened tensions in the waters around the Strait of Hormuz, which carries about one-fifth of the world's traded oil and is critical to global energy security.

its participation firsthand.According to the post, the Consul General "embarked the ship at sea to take a firsthand account of LOKAYAN 2026 & #SAILBOSTON250 & ship's spectacular participation, underscoring India's rich maritime heritage & maritime cooperation between India and US." INS Sudarshini's participation in SAIL Boston 250 marks a significant milestone for India's maritime diplomacy, showcasing the country's indigenous ship-building expertise, naval training traditions and commitment to strengthening maritime partnerships with the United States and other nations participating in the prestigious international sailing event.

## Indian Consulate in Boston warns diaspora about impersonation scam calls

Boston: The Consulate General of India in Boston has issued a public advisory warning members of the Indian diaspora and other residents about a rise in fraudulent calls from scammers impersonating officials of Indian diplomatic missions and law enforcement agencies.Sharing the advisory on X, the Consulate said: "Scam Alert! India in Boston has seen reports of fraudsters impersonating Indian Embassy/Consulate officials/ spoofing official telephone numbers! Please see the advisory below. "

The advisory cautioned that fraudsters are using fear and intimidation to deceive victims into sharing sensitive information or making payments.According to the Consulate, scammers may falsely claim that a person's SIM card has been used for illegal activities in India, allege problems with passport, visa or immigration documents, or accuse individuals of involvement in hawala or money laundering cases while threatening arrest or legal action.

The advisory further warned that fraudsters often "use fear tactics by demanding immediate action, insisting you remain isolated, or asking you to join video calls." Victims may also be asked to share personal, financial or identity information, including copies of official identity documents, which can later be misused for fraud, identity theft or blackmail. I

## Iran threatens to block more vital seaways as Trump orders renewed Iran blockade



CAIRO/WASHINGTON/BEIRUT, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has threatened to close "all other export corridors that benefit the U.S. ?and its allies", Iranian media reported, after Iran shut the Strait of Hormuz and the U.S. reimposed a naval blockade of Iranian ports."Regional energy exports are either shared by ?all, or denied to all," the IRGC said in a statement carried by Iran's IRNA state news agency on Wednesday.

The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here.Analysts have said Iran has been signalling it may use its Houthi allies in Yemen to shut the Bab el-Mandeb gateway to the Red Sea, opening a new front against Washington and putting two of the world's most vital energy arteries at risk.The narrow gateway links the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden, through which Saudi oil exports and a substantial share of global ?shipping pass.A senior Houthi official warned on Monday that the group was prepared to close the Bab el-Mandeb Strait — a move he said could send oil prices soaring to \$200 a barrel — if ?Saudi Arabia continued to attack Yemen, according to a report on Iran's Press TV website.Houthi forces fired missiles at Saudi Arabia after accusing the kingdom of ?bombing an airport under their control on Monday, breaking a four-year truce in the conflict between the kingdom and the Iran-aligned group.The Houthis have already shown they can choke global commerce through the Bab el-Mandeb. ?After the Gaza war erupted in October 2023, the Iran-backed group launched attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea, saying it was targeting vessels linked to Israel in support of Palestinians.The latest threat to global shipping ?comes a day after the U.S. military said it began a fresh round of strikes "to continue degrading Iranian capabilities used to attack commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz."The United States said Iran had attacked seven commercial ships over the last week, leading to nearly a dozen crew members being killed, missing or injured.The U.S. military said late on Tuesday that it hit dozens of military targets near the Strait of Hormuz and Iranian coastal areas. The wave of strikes lasted ?seven hours, the U.S. Central Command said in a statement.Iranian government spokesperson Fatemeh Mohajerani said at least 30 civilians had been killed in recent days due to the U.S.

## US Senate Democrats block \$1.15 trillion defense bill over Iran war objections

WASHINGTON, U.S. Senate Democrats blocked a \$1.15 trillion annual defense policy bill on Tuesday, citing ?frustration with the Iran war and President Donald Trump's failure to consult with Congress about his decision to send U.S. forces into the conflict."Trump started this war without authorization, without a strategy, and without an exit," Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, the Senate's Democratic leader, said in ?a Senate speech announcing he would vote no.Jumpstart your morning with the latest legal news delivered straight to your inbox from The Daily Docket newsletter. Sign up here.

The procedural vote on the National Defense Authorization Act, or NDAA, failed. ?Even though the yes votes outnumbered no votes by 50-46, the bill fell short of the ?60 votes needed to move ahead in the 100-member Senate.The vote was along party lines. Every Republican voted in favor ?of moving ahead except for the chamber's Republican majority leader, John Thune of South Dakota, who voted no under Senate rules ?only in order to enter a motion to reconsider.The bill had been expected to stall, after nine Democratic members of the Armed Services Committee voted against the NDAA when the panel considered it last month. The NDAA typically passes with strong bipartisan support.Democrats are concerned that authorizing a huge Pentagon budget would be seen as approval of the war on Iran that began with strikes by the U.S. and Israel on February 28.The vote came just as Trump the administration said it had reimposed a naval blockade of all Iranian ports ?in the ?latest escalation of the conflict and began a fresh round of strikes.Democrats also object to the Trump administration's push to increase military spending to a total of \$1.5 trillion, even as social programs for Americans are being cut. Besides the \$1.15 trillion authorized in the NDAA, Trump has asked for another \$350 billion from Congress under the budget reconciliation process, which would allow the funding to pass without Democratic support.In remarks urging support, Thune accused Democrats of putting politics ahead of security."It's the

## After Hormuz, Iran turns to Red Sea gateway as new pressure point

BEIRUT, Having choked off shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, Iran is now signaling it could play its most dangerous card yet: using Yemen's Houthi allies to shut the Bab el-Mandeb gateway ?to the Red Sea, opening a new front against Washington and putting two of the world's most vital energy arteries at risk.As U.S. strikes deepen inside Iran and Houthi attacks ?escalate in tandem, analysts say Tehran is widening the conflict and seeking to increase pressure on Washington by extending the threat to global trade and energy supplies beyond the Gulf.The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here.Iran has already demonstrated the power of its most valuable strategic asset by disrupting traffic through Hormuz. Now it appears ready to open a second pressure point at Bab el-Mandeb, the narrow waterway linking the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden through which Saudi oil exports and a substantial share of global ?shipping pass.A senior Yemeni official warned on Monday that the country's armed forces were prepared

strikes on southern Iran, state media reported on Wednesday.Iran's army said at least seven active-duty and conscript personnel were killed in overnight U.S. strikes on the Bampur military base in the country's south-east.

The IRGC said on Wednesday that the Strait of Hormuz would remain ?closed until what it described as "the end of America's evils". Before the war began in February, about a fifth of global oil and gas shipments passed through Hormuz each day.The Guards said they had targeted what they described as command-and-control, logistics, fuel and military equipment facilities belonging to the U.S. Fifth Fleet in Bahrain, in response to the latest U.S. strikes in the Strait of Hormuz.They also said they had set fire to and destroyed what they described as a U.S. logistics facility in Kuwait's Mina Abdullah and that their air force had struck what they described as a U.S. base at Azraq in Jordan, targeting aircraft hangars. They ?said some of the U.S. attacks had been launched ?from bases on Jordanian territory.Earlier on Wednesday, Kuwait's ?state news agency reported that a fire was brought under control at a site targeted in Iranian attacks. It was not immediately clear whether the fire was at the same site referred to in the IRGC statement.Jordan's air defence intercepted and shot down three ballistic missiles that entered the country's airspace from Iranian ?territory early on Wednesday.The hostilities between Iran and the U.S. re-ignited last week, fraying an already fragile truce reached in June after several months of ?fighting that has killed thousands.

