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Telangana CM demands end to 'police brutality' on protesting students

Hyderabad, July 20

Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has extended his support to students protesting against the NEET-UG 2026 paper leak in New Delhi. Condemning the reported police lathi-charge and use of tear gas during the "Chalo Sansad" march, Reddy demanded accountability and justice for the country's medical aspirants.

Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy backed the students protesting in Delhi and demanded an immediate end to 'police brutality' and accountability in the NEET and other paper leaks scandal.

The Chief Minister posted on social media that students from across India who converged to demand justice over the NEET paper-leak scandal are being beaten up with lathis and tear gas when they were marching to Parliament to draw attention to their struggle.

"The central government is using police force to silence the very youth whose future it has endangered. Every blow struck against a protesting student exposes the BJP's fear of questions, truth and democratic dissent," he said.

"I firmly stand with India's students, and we demand an immediate end to police brutality and accountability in the NEET and other paper leaks scandal," he added.

Reacting to the cancellation of NEET-UG 2026 following the paper leak in May, Revanth Reddy said the credibility of national-level examinations must be protected and that those involved in the paper leak must face punishment.

He stated that the cancellation of the NEET-UG 2026 examination has caused enormous distress and

uncertainty among lakhs of students and parents across India.

"The credibility of national examinations must be protected at all costs. Any individuals or networks involved in paper leaks or corruption must face the strictest punishment, irrespective of their influence or position," he had said.

According to reports from the national capital, the security forces used tear gas shells to disperse thousands of supporters of the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) who gathered to march to the Parliament on the first day of the monsoon session on Monday, despite police denying permission for the protest.

The police reportedly also used sticks and batons to disperse the crowd, mostly youngsters, who had converged at the Jantar Mantar protest site for the "Chalo Sansad" march against alleged irregularities in NEET and to demand the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

Some protesters and police personnel sustained minor injuries as they allegedly tried to breach barricades while marching towards Parliament.

Scientific tests for repairs to Kaleshwaram barrages in final stages

Leading technical institutions, including Central Water and Power Research Station (CWPRS) and National Geophysical Research Institute (NGRI), have conducted tests with regard to the nature of the soil, foundations and concrete structures as part of repairs of the three barrages, he said.

Hyderabad, July 20

Telangana Irrigation Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy on Monday, July 20, said the scientific tests for the repair of the three barrages of the Kaleshwaram project are in the final stages and that designs are being prepared for their revival.

Reddy, who held a meeting with MLAs and other leaders of Nalgonda and other districts, said the government has adopted a scientific approach to resume the Medigadda, Annaram and Sundilla barrages of the Kaleshwaram lift irrigation project.

Kaleshwaram is a multi-purpose project on the Godavari river in the Bhupalpally district. Damage to the barrages of the project, built during the previous BRS regime, was a major issue during the 2023 Assembly election.

Reddy made it clear that the government would not use the three barrages until the experts certify their safety

Leading technical institutions, including Central Water and Power Research Station (CWPRS) and National Geophysical Research Institute (NGRI), have conducted tests with regard to the nature of the soil, foundations and concrete structures as part of repairs of the three barrages, he said.

Reddy said the test results have been sent to IIT, Mumbai, where experts are preparing comprehen-

sive designs for their revival.

He made it clear that the state government would take up the revival of the barrages as per the instructions of the National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA), the Central Water Commission (CWC) and also a technical supervisory committee appointed by the Centre.

Roach rage rattles Delhi;

cops resort to lathicharge, tear gas during CJP march to Parliament; 50 injured

New Delhi, July 20

Thousands gathered in support of the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP)-led march to Parliament on Monday, defying a Delhi Police crackdown that saw the deployment of batons and tear gas shells to disperse crowds that repeatedly regrouped.

Both police personnel and protesters were injured in clashes through the day, with over 100 people detained as the police struggled to maintain order in central Delhi.

The protest, reminiscent of the 2019 anti-CAA agitation, saw the government engage CJP leaders for the first time in a month since they began their sit-in on June 20, demanding the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over the NEET-UG 2026 paper leak.

Union Minister JP Nadda met CJP's Saurav Das and Ashutosh Ranka, who presented their demands, including Pradhan's ouster. While the government asked the protesters to end their sit-in as it considered the CJP memorandum, activist Sonam Wangchuk announced that he would continue his fast until youth leaders were allowed to meet MPs in Parliament or MPs were allowed to meet him at the hospital where he is undergoing treatment.

Wangchuk's hunger strike entered its 23rd day on Monday, even as CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke ended his fast.

The day saw groups of protesters repeatedly trying to breach barricades to reach Parliament, while the police virtually sealed every approach to the high-security zone.

Multi-layered barricades and heavy deployment of security personnel locked down Jantar Mantar and surrounding roads, including Connaught Place, Janpath, Parliament Street and Raisina Road, leaving demonstrators hemmed in with little room to move forward or disperse.

As crowds swelled, security personnel launched successive lathi charges to push protesters back, while tear gas shells were fired at several locations.

On the ground, The Tribune correspondent witnessed prolonged face-offs between Delhi Police, Rapid Action Force (RAF) personnel and protesters, leading to stampede-like situations at multiple locations, with protesters breaking barricades and security forces pushing them back.

This correspondent also witnessed isolated instances of violence directed at police personnel, with a section of protesters attacking officials during clashes. The police sources claimed some people in the crowd threw stones, forcing them to resort to lathi charge and tear gas shelling.

In one incident near Regal Cinema, a protester was seen throwing stones at the police. When asked why he was resorting to violence, he said, "They brutally hit my friend. They are hitting us wherever they find us. Now if they hit us, we will hit back."

Though such incidents were isolated, they underscored the tension that gripped the capital throughout the day, with nearly 9,000 security personnel, including paramilitary forces, deployed to control the surging crowds.

By evening, the CJP protest stage at Jantar Mantar had been dismantled, even as protesters regrouped near the site. At several locations, this correspondent spotted people in casual clothing chasing away protesters and assaulting them. At another location, a group of protesters was seen assaulting a police official.

Parliament gates and several office buildings

remained out of bounds for long periods as the Home Ministry ordered suspension of Internet services in two phases -- from 8 am to noon and from noon to 6 pm. The temporary suspension was ordered by the MHA under the Telecommunications Act, 2023.

The police said the Internet clampdown was necessary to prevent the spread of misinformation on social media, with several posts under investigation.

As panic spread across the city, the police repeatedly took to X to dispel what it described as rumours.

The police said force was used only after repeated attempts by protesters to violate prohibitory orders under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), which bars unlawful assemblies except at designated protest sites with prior permission.

No Parliament biz on Day 1 as Opposition raises paper leak, donation theft

New Delhi, July 20

The first day of the monsoon session of Parliament got washed out amid stormy protests in both Houses by the Opposition over the NEET paper leak and the Ram Temple donation theft controversy.

After a dozen adjournments — six times each in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha — both Houses were adjourned for the day.While protests by students spiralled out of control outside the Parliament House complex as thousands of them converged on Jantar Mantar amid heavy police and paramilitary presence, inside Parliament, both Houses could not transact any business and were adjourned for the day at 3 pm.The severity of the protests outside by students could be gauged from the fact that the Parliament complex's gates were locked from inside for several hours, making it difficult for staffers and other personnel to either enter or depart from there.

2026 Ashada Bonalu Jathara Brochure of Sri Nallapochamma Temple Unveiled

""Hyderabad, July 19: The official brochure for the 2026 Ashada Masam Bonalu Jathara of Sri Sri Nallapochamma Temple, Mukkar Basti, Uppuguda, was formally released today at the temple premises amid devotional fervour.""The brochure features the schedule of religious and cultural programmes to be conducted as part of the annual Bonalu celebrations from July 30 to August 10, 2026. Temple authorities stated that elaborate arrangements are being made to ensure the smooth and successful conduct of the festival, which attracts a large number of devotees every year.""The brochure was unveiled in the presence of Chief Advisor Sri V. Narsing Rao, President Sri A. Pandarinath, Working President Sri Devender, General Secretary Sri Rupesh, Sri Dannu, Treasurer Sri Harish, Sri Anantha Rama Rao, Sri Satyanarayana, Sri Raj Kumar, Sri Sridhar, Sri Harikrishna, Sri Srinivas, Sri Yadagiri, and Temple Chief Priest Sri Sridhar, along with temple committee members and devotees.""Speaking on the occasion, the temple committee extended an invitation to devotees to participate in the Ashada Bonalu festivities in large numbers and seek the blessings of Sri Nallapochamma Ammavaru. The committee also expressed confidence that this year's celebrations would be conducted with traditional grandeur and spiritual devotion.

Dharmasthala 'secret burials': SIT files final report, says allegations false

The Karnataka Police team investigating the alleged "secret burials" in the temple town of Dharmasthala has filed its final report, concluding that the complainant had made false allegations.A report for the completion of the probe was filed in a magistrate's court in Dakshina Kannada on Wednesday. The report is filed under Section 215 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023," a Special Investigation Team (SIT) source said.The report under this BNSS section indicates that the allegations were found to be false and leaves it to the court to decide whether to initiate perjury proceedings, the source added.The final report filed on Wednesday runs over 7,000 pages and details the SIT's efforts to ascertain the truth behind former sanitation worker C N Chinnaiah's claims of secret burials of dozens of bodies in Dharmasthala between 1995 and 2014.Chinnaiah named sole accused

Last year, Chinnaiah claimed to have carried out dozens of secret burials in the temple town. Based on his allegations, the Dharmasthala police filed a First Information Report (FIR) on July 4 and sought an official statement from him in court.Chinnaiah appeared before a magistrate's court in Belthangady on July 11, 2025, to provide a statement. On July 19, the Karnataka government constituted an SIT headed by DGP-rank officer Pranab Mohanty.The SIT's search for the bodies for over a month proved futile, following which Chinnaiah was arrested on August 23, 2025, on charges of providing false information. Months later, in November, the SIT filed an initial report before the Belthangady magistrate's court, saying it had found no evidence to substantiate his claims.Chinnaiah had produced a skull he claimed was a part of the "secret burials" he had conducted at the temple town. SIT investigations, however, revealed that the skull was given by the uncle of a teenage girl who was raped and murdered in the temple town in 2012. The 2012 murder probe did not stand up to legal scrutiny, and no one was found guilty by the courts.At the conclusion of its probe, the SIT has named Chinnaiah as the sole accused, charged with providing false information. Investigators have further indicated that several activists from the region—Mahesh Thimarody, Jayanth T, and Vittal Gowda—and former police official Girish Mattanavar were part of an alleged misinformation plot.The SIT said Chinnaiah was part of a conspiracy hatched by Thimarody, Mattanavar, Jayanth T and Gowda to target the administrators of the Sree Dharmasthala Manjunatheshwara Temple Trust and its 'dharmadhikari' Veerendra Heggade, a Rajya Sabha MP associated with the BJP.No evidence to back allegationsSeveral aspects of the 'secret burials' investigation that began in July 2025 unravelled on account of the lack of evidence.Chinnaiah, whose identity was initially protected, claimed that he witnessed some murders being committed in a "cruel manner", adding that he was forced to dispose of the bodies. "I have buried hundreds of bodies, and the final rites were not performed respectfully. The guilt is haunting me, and I believe that the final rites should be performed to pave a respectful farewell to the deceased," he said in a letter sent to the police through his advocates ahead of the filing of the case.A two-week search for the remains, however, yielded no major results.The SIT, which began the search for the remains on July 29, 2025, found bones at one of 13 locations indicated by Chinnaiah, police sources said. The remains of a person who allegedly died by suicide were found during a search operation on the banks of the Nethravati River and the forests surrounding the bathing ghats near Dharmasthala, sources added.An elderly woman, Sujatha Bhat, had filed a complaint stating that her daughter, a medical student at Manipal, went missing in Dharmasthala in 2003.

The local police did not register a First Information Report, and after preliminary investigations, the SIT could not corroborate her statements.In June this year, Chinnaiah, who was released on bail last year, approached the Karnataka High Court over the SIT's delay in filing a chargesheet and prosecuting others in the case. He stated that the SIT has only named him as an accused but has not filed a final report in the case, giving rise to "the doubtful circumstances involved in the matter".Chinnaiah's petition filed on June 8 says the SIT filed a preliminary inquiry report in November 2025 naming five people as conspirators in perpetrating the 'secret burials' claim on social media. "Though they have named aforesaid persons as conspirators, there is no action taken against them. Further, there is no separate crime case registered against them for having played fraud on the court and having caused loss to the state exchequer through the process of law," the writ petition, which is to be heard on July 22, states.

Amritsar Airport dispatches India-UK CETA garment shipment to Birmingham

The first-ever export consignment of ready-made garments under the newly enacted India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) was successfully flagged off today from Sri Guru Ram Dass Jee International Airport in Amritsar.The special commercial shipment was dispatched directly to Birmingham, United Kingdom, aboard a scheduled Air India flight.The landmark departure ceremony was attended by a cohort of senior officials, including Aditya Singh Chauhan (Deputy DGFT), Gaurav Gupta (Assistant Director), A K Sharma (Airport Director), Varun (CSO, Airport), Azad Singh (Station In-charge, Cargo, Amritsar) and Rishabh (Import-Export Executive, Amritsar Cargo).

According to PIB, the operationalisation of the India-UK CETA on July 15, 2026, ushers in a transformative era for cross-border commerce between the two nations.One of the provisions of the agreement is the tariff relief granted to Indian goods, ensuring that approximately 99 per cent of all Indian products will get comprehensive duty-free access to the British market. India's labor-intensive textile and garment sector stands out as a primary beneficiary.

Before the enforcement of the CETA framework, steep import duties ranging anywhere from 4 per cent to 16 per cent were levied on Indian ready-made garments exported to the UK. Under the new guidelines, this tariff has been slashed to zero per cent. This agreement effectively lowers production premiums, a change projected to trigger a rapid surge in demand and dramatically expand the market share of Indian apparel across high-street and digital retail spaces in the United Kingdom.This initial shipment represents a massive validation of regional infrastructure and a boost for the local economy in Punjab.By clearing and routing international cargo directly from the Amritsar Cargo Terminal via Air India, regional manufacturers and exporters no longer have to rely on congested logistics hubs in distant metropolitan cities like New Delhi or Mumbai. This logistical independence translates directly into monumental savings in transit time, fuel consumption, and overall supply chain expenses. Consequently, the inaugural flight to Birmingham establishes Amritsar as a vital international trade gateway, enabling local businesses to participate seamlessly in the global economy.

Delhi's e-rickshaw battery scare: What changed for drivers in two weeks

For the past two weeks, every time 45-year-old e-rickshaw driver Peshkar slowed down in traffic, he worried someone had remotely switched off his vehicle."I took my vehicle to the manufacturing company in Naraina where they said they had installed a code on my battery, so no one will be able to shut it off. I am happy that they did this for free," said Peshkar, who ferries passengers in his e-rickshaw between Moti Nagar and Inderlok in West Delhi.The reassurance comes after weeks of anxiety among Delhi's e-rickshaw drivers, whose vehicles had stopped dead in the middle of the road after strangers using Bluetooth-enabled mobile apps connected to their vehicles' battery management systems (BMS) and remotely switched them off.

