

EYE SECRETS

Spy in every blink

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KCR Failed As Opposition Leader, Says Revanth

Hyderabad, August 31

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy challenged opposition leader K Chandrashekhar Rao for a debate on the performance of the People's Government during the 1000 days and the 10 year BRS rule in the Telangana state Assembly. Further, the Chief minister called to hold dharnas demanding KCR's resignation for confining to his farm house and not meeting people for the last 1000 days.

Addressing a public meeting after inaugurating the bridge in the city today, the CM slammed the BRS Chief for not attending the assembly session. "If KCR truly intends to do justice to Telangana and has any faith, the BRS leader must attend the Assembly. I am ready for a debate in the Assembly comparing what KCR achieved in 10 years and the performance of 1,000 days of my government".

Continuing his tirade against the BRS President, CM Revanth Reddy said that protests demanding the opposition leader's resignation must be held for six days from Tuesday. A big protest programme should be organized at Indira Park on September 6. The CM said he is ready to speak about all these issues during the Assembly session commenced on September 7. The Chief Minister ridiculed a comparison between KCR and his government. "Is there any other opposition leader in the country who has stayed out of the public eye for 1,000 days? Telangana is a state where the main opposition has completely failed". The BRS leaders also sold blood of the party workers by organizing blood donation camps in the party head office Telangana Bhavan, the CM charged.

The CM also disclosed that KCR drew Rs 1.24 crore salary in 1000 days and the government also spent Rs 22 crore for the BRS leader's security and

other facilities. "If a government employee fails to report for duty for a year, they are dismissed. What should be done with KCR?"

Stating that he never misused the power, CM Revanth Reddy questioned KCR for not meeting the poor, women, students, farmers, Dalits, and Adivasis even for a single day. The BRS Chief never stepped out unless it was for his grandson's hospital visit or the death of a relative. The Chief Minister said that he has not taken a single hour of leave in 1,000 days.

The CM accused KCR of exploiting the power to provide political opportunities to his family members. KCR made his son and son-in-law ministers in his cabinet. In the Congress government, Ponnampalapati Prabhakar and Vakati Srihari were elevated as ministers. Hanumantha Rao has been appointed as a government advisor and made Anil Yadav an MP. It was KCR who promoted Errabelli Dayakar as minister and he made Adluri Laxman a minister. Venkat Rami Reddy was made an MLC in the BRS government and Addanki Dayakar was given the MLC post in the People's government. KTR was appointed as BRS working President and Mahesh Goud from the weaker sections community was appointed as the TPCC President.

The CM announced that TIMS, Alwal would be named after former CM Anjaiah and the LB Nagar TIMS hospital after Konda Laxman. The Government also decided to name the Warangal super specialty hospital after Professor Jayashankar.

CM Revanth Reddy warned if anyone touched the Rajiv Gandhi statue installed at the State Secretariat. We also installed the statue of Sardar Sarvai Papanna and Mahatma Jyotiba Phule on Necklace



Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy formally opens the high-level bridge at Moosarambagh in Hyderabad on Monday. Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi, Malakpet MLA Ahmed Balala, and GHMC Commissioner R.V. Karnan were present.

Road. Telangana martyr Srinkatha Chary's mother Shankaramma was appointed as a member of the Women's Commission and named the Women's University after Chakali Ilaamma and also appointed Chakali Ailamma's granddaughter as a member of the Women's Commission.

The Chief minister criticized KCR family for looting public money and constructing farmhouses spanning 1,000 acres during the BRS rule. KTR built one farm house on 100 acres, and Kavitha built on 50 acres in Janwada. The CM castigated KCR for not considering the people's issues mainly providing ration cards, which represent the dignity of the poor? We have spent ₹3,500 crore under the Chief Minister's Relief Fund. The Osmania Hospital was inundated during the floods

but the KCR government did not take any measures. Our government was constructing a new Osmania Hospital at a cost of ₹2,000 crore.