TRUMP ?THREATENS TO HIT ENERGY TARGETSUS. President Donald Trump on Tuesday threatened to hit Iranian power plants and bridges next week unless Tehran resumes negotiations."I'll save the energy targets for last, but ultimately we'll hit energy targets," Trump said in an interview with Fox News' Trey Yingst.U.S. negotiators had been in touch with their Iranian counterparts to tell them "you better make a deal",

Trump added.As tensions escalated, Trump on Monday floated the idea of a 20% fee on shipping ?through the strait, ?which drew sharp criticism from the U.N. shipping agency and others. On Tuesday, he scrapped the idea and said, without providing details, that he would instead seek investment deals with Gulf states.Oil prices rose on Wednesday, after closing up 2% to a one-month high on Tuesday, as the latest attacks deepened a supply disruption in the Strait of Hormuz.For the second straight session, Brent closed at its highest since June 12 and West Texas Intermediate at its highest since June 15. Both contracts rose further in early Wednesday trading.Kanishka Singh is a breaking news reporter for Reuters in Washington DC, who primarily covers US politics and national affairs in his current role. His past breaking news coverage has spanned across a range of topics like the Black Lives Matter movement; the US elections; the 2021 Capitol riots and their follow up probes;



bill that helps ensure our military is ready today and prepared for tomorrow," he said.This year's NDAA authorizes an unprecedented \$1.15 trillion for defense, determining ?everything from how many ships, aircraft and missile systems are bought to pay raises for ?the troops and ?how to address geopolitical threats.Historically seen by both parties as "must-pass legislation," the NDAA is one of the few major bills that always passes, having become law annually for more than six decades.Despite the setback, it is early in the NDAA process. Each year, the House ?of Representatives and Senate pass their own versions of the NDAA, before ?Armed Services committee negotiators reach a compromise version that then comes up for a vote in each chamber.If the compromise version passes, it would be sent to the White House for President Donald Trump to sign into law or veto.Patricia Zengerle has reported from more than 20 countries, including Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and China. An award-winning Washington-based national security and foreign policy reporter who also has worked as an editor, Patricia has appeared on NPR, C-Span and other programs, spoken at the National Press Club and attended the Hoover Institution Media Roundtable. She is a recipient of the Edwin M. Hood Award for Diplomatic Correspondence.

## After Hormuz, Iran turns to Red Sea gateway as new pressure point

to close the Bab el-Mandeb Strait - a move he said could send oil prices soaring to \$200 ?a barrel - if Saudi Arabia continued to attack Yemen, according to a report on Iran's Press TV website.

Mohammed al-Farah, a member of the political bureau ?of Ansarullah, the Houthi resistance movement, said Washington was inciting Saudi Arabia to strike Yemen and that such a provocation would never be in the interest of the United States."If the current situation aggravates, ?the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and the Strait of Hormuz will be closed in an operational alliance. Oil prices would then skyrocket to \$200 a barrel in a dreadful shock," he warned.If Hormuz is Tehran's strongest strategic ?lever, Bab el-Mandeb may be its last major reserve, analysts said."Iran is willing to go all the way," Middle East scholar Fawaz Gerges told Reuters. He said Tehran was showing Washington it could threaten both chokepoints simultaneously, transforming the conflict from a bilateral confrontation into a challenge to the sea lanes underpinning global energy trade.



# The invisible struggle: Addressing the plight of deserted women in India



Marriage, a cornerstone of societal structure, is traditionally viewed as a fundamental institution, not only forming the bedrock of family life but also defining social roles and statuses. However, the phenomenon of desertion, the abandonment of a spouse without justifiable cause, starkly contradicts these ideals, leaving a trail of vulnerable women in its wake. A deserted woman, defined as one whose husband has denied marital co-existence, faces a unique set of challenges often overlooked in broader discussions of women's empowerment.

While India's Draft National Policy for Women (2016) acknowledges the vulnerabilities of various categories of women, including divorced, separated, and widowed, it fails to adequately address the specific plight of deserted women. This omission is not a mere oversight but reflects a systemic negligence that perpetuates their marginalisation. Despite the wealth of data on India's female population, the absence of reliable figures on deserted women renders policy responses speculative and ineffective.The 2023 survey conducted by the CEO of Zilla Parishad, Ahilyanagar district, Maharashtra, revealing that 4,582 out of more than one lakh single women were deserted, underscores the magnitude of this overlooked crisis. These women, abandoned without the legal certainty of divorce, exist in a judicial and social limbo, their voices lost in the formal policy discourse. While they may be included in general welfare schemes, the lack of a clear definition leads to fundamental lacunae in India's gender-sensitive policymaking, perpetuating their socio-economic and psychological marginalisation.Historically, India's legal and social institutions have been anchored in the normative understanding of marriage, with legal systems primarily focussed on its preservation. In a patriarchal society, the onus of maintaining this relationship falls heavily on women, making them particularly vulnerable to the fallout of marital discord. The stark contrast in treatment between divorced, widowed, and deserted women highlights this disparity. Divorced women have legal entitlements, and widows receive social and official acknowledgment and assistance. Deserted women, however, are caught in a paradoxical situation, ineligible for the benefits afforded to either group. This discrepancy necessitates a re-evaluation of gendered hierarchies and a more nuanced approach to gender-sensitive policymaking.The challenges faced by deserted women extend far beyond the legal realm, encompassing socio-economic and psychological dimensions. Economically, their struggle to achieve financial stability, often facing social ostracism that limits employment opportunities. Forced into poorly paid or irregular jobs, they lack access to credit, shelter, and essential welfare programmes. Their vulnerable economic situation is exacerbated by limited skills and education, rigid social norms, and a lack of support systems.Psychologically, the impact of desertion is devastating. These women endure severe emotional trauma, characterised by low self-esteem, anxiety, and

depression. The stigma of being deserted, coupled with familial and community rejection, leads to social isolation and hinders their reintegration into society. In rural areas, where patriarchal norms are deeply entrenched, these challenges are compounded by factors such as caste, religion, and geographic location.

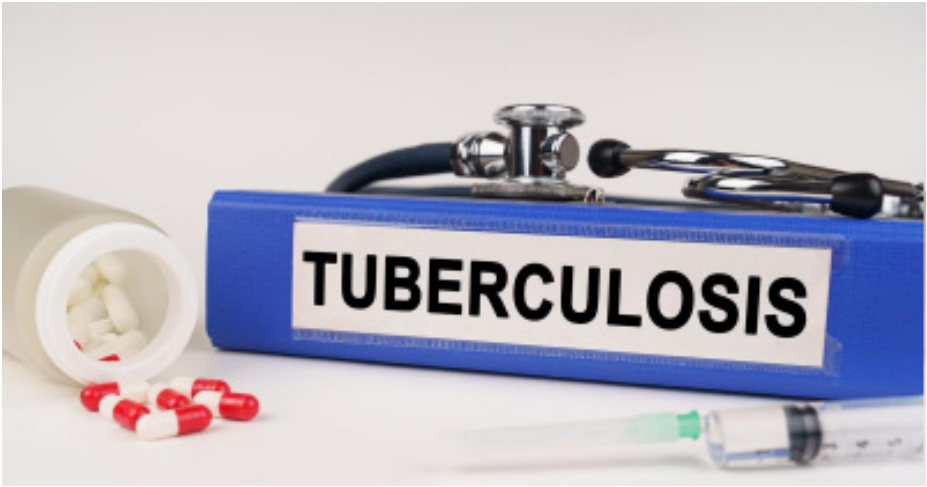
The lack of targeted State welfare measures further exacerbates their plight. Stringent criteria for social welfare benefits, such as residency requirements, create insurmountable barriers for women who have migrated in search of sustenance. Inter-State disparities in welfare provisions leave many deserted women excluded from essential support. Housing is another critical area of concern, with significant gender disparities in property ownership. While recent initiatives such as PMAY-G mandate joint ownership, many properties remain solely in the husband's name, leaving deserted women without a secure social safety net. Similarly, while some States have categorised deserted women for ration card benefits, a lack of uniformity at the Central level hinders their formal recognition as eligible beneficiaries.Even well-intentioned schemes such as the Swadhar Greh Scheme often fail to deliver tangible benefits owing to budgetary constraints and implementation challenges. Limited access to property, low literacy rates, and childcare responsibilities further reduce their bargaining power in the labour market. While schemes such as MGNREGA have identified deserted women as a special category, these measures are insufficient to address their comprehensive needs.