Following reports of the misuse, the Centre directed Apple and Google to take down seven mobile applications linked to the batteries, while manufacturers rolled out their own apps.Apart from a few stray incidents, most e-rickshaw drivers who spoke to said they have not experienced any fresh incidents since the apps were blocked, with business returning to normal.Fifty-year-old Ranjeet still recalls the panic when his e-rickshaw suddenly stopped in the middle of the road two weeks ago. "I was ferrying four passengers when my e-rickshaw suddenly stopped at Mundka Mor. I couldn't understand it because my battery was more than half charged," he said.He said he tried to restart, but to no avail. Some fellow e-rickshaw drivers pushed his vehicle to the side of the road. "I couldn't push alone as I am a heart patient," he said.Besides refunding Rs 40 to his passengers, he estimates he had lost a few hundred rupees more while searching for a mechanic. The vehicle stopped around 5 pm and did not restart until 10 pm, wiping out his peak earning hours.The next day, his vehicle stopped again at the Mundka Metro station around 11 pm. "This time, some kind strangers helped me in pushing it to the nearest mechanic. He said he has locked my battery. Since then, my vehicle has not stopped," Ranjeet said.Rajiv Tuli, General Secretary of Electric Vehicle Manufacturing Society (EVMS), said manufacturing companies set up helplines that stranded drivers could call and get assistance on how to restart their vehicle. "They have also made their own apps now which drivers can use," he said.

What caused the issueThe apps that had been directed to be blocked include BAT-BMS, Lossigy, Epoch Li-ion, and Smart BMS, among others. At least a couple of them are of Chinese-origin.The BAT-BMS app was originally developed by China's Shenzhen Grenergy Technology as a legitimate battery management tool for Bluetooth-enabled lithium-ion batteries. The app allows users to monitor a battery's state of charge, voltage, current, temperature, charging cycles, and overall health.Such apps are typically designed to be used at service centres for battery-related diagnostics.The problem emerged because several low-cost lithium-ion batteries used in e-rickshaws were fitted with Chinese-made battery management systems that lacked adequate password protection or continued to use default credentials, allowing anyone nearby to connect via Bluetooth and remotely switch off the battery.Not all e-rickshaws were susceptible to these attacks. Many e-rickshaws continue to run on lead-acid batteries, while several lithium-powered vehicles use proprietary battery management systems that cannot be accessed through applications like BAT-BMS.Jeetu Mehra, a 30-year-old who drives an e-rickshaw at Central Delhi's Karol Bagh, is among the very few who said their vehicle stalled recently. "On Saturday, the moment passengers sat in my rickshaw at Juta Mandi, it stopped. But I was not scared this time," he said.

Punjab police resort to lathi-charge, teargas, and water cannons to disperse protesting MGNREGA workers

A protest by MGNREGA employees demanding regularisation of their services and release of eight months' pending salaries turned violent in Khanna on Wednesday when police used lathi-charge, tear gas and water cannons to stop demonstrators marching towards the residence of Punjab Rural Development and Panchayat Minister Tarunpreet Singh Sond.According to protesters, 10 of them suffered injuries in the police action and were admitted to the Khanna Civil Hospital and private hospitals. Police officers, including Khanna DSP Vinod Kumar, also sustained injuries during the clash.

The employees, who had gathered at Prem Bhandari Park in the morning, marched towards the minister's residence on Amloh Road to submit a memorandum seeking the regularisation of over 2,000 contractual MGNREGA staff by merging them into the Department of Rural Development and Panchayats and the release of salaries pending for the last eight months.Police had erected barricades near the minister's residence. As protesters attempted to move past them, police resorted to lathi-charge, fired tear gas shells and used water cannons to disperse the crowd.Police said force was used after protesters tried to breach the barricades and advance towards the minister's residence. Additional personnel were deployed and the situation was later brought under control.The Pendu Mazdoor Union, which extended support to the protest, condemned the police action. State president Tarsem Peter alleged that protesters were peacefully proceeding to submit their memorandum when they were stopped and assaulted. He claimed several women protesters were injured and alleged that police manhandled them during the clash.The union said Fatehgarh Sahib resident Sudagar Singh suffered fractures in both legs and was referred to a hospital in Mohali due to the seriousness of his injuries. Tarsem Peter demanded that the Punjab government provide free medical treatment and compensation to all injured workers.In a separate incident after the protest, a canter carrying MGNREGA workers back to their villages overturned following a head-on collision with another vehicle near Bija village. One worker, identified as Sukhdev Singh, was killed, while several others were injured and admitted to nearby hospitals.The police action triggered sharp political reactions.

Punjab Congress president Amarinder Singh Raja Warring condemned the use of force against the protesting workers, alleging that the Bhagwant Mann government had "turned Punjab into a police state". He said the MGNREGA workers were holding a peaceful 'dharna' and chanting 'Satnam Wahe Guru' (Sikh religious chant), yet the police resorted to "brutality". He questioned the use of water cannons, teargas shells, and lathi-charge against protesting MGNREGA workers. "Is this how a common man's government deals with its people?" Warring demanded suspension of police and administrative officers who resorted to "unprovoked" lathi-charge on MGNREGA workers.Shiromani Akali Dal president Sukhbir Singh Badal also criticised the crackdown, alleging that contractual employees seeking their legitimate dues were met with "lathis, water cannons and tear gas"."These contractual employees and labourers were only demanding their rightful pending wages…This is not governance, this is pure dictatorship and 'Danda Tantra'! You cannot silence the voice of the people with brute force," he said.Leader of Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa said the government should immediately clear pending MGNREGA dues and address the workers' grievances through dialogue instead of force.

Fresh violence on Mumbai local: Two injured in late-night fight aboard local train

Two individuals were injured in a fresh violence onboard a Mumbai local train, raising serious questions over lack of security and passenger safety. The incident was reported around 12:30 am in the early hours of Wednesday, July 15, inside the luggage coach of Ambarnath-bound Mumbai local, barely a month after a fatal stabbing incident inside one of the suburban trains.According to railway officials, the two men got into a fight, during which both sustained head injuries.

What led to the fight?

Laxman Chavan, senior inspector of Dombivali GRP, said that Pritesh Kanojia, a Titwala resident, was travelling in the luggage compartment of the train and dozed off.Later, two persons, identified as Raju Waghe and Sahil Khandare, boarded the same compartment and confronted Kanojia and asked him to get up, leading to a scuffle between the two parties.As one of them was wearing a kada, it also hit some other commuters. Due to the fight between the two sides, one of them lost consciousness. Both sides are currently being discharged from the hospital and we are in the process of registering offences against both sides in the matter. No weapons have been used," Chavan said.The train was attended at Kalyan station by personnel from the Railway Protection Force (RPF) and the Government Railway Police (GRP). Both injured passengers were administered first aid before being shifted to Rukhmabai Hospital. One of them, who suffered a severe head injury, was later referred to Sion Hospital for further treatment.

The senior inspector has said that they are in the process of registering two FIRs – one each on behalf of the two parties.

More trouble for Siya Goyal's family, food safety watchdog halts business

Trouble has mounted for the family of 20-year-old Siya Goyal, who is accused of murdering her 25-year-old fiance, Ketan Agarwal. Following an inspection, the Maharashtra Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has asked Siya's family-owned grocery business to halt operations for allegedly violating norms of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India. The family-owned business deals in spices and dry fruits.

The inspection on the company's premises at Pune's Gultekdi was carried out following a tip-off. "During the inspection, authorities seized 84 food samples, including turmeric powder, oil, and soybean chunks, weighing a total of 4,172 kg and valued at Rs 8.13 lakh," said DV Bhogawade, Joint Commissioner of FDA, adding that the action was carried out as part of Safe Food, Safe Drug, Safe Maharashtra campaign.

Pune man held for distributing 'rat poison capsules' at Mumbai Muharram rally

Faiyaz Premji Mumbai poison capsuleAccording to the Mumbai police, Faiyaz Premji is a BBA graduate. His father owns a paint company in Pune. and his mother and sister are in Iran.A 39-year-old man from Pune was arrested on Saturday for allegedly distributing capsules mixed with zinc phosphide—rat poison—during a Muharram procession in south Mumbai on Friday night.The police identified the accused as Faiyaz Premji and said that he had 14,000 capsules with him. He allegedly told the police that he intended to harm those who had gathered for the religious event. Officers are now interrogating him to determine his motive.Zinc phosphide, a rodenticide, is commonly used to kill rats and is also used as a single-dose poison in agricultural fields.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Jayant Meena said the case came to light after employees of a hospital reported that a man had been admitted with vomiting and severe stomach cramps after consuming a "painkiller" tablet that was allegedly being handed out during the procession. Suspecting something amiss, the doctors alerted the police, who picked up Premji."He told us he wanted to target the procession and harm them. He had ordered 30,000 capsules online and 50 kg of zinc phosphide. He added 1 gram of zinc phosphide to each capsule," DCP Meena said. He added that Premji claimed the capsules were painkillers while distributing them among participants.According to the police, Premji is a BBA graduate whose father owns a paint company in Pune. His mother and sister are in Iran and he himself had visited Iran and Iraq in 2025.DCP Meena added that by acting swiftly, the police had averted a major tragedy. An officer said they are checking how many people took the pills and if anyone else has complained of any health issues.

Punjab man dies in Italy police custody after sexual assault complaint

The death of a 23-year-old Punjabi man in police custody in Italy on June 23 has left his family in Punjab's Hoshiarpur devastated and searching for answers, with Italian authorities ordering an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the incident.The deceased, Sukhwinder Singh alias Sonu, a resident of Miani village, was arrested by the Italian Police on June 21 following a complaint by three minor girls who allegedly accused him of inappropriate behaviour during a visit to Tibidabo Water Park.

The man had been living in Italy for the past five years. He worked as an agricultural labourer near Brescia and was reportedly in the process of regularising his stay in the country.What made the tragedy even more painful for the family was the manner in which they learned about his death. The family received an official communication in Italian, a language neither the family nor many educated residents of the village could understand. It was only after a local youth used an Artificial Intelligence-based translation tool to convert the document into Punjabi that the family came to know that Sukhwinder had died.The translated communication stated that Sukhwinder had died while in custody.Italian authorities stated that after Sukhwinder's arrest, the matter was subsequently placed before a court, which recorded the statements of the minor girls.Based on those statements, the court reportedly held him responsible for sexual harassment-related allegations and ordered that he be sent to jail.Officials further informed the family that Sukhwinder had no previous criminal record in Italy. He had also applied for political asylum and was awaiting the outcome of his immigration-related proceedings.Family maintains Sukhwinder was innocentThe family, however, has strongly disputed the allegations.

Sukhwinder's younger sister, Amandeep Kaur, said her brother had spoken to the family shortly before his arrest and narrated a different version of events.According to her, Sukhwinder told them that while passing through the water park, where three girls were taking selfies and chatting, his hand accidentally brushed against one of them. An argument allegedly followed, after which the police were called.Sukhwinder Singh's family Sukhwinder Singh's family has strongly disputed the allegations. Special arrangement)"He repeatedly told us that he had done nothing wrong and that the allegations were false," Amandeep said.The family claims Sukhwinder was deeply disturbed by the accusations and insisted on his innocence during conversations after his arrest.According to information received from Italy, Sukhwinder was lodged in jail after being produced before a court on June 21.The family said they later learned that he complained of feeling unwell inside the prison. Authorities reportedly shifted him to another cell, but he died on June 23, on the third day of his arrest.The family was officially informed of his death on June 24.Amandeep said the family believes the young man was unable to bear the emotional stress caused by the allegations. However, the exact cause of death has not yet been officially established.Investigation and post-mortem orderedFollowing the custodial death, senior Italian police officials have initiated an investigation into the case.According to information shared with the family, the Brescia Prosecutor's Office has ordered a post-mortem examination of the body. A special inquiry committee has also been constituted to examine the circumstances leading to the death and determine whether any lapses occurred during his detention.Authorities are expected to rely on forensic findings, prison records, and other evidence to establish the exact cause of death.For Sukhwinder's family, the tragedy has brought an abrupt end to years of sacrifice and hope.He had moved to Italy around five years ago after studying up to Class 11, hoping to improve the family's financial condition. His mother had reportedly mortgaged her jewellery and taken loans worth nearly ?15 lakh to finance his journey abroad. She died two years ago. Sukhwinder could not attend her last rites because of his immigration situation.The family says he was their only son and the main hope for improving their economic circumstances.Relatives describe him as a religious-minded young man who had served as a pathi (a religious man at the Gurudwara who recites religious texts) at the village gurdwara before leaving for Italy.

MLA Humayun Kabir under fire after threatening BJP workers at Murshidabad rally

Aam Janata Unnayan Party (AJUP) chief Humayun Kabir Friday sparked a controversy after threatening to beat up BJP workers in Murshidabad district.Addressing a public meeting in Murshidabad's Rejinagar, Humayun Kabir said, "I told (Chief Minister) Suvendu Adhikari, it is good that you have won and the BJP has won. But ask (your) party not to boast too much in Murshidabad.""If they (BJP workers) cross the limits, there will be trouble. Lakhs will hit the streets, and I will lead the community. We will beat them up. There will be no one left to hold the BJP flag here. The BJP district president will also vanish," threatened Nowda MLA Kabir.Reacting to his statements, Bengal Panchayat and Rural Development Minister Dilip Ghosh said, "Once Mamata Banerjee and her nephew made statements like this. Look at their condition now. One is trying to get cheap publicity by saying all this. But one should not forget that the government has changed in Bengal."

CPI(M) leader Shatarup Ghosh, too, condemned Kabir's remarks. He said, "Kabir should be immediately arrested. He made controversial comments in 2024 as well when the TMC was in power. But he was not arrested. After such communal and controversial comments, we want to see that he is arrested. If he is not arrested, then it will prove that he has a link with the BJP."Kabir was expelled from the TMC last year after he announced plans to construct a Babri Masjid replica in the Muslim-majority Murshidabad district.He later formed the AJUP and announced an alliance with the AIMIM to contest the Bengal polls. The alliance, though, did not survive after it was alleged that Kabir had accepted money from the BJP to harm the electoral prospects of the then-ruling TMC.Kabir himself contested two seats, Rejinagar and Nowda, and won both, but chose to retain his Nowda seat.

Congress to corner Centre on Ram temple donation row, paper leaks in Monsoon Session

New Delhi: The Congress on Thursday said it will corner the government on critical issues such as the alleged theft of donations from the Ram temple and "systemic corrosion" of education system during the upcoming Monsoon Session of Parliament.The party also asserted that it will strongly oppose the constitutional amendment bills related to delimitation and dismissal of ministers and chief ministers during the session beginning July 20.Senior Congress leaders, including party chief Mallikarjun Kharge, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and other senior leaders deliberated on key issues to be taken up during the session. The meeting was held at the 10, Janpath residence of Congress Parliamentary Party (CPP) chairperson Sonia Gandhi.Among other Congress leaders who attended the key strategy meeting included AICC general secretary K C Venugopal, Congress' chief whip in Rajya Sabha Jairam Ramesh, P Chidambaram, K Suresh, Naseer Hussain, Manickam Tagore, Kumari Selja, Tariq Anwar, Shashi Tharoor and Manish Tewari among others.

In a post on X, Kharge said, "Chanda Chori — Astha se Dhoka, Paper leaks and the systemic corrosion of education system, institutional capture, breaking of political parties, multiple scams and charges of corruption, back-breaking price rise, foreign policy failures and strategic blunders, the imposition of ethanol blending on 3.5 crore vehicle owners, unbridled deforestation, and the continued assault on the rights of SCs, STs, OBCs and minorities are among the critical issues on which the Congress Party will hold the Modi government accountable during the forthcoming Monsoon Session of Parliament."These pressing concerns affecting the lives and aspirations of the people were deliberated upon during the meeting, Kharge said.Addressing a press conference after the meeting, Ramesh said, "We have learnt that the Union Home Minister (Amit Shah) is making efforts to bring back the Delimitation Bill. The government failed to secure a two-thirds majority on 17th April and suffered a significant setback. It now wants to reintroduce the Bill."This was discussed along with the Constitution amendment bill which seeks the removal of ministers in custody for 30 days over serious offences, he said."The Congress Party has consistently maintained that it will strongly oppose the Delimitation Bill and will continue to do so. We will also make every effort to maintain the unity and solidarity of all Opposition parties. Similarly, we will firmly oppose the proposed Constitution Amendment Bill related to the removal of ministers," he said.There was also some discussion on the 'One Nation, One Election' on which a JPC has been constituted, Ramesh said."We will also oppose the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill in its entirety. It is possible that the Bill may be introduced during this session. There is also a possibility that the FCRA Amendment Bill will be introduced. We will oppose it as well. We had opposed it earlier, following which the government withdrew the Bill. However, we are now hearing that it may be brought back," Ramesh said.Another important issue discussed was the proposed amendments to the National Food Security Act, 2013, which forms the basis of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, he said."We are completely opposed to these proposed amendments, and if the Bill is introduced during this session, we will strongly oppose it. As far as the legislative agenda is concerned, I do not see any Bill before us that we can support," Ramesh said.