CM Revanth Reddy listed out the schemes mainly the allotment of 'Indiramma' houses in the names of women, issuing ration cards to everyone, providing six kilograms of fine-quality rice to 3.48 crore people including the BRS supporters. Did KCR ever give this any thought? We are constructing 7 lakh 'Indiramma' houses and building one lakh 'Indiramma' houses for the poor in Hyderabad, the Chief Minister said that the state government also solved the issue of SC categorization within 1,000 days, conducted BC caste census, introduced a policy for Gig workers, new policies for sports, IT, tourism, and endowments also.

PM Modi Holds Talks With Russian President Putin

New Delhi, August 31

Pushing for an immediate end to the Russia-Ukraine war, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday called on Russian President Vladimir Putin to move from "endless war to the end of war". During a meeting with the Russian President in the Kyrgyz Republic capital Bishkek ahead of Tuesday's SCO summit, the



Prime Minister pushed for "dialogue and diplomacy" as the "way forward", asserting that "every day of war pushes back humanity (and that) every single step for peace fills humanity with hope".

In his media remarks in the presence of Putin after bilateral talks, Modi pointed out that India has always backed peace efforts to resolve the conflict. He termed it the "call of humanity" and said the "road to peace" is the message of Gandhi Ji's India that the world should take for the "benefit of humanity".

Modi said he and Putin had always discussed the ongoing conflict during their interactions and recalled that the Russian President had spoken to him about various aspects of the matter. In a late-evening statement, New Delhi said the two leaders discussed the "conflicts in West Asia and the Black Sea region (Russia-Ukraine conflict) which have impacted maritime trade and the safety and security of Indian seafarers".

Modi and Putin travelled together in the Russian President's limousine to the Nomad Games. Television footage showed them jointly entering the venue for the inauguration ceremony of the games. The two leaders had travelled in the same car in the Chinese city of Tianjin during the SCO summit last year too.

During the meeting, Modi and Putin discussed the gamut of bilateral ties, including in trade, energy and defence. The talks came over a week before Putin travels to India to attend the annual BRICS summit.

The Prime Minister also made a mention of the Russian President's visit to New Delhi last December. "Your visit to India last year was highly successful and truly memorable. It is a matter of deep satisfaction for us that our cooperation continues to scale new heights and that we are working together for the

welfare of the people of both nations," Modi said.

The Russian President appreciated the growth of bilateral trade ties and hailed the strong relationship between the two nations on the basis of the special and privileged partnership between both countries. "Focusing on national interest as the paramount priority has been our shared approach, and this will remain our guiding principle in the future as well," Putin said.

Briefing the media after the meeting, foreign secretary Vikram Misri said that Modi and Putin held a discussion on trade with a focus on increasing Indian exports to Russia in several areas. The foreign secretary also noted that there has been significant progress in addressing issues like non-tariff barriers and market access for Indian products in Russia since the last meeting between the two leaders.

According to Misri, Modi and Putin discussed the Ukraine war. "The Prime Minister emphasised the importance India attaches to dialogue and diplomacy to resolve the conflict... The Prime Minister also reiterated India's readiness to do whatever is feasible and necessary to end the war, as it is exacting a very heavy toll on the global community at large," he said.

The ministry of external affairs statement said Modi and Putin reviewed progress in bilateral cooperation in a range of fields, including political, economic, defence, energy, space, mobility and people-to-people ties. "The two leaders welcomed the outcome of the 27th India-Russia inter-governmental commission on trade, economic and cultural matters, held on August 24 in Moscow," it said.

The Prime Minister and the Russian President exchanged views on India-Russia engagement in the multilateral arena, in particular in BRICS and also shared perspectives on key regional and global issues of mutual interest, including the conflicts in West Asia and the Black Sea region, the foreign affairs ministry said.

"The two leaders agreed to remain engaged to further strengthen the special and privileged strategic partnership between the two countries, which continues to register significant growth and has shown resilience in the backdrop of geopolitical uncertainties," the foreign affairs ministry statement said.