The pervasive lack of awareness regarding legal rights and personal agency compounds these obstacles. Despite the existence of laws designed to protect deserted women, prohibitive legal fees, procedural complexities, and social stigma deter many from seeking justice. Even with free legal aid, many deserted women do not file maintenance cases or receive minimal support. Studies, like the one from Sakhi: One Stop Centres in Maharashtra, show that even when cases are filed, outcomes are uncertain and prolonged. These challenges highlight the need for legal reform and sociocultural advocacy.Rules that edge out women from employment for getting married are 'coarse', unconstitutional: Supreme Court

Addressing the plight of deserted women requires a comprehensive policy intervention. Integrating them into State welfare measures and expanding empowerment initiatives through self-help groups (SHGs) are crucial steps. Improving legal literacy through dedicated legal support centres is equally essential. Community support networks and free counseling are needed to address their psychological needs. Expanded access to healthcare and insurance coverage will provide a safety net against economic- and social instability. A formal national institution dedicated to the care of deserted women would ensure uniform policy implementation and recognition of their specific needs.Legal reforms are necessary to expedite processes and remove administrative barriers. Simplifying procedures and enforcing existing legislation are key goals. Organisations such as CORO India and Ekal Stri Sangahtana are working to bring awareness to the plight of single women. Women's rights organisations must continuously challenge and transform the socio-cultural beliefs that marginalise deserted women.The plight of deserted women underscores the need for a more inclusive approach to women's empowerment. Their legal invisibility and socio-economic vulnerability highlight a critical deficiency in current gender-sensitive policymaking. A multi-pronged strategy encompassing legal reform, policy innovation, and grassroots advocacy is essential. Excluding deserted women from the policy narrative is a moral and practical failure that demands urgent correction.

# Sharpening India's anti-tuberculosis fight

The omnipresence of tuberculosis (TB) in the pages of history and literature is testimony to how the disease has plagued generations across the world and continues to be a major problem even today. India bears over a quarter of the global TB burden. Political will in India has helped drive a great deal of progress in the fight against the disease. For example, in 2023, addressing the big challenge of 'missed' TB cases, 25.1 lakh patients were diagnosed in India as having TB, highlighting strengthened case finding efforts. However, as we work toward the goal of TB elimination — the Prime Minister has urged citizens to work towards TB elimination — we must look to innovate and deploy proven technologies and tools at our disposal.Regimens and issuesThe first low-hanging fruit that I believe must be invested in urgently is new shorter regimens for drug-resistant TB. It has been encouraging to learn that India will soon introduce the World Health Organization (WHO)-recommended shorter regimen for drug-resistant TB. The current regimens on offer are long and arduous, requiring patients to consume nearly 13 to 14 tablets every day if they are on the shorter nine to 11-month regimen, or four to five tablets every day if they have been put on the 18 to 24 month longer regimen. The treatment is physically and psychologically drain-



ing and has severe side effects, such as loss of hearing, and even psychosis.

Moreover, a problem with such an extended treatment regimen that requires regular visits to a TB clinic for nearly two years is loss of employment, driving many families into poverty.In 2022, WHO recommended the shorter, safer and more effective regimens called BPaL/M for all drug-resistant TB patients, and there is a lot of recent data that show this regimen to be more effective with better compliance. With only three to four tablets every day, patients can complete their treatment within six months, with minimal side effects. The success rates of this regimen are also reported to be higher — 89% as compared to the 68% treatment success rate reported in the country in the 2023 India TB Report. Given its efficacy, close to 80 countries around the world have already procured the BPaL/M regimen and about 20 of

the highest burden countries are already rolling it out.

Research indicates that savings from implementing this regimen will be between 40% to 90% of the cost of current treatment regimens, and that an immediate transition to BPaL/M could result in an annual saving of approximately \$740 million (or approximately ₹6,180 crore) for health systems globally. This is a more effective and safer solution to treat drug-resistant TB and we must work on expediting access to this regimen to all eligible patients across the country.Making the best use of new treatmentsThe next question is this. How do we go about diagnosing more people with TB so that they can benefit from these game-changing new treatments? The answer lies in making sure that we are screening and testing quickly and efficiently to reduce delays in accurate diagnosis. For this, a proac-

tive approach is essential. It is time we modernised and used health datasets, which include GIS mapping, to identify vulnerable populations such as those with comorbidities (for example, malnutrition, diabetes and HIV), former COVID-19 patients, and at-risk communities in slums, prisons, or those who are homeless. Targeted multi-disease focused screening drives can then be conducted to detect TB cases early, even among those without typical symptoms.In fact, recent evidence highlights that a significant number of people with pulmonary (i.e., lung) TB may not exhibit recognisable symptoms such as cough, fever, weight loss, or night sweats. The National TB Prevalence Survey (2019-21) highlights the importance of chest X-rays, which detected 42.6% of cases that would have otherwise been missed. Leveraging advancements in technology, portable X-ray machines equipped

# Caught between the warp and weft of business and life



In name, Akkalkot road falls in an industrial area. But the 4- 5-km potholed road, in Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) in Solapur district, is deserted. The factory units, spread across 216 hectares of the industrial area, resemble homes with white rangolis outside each gate. In the quiet afternoon, the only sound is the khat-khat of power looms, bearing testimony to still-running textile industry of the area. Here, 600-700 units operate with about 10 people in each, weaving textile for Solapuri chaddars and towels. Chaddars are used in daily life for everything from a floor spread to a blanket.In his Solapur home Govind Zanwar, 54, who produces bamboo towels now after switching out of the chaddar, says there are many reasons for its decline. Besides a change in customer tastes, cheaper synthetic textiles flooding the market, and the increased cost of production, he ascribes the downfall to the lack of innovation in design. "Aesthetics matter and the chadar features loud colours. There is scope for a revival, but it will be difficult," he says. Zanwar, who lives in a joint family of Marwaris, who were initially trading in cloth, got into the production of chaddar and towel about 15 years ago. His daughter and son do not want to get into the business, and are looking at careers as professionals in corporate jobs.

In 2005, the jacquard chaddar made from cotton yarn got the Geographical Indication (GI) stamp, an Indian government certification that a particular craft originated in an area. That year, the Geographical Indications Journal, a government document issued for GI tags, had listed at least 15,000 handlooms and power looms operating in Solapur, employing over 2 lakh people, all producing the Solapuri chaddar. In 2004, the journal reports that exports amounted to ₹500-600 crore.Now, only 600-700 looms remain, according to data from the Textile Development Foundation (TDF), an association of manufacturers established in 1995 in Solapur. Exports have grown to ₹800-1,000 crore, as per estimates by an industry expert. The government does not have current figures.

Shriniwas Bura, 59, a textile engineer who worked in a corporate office in Mumbai, and then returned to start Bravo Kids School to train a generation to think independently and like entrepreneurs, is also the founder of TDF. He points out that chaddar production started declining from the year 2000.He blames the government and manufacturers for the downfall. "The government ignored the industry, while the producers failed to innovate. We realised only when external players from Haryana's Panipat captured our chaddar market. Now made-in-China towels are posing a danger to our towels," Shriniwas says, going through old records, covered in dust. He says Haryana producers use synthetic fibres and claim they are cotton.

Pentappa Gaddam, 65, a manufacturer and the president of the Solapur Zilla Yantramag Dharak Sangh (SOZIYA), an association that represents the community's needs to the government, says, "We complained to the government about the duplication, but no one listened to us." The association last complained eight years ago in letters, and has since stopped, since the number of producers has come down. In a grey building in in Siddheshwar Nagar, Suraj (name changed to protect privacy), 53, sits in his cramped office surrounded by piles of brightly coloured cotton towels. He is a third-generation producer, who owns 12 power looms operating in two shifts. "We all are working for survival. Forget bringing the next generation into the business. I am working at a 5% margin in towels; earlier it was 20%." He has had to shift from the Solapuri jacquard chaddar to towels, because there is barely any demand for the chaddar any more. Suraj's voice is drowned in the noise of the thana-bana (warp-weft) coming together to form cloth. It is Tuesday, the day he pays out weekly wages before the weekly day off on Wednesday.Suraj belongs to the Padmashali community of weavers, who repeat a legend, where people from the community made a piece of cloth from padma tantu (lotus fabric) for Lord Vishnu THEN?. Around 1877, when Solapur's first mill — Solapur Spinning & Weaving Mills — was established, they migrated here from Karimnagar, Warangal, and Siddipet, now in Telangana. It wasn't just about job opportunities, but also to escape the drought in those areas."We are able to sustain ourselves today only because our past generations built the foundation. We own the land, so we don't take its value into account while pricing products. If we do, we will run into losses," says Siddheshwar Gaddam, 61, the owner of a chaddar and towel factory, and the third generation in the business. His grandparents worked in mills like Jam Mill, Laxmivishnu Mill, and others, which collapsed in the 1950s. They purchased looms at a low price and started small units, becoming self-employed and giving employment to others. "From grey cloth, they shifted to chaddar, and 15 years ago we started with towels, as it had an international market."