Video row escalates, SGPC asks Bhagwant Mann to resign over 'grave mistake'

The general house of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) on Saturday passed a resolution demanding the immediate resignation of Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann over a viral video and directed that a First Information Report (FIR) be filed against him."This is a grave mistake by the chief minister, one that is unforgivable. Bhagwant Singh Mann has lost the moral right to remain in office and must resign immediately," the SGPC declared.

Reading the resolution, SGPC president Harjinder Singh Dhami said that the purported video of Mann has "caused massive outrage and anger across the entire Sikh world." Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Kuldeep Singh Gargajj was also present at the meeting.Mann has been under fire from the Akal Takht, the highest temporal body of Sikhs, which has alleged that the person in the video is him and declared him "Guru dokhi" (anti-Guru) and "panth virodhi" (anti-panth). Mann has denied the allegation.'Mann used lies, influence'The SGPC general house endorsed the action taken by the Akal Takht in issuing notice over the matter, calling it "an important step in keeping with national traditions".The SGPC general house also took serious note of what it described as a confrontational policy adopted by Mann toward the Akal Takht. It alleged, "In order to defend himself, the chief minister used lies, government officials, and official influence to get a fake report prepared from a laboratory in Gurgaon—the truth of which has now come before the Sangat."The resolution noted that Jaspreet Singh, associated with the laboratory in question, has issued a statement to the media, and that Haryana Police has registered an FIR in the matter.

The SGPC general house directed its executive committee to meet the Punjab director general of police and formally seek registration of criminal cases against Mann and his associates on charges including misuse of a constitutional office, use of government resources to fabricate false evidence, suppression of genuine evidence, and hurting religious sentiments and committing sacrilege.It also announced that it will launch a large-scale campaign across every constituency to mobilise the Sikh community in line with the Akal Takht directives. Preachers will be deployed across Punjab to "firmly uphold the Akal Takht's orders against Mann and inspire the Sangat to stand firm", it added.The SGPC general house also appealed to the Khalsa Panth, Sikh institutions, gurdwara management committees, religious organisations, and Panth-loving individuals to "oppose Bhagwant Singh Mann at every level to protect Gur Maryada under the guidance and orders of Akal Takht Sahib."

Pune civic body plans new water tanker rules to fix complaints

The city's ongoing water crisis took centre stage at a Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) standing committee meeting on Friday, as chairman Shrinath Bhimale ordered the formulation of a comprehensive Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to govern tanker-based water supply.The directive comes nearly two weeks after PMC introduced an alternate-day water supply on June 15, a measure that invited a flood of complaints, with over 1,200 grievances logged so far. Of these, 450 have been resolved, while roughly 750 remain pending.Addressing a press conference, Bhimale outlined the scale of the problem. "We are facing numerous issues – water being sold at inflated rates, delayed tanker arrivals, the deficiency of GPS systems, road accidents, complaints regarding water quality, and a lack of regulation," he said.

He stressed the need to consider all these factors and establish a uniform, effective SOP.With several areas of the city receiving water on alternate days and others dependent almost entirely on tanker supply, the committee's discussion covered a wide spectrum, from overcharging by private operators to the exploitation of vulnerable residents during peak scarcity.As an immediate step, the PMC administration has been directed to place before the standing committee a detailed status report on tanker operations in the city. This includes the total number of PMC and private tankers currently in service, the capacity of tanker-filling stations, authorised rates, accident data, driver credentials, GPS deployment, online booking mechanisms, water quality testing protocols, and information about the control room setup.The proposed SOP addresses both citizen convenience and operational accountability. On the transparency front, the guidelines call for an official rate card to be announced and displayed on every tanker, an online and helpline-based booking system, a mobile application for citizens to track tankers in real time, and strict enforcement of a first-come, first-served supply policy.

Road safety has emerged as a parallel concern. The committee has directed that speed limits be imposed on tankers, with stricter norms applicable near schools and hospitals. Tanker drivers will be required to undergo regular training, periodic medical check-ups, and mandatory testing for alcohol and narcotics. All vehicles must be fitted with safety lights, reverse cameras, and alarm systems, while hazardous locations and accident-prone stretches are to be identified and flagged.On the quality front, Bhimale announced that every tanker will be required to carry water that has been regularly sampled and chlorinated. Strict action has been mandated against suppliers found distributing contaminated water. Additionally, all private tankers will need to be registered with the PMC, obtain annual fitness certification, and be placed on a publicly accessible list – with a separate registry maintained for rule violators.The committee has also directed the administration to ensure priority tanker supply to hospitals, schools, police stations, and fire stations. A dedicated action plan is to be drawn up for water-scarce zones, and a 24/7 helpline is to be launched for the immediate redressal of tanker-related complaints, with a 24-hour resolution window mandated for each grievance received.

Punjab reverses stand, to roll out VB-G RAM G scheme from July

The Punjab government has notified the implementation of the Centre's Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) scheme from July 1, in a complete reversal of the stand it had taken barely six months ago when the Punjab Assembly had unanimously passed a resolution rejecting the legislation.A notification issued by the Punjab Rural Development and Panchayats Department on Friday states that the provisions of the VB-G RAM G Act, 2025 will come into force in the state from July 1. The implementation follows the Centre's rollout of the new rural employment law, which replaces the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).The move marks a sharp U-turn by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government. On December 30, 2025, the Punjab government had convened a special Assembly session and got a unanimous resolution passed rejecting the VB-G RAM G Act. The House urged the Centre to withdraw the law and restore MGNREGA in its original rights-based form.The resolution stated that the new law takes away the legal guarantee of employment and timely wages available to poor labourers, women and lakhs of job card holders. It said the legislation converts MGNREGA from a demand-driven, rights-based programme into a norm-based scheme, imposes an additional financial burden on states by changing the funding pattern, and weakens the federal structure by reducing the Centre's responsibility.Replying to the debate in the Assembly, Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann had described the legislation as anti-poor, anti-Dalit, anti-farmer, anti-labourer and anti-women. He had argued that it would deprive rural workers of their guaranteed right to employment and wages and maintained that Punjab would not implement the law.'What is the deal with the BJP'The notification has triggered sharp political reactions, with the Congress accusing the government of contradicting its own position.Punjab Congress president Amarinder Singh Raja Warring questioned why the government had implemented the scheme after rejecting it in the Assembly. "What is the deal with the BJP?" he asked.Warring pointed out that the Punjab government had negated its own resolution by notifying its implementation. He said the timing of the notification was equally surprising and asked whether it had anything to do with the ongoing controversy surrounding Mann.

Mallikarjun Kharge writes to PM Modi, seeks all-party meet on revised delimitation bill

New Delhi: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Thursday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi over reports that the government is now planning to reintroduce a Constitution amendment bill that would involve delimitation, urging him to convene an all-party meeting to discuss the revised proposals.In his letter to the PM, Kharge said during March and April, he had been writing to Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Kiren Rijiju, requesting that the Union government convene an all-party meeting to discuss its proposals regarding delimitation, etc."Unfortunately, these requests had not been accepted. The Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026, then failed to secure the required 2/3 majority in Lok Sabha on 17 April, 2026 by a clear margin," he said.

"I have been reading in media reports that the Union Government now proposes to reintroduce a revised (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026 during the forthcoming Monsoon Session of Parliament. I would, once again, request you to convene an all-party meeting to discuss the government's revised proposals on delimitation, etc., and give us adequate time to study them in detail before they are introduced in Parliament," Kharge said.The Congress chief's letter comes days after it emerged that the government is learnt to be working on multiple formulations to increase the number of Lok Sabha seats for all states by 50 per cent to assuage the concerns of southern states, as it seeks to operationalise a fresh draft of the Constitution amendment bill on women's quota law.The draft is being readied keeping in mind the concerns of the southern states that a population-based delimitation exercise would shrink their political power in the Lok Sabha.The

first Bill failed to clear the Lok Sabha test on April 17, as the government could not muster the two-thirds majority required to pass it.The Modi government had said that it wanted to get the Bill passed as it wanted to advance the enforcement of the women reservation law.As of now, the ruling NDA has around 300 MPs in the Lok Sabha with three vacancies. It needs 360 votes to achieve the two-thirds mark.Under the current law, reservation for women would not be enforceable before 2034, as the process is tied to the completion of the delimitation exercise post the 2027 Census.

EYE SECRETS

Editorial

India–UK FTA opens new opportunities

As the historic free trade agreement with the United Kingdom comes into effect, culminating years of tough negotiations, a slew of opportunities beckons Indian exporters across key sectors. The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) is a win-win proposition for both countries and would go a long way in deepening economic engagement and creating new opportunities for businesses, workers and investors. The most significant outcome is that the agreement will provide zero-duty market access for nearly 99% of India's exports, covering sectors like textiles, leather, gems and jewellery, engineering goods, marine products, chemicals and processed foods. Additionally, the social security agreement will provide support to Indian professionals working temporarily in the UK and strengthen the competitiveness of Indian enterprises. Indian professionals on temporary assignments will be exempt from double social security contributions for up to five years, enhancing the global competitiveness of our workforce. This provision is projected to benefit over 75,000 professionals and 900 companies across IT, financial, healthcare, education, telecommunication, and consultancy sectors. This is truly a significant moment for India, as its farmers, entrepreneurs and MSMEs will stand to gain. The free trade agreement was signed in London last year in the presence of visiting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his British counterpart Keir Starmer. It is expected to boost bilateral trade between the two economies by $34 billion annually and open new avenues for India's IT, financial, education, professional and business services sectors.For the agricultural sector, the agreement provides zero-duty access to all products, with specific exclusions for chicken, pork, eggs, rice, and sugar. It also grants duty-free access to 97.1% of tariff lines for processed food products, offering Indian exporters an immediate edge in the UK's agricultural import market, which exceeds $90 billion. Gems and jewellery exporters expect shipments to the UK to grow by 230% to $2.5 billion within the next three years, while exporters of engineering goods expect sales to almost double to $7.5 billion over the next four to five years. At the same time, the agreement safeguards sensitive farm products such as dairy, vegetables, apples, edible oils, oats, millets, cooking oils and others by placing them on the sensitive list, and no duty concessions have been granted to the UK on these items. Enhanced market access and regulatory certainty will support Indian service providers in IT and IT-enabled services, financial and professional services, healthcare, education, engineering, telecom and consultancy services. The foundation for the agreement was laid through the India–UK Enhanced Trade Partnership and the Roadmap 2030, launched in May 2021, which set an ambitious target of doubling bilateral trade to $100 billion by 2030. Following 14 rounds of negotiations, the agreement, comprising 30 chapters, was concluded on May 6 last year and signed in London two months later.

Excess fee charged by School of Eminence: Minister Bains assures action

Punjab Education Minister Harjot Singh Bains on Wednesday assured action against those responsible for the alleged collection of unauthorised fees at the School of Eminence (SoE) in Nawanshahr after the issue was raised during his visit to Raja Sahib Da Mazara near Banga.The controversy first came to light in April after parents alleged that students seeking admission to Class XI were asked to pay around Rs 5,000 despite the notified annual fee for government schools being about Rs 876. Several parents claimed they paid the amount fearing their children would lose admission.

The matter was flagged by AAP's district in-charge for the Nasha Mukti Morcha, Dinesh Suri, MLA Dr SK Sukhi and mediapersons. During the interaction, Bains reportedly said the school's principal should be suspended. Sukhi, however, reminded the minister that he had raised the issue in the Assembly earlier, but no action had followed.The controversy surfaced after allegations that the government-run school was charging students far more than the fee prescribed by the Education Department. Principal Sarabjit Singh had reportedly admitted to collecting additional charges with the approval of the School Management Committee (SMC), claiming the money was used to address staff shortages and support academic activities beyond the regular curriculum.The issue snowballed into a political controversy, with opposition leaders questioning the AAP government's flagship 'Sikhiya Kranti' initiative. Shiromani Akali Dal leader Sukhdeep Singh Sukkar and Jamhuri Adhikar Sabha activist Jasbir Deep alleged that the government could not claim to provide quality education at nominal cost while allowing a government school to charge fees beyond the notified rates.They also asked why the Punjab government's recently promulgated ordinance regulating fee and fund hikes in unaided private schools had not been enforced with similar rigour in Schools of Eminence. While private schools have been directed to submit records and refund excess fees, they alleged that no comparable action has been initiated against officials of the government-run school. The two leaders demanded that the government first refund the allegedly excess amount collected from parents at the School of Eminence and fix accountability before enforcing similar provisions against private schools. They also questioned the authority of the School Management Committee to alter the fee structure notified by the Education

'Just keep him in jail for two days': A day at Delhi's first women police station

At 10 am on a humid July morning, a woman in a plain salwar-kameez walks hesitantly through the gates of a police station in North Delhi's Sabzi Mandi.Clutching a white polythene bag bulging with copies of identity documents, she heads towards the duty desk manned by Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Meenu Bala.She identifies herself as 40-year-old Radhika. She tells Bala that she got married in 2016, but the relationship was turbulent from the start. Hoping things would improve, she endured years of domestic abuse. Now, with a child to care for, she says she no longer wants to suffer in silence.Bala nods, making notes on a complaint paper. Every now and then, she asks a question about the timeline of events."This is the most important part of the job," she explains later. "The duty officer is the first person anyone meets when they enter a police station. That first interaction matters. If someone feels heard, half the hesitation disappears."-The duty officer's desk sits immediately to the right, separated from complainants by a glass partition. A separate room is available for women who wish to speak in private. (Express Photo by Praveen Khanna) The duty officer's desk sits immediately to the right, separated from complainants by a glass partition. A separate room is available for women who wish to speak in private.Barely a month after it opened on June 19, Delhi's first women police station has become the single point of contact for complaints ranging from domestic violence to sexual offences in the North district. Integrated with the Crime Against Women (CAW) Cell, it was set up to bring counselling and criminal investigation under one roof.At 57, Bala is from the 1994 batch of the Delhi Police. Before being posted here, she served as duty officer at Rani Bagh and Kamla Market police stations.Some narrate their complaints matter-of-factly. Some cry before they can complete the first sentence. Others spend several minutes simply gathering the courage to speak.For years, women approached different police stations in the North district and then their complaints were transferred to the CAW for counselling and mediation before criminal proceedings began, often requiring them to move between different offices and police units.Now, the counselling mechanism and the police station function as one unit, allowing complaints to move through a single system.Of these, 125 were received after the police station became operational. The remaining complaints came with the merger of the CAW Cell.Station House Officer Lakshmi Singh spends much of her day moving between investigation rooms, reviewing case files and speaking to officers.Station House Officer, Inspector Lakshmi Singh, inside her office. (Express Photo by Praveen Khanna) Station House Officer, Inspector Lakshmi Singh, inside her office. (Express Photo by Praveen Khanna)Barely a month into the station's functioning, she says one request is heard often. "Women often come to us and say, 'Bas unhe 48 ghante ke liye jail mein rakh dijiye. Sudhar jayenge, (Just keep him in jail for two days. He'll change)'."The request is understandable, she says, but can't be executed. Many women are not necessarily looking for prolonged criminal proceedings, they just hope a brief spell in custody will act as a warning and save the marriage.