Responding to a question about several Indians serving in the Russian military, Mr Misri said, "The issue of our nationals being recruited into the Russian armed forces has been discussed between India and Russia at various levels on various occasions... Our embassy in Moscow is monitoring this situation regularly with regard to the release and repatriation of these Indian citizens. We are in discussions with the Russian side to ensure that any cases that remain are discharged at the earliest."

TG to showcase unified water security model at National Jal Shakti Summit

Hyderabad, August 31

Telangana will showcase its unified water security model at the two day Departmental Summit organised by the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, on September 1 and September 2, 2026, Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy said. The summit holds national significance as it brings together the Centre and states to deliberate on critical issues affecting water security and service delivery, contributing to a shared time bound national action plan. The event will focus on four major themes: timely implementation of water infrastructure projects, the Catch the Rain campaign, sustainability of drinking water sources, and operation and maintenance of rural drinking water supply systems.

Reviewing Telangana presentation, N Uttam Kumar Reddy stated the state will advocate a practical framework founded on one water security plan, one comprehensive geotagged asset register, one designated lead agency, one accountable financing



mechanism, and one measurable outcome. Every water asset must feature a unique identity, geotagged location, clear funding source, responsible implementing agency, and measurable benefit. The Minister stressed that check dams, percolation tanks, farm ponds, recharge shafts, and soak pits should be selected scientifically after assessing terrain, rainfall, runoff, soil conditions, groundwater profile, and local water requirements across regions.

Kavitha vows to expose corruption in Nizamabad



Nizamabad, August 31

Telangana Rakshana Sena president Kalvakuntla Kavitha vowed to expose corruption and alleged irregularities involving local political leaders at the Panchajanya Sankalpa Sabha held at the Old Collectorate Ground on Sunday. Speaking emotionally, Kavitha said she had remained strong despite her imprisonment in Tihar Jail and alleged prolonged harassment by central agencies. She claimed the Supreme Court's intervention had vindicated her stand. Kavitha accused Balkonda MLA Vemula

Prashanth Reddy of creating differences between her and her father. She also alleged political negotiations with Congress leaders after the BRS defeat.

Announcing five key principles, she promised free education, healthcare, social justice, agricultural support and employment. She also pledged one acre to every landless poor family under Bhu Lakshmi and promised to address land and sugar factory issues. Kavitha said she would expose alleged illegal activities involving local MLAs.

How terror handlers turned Punjab’s vulnerable youth into foot soldiers



At that exact moment – 9:40 AM on January 1, 2026 – Nalagarh appeared on the radar of the country’s counter terrorism grid. It was a Thursday and the residents of this languid town were busy with their familiar routines. Once a princely state set up by Chandel Rajputs, Nalagarh is now a major industrial hub and the gateway to Himachal Pradesh that lies closer to neighbouring Chandigarh than the capital Shimla. Suddenly, a deafening explosion shattered the morning calm. Triggered by an improvised explosive device (IED), the blast was powerful enough to shatter the window panes of the police station and damage an under-construction Retired Army Personnel Association building some 45 metres away. The explosion, later claimed by banned Khalistani outfits such as Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) and Punjab Sovereignty Alliance (PSA) through an Instagram post, caused no casualties, officials say. But in a state that rarely sees terrorist attacks, it did what it set out to do – send shockwaves across Himachal’s security establishment. “It was not aimed at killing,” one officer of the Punjab Police, who was part of the investigation, told The Indian Express. “But it was intended to create fear, demonstrate the operational reach of the terror outfit and send a threatening message to the police establishment.”