Many like Suraj and Siddheshwar have quit manufacturing Solapur chaddar and shifted to towels. Suraj asks, "When Prime Minister Narendra Modi is saying 'go local', why is the government not banning Chinese products." The decline of the Solapur chaddar is also tied to economic growth and a rise status among customers.

Gurubai is lost between the warp and the weft, as she carefully winds thread on the bobbins. Spreading her hands out as she speaks, she says, "I don't know how old I am; maybe 50. I came to Solapur when I got married and started working with the chaddor. I was 15 then."She wears a shirt over her saree, so that the cotton dust doesn't stick to her body and clothes. "It gets itchy," she adds. She earns ₹800 to 1,000 every week for a 12-hour shift, and fears losing her job, because she knows no other work. Some months though, her salary just about pays her medical bills. Her work involves concentration and the use of her eyes, back, and hands. When these body parts ache, she takes an injection to deal with the pain.

Shridhar Gudheli, 48, a member of the labour union associated with the right-wing-politics Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS), pointed out that workers don't have uniforms or safety gear, characteristic of informal work in India. He started as a worker, but now he fights for the rights of workers. "The wages were last increased in 2022. Business owners will tell you the market is tight, just

to avoid a wage increase," he says.On their lunch break, a group of power loom workers, all in their 30s and 40s, sit under a tree and open their tiffin boxes. They are covered in cotton dust. All the workers were in their late 30s to 40s., covered with cotton dust. Nagesh Usapoyal, 43, a third generation chaddar maker says, "I rode a cycle yesterday; I am still riding a cycle today. That is us, the textile industry workers." He dusts off cotton threads from his torn brown vest and folded pants. Usapoyal says he earns ₹8,000 a month.Laxman Kusma, 35, is at the managerial position as he is a college graduate, but earns the same amount as a weaver. His work is to manage the weavers and look after the factory in the absence of the owner. Sitting on his bike, Laxman says, "I work double shift. In the morning I deliver milk for ₹250 a day. I come to the factory at around 8 and leave at about 7 in the evening."SOZIYA has been demanding civic facilities like water, smooth roads, drainage lines, a fire unit, and low rates of interest on loans.

The decline of the Solapur chaddar is also tied to economic growth and a rise status among customers. As incomes increase, people migrate from the chaddar to branded bedsheets that arrive in plastic packaging. Plastic mats have taken over from floor seating.

"With the chadar, washing is problematic, and our product was perceived as a poor man's commodity," says Govind Bura, 57, a manufacturer, and Shriniwas' brother. Today, labourers prefer the towel, and those who have the chaddar say it lasts at least five years, so there are few repeat buyers. Solapur holds a geographically strategic position as it is situated in the southeastern part of Maharashtra.

Manufacturers talk about the fact that Solapur receives water only once every five days, so it's difficult for a water-intensive industry to run. For 1 kg of yarn, 60 litres of water is needed. Currently, the producers use tanker water. "Many shifted to recycled hosiery waste yarn as it is already dyed, which doesn't require water, says Zanwar. SOZIYA has been demanding civic facilities like water, smooth roads, drainage lines, a fire unit, and low rates of interest on loans. District Industries Centre (DIC) officer Santosh Kolte says, "We are aware of the water issue. The work of setting up a new pipeline has been in progress." DIC's job is to take care of Solapur's needs.In his home-balcony office, Ashok Indapure, a trader who commissions goods and sells them on Amazon.in, says, "Solapur Government Polytechnic College discontinued textile-related courses as the students did not opt for the course, given the outdated syllabus." He feels if the Maharashtra State Board of Technical Education (MSBTE) sets up diploma courses it may help.A few mill owners blame politicians for ignoring Solapur, a city of migrants with people who speak Marathi, Telugu, and Kannada. There is also a mix of Hindus and Muslims, preventing politicians from creating religion- and caste-based vote banks. One producer says, "Baramati had Sharad Pawar who made sure the region developed. We had Sushil Kumar Shinde (a former chief minister), but he did not have the political will to do anything."

Solapur holds a geographically strategic position as it is situated in the southeastern part of Maharashtra, bordering Karnataka and a six-hour road ride from Telangana. The textile industry flourished in this area because of train connectivity. "But we needed an upgrade with airline connectivity," says Shriniwas, adding that there has been an airport here for 30 years, but it has been mostly non-operational. The closest international airports are Pune and Hyderabad, both a five-hour drive away. "Buyers from other countries avoid travelling here, as they have to take various modes of transport to reach here."

Charvak Burgul, whose 2,200 square foot unit was started in 1987 by his father, says for any textile-based industry to survive generations, there must at least be a 10% year-on-year growth, so there is a cushion for the bad years. His margins have dropped from 25% WHEN to 10%. To cut the cost of production, manufacturers shifted from power looms to shuttle-less looms in 2010 or so. The speed is high and gives four times the output compared to the power loom, and requires limited manpower. Charvak runs a full-fledged chaddar production unit with 10 power looms and 20 rapiers. "This is our legacy, we have to keep it alive somehow," he says, while walking through rows of power looms that can produce 10 chaddars a day, unlike the rapiers that do double. He claims Solapur is the only place in India where everything from the doubling of yarn (twisting two yarns) and dyeing to the winding (hanks transferred to bobbins) and warping (yarn transferred to beam) is done under one roof. For the towel, the process is the same, with the dyeing being done after weaving. The entire process takes 15 days. The most common sizes are 48x90 inches, 54x90 inches, and 60x90 inches. Charvak has tried to innovate by creating wall hangings, portraits, and bags, but he is unsure of where to find a market. Youth and women in factory leadership are uncommon. Amit Bura, 25, is one of the few who has taken up his father's trade, but he does not see the Solapur chaddar as a profitable business. "We are experimenting with other products. We tried bottle-making

# Fire, fidelity and an inhuman heritage

In Europe, Christian clergy burnt alive women suspected of being Satan-worshipping witches. In Arabia, the 'People of the Ditch' were martyrs who chose death by fire rather than giving up Islam. The theatre of death in matters of faith is very much part of human culture. The practice of Sati — burning of Hindu widows — needs to be seen in this context.In 1829, the East India Company passed a law banning Sati. Christian missionaries had long highlighted this practice in European circles to argue that, despite its lofty philosophy, India was a barbaric land in need of civilisational rescue.

Defying this ban, a decade later, the Sikh controlled lands saw the burning of four Rajput queens and seven slave girls on the funeral pyre of Raja Ranjit Singh. A Kangra miniature painting was commissioned to commemorate this event.In 1861, Michael Madhusudan Dutta wrote his famous ballad Meghnad-Badh that valorised the sati-hood of Prameela, widow of Indrajit, daughter-in-law of Ravan, a story with roots in the 700-year-old Telugu Ranganatha Ramayana. Even Hindu social reformers, known for supporting the ban against Sati, praised this Bengali ballad as a literary masterpiece.No one knows when the pan-Indian practice of warrior widows burning themselves with (sahagamana) or without (anugamana) the corpse of their husband came to be known as 'sati' — a word that means the chaste wife.



# FIFA World Cup 2026: Spain consign France to death by disruption



The cruellest punishment Spain imposed on France was not that they upended them and progressed to the final; or that they reduced them to futile escape artistes in an airless glass box, or that they imprisoned France’s vaulted forward-line in an iron cage, but that they pushed them to utter hopelessness.Spain sucked the fight out of France, they infused an irrevocable sense of fatalism into a group smattered with high-class football artistes. A bunch that features the most expensive footballer, the Ballon D’or and Champions League winners. The match, a 2-0 victory achieved through the goals of Mikel Oyarzabal and Pedro Porro, wouldn’t be remembered for its electrifying thrills or its riveting drama or suspense, but for the tactical coup, for the flawless technical showmanship.