Since its inauguration, the station has registered nine FIRs, most of them transferred from other police stations: three relate to dowry harassment, two concern molestation, two involve rape/POCSO charges.Police officials say action has been initiated in all the cases, particularly those involving sexual offences.

Inside the stationUnlike a conventional police station, where complainants often find themselves navigating multiple rooms before locating the right officer, this building has been designed around accessibility.The station opens into a large hall flooded with daylight. The duty officer's desk sits immediately to the right, separated from complainants by a glass partition. A separate room is available for women who wish to speak in private.The reception is in the centre. Behind it are the investigation officer's room, a conference room, the Station House Officer's office, a gym and women's barracks.A brightly painted children's room occupies one corner, a space for women who bring children along.While the duty officer records complaints and provides the first point of contact, investigation officers take over recording statements, examining evidence, counselling parties where required and initiating criminal proceedings wherever offences are made out.

Nearly 60 per cent of the personnel are women, while the remaining 40 per cent are men. In all, the station has around 57 women personnel, seven are Sub-Inspectors, thirteen are Assistant Sub-Inspectors.Officials say male officers continue to play an important operational role, particularly during night arrests, medical examinations, handling violent accused persons and situations where women accused are accompanied by aggressive male relatives.But staffing remains among the station's biggest challenges. Women Sub-Inspectors are required to investigate rape and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) cases.Yet several officers are currently unavailable because of maternity leave, medical leave or other reasons. Officials say only one officer is presently available full-time to handle such investigations.Infrastructure is another challenge. The reception area does not yet have air-conditioning. Because the structure is prefabricated, it heats up rapidly during summer, making conditions uncomfortable for both visitors and police personnel.These are teething troubles, officers say. The larger objective remains creating a police station where women feel comfortable enough to report crimes.Back at the duty officer's desk, Bala continues working through the day's complaints. Every few minutes, a complainant walks in. Some arrive alone, others come with parents or siblings

Ahead of Ganeshotsav, Maharashtra seeks HC nod for immersion of 6-ft-plus PoP idols in natural water bodies

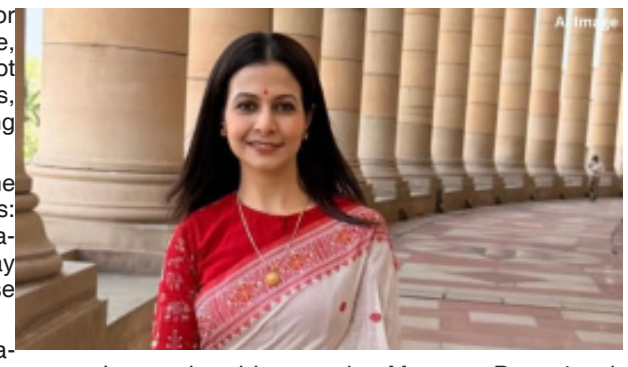
The Maharashtra government on Wednesday defended its decision to continue allowing plaster of Paris (PoP) Ganesh idols taller than six feet to be immersed in natural water bodies, telling the Bombay High Court that the relaxation should continue until a viable solution is found for recycling the material.The state argued that the Central Pollution Control Board's (CPCB) 2020 guidelines on PoP idol immersion are advisory and not prohibitory, and opposed a public interest litigation seeking a complete ban on immersing large PoP idols in lakes, rivers and the sea.

If the court accepts the state's stand, large public Ganesh idols can continue to be immersed in natural water bodies this festival season, subject to the conditions laid down in the 2025 guidelines.According to the state's August 1, 2025 guidelines, idols exceeding six feet may be immersed in natural water bodies only where no alternative immersion facility is available. Such immersions are subject to obtaining the necessary permissions, collecting the immersed material, scientifically disposing of it and cleaning the water body afterwards.In an affidavit filed before the court, Ramesh Mahale, Joint Secretary in the Environment Department, said the state was working towards finding a long-term solution for the reuse and recycling of PoP while continuing to promote eco-friendly Ganesh celebrations.The government said local authorities had created alternative immersion facilities for idols up to six feet in height and were taking steps to collect PoP waste after immersion while exploring recycling options.The PIL, filed after alleging poor implementation of the CPCB's 2020 guidelines, contends that allowing large PoP idols to be immersed in natural water bodies contributes to water pollution. Senior advocate Mihir Desai, appearing for the petitioners, argued that the state's revised guidelines were impractical and sought a complete prohibition on immersing PoP idols taller than six feet, which are commonly installed by Sarvajanik Ganesh mandals.The state, however, relied on a June 7, 2025 affidavit filed by the CPCB, which clarified that its 2020 guidelines govern only the immersion of PoP idols and are advisory in nature, not a prohibition on their manufacture or use. On that basis, it argued that the PIL was "misconceived".The government also told the court that the "internationally famous" Ganeshotsav forms part of Maharashtra's cultural heritage and said it remained equally committed to protecting the environment. It said awareness campaigns encouraging citizens to adopt eco-friendly idols had already led to a gradual shift away from PoP idols.

Stalker stabs schoolgirl to death near Kolkata after she rejected him

In a chilling incident near Kolkata, a 16-year-old schoolgirl was stabbed to death in Howrah, allegedly by a man who had been stalking her despite the teenager spurning his advances. The Class 10 student was followed and attacked while she was returning home on a bicycle around 7.00 pm on Wednesday.According to police and eyewitnesses, 24-year-old Samir Das stabbed her multiple times in the neck, hands, and stomach."The girl was cycling back from her tuition class when the youth suddenly blocked her path. Before anyone could react, he pulled out a knife and began stabbing her indiscriminately. She collapsed on the road," said a police officer.Enraged bystanders overpowered the accused and thrashed him severely before handing him over to the nearest police station. The teenager was rushed to a private hospital and later shifted to the Howrah district hospital, where she succumbed to injuries late at night.Das, a resident of Murshidabad in north Bengal who works at a factory in Howrah, had been pursuing the 16-year-old for a long time, police have said. Preliminary interrogation reveals that the crime was a retaliatory act after the teenager repeatedly rejected his proposals. "We have taken the accused into custody, and a murder investigation is underway," a senior police officer said. The attacker remains hospitalised under strict police watch.3 chilling crimesThis comes after the gruesome gangrape and murder of an 11-year-old in Baruipur near Kolkata. Prabhash Mondol, an accused in the case, was killed in an encounter when he snatched a policeman's firearm during the reconstruction of the crime.The murder in Howrah also comes days after a woman was murdered in Sodepur in Bengal's North 24 Parganas district. Subhas Das murdered his estranged wife, Geeta Das, in broad daylight. After the attack, Subhas stabbed himself in a suicide attempt and suffered serious injuries.The back-to-back crimes against women have put the Suvendu Adhikari-led BJP government in a spot months after the party came to power after defeating the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress in the state polls in May.Amid growing outrage over the crimes, Kolkata Police have rolled out a five-point Standard Operating Procedure to eliminate "administrative reluctance" and systemic delays in handling Zero FIRs. A Zero FIR is a case that can be filed at any police station in the country regardless of where the crime took place.

Koel Mallick gives up Trinamool's Rajya Sabha seat, meets BJP's Bhupender Yadav



In another blow to the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress, actor Koel Mallick resigned as the party's Rajya Sabha MP on Thursday, just three months after the party nominated her to the Upper House of Parliament. Koel Mallick is Trinamool's fourth Rajya Sabha MP to quit amid the meltdown in the party in the aftermath of its defeat in the West Bengal Assembly polls in May. Sukhendu Sekhar Ray, Sushmita Dev and Prakash Chik Baraik, who resigned earlier, have joined the BJP. Hours later, the BJP nominated the trio for the election to the three seats they vacated.

Koel Mallick took the oath as a Rajya Sabha MP on April 6, but did not attend House proceedings at all. Mallick has submitted a resignation letter to the Rajya Sabha chairman and Vice President C P Radhakrishnan. In the letter, she has said she was resigning from the Rajya Sabha with immediate effect. "I convey my sincere gratitude to your Excellency, Hon'ble Deputy Chairman and all functionaries of the Rajya Sabha Secretariat extending all help and cooperation during my tenure as a Member of the Rajya Sabha," she added.Shortly after, she met Union Minister and BJP veteran Bhupender Yadav at his residence in Delhi, sparking a buzz about her next move.A popular face in the Bengali film industry, also known as Tollywood, Koel Mallick is the daughter of veteran Bengali film actor Ranjit Mallick and Deepa Mallick. She married film producer Nispal Singh in 2013, and they have a son. She has won several awards for her performances in movies. These include a Filmfare Awards Bangla, two Bengali Film Journalists' Association awards and an Anandalok Puraskar. In 2023, the West Bengal government, then under the Trinamool Congress, honoured her with the Mahanayak Samman.

Following her exit, the Trinamool Congress is left with nine MPs in the Rajya Sabha. The party is simultaneously fighting an exodus in the two Houses of Parliament, and the state Assembly. Twenty out of its 28 Lok Sabha MPs have switched to the lesser-known Nationalist Citizens Party of India and have said they back the NDA. The rebel MPs' bloc has also urged Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to make separate seating arrangements for them. In the Assembly, a group of 60 MLAs from the Mamata Banerjee-led party has rebelled and claimed it is the real Trinamool Congress.The resignation of Koel Mallick is significant against the backdrop of the BJP's attempts to cobble together a two-third majority in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha before making another push for the Constitutional amendment Bill that provides for delimitation of parliamentary seats before implementing 33 per cent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies. The government's earlier attempt to ensure the legislation clears Parliament failed in April.

Mumbai may get new long-distance rail terminus in Kandivali, if Defence clears land

In a bid to ease train congestion, the Western Railway has sought the Defence Ministry's land in Kandivali to develop a mega project for a long-distance terminus with nine platforms and a coaching depot, The Indian Express has learnt. But the project cannot proceed unless the Defence Ministry agrees to give away the land. In the past, the Defence Ministry has rejected two such requests by the Western Railway, on the grounds that the land was under "active occupation".Sources said the Western Railway expects to pursue Defence land through the appropriate channels."The proposed site offers one of the few remaining large tracts of land capable of supporting a modern coaching terminal in Mumbai's suburban region. However, the project is entirely dependent on obtaining the required land," a source aware of the planning process said.Proposed features of Kandivali terminus, coaching depot

As per the preliminary discussion plans accessed by The Indian Express, the proposed infrastructure is planned on two parcels of defence land between Kandivali and Malad – also located close to the Kandivali car shed and Poisar Metro station, making them strategically placed for future multimodal connectivity.The larger land parcel, measuring approximately 1,100 metres by 400 metres, has been earmarked for the proposed coaching terminal.The Railways plans a full-fledged long-distance terminus with nine platforms, each around 625 metres in length, capable of handling 54 mail and express trains.The facility will also include six pit lines for routine inspection and maintenance of coaches.It will also have nine stabling lines for parking and servicing rakes.Dedicated shunting tracks to facilitate train movements and two sick-line sheds where damaged or defective coaches can undergo repairs are also being planned.The second plot – measuring roughly 700 metres by 60 metres – has been identified for stabling lines and pit lines.If approved, the proposed long-distance terminus and coaching depot will augment terminal capacity in Mumbai.Currently, the existing long-distance stations, including Mumbai Central, Dadar, and Bandra Terminus, are operating near saturation.If implemented, the Kandivali terminus is expected to reduce pressure on the existing terminals in south Mumbai and substantially increase operational flexibility by allowing more trains to originate and terminate from the western suburbs.

US Senators table Bill slapping 100% tariffs on India for buying Russian oil

A bipartisan group of US Senators has introduced a legislation proposing tariffs of up to 100 per cent on imports from India, China and three other countries over their continued purchase of Russian oil, marking Washington's latest attempt to intensify economic pressure on Moscow over the Ukraine war.The legislation targets the five largest buyers of Russian oil — India, China, Slovakia, Hungary and Azerbaijan — while exempting 15 European countries that continue to import Russian natural gas.

Lawmakers argued that gas purchase by those nations accounted for only a small share of their energy requirements and that they were steadily reducing their dependence on Russian supplies.The Bill significantly scales back an earlier proposal that sought to impose punitive tariffs of up to 500 per cent on countries importing Russian energy. Instead, it authorises US President Donald Trump to impose tariffs ranging from zero to 100 per cent, depending on the circumstances. The measure, one of the last major legislative initiatives backed by the late Republican Senator, Lindsey Graham, has been introduced along with Democratic Senator Richard Blumenthal, who urged Congress to move quickly on the proposal.Announcing the Bill, Blumenthal said the White House had agreed to the revised framework before Graham's death."Now is the time for this sweeping sanctions Bill," Blumenthal said, describing it as far broader than a tariff measure.According to Blumenthal, the legislation will impose "full blocking sanctions" on key sectors of the Russian economy, including its energy, financial and defence industries, while also targeting Russian President Vladimir Putin, oligarchs and other influential business figures.He said the tariff provision had been "narrowly crafted" to apply only to the five largest importers of Russian oil.Speaking to reporters, one of the lawmakers said the exact tariff rate — anywhere between zero and 100 per cent — would be determined with the objective of strongly discouraging continued purchase of Russian energy by the targeted countries.The proposal comes as Washington seeks to tighten economic pressure on Moscow, with US lawmakers arguing that curbing Russia's energy revenues remains critical to weakening its ability to sustain the war in Ukraine.ndia had sharply increased imports of discounted Russian crude after the outbreak of the Ukraine conflict in 2022, maintaining that its energy purchases were driven by national interest and the need to ensure affordable supplies for its consumers.New Delhi has consistently defended its position, saying it does not recognise unilateral sanctions that are not mandated by the United Nations and that its energy sourcing decisions are based on market conditions and domestic requirements.The legislation must clear both chambers of the US Congress before it can become a law

Pakistan fuel crisis deepens as policy delays deepen supply concerns

According to The Express Tribune, industry officials have warned that petrol inventories have fallen to nearly 379,000 tonnes, including supplies from local refineries, leaving enough stock for only about two weeks at the current rate of consumption. Demand has surged significantly during the first half of July, with daily petrol sales exceeding projections and last year's figures, driven by expectations of another increase in fuel prices. The rise in consumption has intensified pressure on already limited reserves, while delays in scheduled fuel imports have added to uncertainty.

Although shipments carrying around 153,000 tonnes of petrol are expected to arrive in the coming days, at least one planned cargo failed to receive approval last month, and another import involving multiple oil marketing companies was reportedly cancelled, further tightening supply. The situation has also been complicated by international shipping disruptions linked to tensions around the Strait of Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb, which have pushed up global oil prices and freight costs. However, industry representatives argue that domestic administrative and financial challenges remain the primary factors worsening the crisis.Oil marketing companies have urged the government to immediately release approximately Rs 66.7 billion in pending Price Differential Claims (PDCs), saying the delayed payments have weakened their ability to finance fresh fuel imports. Industry estimates suggest the outstanding amount could fund nearly 250,000 tonnes of petrol, equivalent to several import cargoes that would significantly strengthen national reserves, as cited by Officials have also highlighted delays in customs clearance through the WeBOC system, warning that slow processing of imported fuel at ports could disrupt supplies to inland markets. While diesel stocks remain relatively stable due to continued refinery production, industry representatives cautioned that panic buying or hoarding could quickly create shortages if uncertainty persists as reported

BIMSTEC security chiefs reaffirm regional security cooperation at 5th meeting

New Delhi [India], The 5th Meeting of the BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs, chaired by National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval on Thursday, reaffirmed the member states' commitment to strengthening regional security cooperation, with discussions focusing on counterterrorism, cyber and maritime security, disaster management and emerging security threats.According to an official statement, NSA Doval hosted National Security Advisers and Heads of Delegations from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

"BIMSTEC bridges South Asia and Southeast Asia, two of the most significant and vibrant regions of the Indian Ocean. Over the years, BIMSTEC has deepened cooperation in regional security, disaster management, transport and trade connectivity, technological issues, and people-to-people contacts," the statement said.During the meeting, BIMSTEC Secretary General Indra Mani Pandey presented a comprehensive overview of cooperation in the security sector and briefed member states on the progress made across various sectors.

The National Security Advisers and Heads of Delegations discussed "practical and result-oriented solutions" to combat terrorism and organised crime, ensure security in the cyber, maritime and energy domains, enhance connectivity, facilitate efficient disaster management, and tackle new and emerging threats.The member states also adopted guidelines for the maritime component of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR), which, according to the statement, "will help BIMSTEC member states to undertake relief operations in the region in an expeditious manner."They further endorsed a set of guiding principles for the conduct of maritime law enforcement agencies during interactions at sea. The principles are expected to "outline reference points for increasing predictability and promoting safety during maritime engagements among member states," the statement said.As BIMSTEC approaches its 30th anniversary next year, the National Security Advisers and Heads of Delegations reiterated their resolve to enhance collaboration and knowledge-sharing towards strengthening regional security, building resilience and enhancing institutional capacities to address diverse security threats, the statement added.Meanwhile, Doval underscored the need for closer regional cooperation to tackle evolving security challenges, saying the current global landscape marked by conflicts, geopolitical uncertainties and technological disruptions requires BIMSTEC member states to work together and take "decisive actions" for their mutual benefit.

Addressing the fifth BIMSTEC National Security Advisers' Meeting, Doval said, "We are meeting today in the backdrop of a challenging global landscape. We are witnessing conflicts and geopolitical uncertainties. We are also facing multi-domain security threats, amplified by rapid technological advancements. Disruptions in global supply chains have also resulted in economic hardship for all our countries.""In this setting, there's an urgent need for us to collaborate, take decisive actions for our mutual benefit, and find solutions to mutual discussions and deliberations to the vexed problems that we are all facing," he added.Highlighting the significance of the Bay of Bengal grouping, Doval said BIMSTEC unites two of the world's most dynamic regions and represents a population of 1.7 billion people, around 22 per cent of the global population, with a combined GDP of nearly USD 5 trillion."We are united by the Bay of Bengal, not just geographically, but also through deep civilizational and cultural legacies that have evolved over a millennium of shared history," he said.BIMSTEC is a key regional organisation that was established on June 6, 1997, with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration. Initially known as BIST-EC (Bangladesh-India-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation), the organisation is now known as BIMSTEC and comprises seven Member States, with the admission of Myanmar on December 22 1997, and Bhutan and Nepal in February 2004.

Iran threatens to destroy 'all infrastructure in region' as US strikes intensify

Dubai: Iran's joint military command stepped up its threats on Thursday as intensifying US airstrikes target the country, saying it would destroy "all the infrastructure in the region".The threat from the Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters referenced US President Donald Trump's repeated warning that he could launch attacks against power plants and bridges in Iran.Col Ebrahim Zolfaghari, a spokesperson for the Iranian military's Khatam Al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, issued the warning."All the infrastructure in the region will be crushed under the steel blows of the powerful armed forces

Ajit Doval chairs 5th BIMSTEC Security Chiefs Meeting in New Delhi

New Delhi [India], National Security Advisor Ajit Doval on Thursday chaired the fifth BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs' meeting, hosting top-level intelligence and security officials from across the Bay of Bengal region to reinforce regional stability.The high-level gathering brought together delegates from the seven member nations of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), which includes Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.The delegates gathered for a joint family photo, with discussions centring on counterterrorism, cybersecurity, and strengthening regional maritime cooperation.BIMSTEC Secretary General Indra Mani Pandey attended the meeting along with delegations from all member countries.Nepal was represented by Home Secretary Raj Kumar Shrestha.Thailand's delegation was led by Chatchai Bangchaud, Secretary General of the National Security Council. Bangchaud had also held bilateral talks with NSA Doval on Wednesday, focusing on enhanced intelligence sharing and law enforcement cooperation.Sri Lanka was represented by Air Vice Marshal Sampath Thuyacontha, Secretary at the Ministry of Defence.Bangladesh's delegation was led by Dr Shamsul Islam, Adviser to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, and included Bangladesh High Commissioner to India M Riaz Hamidullah.Myanmar was represented by Tin Aung San, Minister in the President's Office.Bhutan's delegation comprised Home Secretary Sonam Wangyel and Bhutan's Ambassador to India, Major General Vetsop Namgyel.Meanwhile, Doval underscored the need for closer regional cooperation to tackle evolving security challenges, saying the current global landscape marked by conflicts, geopolitical uncertainties and technological disruptions requires BIMSTEC member states to work together and take "decisive actions" for their mutual benefit.Addressing the fifth BIMSTEC National Security Advisers' Meeting, Doval said, "We are meeting today in the backdrop of a challenging global landscape. We are witnessing conflicts and geopolitical uncertainties. We are also facing multi-domain security threats, amplified by rapid technological advancements. Disruptions in global supply chains have also resulted in economic hardship for all our countries."

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Doval said.He stressed that BIMSTEC's long-standing goals of regional security, connectivity, capacity building and economic security should continue to guide the grouping's collective efforts. He said, "BIMSTEC's long-standing goals of regional security, connectivity, capacity building, and economic security should continue to drive our collective efforts."BIMSTEC is a key regional organisation that was established on June 6, 1997, with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration. Initially known as BIST-EC (Bangladesh-India-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation)

Keeping you on the leading edge of lethality: Pete egseth announces annual testosterone screenings for US troops

Washington, DC [US], US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth has announced a new initiative requiring annual testosterone screenings for service members aged 30 and above, saying the move is aimed at ensuring troops remain on the "leading edge of lethality."According to The Hill, the testosterone screening will be incorporated into the military's periodic health assessment for service members aged 30 and older, while personnel under 30 will have the option to undergo the test voluntarily.In a video message posted on X on Wednesday (local time), Hegseth said, "While we invest heavily in our weapon systems, platforms and gear, our most decisive tactical advantage will always be the individual warfighter.""We have a sacred duty to maintain that advantage, which is why we must constantly look for new ways to optimise your performance, your resilience and your long-term health," he added.Hegseth said the screening programme is intended to ensure troops "have the right testosterone levels to operate at [their] absolute best because it's well-established science that as we age, testosterone levels often naturally drop."

According to The Hill, service members found to require treatment after testing will be offered the option of testosterone replacement therapy (TRT)."This initiative... it's not about artificial enhancement; it's about restoring and optimising your natural capabilities, protecting your longevity, ensuring you have the biological foundation required to sustain and fight," Hegseth said."We owe our warriors the absolute best medical care in the world. And this program delivers on that obligation," he added.The Hill reported that the initiative comes amid the Trump administration's broader emphasis on traditional masculinity. In April, the US Food and Drug Administration expanded access to testosterone replacement therapy after years of recommending it primarily for men with medical conditions affecting testosterone production.According to The Hill, Hegseth has also introduced stricter military fitness standards requiring personnel to meet a uniform "male standard" and has frequently highlighted physical fitness by working out with service members. Last September, he said he did not want to see overweight troops or "fat generals and admirals."The Hill noted that about 5.6 per cent of men aged 30 to 79 are estimated to have testosterone deficiency, which can lead to muscle loss, fatigue, weight gain and sexual dysfunction, and is also associated with conditions including diabetes, cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis and depression."By addressing these health markers early, we're keeping you on the leading edge of lethality and giving you the same level of support that you give this nation the absolute best," Hegseth said.

Sikka Groups Vision for Sustainable Urban Growth

New Delhi [India], July 16: India's urban transformation is entering a defining phase, where the emphasis is no longer limited to constructing buildings but extends to creating sustainable, resilient, and future-ready cities. With rapid urbanisation, growing infrastructure investments, and evolving consumer expectations, the real estate sector is increasingly becoming a key driver in shaping integrated urban ecosystems that promote economic growth, environmental stewardship, and enhanced quality of life.India's urban population is projected to exceed 600 million by 2030, driving unprecedented demand for well-planned developments that seamlessly integrate residential, commercial, retail, hospitality, and recreational infrastructure. This shift is encouraging developers to move beyond conventional construction and adopt a holistic approach centred on sustainability, technology, connectivity, and community living.Sikka Group believes that the cities of tomorrow must be designed around people, not just infrastructure. Future-ready developments should promote walkability, efficient mobility, energy conservation, digital infrastructure, open green spaces, and mixed-use ecosystems that reduce commute times while fostering healthier and more vibrant communities.Across the country, integrated developments are emerging as engines of urban growth by combining premium residences, organised retail, office spaces, hospitality, and entertainment within a single destination. Such projects stimulate economic activity, create employment opportunities, and support local businesses while delivering greater convenience and improving the overall urban experience.Sustainability has become central to modern real estate development. Green building practices, rainwater harvesting, water recycling, energy-efficient systems, waste management, and environmentally conscious landscaping are increasingly becoming standard features of responsible developments. Simultaneously, the integration of smart technologies, including intelligent building management systems, EV charging infrastructure, digital security solutions, and IoT-enabled services, is helping create more efficient, future-ready communities that align with India's sustainability and climate goals.The emergence of infrastructure-led growth corridors is further redefining India's urban landscape. Mega infrastructure projects such as expressways, metro rail expansions, multimodal transport networks, and the upcoming Noida International Airport are unlocking new investment opportunities and accelerating planned urban development. These infrastructure advancements are attracting homebuyers, businesses, and institutional investors seeking destinations with long-term growth potential.Noida and Greater Noida have emerged as prime examples of this transformation. Supported by world-class infrastructure, expanding metro connectivity, expressway networks, and the upcoming Noida International Airport, the region has become one of India's fastest-growing real estate markets. Increasing demand across residential, commercial, and retail segments is reinforcing its position as a preferred destination for integrated urban development.Reflecting this vision, Sikka Group continues to develop projects that align with evolving urban aspirations while contributing to sustainable city-building. The Group focuses on creating thoughtfully planned developments that combine contemporary architecture, efficient infrastructure, green spaces, and lifestyle-driven amenities designed to meet the needs of modern consumers.One of the most significant examples of this philosophy is the Mall of Noida, Sikka Group's landmark mixed-use development, envisioned as one of the region's premier lifestyle destinations. More than a conventional shopping centre, the project integrates retail, fine dining, entertainment, and leisure experiences within a vibrant urban ecosystem. Designed to cater to changing consumer preferences, Mall of Noida is expected to strengthen the region's commercial landscape, generate substantial employment opportunities, attract leading national and international brands, and contribute significantly to Noida's economic growth.

The forgotten 9,909: 34 Punjab Registers document sacrifice of unrecorded Indian soldiers who fought in World War 1 -

More than a century after the guns of World War I fell silent, nearly 10,000 Indian soldiers whose deaths slipped from the official historical record are finally to receive the recognition they were denied.The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) has announced that 9,909 previously unrecorded Indian servicemen will now be commemorated after a decade-long research project centred on a remarkable archive in Pakistan: 34 handwritten Punjab Registers containing the names of some 3,20,000 men recruited into the Indian army during the war.

It is one of the largest single additions ever made to the Commission's casualty records, and represents far more than an administrative correction. It restores identities, acknowledges forgotten sacrifice and shines a light on one of the last major gaps in the history of India's contribution to the Great War.More than 13 lakh Indians served during World War I, making the Indian army one of the largest volunteer forces in history, with soldiers fighting from Flanders and Gallipoli to East Africa and Mesopotamia.Behind the announcement lies an extraordinary story of historical detective work that began not in London or Delhi, but in the Lahore Museum.The 34 Punjab Registers found in the Lahore Museum by Amandeep Madra, co-founder of the UK Punjab Heritage Association, in 2014. He worked with British and Punjabi scholars, Pakistan archivists, and transcribers in India and Pakistan for over 10 years to convert thousands of handwritten pages into searchable data. Photo courtesy: CWGC

The 34 Punjab Registers found in the Lahore Museum by Amandeep Madra, co-founder of the UK Punjab Heritage Association, in 2014. He worked with British and Punjabi scholars, Pakistan archivists, and transcribers in India and Pakistan for over 10 years to convert thousands of handwritten pages into searchable data. Photo courtesy: CWGC"I found them in 2014 during research for our Empire, Faith & War project," recalls Amandeep Madra, co-founder of the UK Punjab Heritage Association, whose discovery set the entire process in motion."Military historians knew the registers existed in principle, but no one had gone to look. It seemed unlikely: an art museum holding 34 handwritten volumes of military records. But they were there: a systematic record of every Punjabi man who served in the Indian army during the First World War. I knew straightaway it was significant."The significance became deeply personal. One of the first registers photographed was from Ambala district, the home of Madra's own family. "My father's Chacha (paternal uncle), Bishen Singh, had served," he says. "My dad remembered being taken to collect his pension as a boy and that he'd been blinded by sandstorms during the war. That was all we knew. Then I found him in the register. He was the only man from our village to serve. If it could do that for my family, I knew it could do it for thousands of others."The 26,000 pages had first to be photographed, digitised, indexed and transcribed. The project later became a collaboration between the UK Punjab Heritage Association, the University of Greenwich and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.Prof Gavin Rand of the University of Greenwich recognised the scholarly importance of the archive and secured funding for its transcription. The CWGC then undertook the laborious task of comparing the information with its own casualty database.Names had often been spelled differently by different clerks. Villages appeared under several spellings. Regimental records varied. Punjabi naming customs created further complications.As Madra explains, researchers had to learn to think like Edwardian record keepers. 'Roor Singh' and 'Rood Singh' could be the same man. 'Dulla' might turn out to be Abdullah Khan, "but only if every other detail — father's name, village and regiment — matched".

During the Covid lockdown, volunteers began checking a sample of soldiers listed in the registers as having died during the war against CWGC records. They immediately discovered dozens whose names simply did not exist in the Commission's database.As the work expanded, the omissions kept growing. Ultimately, researchers examined almost 16,000 recorded deaths against some 74,000 existing Indian army casualty records. Supported by computer-assisted analysis and multiple layers of verification, they identified 9,909 men who had never previously been commemorated.

Why had they disappeared from history? According to Dr George Hay, Official Historian at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, the reasons were both administrative and political."The British Indian Government made a conscious decision not to extend full war graves status to Indian army soldiers who died at home and away from operational zones," he explains.Many of those men had survived the battlefields only to die later from wounds or disease after returning to India. Unlike British soldiers who died in comparable circumstances, their names were never passed on to the Commission's predecessors for permanent commemoration.Administrative failures compounded the problem, meaning that some operational casualties also disappeared from the historical record.The findings reinforce the conclusions reached by the CWGC's Special Committee on Historical Inequalities in Commemoration, established in 2021, that entrenched racial prejudice and discriminatory colonial attitudes had contributed to unequal commemoration.For Madra, who served on that committee alongside Professor Rand, the present announcement demonstrates that history can sometimes be corrected rather than merely debated. "This is one of the rare cases in Britain's colonial history where we can actually correct a wrong rather than just argue about it," he says.The Punjab Registers reveal far more than military service. Taken together, the registers amount to an unparalleled census of rural Punjab on the eve of modern history, recording not simply soldiers but families, villages, religions, castes and communities that would later be divided by Partition.A close up of the Punjab Registers shows the handwritten entries. There were 26,000 pages of detailed entries which had to be photographed, digitised, indexed and transcribed. Photo courtesy: CWGCA close up of the Punjab Registers shows the handwritten entries. There were 26,000 pages of detailed entries which had to be photographed, digitised, indexed and transcribed. Photo courtesy: CWGCEach entry records a soldier's religion, caste, father's name, village and district, creating an extraordinarily detailed portrait of rural Punjab between 1914 and 1918.The newly identified casualties themselves reflect the diversity of that society: approximately 41 per cent were Muslim, 26 per cent Hindu, 25 per cent Sikh and less than 1 per cent Christian.