It’s place is not so much among the World Cup classics album as it would be in a football academy’s tutorial video or textbook. It was a treatise on subduing a buzzing, smolderingly offensive team without resorting to unholy dark arts, a demonstration of taunting authority that makes Spain an unassailable force.This was France. The critics whispered. This was an unstoppable force, the realists sighed. But this was Spain, too, shapeshifting perfectionists, who study their opponents to its minutest details. It required a perfect symphony, and Spain produced one. The fundamental idea was simple, as all grand thoughts are. To give France as little time on the ball as possible; or better to not give them the ball at all. Even Van Gogh needs a canvas to paint his masterpieces. And France is a team that loves as much time on the ball as possible to transform it into a cannonball from their feet.Kloppian principleSo France starved for the ball in their first act — death by pressing, where once it was death by passing. The more France were without the ball, the more they couldn’t enjoy quality time on the ball. The raw numbers don’t reveal much. Spain enjoyed marginally better possession than France (51-49). The press was vigorous, reminiscent of Jurgen Klopp’s Liverpool heyday. They lived by the Kloppian principle that “the best moment to win the ball is immediately after your team just lost it.” Pressing relentlessly is exhaustive, but Spain had the will and energy.Most top sides press, and know how to remain press-resistant. But what emboldens Spain’s pressing is the superlative passing range of their players. Simple scything passes that tore the heart and belief of

France.The moment a blue shirt snatched the ball, be it in their own box, they buzzed incessantly, suffocatingly close to their body, with more than one man around them. The French sought a sideways route, or they slapped the ball back. The ball is a footballer’s oxygen. It was destruction by disruption. A worse feeling than not getting the ball is perhaps losing the ball. France’s frustration grew louder; the brains of their creative heads scrambled. Mbappe, forlorn and fumbling, mustered three wayward shots. None of them were on goal, all of them were bereft of venom. His xG (expected goals) was .09, and undoubtedly it was his worst World Cup night.Michael Olise (0 shots and one touch in the opposition box), France’s ingenuity plank, was so ragged that coach Didier Deschamps ousted him in the 72nd minute. None of Ousmane Dembele, Desire Doue, or Bradley Barcola could script a moment of magic. Deschamps, a picture of unease, rolled his carousel of gifted forwards with little consequence. For, Spain was magically methodical. It’s not a happenstance that all French lieutenants chose the worst afternoon to underperform; it was simply Spain’s effect on them that they looked horrendously out of depth.

The audience might misinterpret France’s bluntness as a lack of urgency. Even after Spain netted their second in the 58th minute, France did not exhibit the belief that they could overturn the deficit. Perhaps, all their hopes had been nipped by then. But it was how Spain made them look. The clarity and stability, the contentedness, was startling.Covering spacesMarshalled by Rodri, putting in his most impactful shift since his Ballon D’Or year (2024), they doubled-up and often tripled-up, especially when Mbappe or Olise, had the ball. Spain were supremely athletic and foresightful, in covering the spaces and snuffing the potential danger. Aymeric Laporte and Pau Cubarsi dust up memories of Alessandro Nesta and Paolo Maldini in their presence and personality, in their superhuman anticipation of a potential move. Always in control, few last-ditch tackles, or seldom caught out of possession, they form an unbudging wall of defiance that takes some heavy artillery to break.To define Spain’s dismembering of France as a defensive masterclass is to belittle their penetrativeness upfront. The first goal stemmed from Lucas Digne’s unawareness of Lamine Yamal nudging behind him. It was a soft and clumsy penalty to concede, but there were numerous other times when Yamal and Dani Olmo stretched France’s back-line. Yamal’s pace continued to spook Digne so much so that he was tracking Yamal when Pedro Porro enjoyed a literally free run towards the box for his goal, and slashed home a delectable touch-pass from Olmo.France tried to regroup after the goal. Mbappe exhorted his teammates to be calm. But their faces were tired and sullen. They knew their fate. They had no hope. And that’s the worst kind of defeat. To lose without hope.

## Feud in England camp between Bellingham & Tuchel? Ibrahimovic & Thierry Henry weigh in

England’s quarterfinal win over Norway at the FIFA World Cup 2026 may have been inspired by Jude Bellingham’s match-winning brace, but the performance has been remembered for the wrong reasons.In a game where England were largely outplayed, Bellingham’s two goals helped them overturn a 1-0 deficit by the 40th minute. The Three Lions, however, failed to impress their manager Thomas Tuchel, who was critical of the quality and technical level of the display.

“We made life very difficult for us in the way we played, how we played, sloppy, a lot of technical mistakes, not fast enough. We were lucky today,” Tuchel said after the match.“It’s a pure mentality thing; there was no mentality problem. You could bottle it up and sell it. It’s the quality of our games. It’s nothing to do with mentality; it’s about quality. We need to play better,” he added.When Bellingham was asked about his manager’s criticism, he offered a terse response: “Maybe he doesn’t really know what it’s like to play in those kind of conditions against Erling Haaland, Martin Odegaard... That’s not an easy team to play against. We have tried to create a positive environment and we should continue that going into the final four. Can’t speak highly enough for the lads. You’re not going to win every game making a thousand passes. Sometimes you have to win dirty. We did that tonight.”Former Swedish striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic believes the full context of Tuchel’s criticism may not have been accurately presented to Bellingham, suggesting the England midfielder’s response was shaped by incomplete information.“I think it’s misinformation, because if Jude would have seen the interview with Tuchel, he would have answered differently... 100%,” Ibrahimovic said on FOX Sports.French legend Thierry Henry agreed with Zlatan’s take but downplayed the significance of the exchange, insisting there are no issues within the England camp. He urged that attention should shift to the semifinal against



Argentina at Atlanta Stadium on Wednesday.“Nothing has changed for me,” Henry said. “We need to talk about the game. That’s the most important thing. What animosity? There is no animosity in there. There is nothing in there. And I agree with Zlatan. He didn’t know how it was phrased to Tuchel. That’s about it. I’ll leave it there. They’re playing well in the way that they want to play. They’re fighting and coming back. We’ll think about the style later on.”Former USMNT international Alexi Lalas had no issue with the back-and-forth and saw it as a healthy dynamic between manager and player.

“I don’t think it’s a problem. I actually love it,” Lalas said. “I think it’s important for Tuchel to do something a little different in terms of the way that he reacted and make sure that the players know that they have plenty of work to do, and that they can and must get better if they ever hope to have it coming home.”Lalas also praised Bellingham’s response. “I love the fact that Jude stood up for himself and stood up for his teammates. So, I don’t think the dynamic changes. I still think that they respect each other, even though they disagree with each other, maybe in this instance.”

## Alan Shearer makes big England vs Argentina prediction: ‘VAR might impact us’

Former England captain Alan Shearer has predicted a player to be sent off in the England vs Argentina FIFA World Cup semi-final on Wednesday, but admitted that he was worried about the level of refereeing and the intervention of the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) in the match.Shearer captained the England team, which was knocked out in the Round of 16 clash against Argentina in the 1998 World Cup, which famously saw David Beckham sent off after a retaliation with Diego Simeone.

“I would not be surprised at all if we saw another red card this time too, but I am slightly concerned where the refereeing will be at, and how VAR might impact us,” Shearer wrote in his BBC column.“It was an unbelievable night with everything that happened, and, while I know I should be over it by now, I still don’t think the best team won. What happened to us then should be a warning to England now, because these are the kind of games where tempers can boil over and affect the result,” he added about the 1998 World Cup game.The former striker believed that England had a chance to beat Argentina and go to the final, admitting that the reigning champions had not played well during the course of the tournament.“I don’t think Argentina have played great football to get this far, but they have scored some great goals. They are an experienced and streetwise team, and they are also the



defending champions.”“They are not as good as they were when they won it four years ago, but what they have been great at is always finding some way to get a result when they have needed it. Having Messi up top obviously helps. Everything Argentina do goes through him, and they always look for where he is whenever they win the ball,” Shearer wrote.