"It gives us Punjab from the village up," Madra says. "You begin to see how communities were organised and how people identified themselves. It tells the social history of Punjab as much as its military history."That Punjab no longer exists. The villages recorded in the registers now lie across India and Pakistan, reminding us that the soldiers belonged to an undivided province long before Partition divided families, communities and memories."It isn't an Indian story or a Pakistani story," Madra says. "It's a shared Punjabi story." The research itself crossed modern borders. British and Punjabi scholars worked alongside archivists in Pakistan, while transcribers in both India and Pakistan painstakingly converted thousands of handwritten pages into searchable data.For many families, the project has already transformed fragments of family legend into documented history.Among those newly recognised is Jagat Singh of the 34th Reserve Mountain Battery, who died in Mesopotamia in January 1918. His great-granddaughter, Manjinder Nagra, became the first Sikh woman to play rugby for England.Another descendant, Leicester dentist Dr Inder Singh Palahey, spent years searching for information about his great-grandfather, Kesar Singh."From just hearsay to now discovering the facts about my great-grandfather's ultimate military sacrifice has been incredibly poignant," he says. "The fact that he will now be remembered in perpetuity simply means everything to us."Madra has experienced that same emotion himself. Finding his own relative, Bishen Singh, in the registers remains his most powerful memory of the project."It's probably the only surviving record where both his name and his father's name still exist," he says.The work, however, is far from complete. The 9,909 names represent only those who died and were omitted from commemoration.

The registers themselves contain details of around 3,20,000 soldiers and promise to become one of the richest resources ever assembled on the Indian army during World War I.Researchers hope eventually to create a public, searchable database allowing descendants across the world to trace relatives, add family histories and photographs, and piece together stories that have lain buried for generations. The CWGC also believes similar archives may survive elsewhere in the former British Empire, raising the possibility that more forgotten soldiers may yet be found.For Madra, however, the work will not be complete until the names exist not only in a digital database, but on permanent memorials where descendants can stand before them. He believes the men should ultimately be commemorated physically, with their names carved in stone, just like those of other Commonwealth war dead.For thousands of families, the project has transformed fading memories and family folklore into documented history.After more than a century, the forgotten soldiers of undivided Punjab have begun their journey back into history.

US Senate targets China's drug supply grip

Washington: A bipartisan group of US senators has unveiled legislation to increase scrutiny of foreign ownership in America's pharmaceutical industry, warning that growing dependence on China for critical medicines and drug ingredients poses risks to US national security and public health.The proposed Pharmaceutical Investment Oversight and Accountability Act, introduced by Senate Special Committee on Aging Chairman Rick Scott along with Ranking Member Kirsten Gillibrand and Senator Elizabeth Warren on Wednesday (local time), would require annual reports to Congress on foreign investment in pharmaceutical manufacturing and related technologies.

Supporters said the measure is intended to improve transparency over who ultimately owns or controls companies that supply medicines to Americans. "The American people, and especially seniors, deserve to know who actually controls the medicines keeping them alive," Scott said while opening the hearing.Indian entertainment newsScott argued that Washington lacks a complete picture of foreign ownership across the pharmaceutical supply chain, including facilities that manufacture medicines, produce key ingredients or hold sensitive clinical data.

He warned that geopolitical tensions could expose vulnerabilities if critical supplies were disrupted. Gillibrand said the United States remained heavily dependent on China and India for key starting materials and active pharmaceutical ingredients used to manufacture many generic medicines.She said stronger oversight was needed to understand the extent of foreign influence while ensuring that trusted international investment continues. "We must bolster federal oversight efforts and increase transparency on how foreign capital impacts American health care infrastructure," Gillibrand said.Several witnesses told the committee that China has expanded its presence beyond generic drug manufacturing into biotechnology research, clinical trials and pharmaceutical innovation, raising concerns about long-term US competitiveness and supply chain resilience.Former Commerce Department official Nazak Nikakhtar urged Congress to tighten oversight of Chinese investments in US biotechnology companies.

Highs and lows of driving in the mountains

I have spent the last 15 years travelling across India, leading expeditions through some of the country's most remote and challenging terrains. Month after month, I travel with groups of people to destinations such as Ladakh, Spiti, Zanskar, and other Himalayan regions. Having witnessed these places evolve over the years, I believe it is important to highlight both the positives and the growing concerns surrounding development and tourism in these fragile ecosystems.There is no denying that infrastructure development in the Himalayas has transformed connectivity. From a strategic perspective, better roads are invaluable for the swift movement of our armed forces and for improving accessibility to remote regions. However, every development project must be evaluated not only for its economic and strategic benefits, but also for its long-term environmental impact.

I first travelled to Leh-Ladakh in 2010. At that time, there were no proper highways, no mobile connectivity, and reaching Leh from Chandigarh often took nearly three days. Today, the same journey can be completed in around 14 hours on well-built roads, and 5G connectivity is available in many parts of the region. This transformation has undoubtedly boosted tourism and opened economic opportunities for local communities. However, it has also placed unprecedented pressure on landscapes that were never designed to handle such large numbers of visitors.One issue that has become increasingly evident is the decline in civic sense among many tourists. During recent expeditions, I witnessed vehicles from different states being washed directly in sacred rivers such as the Shyok using detergents and chemicals. Plastic bottles, food wrappers, and other waste are frequently discarded in valleys, rivers, and mountain passes. These are not isolated incidents anymore; they are becoming common sights in places that were once untouched.If we continue to treat these destinations as picnic spots rather than environmentally sensitive regions, we risk permanently damaging what makes them so unique.Another growing concern is that travelling to high-altitude regions has become easier, but not necessarily safer. In the past, reaching Ladakh required preparation, research, and respect for the terrain. Travellers would spend weeks understanding altitude sickness, road conditions, vehicle requirements, and weather patterns before attempting the journey. Today, digital maps and viral social media reels have created the illusion that these destinations are just another weekend road trip.

Many visitors arrive without understanding the risks posed by high altitude, reduced oxygen levels, or rapidly changing weather conditions. It is increasingly common to see families travelling with very young children to elevations above 11,000 feet without adequate acclimatisation or medical awareness.Many tourists ignore the importance of gradual ascent, proper hydration, and rest. Every year, local authorities and rescue teams respond to preventable medical emergencies caused not by the mountains themselves, but by a lack of preparation.Equally concerning is the tendency of many travellers to ignore the knowledge of local communities. The people who have lived in these regions for generations understand the mountains better than anyone else. They know which roads become dangerous after rainfall, how weather changes within minutes, and how visitors should acclimatise before travelling further. Yet many tourists rely entirely on navigation apps or social media recommendations.Technology is a useful tool, but it should never replace local wisdom in environments as unpredictable as the Himalayas.

The increasing number of landslides across Himalayan states is another issue that deserves attention. While natural geological conditions certainly play a role, aggressive hill cutting for road widening and new highway projects has undoubtedly weakened mountain slopes in many areas. Roads that were originally designed as single carriageways are now being expanded, often requiring extensive excavation. Development is necessary, but it must be carried out with careful environmental assessment and scientific planning rather than speed alone.Tourism is essential for the local economy, and no one is suggesting that it should be discouraged. However, tourism must become sustainable. Ecologically sensitive regions cannot continue to receive unlimited numbers of visitors without consequences. Introducing a regulated permit system or seasonal cap on visitor numbers in highly sensitive areas would reduce pressure on infrastructure, minimise environmental degradation, improve the travel experience, and provide local communities with a more stable source of income throughout the year rather than concentrating tourism into only a few months.Authorities should spread awareness to promote responsible tourism. Visitors must understand that preserving these places is as important as enjoying them. Carrying back waste items, respecting local customs, avoiding pollution of rivers, and following advice from local residents should be considered basic responsibilities rather than optional choices.The Himalayas are among India's greatest natural treasures. They are not merely tourist destinations but living ecosystems that support millions of people downstream. Development and tourism are both important, but neither should come at the cost of the environment or the well-being of local communities.Progress and conservation must go hand in hand. If we fail to protect these mountains today, future generations may inherit roads and hotels, but they will lose the pristine landscapes that once inspired millions to visit them in the first place.

The inescapable earthiness of Teejan Bai

Many decades ago, sometime in the mid-1980s, I arrived in Paris and knocked at my painter friend SH Raza's door early in the morning. He was awake. As soon as we settled down to the morning tea, he asked me who Teejan Bai was. He added that the Parisian high society was abuzz with scandal since Teejan Bai had stated in an interview, published the previous day in the French daily Le Monde, that "French women are beautiful, but they are so flat-chested!"

Teejan Bai, a dark-skinned, well-endowed woman from Chhattisgarh, was a Pandavani performer who narrated episodes from the Mahabharata with pithy and sharp comments, relating them to current affairs, to the eternal dilemmas and contradictions of humans. A solo actor, a dancer, a singer, she was all rolled into one, her body and an ektara her only physical assets.

No stage set, no complicated light arrangement, not even a public address system was required for Teejan's art.It was an art that teased and brought the grand epic of Mahabharata to the utterly ordinary, infusing it with the earthiness of Chhattisgarh.In her narrative, the classical was folk, and the grandeur and the heroics were teased into being everyday occurrences. Teejan creatively, and significantly, transformed the distant and inaccessible narrative into its inevitable everydayness. The living and the grand, the awe-inspiring and the interrogative were all pulled down, as it were, to be located and rooted in the mundane, and the earthiness and mess of daily life.Pandavani, a popular folk form of Chhattisgarh, is the narrative art of telling the tales of the Pandavas from the Mahabharata. Teejan Bai, born and brought up in the lowliest of social and economic circumstances, almost single-handedly transformed this art into a vehicle of not only the epic episodes, but also of social and moral criticality. She was very nearly the first woman performer in the exclusively male-dominated Pandavani. She took this Chhattisgarhi genre of creative expression to the national and international levels.Teejan, through her self-chosen art, converted the lowliness of her circumstances into depth. She was able to transgress the conventional constraints into a bold, open-ended arena of moral and social interrogation. The irony of a low-caste woman making a foundational text, a classic of Hinduism, come alive could not be lost on her audience, nor its contemporary relevance be overestimated.It became Teejan Bai's Mahabharata. She seemed to be possessed by it. On the stage, she almost owned it. Classics are classics because they allow constant discovery and reinvention. However, reinventions in performance often do not get the recognition that scholarly or intellectual discoveries and explorations of the same classics get. In our time, if Buddhadeb Basu (Bengali), Durga Bhagwat and Irawati Karve (Marathi), and Dharmveer Bharati (Hindi) have discovered the Mahabharata and reinterpreted it in literature, Teejan Bai has done so in performance.We came to know of Teejan Bai through theatreperson Habib Tanvir in the late 1970s. He was already creating a new kind of modernism in theatre by engaging the energy and vitality of some of the folk performers of Chhattisgarh. When Teejan Bai performed for the first time in Bhopal, we were struck by the many elements of her performance; and the ease and confidence with which she handled a variety of emotions and experiences: love, longing, grief, tenderness, waiting, wonder, shock, challenge, resolve to fight, retaliation, contemplation, moral dilemma, burning questions. She smoothly moved from one to the other, as she did from enacting a variety of characters such as Krishna, Duryodhana, Karna, Bheema, Arjuna, Draupadi, and Gandhari. While they were part of a narrative being said and sung, suggested and enacted, each one emerged with a marked and distinct persona.She spoke, sang, whispered, shouted, wailed, laughed, and, in a manner, wove them together in her unending, almost interminable, episodes from the great epic.In between, with humour and sarcasm, she would punctuate the narration with bits of contemporary happenings, commenting sharply on their import and implication. In her performance, we, who watched her, were transported to an epical time, in which the past and the present seamlessly merged. Teejan Bai spoke to the great epic Mahabharata, but she also addressed the clumsy, chaotic, clueless 'Mahabharata' we currently live in.Teejan Bai had a troubled personal life, a depressing ethos of social stigma. But she fiercely protected her art from being soiled by it, refusing to carry the suffering visibly. Perhaps she was, in this respect, an unsuspecting classicist who did not use art for self-expression. And yet she was a woman, her female presence and gesture undeniable, and sometimes stark. She was a woman who was telling us stories and episodes from a classical past, revealing aspects of our eternal human condition.She became a human voice, a human presence, a human oracle, reaffirming that we are all human beings who have a lot to share with each other: songs, stories, strengths, foibles, dignity and arrogance — all markers of irrepressible humanity.Teejan Bai was admired by lakhs of people, both in India and abroad. She received many honours: the Rajya Shikhar Samman of the Madhya Pradesh government, the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, the Padma Shri, the Padma Bhushan and the Padma Vibhushan. She emerged as the most admired and awarded folk performing female artiste in India.She travelled far and wide and carried both the Mahabharata and the Chhattisgarhi fragrance all along. I recall that when she went to Paris to perform for the first time, she was scheduled to give about a dozen concerts, but performed twice the number due to public demand.From singing on small chabutaras and under trees in rural Chhattisgarh, she rose to perform in hallowed halls and glittering spaces, both within India and elsewhere.

Forty years after the hand of God, England meet the right foot of God

It was stoppage time of the World Cup semi-final. Argentina had already rescued themselves once, and now sensed one last opportunity to avoid extra time. Inside England's penalty area stood a wall of white shirts. One defender rushed out to close Messi down, another threw out a desperate leg to block the cross. Three more occupied the six-yard box, each standing exactly where a delivery ought to land. Jordan Pickford lurked behind them, waiting for anything overhit.Messi's right foot clipped the ball into the night sky. It rose over the first challenge, skimmed above the heads of England's defenders by inches, drifted beyond Pickford's reach, left him in a dilemma whether to commit or leave, and, almost impossibly, dipped at precisely the moment Lautaro Martínez arrived at the far post. By the time the Argentina striker nodded home the winner, guiding the defending champions to a second successive final, the ball had travelled over almost the entire England defence before landing gently on his forehead.Zlatan Ibrahimovic, the Swedish great, gushed on Fox: "I had said yesterday that you're going to see the left foot of God. You got to see the right foot of God … beautiful moment."Football has always celebrated players who beat defenders with feints and dribbles.

Diego Maradona's 'Goal of the Century' against England in 1986 remains perhaps the sport's greatest act of individual brilliance. Starting inside his own half, he dribbled past five outfield players, rounded Peter Shilton and rolled the ball into an empty net. Forty years on, against the same opponents, Argentina produced another moment that belonged in the same conversation. Maradona erased six Englishmen by carrying the ball. Messi erased six with a cross.Messi has made those weaving runs, too. The slalom against Getafe, that run through Athletic Bilbao and countless solo goals for Barcelona belonged to a footballer who bent matches at his will, with his legs. That version of Messi is gone.Argentina's Lionel Messi in action during the World Cup semifinal vs England. (AP) Argentina's Lionel Messi in action during the World Cup semifinal vs England. (AP)Age takes away the explosive first step, the relentless dribbles and the ability to outrun younger players for 90 minutes. What it cannot touch is vision. If anything, it sharpens it.Against England, he wasn't looking at defenders. He was looking beyond them. Where most footballers would have seen a penalty area crowded with bodies, Messi spotted a passing route that wasn't through defenders but above them.

The margin for error was microscopic. A fraction lower and it strikes a defender. A fraction longer and Pickford claims it. A fraction slower and the opportunity disappears. The window existed for barely a second.Messi found the only solution: going aerial. Perhaps even more astonishing was the foot he used.For nearly two decades, coaches have devised plans around forcing Messi onto his weaker side. Every full-back who has faced him has been told the same thing: don't let him come inside onto his left. England did exactly that. For a fleeting moment, it even looked as though Messi would check back and recycle possession to a teammate waiting outside the box.Instead, he trusted his weaker right foot. The cross he produced is one many elite wingers would struggle to deliver with their stronger one. As much as the execution, it was the imagination that made it extraordinary. He saw an angle that didn't appear to exist and a space that revealed itself only after the ball had travelled through it.This assist deserves to sit alongside the greatest goals Messi has scored. Not just because it was spectacular at first glance, but also because every replay makes it seem even more impossible. Watch it once and it looks like a fine cross. Watch it again and you begin counting the defenders it clears. Freeze the frame and you wonder how the ball found its way through a corridor that appeared not to exist.At 25, Messi might have dribbled through six defenders. Cup final.

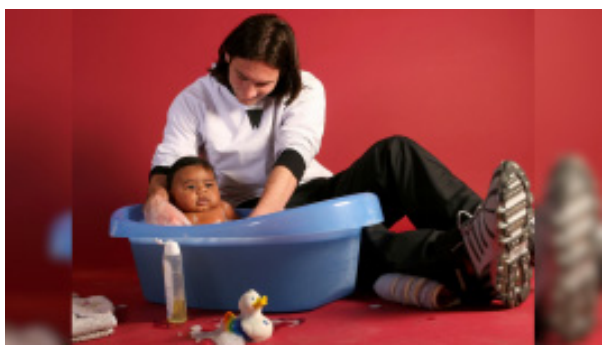
Leaving Rajasthan Royals was the toughest decision of my career, says Sanju Samson on trade to CSK

New Delhi: India wicketkeeper-batter Sanju Samson has revealed that leaving IPL franchise Rajasthan Royals after more than a decade long association was one of the toughest decisions of his career.South Asians & DiasporaBut the strong bond he shared with Mahendra Singh Dhoni and Ruturaj Gaikwad made his move to Chennai Super Kings an easy transition.

"Moving on from RR was a very big decision for me. I believe that after playing for a team for some time, you start to feel like this is your team and nobody can remove you. But, I always had the awareness that there is a limited time for everyone at one place," Samson, who led the Royals for five years before moving to CSK through a trade ahead of IPL 2026, told JioStar's 'Superstars'."You do your part, and you move out and after the end of IPL 2025, a point came when I felt that I should move on. I told myself that the boys are ready, and RR is ready to play without Sanju Samson. That is when I thought of leaving," he added.The Kerala cricketer said he had a few options on the table after quitting RR but chose Chennai Super Kings because it felt like the perfect fit for his game. Samson added that finally donning the iconic yellow jersey was a special feeling."There were two or three options at that time. But honestly, CSK, Mahi bhai's influence, the franchise itself, and my friends there, especially Ruturaj, meant I had great connections. Based on what I had heard about CSK from other players, I felt that this franchise was my type."If I go there, it will be very good for me. I had wished for that, but a trade is a tricky thing. I want to go there, but do they want me? And the original team needs to get what they want in return. Everyone has to agree. It was a major turning point. Luckily, I ended up in CSK. It was a great feeling," he said.Indian entertainment newsGrowing up, the 31-year-old Samson idolised Dhoni and his fearless batting style, often going to bed dreaming of the day he would get the chance to represent India.The way he carried himself and his aggressive batting style really attracted me. He used to appear in the ads, and I would cut out his picture and stick it in my diary. Every kid has an idol, and Mahi bhai was mine."As a child, I used to watch India play every day. Mahi bhai would be captaining and winning matches. I would go to sleep thinking, 'I have to play one day too.' I used to dream of batting with him, building a partnership, and fielding alongside him."Now part of the CSK setup, Samson said one of his biggest dreams is to bat alongside Dhoni. Dhoni missed the entire 2026 IPL season with a calf injury, but Samson said he hasn't given up hope of playing alongside him.

Recalling how he got his first IPL opportunity, Samson said he spent the first few matches on the Rajasthan Royals bench before finally gathering the courage to approach then captain Rahul Dravid."He calmly explained that I needed to be patient and that my time would come. I was frustrated and disappointed after hearing that, so I took out all my anger in the nets. I would go to the nets and hit sixes, thinking, 'I'll show them.'His lucky break came when wicketkeeper, Dishant Yagnik bhai, got injured."There was no plan to play me, but Dishant bhai got injured for one match. So, they played me against Punjab (then KXIP), which was my debut in the IPL in 2013, and I won that game for the team."It was my first match. I scored 27 not out batting at number 6. I also got three-four dismissals while keeping the wickets. But in the next match, Dishant bhai was fit again, and I was dropped."

The baby in the bathtub with a legend: Messi & Yamal's 19-year journey to World Cup final



The photograph was taken in a Barcelona dressing room in late 2007. A 20-year-old Lionel Messi, with a shy smile and a head of untamed curls, held a six-month-old baby in a blue plastic bathtub. Neither of them knew, in that fleeting moment, that the world would one day look back at the image and see the beginning of something extraordinary.Almost two decades later, that baby, Lamine Yamal, will face Messi in the FIFA World Cup 2026 final on Sunday in New Jersey, a generational showdown that feels scripted by football's gods.

Defending champion Argentina secured their place in the title clash with a 2-1 victory over England, setting up a meeting against Spain, the reigning European champions. It will be the first time Messi and Yamal have played against each other, but their story began long before either had kicked a ball on the world's biggest stage. Spain, meanwhile, thrashed pre-event favourite France 2-0 in the semifinal courtesy of goals from Mikel Oyarzabal and Pedro Porro.Yamal's dazzling rise for Spain and Barcelona has inevitably drawn parallels with Messi (AP Photo) Yamal's dazzling rise for Spain and Barcelona has inevitably drawn parallels with Messi

The unlikely origin of their connection dates back to a charity raffle organised by the Spanish newspaper Diario Sport and UNICEF in 2007. Local families in Catalonia were offered the chance to participate in a promotional calendar photo shoot with FC Barcelona players. Yamal's family won one of the slots.The shoot took place inside the Camp Nou dressing room. Messi, then a rising star for Barcelona, was paired with the infant Yamal. The resulting image, Messi holding Yamal in a plastic bathtub, was published in the 2008 charity calendar and largely forgotten.That changed during the 2024 European Championship, when Yamal's father, Mounir Nasraoui, posted the photo on Instagram with the caption: "The beginning of two legends."Now, almost 20 years after that photo shoot, the baby from the picture and the legend himself are set to face each other on the biggest stage in football.

Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli will bring calmness and confidence to ODI squad, says Cheteshwar Pujara

New Delhi: Veteran India batter Cheteshwar Pujara believes the return of Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli for the ODI series against England will provide the Indian dressing room with much-needed confidence after a disappointing 4-0 defeat in the preceding T20I series. Reflecting on India's struggles, Pujara attributed the batting unit's difficulties to its lack of experience in English conditions and expressed hope that the presence of two seasoned campaigners would help the team respond positively in the 50-over format.India's young batting group came under scrutiny after failing to consistently counter England's pace attack during the T20Is, with several batters troubled by the short ball. Pujara, however, felt the challenge went beyond technique and stemmed largely from unfamiliarity with white-ball cricket in England."If you look at this Indian batting group, they had IPL experience but very little white-ball experience in English conditions," Pujara told JioStar.

He explained that success in England demands a different range of scoring options than those commonly used on batting-friendly surfaces elsewhere, saying, "In England, you can't rely only on six-hitting. You need to play more flat-batted shots, access straight boundaries and use options like the upper cut and cuts over point against the short ball. We didn't see enough of those shots, and I think that was largely down to a lack of experience in these conditions."Pujara also widened the discussion to the balance between bat and ball in T20 cricket, arguing that conditions should offer bowlers greater assistance to preserve the contest, as he stated, "Even in the IPL, you don't want matches where teams can easily chase 260. There has to be something for the bowlers."He believes increasingly powerful and inventive batting has made it essential for pitches to provide at least some early assistance."In T20 cricket, the margin for error is already very small, especially on flat pitches with short boundaries, while batters continue to get stronger and more innovative. That's why it's important to have pitches that offer bowlers a little assistance, whether through some turn or a bit of movement in the first two or three overs," Pujara added.Looking ahead at the ongoing ODI series, Pujara said the return of Rohit and Kohli would extend beyond their individual contributions with the bat, bringing invaluable composure to a relatively inexperienced squad."What Rohit and Virat will bring is calmness and confidence, and that only comes with experience. The T20I squad lacked experience, so having players who have consistently performed against England across Tests, ODIs and T20Is will give the dressing room belief because they know how to win," he opined."It won't be easy. England have identified certain areas they can target, and after a 4-0 T20I series defeat, there will naturally be some pressure on the team. But the confidence Rohit and Virat bring can rub off on the rest of the squad. They have also had time to prepare before the ODI series, and that preparation should help them perform well. I hope they have a strong series," he added.

India vs England Playing 11, 2nd ODI: Will Shubman Gill return after Injury scare? Brar's fitness in doubt

India vs England 2nd ODI Today Match Playing 11, Full Squad: After a morale-lifting win over England in the first One-Day International, Shubman Gill-led India will look to seal the series in the second ODI at Sophia Gardens in Cardiff on Thursday.India chased down England's total of 259 with ease, reaching the target in the 46th over. Captain Gill anchored the chase with an unbeaten 80 before retiring hurt, while Axar Patel and Washington Sundar chipped in with crucial half-centuries to see the side home. Axar had earlier starred with the ball, picking up four wickets to restrict the hosts to a below-par score.

Veterans Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, whose inclusion was the central theme of the series, failed to impress in the opener. Both senior pros got out cheaply; Rohit fell for 11 while Kohli managed just 5, leaving the middle order to do the heavy lifting. Their lack of runs, however, did not hurt India on the day, but the team will hope for more from the experienced duo in the remaining games.There were injury scares for both Gill and pacer Gurnoor Brar during the first game, but it is being reported that the India skipper is fit and will be available for the second ODI. There is still no clarity on Brar's availability, however. Should he miss out, either Prince Yadav or Arshdeep Singh could come into the playing XI.England probable XI: Jacob Bethell, Ben Duckett, Joe Root, Harry Brook (c), Jos Buttler (wk), Sam Curran, Will Jacks, Jofra Archer, Liam Dawson, Josh Tongue, Adil Rashid.India probable XI: Shubman Gill (c), Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sundar, KL Rahul (wk), Axar Patel, Shivam Dube, Prasidh Krishna, Gurnoor Brar/Prince Yadav/Arshdeep Singh, Jasprit Bumrah.India: Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill (c), Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul, Ishan Kishan(w), Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Jasprit Bumrah, Arshdeep Singh, Gurnoor Brar, Prince Yadav, Shivam Dube, Prasidh Krishna.England: Ben Duckett, Will Jacks, Joe Root, Harry Brook(c), Jos Buttler(w), Jacob Bethell, Sam Curran, Liam Dawson, Jofra Archer, Adil Rashid, Saqib Mahmood, Tom Banton, Josh Tongue, Gus Atkinson, James Coles, Rehan Ahmed.

'My father sold a property to help me follow my ambition,' reveals shooter Sonam Maskar

New Delhi: Kolhapur's Sonam Uttam Maskar went from casually taking up shooting to preparing to represent India at the 20th Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan. She revealed that her father sold a property to provide her with the necessary equipment to follow her ambitions.The 23-year-old 10m air rifle shooter will be part of the Indian team heading to Japan, where the shooting events at the Asian Games are set to take place from September 17 to October 3 at the Aichi Prefectural General Shooting Gallery. Sonam's ascent to the global stage was preceded by financial struggles.As she committed to shooting seriously, the expense of professional gear became a barrier, especially as her family faced economic hardships after the Covid-19 pandemic.There was a time when we were facing financial difficulties, especially around the lockdown period. When it became clear that I needed my own equipment to progress further in shooting, my father sold a property so that we could buy it. It was a big decision for our family, but they have always supported me," Sonam recalled.Sonam's first encounter with shooting was in 2018 during her studies at Tolani College of Commerce in Mumbai, and a professional career in the sport was never part of her original plans. "I was always interested in sports and I used to play chess as well. I thought I should try something different, so I initially took up shooting. I started shooting as a hobby, but it soon became something I wanted to build my career around," she said.Following the pandemic disruption of her early progress,

Abhishek Nayar urges patience with Vaibhav Sooryavanshi after India's tough England tour

New Delhi: Former India assistant coach Abhishek Nayar has urged patience in handling teenage batter Vaibhav Sooryavanshi following India's underwhelming T20I campaign against England, insisting the youngster needs understanding rather than immediate technical intervention.Reflecting on India's recent struggles and the team's loss of momentum, Nayar explained why the England assignment unfolded differently from the successful tour of South Africa in 2024, while outlining how the support staff should approach one of the country's brightest prospects.Sooryavanshi entered the series carrying significant expectations after attracting widespread attention in recent months, but endured a difficult run with the bat as India struggled to find rhythm throughout the tour. Nayar believes the priority should be understanding the teenager's state of mind before discussing cricket."The most important thing is to evaluate where the kid is today and how he's feeling. As a young player, you're already conflicted, that three games ago, the whole world was excited about your batting, and suddenly everything seems to have changed," Nayar told JioStar.

According to Nayar, communication from coaches should focus on helping the youngster process the experience rather than overwhelming him with technical advice."The support staff's response has to be measured. First, understand how he's feeling. Maybe the conversation isn't even about batting initially, but about life and what international cricket is. Every bowler is coming at you, so can you find different solutions?" he questioned.He added that allowing the player to reflect on his own experiences would be more effective than prescribing immediate fixes."You don't want him to see it as a problem, but as a tactical challenge. Instead of telling him what to do, have a conversation. Let him explain what he felt in that moment and what he was trying to do. The more he speaks, the clearer he'll become," he added.Nayar also highlighted the role of coaches in shielding young players from additional pressure during difficult phases, saying, "As support staff, you don't put your emotions onto the player; you absorb theirs, so that the next time he walks

in, he's clear in his mind."Discussing India's broader struggles, Nayar rejected comparisons with the team's successful T20I tour of South Africa in 2024, arguing that the circumstances surrounding the two series were vastly different."To be honest, the pitches in South Africa were very good. The conditions weren't the issue. In T20 cricket, form and momentum are everything, and this team had neither," he said.He pointed to the lack of preparation following the IPL, the introduction of a new captain, and the heightened attention around Sooryavanshi as factors that disrupted India's campaign before it had gathered momentum.

"After the IPL, there was a break. So, they went into the Ireland series without much preparation. The only question over the team was that there is a new captain and a couple of new players. There was so much discussion about Vaibhav Sooryavanshi going into it, that I felt that the team didn't have tunnel vision," the former India player stated.While acknowledging that India's batters found the short-ball strategy challenging, Nayar insisted the issue should not be viewed as a long-term concern given the players' proven ability. "The players are talented. They struggled against the short ball, but it's not like players like Ishan Kishan, Abhishek and Sooryavanshi haven't handled it well before,"

Paresh Rawal claims OMG 2 was his idea: 'Akshay Kumar took the script, didn't give me credit'

When OMG 2 was gearing up for release in 2023, it ran into trouble with the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) over its blend of sex education and religious themes. After multiple delays, the film was eventually cleared with an A certificate, even though the makers had hoped for a U/A rating as they intended to target adolescents. Several modifications were also made, including changing Akshay Kumar's character from Lord Shiva to 'Shiv ka Doot'.However, according to Paresh Rawal, much of the controversy could have been avoided had the makers stuck to his original story, which, he claims, centred on the relationship between a father and son and did not involve any divine intervention.