He also praised Jude Bellingham for his exploits at this World Cup, adding that between him and Lionel Messi, whoever goes through on Wednesday will be the top contender for the Player of the tournament.

# FIFA president Infantino faces IOC complaint over political neutrality breaches in Trump support



FIFA president Gianni Infantino is facing a complaint over alleged political neutrality breaches, with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) asked to investigate his ties to US President Donald Trump, including his role in a controversial World Cup red-card decision, Reuters reported.The complaint, filed by advocacy group FairSquare, claims Infantino violated IOC rules on multiple occasions. Among the instances cited is his possible involvement in overturning a one-match ban for US striker Folarin Balogun, allowing him to feature against Belgium in the Round of 16 on July 6.Infantino has acknowledged receiving a call from Trump, who publicly pushed for Balogun to be allowed to play. However, the FIFA president has insisted he did not interfere with the disciplinary process.Balogun was sent off in the 64th minute of the US’s Round of 32 win over Bosnia and Herzegovina for a challenge on Tarik Muharemovic. The US won 2-0 with

10 men, but Balogun was automatically suspended for the next game.FIFA later issued a brief statement on its website on July 5, citing Article 27 of its disciplinary code to suspend the ban for a probationary period of one year, without offering further explanation.Trump defended his intervention on the day of the Belgium match. “All I did was ask for a review because I didn’t think it was a foul,” Trump said. “I think they made a really brilliant decision. I think the referee’s call was horrible and nobody talks about that.”Infantino, through a statement on FIFA’s website, said the governing body’s judicial committees operate independently. “Their independence is essential to the credibility and integrity of football, and this must always be respected,” the statement read.FairSquare, in its complaint, argues that Infantino, who became an IOC member in 2020, is bound by strict neutrality rules under the Olympic Charter and the IOC Code of Ethics. The group has pointed to five specific instances of alleged breaches, including his public endorsement of Trump for the Nobel Prize in October 2025 and supportive social media posts following Trump’s inauguration. The complaint also highlights Infantino’s promotion of a FIFA fan site for the 2026 World Cup, which FairSquare claims “appears to have been part of a data-harvesting campaign run by entities linked to President Trump.” Additionally, Infantino presented Trump with the inaugural FIFA Peace Prize at the World Cup draw in December.A separate complaint to FIFA’s ethics committee, filed by FairSquare in December, has received support from the Norwegian football federation and 50 members of the European Parliament, according to Reuters.

## ‘When you don’t win, you have to take blame’: Mbappe after France’s semifinal exit to Spain



France captain Kylian Mbappe has shouldered the blame for his side’s semifinal exit, admitting that Les Bleus failed to execute their game plan and allowed Spain to dictate the tempo in a 2-0 defeat at the FIFA World Cup 2026.“You take all the glory when you win, when you don’t win but you have to take the blame. It’s part of my game, my life, and as captain I have to take all the responsibility. We wanted to go to the final, we didn’t and we have to take what people say to us,” Mbappe told Fox Sports after the loss that ended their quest for a third straight World Cup final.France were clinically outplayed by a Spain side that was compact in defence and threatening in attack. Mikel Oyarzabal converted a penalty to put Spain ahead before Pedro Porro doubled the lead for

Luis de la Fuente’s side.

Reflecting on the tactical failure, Mbappe said the team’s plan was to press Spain aggressively and deny them control in midfield, but acknowledged they fell short of that objective.“It was difficult for us. Tactically, we had a plan to go for them with pressure, to go one for one, to not let them lead the tempo and play the way they want to play. They want to have control of the game and the ball,” he said. The French skipper admitted that Spain’s midfield was given too much freedom, allowing La Roja to dominate possession and take control of the contest.“That’s what we let them do. We let the midfield too much time to play and they have the quality to play. It’s difficult when you don’t change the plan of Spain. The penalty helped them also to come into the game and then they scored the second goal and we didn’t have the quality to get to the final,” he added.Saturday’s third-place play-off will be Didier Deschamps’ last game as France manager. Asked about the significance of that match, Mbappe said: “Nothing changed about what Didier means to us as the French people, as a manager. There is one game left for him and we have to play the best game for him because he deserves it and the fans deserve it, to finish third in this World Cup.”France will now compete in the third-place playoff, while Spain will face either defending champions Argentina or England in the title clash.

## Did referee rob France of a World Cup final spot? Deschamps questions after Spain defeat

Spain vs France | Ousmane Dembele (7) and Kylian Mbappe (10) argue with referee Ivan Arcides Barton Cisneros after Adrien Rabiot (14) received a yellow card. (AP)France’s Ousmane Dembele (7) and Kylian Mbappe (10) argue with referee Ivan Arcides Barton Cisneros after Adrien Rabiot (14) received a yellow card. (AP)It wasn’t meant to be for Didier Deschamps and his men. France’s daunting run at the FIFA World Cup 2026 came to a sudden halt after a gut-wrenching 2-0 defeat to Spain in Arlington on Wednesday, ending their quest for a third straight World Cup final.

Deschamps, who led France to glory in 2018, a final in 2022, and now a semifinal in 2026, bows out after a remarkable tenure at the helm. However, the sour taste of defeat left him questioning the level of refereeing in the match.Clearly unimpressed with Salvadoran official Iván Arcides Barton Cisneros, who took charge of the heavy-weight clash, Deschamps questioned his ability to officiate a World Cup semifinal.

“If I say anything, I’ll look like a sore loser because we lost,” Deschamps told reporters after the match. “But I ask you: is the referee up to the task of officiating a semifinal? There’s the penalty, but that’s not all; it adds to everything else. I have nothing against the referee tonight, but ask yourselves the question.”The decisive moment arrived in the 22nd minute when Lamine Yamal was brought down inside the box by Lucas Digne, who had miscontrolled his clearance and caught the Spanish winger as he nipped in front. Mikel Oyarzabal stepped up and calmly converted the penalty to give Spain the lead.Deschamps suggested his frustration was not limited to the penalty decision but extended to the overall standard of officiating throughout the contest. “The fourth and the fifth official were top level... I chatted with them on the sideline... but the field referee, I won’t say anything,” the coach said.The Frenchman, however, accepted that



Spain were the better side on the night. “Obviously, this Spain team are very strong and they proved it tonight. We were slightly below our usual level and made more technical mistakes than in previous matches. We were also a step short physically,” he admitted.France had reached the last four on the strength of a fearsome attack, but Ousmane Dembélé, Michael Olise, and Kylian Mbappé were all kept quiet as Spain denied them space and repeatedly regained possession.Deschamps said his team needed to operate at full capacity to trouble Spain, but fell short in every key area. “We know the quality Spain possess, and to have any chance of going through we needed to be at our absolute best. We were not.”France were also disrupted by an injury to defender William Saliba, while Adrien Rabiot had to temper his aggression after being booked early in the game.“They are very good at linking their play and reading the direction of passes in order to intercept them. We did not find the solutions. The fact that we failed to reproduce the attacking and technical quality we had shown until now is partly our fault, but Spain also deserve credit for preventing us from doing so,” said Deschamps.

## Washington Sundar credits Gautam Gambhir and Ashish Nehra for batting improvement

Birmingham: India all-rounder Washington Sundar credited head coach Gautam Gambhir and Gujarat Titans head coach Ashish Nehra for helping him develop greater clarity as a batter after playing a pivotal unbeaten half-century in India’s six-wicket win over England in the opening ODI at Edgbaston, saying their guidance has played a major role in his evolution across formats.Sundar remained unbeaten on 52 while sharing an unbroken 102-run partnership with Axar Patel to steer India to a 1-0 lead in the three-match series. His knock marked his maiden ODI fifty and capped another important contribution with the bat after assuming varied roles for both India and in franchise cricket over the last few seasons.

Reflecting on his development as a batter, Sundar said preparation and the confidence shown in him by those

around him have been instrumental.“I try and prepare really well. As much as possible (with) preparation, I make sure I do it to the T. I give a lot of importance to preparation, and I am so grateful that people have always had faith in my skill set. Here, Gautibhai (Gautam Gambhir) always made me understand what exactly I could do with the bat, especially, and made me understand my game as well. And even Ashish Nehra in GT, he’s always made sure, like he’s helped me understand myself a lot more, be it as a person or as a cricketer on the whole. So, I’m honestly grateful for the fact that I’ve got such people around me who are actually helping me become a better cricketer every single day,” Sundar told reporters during the post-match press conference.“I think that’s very important, especially for me.



‘I am not Phunsukh Wangdu’: Why Sonam Wangchuk distanced himself from Aamir Khan’s 3 Idiots



Engineer, educator and environmentalist Sonam Wangchuk has been making headlines for his indefinite hunger strike, which began on June 28, demanding Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan’s resignation over the alleged NEET paper leak. In the 18 days since he began the protest, Wangchuk has reportedly lost over 8 kg, while his blood pressure has also dropped, raising concerns about his health. As updates on his condition emerged, several actors voiced their support. Among them was Omi Vaidya, who famously portrayed Chatur Ramalingam in 3 Idiots. Reacting to Wangchuk’s deteriorating health, he wrote, “I don’t want Phunsukh Wangdu to die.”For years, many have believed that Aamir Khan’s character Phunsukh Wangdu in 3 Idiots was inspired by Sonam Wangchuk. However, Wangchuk has consistently distanced himself from the film. He has maintained that he was never consulted during its making, never gave his consent, and never received a response to the letter he later wrote to the filmmakers questioning the alleged use of his work and life. “They secretly came to my school to shoot the film,” he once claimed.

‘I am not Phunsukh Wangdu’Appearing on Kaun Banega Crorepati, Wangchuk clarified his stand while speaking to Amitabh Bachchan. “If you say inspired, then I won’t deny it. A lot of people say the film is based on me, but I don’t agree with that. The right word is that it may have been inspired or influenced. At the same time, I don’t want people in this country to accept something simply because it is associated with a film. So even if the film is influenced by me, I am not very proud of it. And if it is not inspired by me, I don’t regret it either.”

How Wangchuk says he learnt about the filmIn a Josh Talks session, Wangchuk narrated how he first came to know about 3 Idiots. “I am troubled because people constantly ask me, ‘Is your school the one shown in 3 Idiots? Are you Phunsukh Wangdu?’ I want to clarify: No, I am not Phunsukh Wangdu. I am Sonam Wangchuk. I don’t work in films, I work in real life. I work on innovations that can go from India to the world and make our country proud.”He added that he often avoids discussing the film because he does not want to misrepresent the truth. “Many journalists and young people ask me about the film. I desperately want to tell them I have nothing to do with it. But that would also be a lie.”His meeting with Aamir KhanWangchuk recalled that in 2008, he travelled to Mumbai to receive a CNN-IBN award for his educational work in Ladakh, where he met Aamir Khan. He said he told the actor about his idea for a film centred on the conflict in Siachen. “I told him, ‘Can you make a film on the tension in Siachen, where countries are fighting over a piece of ice while spending nearly Rs 7 crore every day? Can we show that ordinary people from both countries solve the problem and that money is instead used for

education?’” According to Wangchuk, Aamir listened with great interest and also watched an audio-visual presentation of his work that was screened during the event. “They came secretly to my school”Wangchuk said that after the award ceremony he travelled to France to study Earth Architecture. A year later, after 3 Idiots was released, he was flooded with emails from people congratulating him. “People told me, ‘The film based on you is fantastic.’ I was shocked. They also said they had shown my school.”When he contacted his school, he was told that a film crew had indeed visited but had kept the project a secret. “They were planning to bring a lot of plastic material, so we refused permission. Later, they shot in another nearby school.”Wangchuk said he deliberately chose not to publicly object to the film immediately because another controversy was already brewing between the filmmakers and author Chetan Bhagat. “I didn’t want people to think I was also trying to get money from the filmmakers.”

He said he waited until the legal period for claiming compensation had expired before writing to the makers, explaining how he had met Aamir Khan before the film was made and expressing his disappointment over not being consulted. “They never replied. Nor do I expect them to. I have better things to do in life.”He also criticised India’s obsession with films and cricket. “Our country gives too much importance to Bollywood and cricket. We try to achieve greatness through films, whereas we should be doing these things in real life.”The Chetan Bhagat-3 Idiots controversyThe release of 3 Idiots in December 2009 also sparked a major dispute between the filmmakers and author Chetan Bhagat, whose novel Five Point Someone served as the source material for the film. Bhagat objected to what he felt was inadequate recognition, arguing that while the film was adapted from his novel, the main story credit went to Rajkumar Hirani and Abhijat Joshi. Speaking to the media at the time, Bhagat said: “For the past two years, I trusted Hirani, Vidhu Vinod Chopra and Aamir Khan blindly, and this is what I get in return. Now I am being threatened with legal action, but I am ready for it.”The remark came after Aamir Khan warned of legal action over what he described as defamatory allegations. Producer Vidhu Vinod Chopra, meanwhile, strongly rejected Bhagat’s claims and accused the author of using the controversy to promote his book. In a blog post, Bhagat wrote: “Before release, the makers said the movie was only ‘very loosely’ or ‘2-5% inspired’ by the book. After release, those who have read both the book and seen the film know it is an adaptation of Five Point Someone.”He further argued: “The setting, characters, plotline, dramatic twists, one-liners, theme and message—almost everything that makes up the story comes from Five Point Someone. Yes, adaptations require changes, but this is by no means an original story.”“It is very unfortunate that Chetan is behaving in this manner. Abhijat Joshi has spent nearly three years writing the screenplay. It is unfortunate that Chetan is trying to take away credit from someone who is not as famous as he is.”Chetan Bhagat later said he was paid fairlySpeaking on Kushal Lodha’s podcast last year, Bhagat looked back at the deal with far less bitterness. He revealed that he had sold the adaptation rights to Five Point Someone for Rs 1 lakh, with an agreement that he would receive a Rs 10 lakh success bonus if the film performed well. “We had settled for a Rs 1 lakh contract, along with a Rs 10 lakh bonus. After the success of the film, they did pay me the bonus.”Although 3 Idiots eventually earned around Rs 350 crore worldwide and Bhagat received just Rs 11 lakh, he said he had no regrets. “I was pretty new then.

‘Prasoon Joshi has not seen Satluj, but has problems with it’: Anurag Kashyap on film’s ban

Anurag Kashyap has been actively advocating against the recent ban on former collaborator Honey Trehan’s period investigative thriller Satluj. The film, starring Diljit Dosanjh, has been fighting a three-year censorship battle, the latest chapter of which is it being pulled down from streaming platform ZEE5 across the world within days of its release earlier this month. Now, Kashyap has revealed what he gathered from a private conversation with Trehan — Prasoon Joshi, lyricist-screenwriter and the Chairperson of the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) hadn’t even watched the film before he objected to its release. “Honey says Prasoon Joshi had objections with the film. He hadn’t seen the film. I know, in other cases also, the chairman doesn’t see the film,” said Kashyap.

The filmmaker pointed out that in certain cases, the CBFC chief only acts on the basis of a report he gets from members of his Examining Committee. “On the basis of that report, an arbitrary decision can be made. So, the film has been arbitrarily withdrawn. When I last spoke to Honey, he hasn’t been given any clear reasons,” Kashyap said on stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra’s YouTube channel on Tuesday. “I did not get any calls from them. I had nothing to do. Neither my producers nor I got any calls. But Zee5 got a letter from the (I&B) Ministry to stop the film,” Trehan told The Indian Express recently. Despite not watching the film till that point at least, Prasoon Joshi demanded 127 cuts in Satluj, which was then titled Punjab ’95, including erasure of all references to Punjab. The makers were even “threatened” to withdraw their case against the CBFC in court just before they thought they were on the verge of winning.

Prasoon Joshi was appointed as the CBFC chairperson in 2017, succeeding late producer Pahlaj Nihalani. Last year, The Indian Express reported that a number of film professionals said Prasoon Joshi, the longest-serving CBFC chairperson has involved only a select few members in the board’s activities in recent years. “The range of censorship he is unleashing cannot always be explained in ideological or even political terms. So it is difficult to understand the source of his uncontested powers,” said a CBFC member, adding, “When Nihalani was removed, we thought it was the end of the ‘sanskaar raj’.” But then Joshi’s board changed the title of Padamavati to Padmavat (2018).”