Speaking to Vickey Lalwani, the veteran actor claimed he had conceived the original story for what later became OMG 2 and shared the idea with director Amit Rai, with whom he developed the screenplay. According to him, the project took a different turn after Akshay Kumar came on board.'The story was never meant to have God'Recalling how the project began, Paresh said, "I had approached Amit Rai, the director of Road to Sangam, and asked him if he was planning another film. I admire him a lot. I told him, 'I have an idea. Let's sit and write it.' I told him I wasn't a writer but I could contribute ideas and help identify where we were going wrong because I understand screenplay to some extent."He continued, "The story was about a boy who gets caught masturbating, and a video of the incident goes viral, making his life miserable. His father was a tourist guide at the Khajuraho temple. Amit suggested making him a part-time priest at the Mahakal Temple. We developed the script together and even brought sexologist Dr Prakash Kothari on board. We had several meetings because our intention was to make the film educational, entertaining and not vulgar. We were deeply involved in the process."Rawal said the script was later narrated to filmmaker Anurag Kashyap and subsequently to Somen Mishra from Karan Johar's Dharma Productions. "Somen outright said it wouldn't work," he recalled.'We didn't need God in the story'

Rawal further revealed that the original concept was vastly different from the final film. "Our main idea was to have a biker guiding the father, not God. In the first OMG, God appeared because the case was against God. But this film was about a father's fight to get justice for his son. There was no need for a divine character. We wanted someone like Kader Khan's character in Muqaddar Ka Sikandar."According to Rawal, he approached Ajay Devgn and Salman Khan for the role of the biker. "I didn't approach Akshay because people would have assumed it was OMG 2, whereas that wasn't the plan."Paresh alleged that the project changed course after Akshay Kumar expressed interest in it. "I was under the impression that we were still figuring things out. We even had a meeting with Vipul Shah of Optimystix. They also asked about Akshay, and I said if I wanted to make it with him, I would have approached him directly. Akshay and I were partners in OMG. I didn't need anyone to bridge the gap." He added, "A few days later, Amit Rai called and told me Akshay wanted to do the film. The issue was that Amit had tentatively written 'OMG 2' on the script because the genre was similar."Rawal believes the script reached Akshay through producer Ashwin Varde. "In one of our meetings, Ashwin Varde was present. That's when they decided they wanted to do it with Akshay."He continued, "I told Amit that I didn't want to go ahead with it. Amit said, 'But they want to make it.' They took the script from him. I told Amit I couldn't fight him; he's my friend. If that's what he had chosen, I wished him well. I repeatedly told them not to make it a franchise because it wasn't one. But they still went ahead."The veteran actor said Akshay Kumar later personally asked him to be a part of the film. "I spoke to Akshay. He asked me to do the film. I told him, 'No. This isn't the film I had envisioned. There is no role of God in this story.' He tried to convince me, but I had lived with the script from the beginning. I knew exactly what it was supposed to be. That's why I walked away."The role eventually went to Pankaj Tripathi. Rawal also claimed he did not receive credit for the story. "The saddest part is that I wasn't even given credit for the story or the concept. My name wasn't mentioned anywhere." He further claimed that everyone he had narrated the script to was aware that the idea originated with him."Amit, Akshay, Ashwin, Ajay Devgn, Karan Johar and Salman Khan… all know it was my idea and my story. Ajay and Salman probably said no because of the subject. They thought it could become controversial. I tried explaining the concept to them."

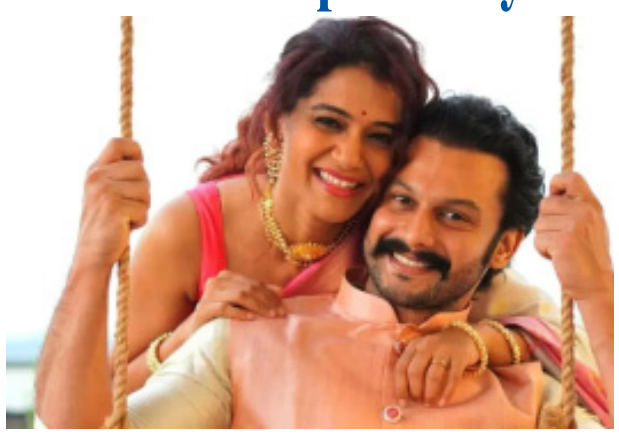
'Amitabh Bachchan ko noch dala': Paresh Rawal says Big B was persecuted, he only wants peace

Paresh Rawal is known not just for his acting prowess but also for speaking his mind. Never one to shy away from expressing his opinions, the actor recently weighed in on the buzz surrounding Amitabh Bachchan's cryptic X post, in which the veteran star wrote, "Wanted to say something, but thought – NO!! Don't say it." Reacting to the post, Paresh said he believes fear is what is stopping Amitabh Bachchan from speaking his mind.Speaking to Vickey Lalwani, Rawal said: "People are afraid. They fear harassment from those in authority. Earlier, some people spoke unapologetically. If you notice, the number of such people has also reduced over time." He then reflected on Bachchan's own political experience. "What will he do at this age? He has seen how people tore him apart after the VP Singh episode. If power comes after you, it can ruin your life. We don't know everything he went through. He suffered a lot. Amitabh is not someone who believes in conflict. He prefers peace. He folds his hands and ends the argument there itself. Many mistake that for weakness. He doesn't like fights, toxicity or negativity around him."Talking in the same interview, Paresh Rawal also recalled the time he almost starred alongside Amitabh Bachchan in 102 Not Out, only to be dropped from the film at the last minute.Speaking to Vickey Lalwani, Rawal said, "Politics never really played a role in the reduced number of films I did. The number reduced because I refused to do them. I am using the word 'refuse' and not 'reject'. Many times, I simply didn't find merit in the scripts or the stories." He added, "Even while being a politician, I had enough time to do films. Parliament functions for around 110 days a year. I still had about 265 days to myself. I had even reduced my theatre shows."

'Someone refused to work with me'Rawal then recalled how he unexpectedly exited 102 Not Out. "In 102 Not Out, I was supposed to play the role that Rishi Kapoor eventually did. I was associated with the project for two to three years. Then suddenly, I was out. I asked Umesh what happened, and he told me someone had refused to work with me. He never named that person. I still don't know exactly why I was removed, but I can tell you it had nothing to do with my political stint."When asked whether he tried to find out who had objected, Rawal replied, "I didn't pursue it because Umesh is a friend. I asked him once, understood that there were issues, and didn't want to embarrass him. I could have dug out the truth. I was the victim in that situation. I know who wanted me out, but I don't want to say it publicly. I even confronted that person, but they denied knowing anything about it. I let it go. Whenever I have a problem with someone, I prefer calling them directly instead of speculating."At the peak of his acting career, Amitabh Bachchan entered politics in 1984 at the request of his close friend, then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Contesting on a Congress ticket, he won the Allahabad Lok Sabha seat by defeating veteran politician Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna by a massive margin. Around the same time, Vishwanath Pratap (VP) Singh became Finance Minister in the Rajiv Gandhi government. During his tenure, he launched a high-profile crackdown on tax evasion and expanded investigations by the Enforcement Directorate into suspected violations of foreign exchange laws.Given Amitabh Bachchan's close friendship with the Gandhi family, media attention also turned towards the Bachchan family during this period. Allegations surfaced regarding possible foreign exchange violations, although no charges were ultimately proven against the actor.The controversy intensified after the Bofors scandal broke in 1987. Around the same period, a Swedish newspaper alleged that Amitabh Bachchan and his brother Ajitabh Bachchan held secret Swiss bank accounts linked to alleged kickbacks in the Bofors deal. The Bachchan brothers consistently denied the allegations.

VP Singh later resigned from the Congress government, alleging corruption in the Bofors deal and emerging as Rajiv Gandhi's principal political rival. Amitabh Bachchan's name frequently surfaced in the political discourse surrounding the controversy, despite his repeated denials. Facing mounting political scrutiny and media attention, Bachchan resigned from Parliament in 1987 and announced his exit from politics. However, the scrutiny didn't end.In 1988, VP Singh formed the Janata Dal and went on to win the Allahabad by-election from the seat vacated by Bachchan, cementing his position as the face of the anti-Congress movement.After becoming Prime Minister in 1989, Singh's government continued investigations into the Bofors affair and related financial matters. Amitabh and Ajitabh Bachchan remained under scrutiny for years in connection with Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) and tax-related investigations. However, they consistently denied any wrongdoing, and over time, the allegations against them were not substantiated. Various investigations and court proceedings ultimately did not establish their involvement in the alleged kickback scandal. In 2012, the actor was officially cleared of involvement in the scandal.

Ramayana actor Addinath Kothare and Urmila Kanetkar part ways after 15 years of marriage



Ramayana actor Addinath Kothare and Urmila Kanetkar confirm divorce after 15 years of marriageRamayana actor Addinath Kothare and Urmila Kanetkar confirm divorce after 15 years of marriageActors Addinath Kothare and Urmila Kanetkar have officially announced their divorce, bringing an end to their 15-year marriage. The couple shared the news in a joint statement on social media on Thursday, saying the decision to part ways was mutual. They also said they would continue to co-parent their daughter, Jizah.

Taking to their Instagram handle, the duo shared a long note about navigating this new chapter of their lives. "To our friends, media, and well-wishers, After much thought and consideration, Urmilla Kanetkar and I, Addinath M. Kothare, have mutually and amicably decided to part ways as partners. While our journey as a couple has ended, our commitment to our daughter, Jizah, remains absolute. She is our utmost priority. We are happily and dedicatedly co-parenting her to ensure she grows up surrounded by love, security, and support," the statement read.It further read, "We hold the deepest mutual respect for one another and the years we shared. We are incredibly grateful to the media and the public for the immense love and support you have given us over the years, and we sincerely hope and pray that you will continue to bless us with the same as we step into this new chapter of our lives.""In this spirit, we kindly request our friends in the media and the public to respect our privacy. This will be our only statement on this matter, and we will not be commenting further. Thank you for your continued warmth and understanding," the statement concluded.Addinath Kothare and Urmila Kanetkar first met on the sets of Shubh Mangal Saavdhan in 2006. They got married in 2011 and welcomed their daughter Jiza in 2018, after seven years of marriage. While Urmila is known for projects like Duniyadari, Mala Aai Vhhaychy! and Ti Saddhya Kay Karte, Addinath, on the other hand, is a prominent name in Maratha cinema,

Madhuri Grover doubles down on 'rich vs poor' childbirth remark: 'Wealthy running country'

Ashneer Grover's wife, Madhuri Jain Grover, recently got evicted from Netflix India's Lock Upp Sach Ya Sazaa. After her eviction, Madhuri sat down for a special conversation with actress Tejasswi Prakash, where she addressed her remark that "if poor people have more kids, poverty will increase." Madhuri also got emotional and pledged to give Rs 1 crore to someone who went to jail because of her personal battles.

Madhuri Grover revisits her 'rich vs poor' childbirth logicOn the first judgement day of the season, Madhuri Jain Grover shared a secret from her life. She said that she wanted to plan a third child with Ashneer Grover. However since their familes opposed the decision, they didn't go ahead with that decision. During that discussion, Madhuri went on to say that she believed that if the rich had more children, they would contribute more to the country's economy. She said, "We wanted to have a third child, but we got influenced by our family's circumstances. Despite being educated and having so much, we were not able to make that decision. We got influenced by Ashneer's mom's idea that two kids are enough, and later, when we wanted a third child, it was too late. We have that regret. All the rich people have a third child, and he makes you feel young. If the rich people have more kids, wealth will increase, and if poor people have more kids, poverty will increase."

Now, in a special curated interview segment called Shut up with Tejasswi, hosted actress Tejasswi Prakash. Madhuri revisited her controversial statement. She said, "I never stopped anyone from having kids. The problem with this generation is that people don't want to have kids. I said, 'If the rich give birth to more kids, the country will get richer; if the poor give birth to more kids, poverty will increase.' We resonated with that."When Tejasswi pointed out how her remark came across as 'insensitive' on social media, Madhuri added, "The wealthy people are only running the country; others are getting employment through the rich." Tejasswi disagreed and said, "Poor people are also running the country, ma'am." Responding to this, Madhuri added, "While the poor also drive the nation, not all of them are doing so. You seriously think the poor are running the country? I never stopped anyone from having kids. On social media, people like to pity themselves. Humein gareeb bold diya. If they consider themselves poor, then they will stay poor."While Lock Upp Sach Ya Sazaa is said to be a journey of redemption for its contestants, an emotional Madhuri Jain Grover said her journey is not yet complete. Soon after her eviction, Madhuri teared up and told Tejasswi Prakash, "While I am still in the Lock Upp area, there are a few things I couldn't say. I was in London when the show was offered to me. It was not easy for me to say yes to it. My inner voice told me that this was a chance for redemption. I wanted to give the winning amount to that one special person who had to face Lock Upp in real life due to my personal battles. I unfortunately could not win the show, but I will still give Rs 1 crore to that person; only then will my journey of redemption be over."

In an exclusive interview with SCREEN, Madhuri Jain Grover also revealed that a lot of her fellow contestants were insecure about her. "When someone is so soft spoken and calm, people, of course, underestimate you in the first week, thinking how she would be seen on camera. All the TV personalities on the show kept saying I was a weak player since I wasn't fighting. They gradually figured they were wrong; those who thought I was weak started feeling insecure about me because they thought I would come across as a very different person outside. They thought their fights would show them in a negative light, and I would be seen positively. Honestly, I didn't do things for the camera; I was just the way I am. Many people knew I was a strong player, but they were in denial. I could feel the insecurities in them."

Anushka Sharma's rare London appearance gets fans talking, see viral video

Anushka Sharma may have stepped away from the spotlight, but every glimpse of the actor continues to send fans into a frenzy. Most recently, a fan spotted Anushka on the streets of London and shared a video of the actor on Instagram.

The clip quickly made the rounds on social media, with admirers expressing excitement over seeing Anushka, who has largely kept a low profile in recent years.In the clip, Anushka can be seen strolling through the streets of London dressed in a blue shirt paired with beige culotte pants. Keeping her look effortlessly chic, the actor opted for a minimal, casual ensemble that perfectly complemented her low-key outing.

As fans celebrated her latest appearance, an old interview featuring Anushka Sharma and Shah Rukh Khan also resurfaced online. The clip, from an episode of Yaaron Ki Baraat, reminded fans of the duo's effortless camaraderie and Anushka's witty sense of humour.During the chat show, host Sajid Khan asked Anushka what she would steal from Shah Rukh if she had the chance. Anushka replied, "Kitni saari cheezein hain (There are so many things)." She first joked that she would take his expensive watch collection because she could sell it.However, when asked what she really wanted, Anushka Sharma didn't hesitate before saying, "Mannat. Obviously."

Referring to Shah Rukh Khan's iconic Mumbai residence, her candid answer left everyone on the set laughing.

The fun banter continued as Anushka jokingly added, "Abhi kuch toh chhod deti hoon," prompting Shah Rukh to respond with his trademark wit. The superstar quipped that if Anushka took Mannat, he would simply move into his vanity van with his family, drawing laughter from the audience.

Tamannaah starts filming 'date night horror' Ragini 3 in London

Mumbai: Actor Tamannaah Bhatia has started shooting for her upcoming film "Ragini 3", the latest installment in the horror franchise, in London.The film, directed by Shashanka Ghosh, is slated for a theatrical release in 2027, the makers said in a statement.Billed as a "date night horror" entertainer, "Ragini 3" is expected to blend horror, romance and comedy while taking the franchise in a new direction.Tamannaah shared the update with fans on Instagram Stories, posting a behind-the-scenes photograph holding the film's clapperboard.The "Ragini" franchise began with "Ragini MMS" (2011), starring Kainaz Motivala and Rajkummar Rao, followed by "Ragini MMS 2" (2014), headlined by Sunny Leone.

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