Kashyap also attested to Prasoon’s lack of involvement, recalling how Nihalani personally supervised all the cuts in his 2015 period crime drama Bombay Velvet. In fact, he even did that in the Revising Committee, although the CBFC chief isn’t allowed to sit in that committee. He also delayed the process for the makers to go to



the Film Certification Appellate Tribunal (FCAT), which has now been abolished. “If the body’s face is Prasoon Joshi, he hasn’t made any statements on all the films being stopped. At the end of the day, by removing FCAT, it’s a Kafka-esque thing,” argued Kashyap. “A government office is a Kafka-esque face. You can’t hold a single government office responsible because they’re following the guidelines and procedure,” he added, claiming that the guidelines keep changing keeping in mind the public sentiment. “When I watched Satluj, I found no problem. Why would the government object, because it’s from Congress’ time,” reasoned Kashyap. Satluj revolves around the abduction and murder of human rights activist Jaswant Singh Khrala, who exposed over 2,500 estimated extrajudicial killings and cremations in Punjab of the 1990s, with the involvement of the state police.

After the film was pulled off ZEE5, the Centre formed a committee to review the situation. The said committee pointed out that Satluj can “threaten national security” by being exploited by “hostile elements” outside the country against the nation’s interests. However, like Trehan, Kashyap also believes that instead of dividing Punjab, the film is uniting the state. Kashyap on Tuesday shared a screenshot on his Instagram Stories, which stated, “For the last 10 days, #Satluj has been screened across Punjab and beyond. Not a single unpleasant incident has been reported. People are organizing these screenings on their own. If telling the truth is seen as a threat to peace, perhaps it exposes the guilty conscience and your ‘nation’.”“They always give the ‘law and order’ issue. There’s no scope for violence. It’s a loophole that’s used as an excuse,” claimed Kashyap. “The most important film, for me, today is Satluj. Because the intention we had in Black Friday, I see that objectively in Satluj. If an honesty like that is possible, it’ll give a lot of strength to filmmakers,” he added. “They say my film can harm the law and order situation in Punjab. On the contrary, my film has actually united Punjab,” Trehan told The Indian Express. “You go to Punjab and see, people are watching the movie together.

Aamir Khan on ‘love jihad’ claims: ‘Gauri not even Hindu; Kiran, Reena didn’t convert’



Aamir Khan recently tied the knot for the third time, sparking widespread debate on social media, with some accusing the actor of promoting “love jihad”, as they claimed all his three wives were Hindus. Breaking his silence on the controversy, Aamir clarified that his wife, Gauri Spratt, is not Hindu but Christian, and that none of his wives ever converted their religion. In an interview to Rediff, Aamir reacted to being labelled “the brand ambassador of love jihad.”“None of my wives converted their religion”He said, “The truth is that ours is a very inclusive family. Both my sisters are married to Hindus; my daughter is also married to a Hindu. My cousin Mansoor is married to a Christian.” He further added, “Neither Gauri, Kiran nor Reena converted their religion, as we had civil marriages. Gauri is not even Hindu, she is Christian, and not even a practising Christian at that. Life is getting more comical as time passes.”

Aamir Khan reacts to rumours of making sky villa’

Following his marriage, Aamir also made headlines after reports claimed he had purchased additional apartments in Mumbai’s Marina Apartments, which is currently undergoing redevelopment. Several reports suggested that the actor was planning to live in the redeveloped building with his current wife while also ensuring that his former wives, children and close family members had homes in the same complex. Addressing the speculation,

Aamir clarified that the redevelopment is a collective decision taken by the housing society. “Our apartment complex is going in for redevelopment, like the rest of Bombay. All old buildings in Bombay are going in for redevelopment. It is a decision taken by our housing society, which has 24 members. It involves a builder who has bought, and therefore owns, the bulk of the building. I am one of the members,” he said. Earlier reports had claimed that Aamir had spent around Rs 100 crore acquiring additional apartments in the redeveloped complex, where he already owned more than nine flats. According to the reports, two floors were intended for Aamir and Gauri, one floor for family gatherings, one for his son Junaid Khan, another for Kiran Rao and their son Azad, while his mother and sisters were also expected to have residences in the same building. However, Aamir’s latest statement suggests that much of the speculation surrounding the redevelopment has been exaggerated. Aamir was first married to Reena Dutta, with whom he shares two children—Junaid Khan and Ira Khan. The couple divorced after 16 years of marriage. In 2005, he married filmmaker Kiran Rao. They announced their separation in 2021 but continue to co-parent their son, Azad. Five years later, Aamir married Gauri Spratt, his Bengaluru-based acquaintance, whom he introduced to the media around his 60th birthday last year.

Visibly uncomfortable, Mouni Roy snaps at paparazzi: ‘Band Karo’

A video of actor Mouni Roy losing her cool at the paparazzi has gone viral on social media. The incident took place on Tuesday night when the actor stepped out to catch up with her friend and VJ Anusha Dandekar. After their outing at a cafe, the two headed towards their car, where paparazzi stationed outside continued clicking pictures of them. Visibly uncomfortable with the constant attention, Mouni eventually lost her patience and asked the photographers to stop.

In the viral video, Mouni is seen wearing a little black dress with a minimal, no-makeup look. As she settles into the car, she keeps her hand over her head, seemingly trying to avoid the cameras. Moments later, she turns towards the window and firmly says, “Band karo! (Stop it!)” Mouni Roy got angry with the paparazzi after they entered inside her car and started recording her.

Her ‘without make-up face’ got revealed but that’s not the point, the paps should respect the privacy of celebrities. Anusha, who was seated beside her, is then seen placing a reassuring hand on Mouni’s arm in an attempt to calm her down. Although Mouni remains quiet for a brief moment, she repeats, “Band karo,” just before the car drives away. In the background, some paparazzi can be heard telling others in Hindi, “Photos mat lo, woh mana kar rahi hain (Don’t take pictures, she’s asking us to stop).” Mouni Roy has been in the news ever since she announced her separation from husband Suraj Nambiar. On May 14, the couple shared a joint statement on Instagram confirming their split after weeks of speculation. The statement read, “We note with dismay the unnecessary and intrusive attention into our personal lives by certain quarters of the media. We would like to



state that we have decided to part ways and are taking the necessary time to address matters privately and amicably. Attempts have been made to sensationalise our private lives by circulation of fictitious narratives and blatant falsehoods, which do not reflect the reality of our relationship. After thoughtful reflection on evolving personal priorities, we have mutually chosen to move forward on separate paths with respect and understanding.”

Priyanka Chopra’s action update for SS Rajamouli’s ‘Varanasi’: ‘So many slow-motion jumps’



Priyanka Chopra is all set to make her Indian film comeback with SS Rajamouli’s Varanasi. In the latest episode of Jonas Brothers’ YouTube podcast, Priyanka joined her husband Nick Jonas and his brothers Kevin and Joe Jonas for a candid conversation, where she opened up about the much-awaited project. Priyanka Chopra has shared an exciting update about her upcoming

film Varanasi, directed by acclaimed filmmaker SS Rajamouli. During a recent podcast appearance, the actor spoke about the ambitious project, revealing that she has been working on it for over a year and hinting at the scale of the epic adventure. Talking about the Indian film industry and her next release, Priyanka clarified that while she’s known for her Bollywood work, Varanasi is a South Indian production. “I’ve been working on it for almost 14 months now. But this filmmaker, his name is SS Rajamouli, is known to take that kind of time to make movies.” The actor praised Rajamouli’s meticulous filmmaking process, pointing out that his previous blockbuster RRR showcased the kind of grand storytelling he is celebrated for.

Priyanka also shared a fun exchange about how her brother-in-law Joe Jonas was the first person to tell Priyanka about the film RRR to her before she had watched it herself. “You were like, ‘Oh, there’s this Indian movie that came out. I saw it,’” shared PeeCee about Joe Jonas’ reaction to RRR. When asked about the film, Priyanka described Varanasi as a massive cinematic experience. “He called me for this movie and it’s called Varanasi. It’s this epic adventure around the world and in time. It’s taken a minute, but I’m very excited about it. It comes out April 2027.