The attack was Himachal’s second terror attack in two decades and the first time the state had seen a bomb blast. But the investigation that followed showed something even more alarming: it revealed how cross-border terror networks had changed tack, recruiting Punjab’s drug-addicted youth to be foot soldiers for a strike engineered abroad. This terror attack was also significant because it was a breach in the security in Baddi-Barotiwala-Nalagarh industrial corridor. nalagarh police gathering For investigators, the attack signalled the vulnerability of India’s security system against such sneak attacks. (Express Photo) On August 13, India’s premier anti-terror agency, the National Investigation Agency (NIA), formally arrested three people, Mahavir Kumar alias Kaka, Ajay Mehra and Manpreet Singh alias Mani, in connection with the attack. Although all three had already been in judicial custody in Punjab, the arrests came on the back of a new FIR by the NIA. Mahavir Singh alias Kaka and Manpreet Singh alias Mani, both residents of what was Punjab’s Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar, are alleged to have executed the attack. For investigators of the Himachal and Punjab Police, the explosion – and the subsequent findings – posed a new security challenge: how to prevent attacks planned abroad but executed by vulnerable local recruits with no past criminal records? In many cases, these people are not ideologically-driven terrorists,” one officer of the Punjab Police said. “They are often individuals trapped in drug addiction or financial desperation, and are persuaded to carry out specific assignments in exchange for money. The masterminds remain outside India, communicate through encrypted applications or intermediaries and ensure that the persons actually carrying out the operation know very little about the larger conspiracy.” Baddi SP Vinod Kumar Dhiman – under whose jurisdiction Nalagarh falls – declined to comment. STF operation STF personnel seized narcotics during a checking operation and weighed the seized narcotics on an electronic scaling device. The Nalagarh attack Hours after the blast at Nalagarh, both Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) and Punjab Sovereignty Alliance (PSA) claimed it through an Instagram post. In it, the two outfits claimed that the attack was to “protest” the alleged manufacture of synthetic drugs in Himachal Pradesh and their supply to Punjab. The post claimed that the attack “was not against innocent people but against a corrupt system”. “Despite the police administration being aware of such activities, no action was being taken, and young people were losing their lives because of drug addiction,” the post said. sff operation Special Task Force (STF) of Himachal Pradesh Police conducted search operation in the area of Nalagarh and Baddi in Solan district. For the Himachal Police, the attack was an anomaly. The state had last seen a terrorist attack in 1998, when the proscribed Hizbul Mujahideen lined up and killed 35 Hindu villagers and injured 11 others in two separate late-night strikes inside Himachal Pradesh, prompting the long-term deployment of security forces like the ITBP along the remote border. The social media post led Himachal police to seek help from their Punjab

counterparts. On February 22, police made their first arrests — Mahavir Singh and Manpreet Singh. “Preliminary investigation has revealed that the accused were acting on the directions of foreign-based masterminds Gopi Nawanshahria, Jassi Kulam and Sushant Chopra, who are associated with the banned terrorist outfit Babbar Khalsa International,” Punjab Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav said at a press briefing, adding that a 9MM Glock pistol and four live cartridges were found with the two arrested suspects.

But it was allegedly during the subsequent recovery that the police found what they thought was clinching evidence — a fully assembled 2.5-kilogram RDX-laden IED fitted with dual remote- and timer-based detonation mechanisms. Investigators from the Punjab Police say that led them to a layered narco-terror module in which explosive consignments allegedly moved through a chain of low-level operatives before reaching the two men, now being seen as the suspects who planted the bomb. Soon, the police made four more arrests, all from SBS Nagar, like Kaka and Mani. “Police of both states concluded that Nalagarh was chosen for the attack because of proximity to both Punjab and Haryana. Two suspects managed to enter Punjab within 1.5 hours of the attack,” one police officer said. “The other three helped move the explosives and arrange for motorcycles.” The purported Instagram post from January 1 provided the next clue. The post mentioned two names — Gopi Nawanshahria and Kabal Singh – as having planned the attack. Investigators were already familiar with those names, especially that of Gurpreet Singh alias Gopi Nawanshahria – a fugitive gangster allegedly connected with several firing incidents in Punjab’s Hoshiarpur and Mahilpur in December last year, and linked to one of the most notorious Khalistani terrorists, Harwinder Singh Rinda. What was striking about the attack was how compartmentalised the network was. According to a senior Punjab police officer, several suspects arrested for transporting the explosives were simply carriers and were unaware of what their deliveries contained. Investigators also found that the suspects were selected from a drug network that Nawanshahria allegedly ran in SBS Nagar. “The movement of the explosives appears to have involved multiple persons, each performing a limited task,” the officer said. “One person receives the consignment, another transports it, a third arranges a motorcycle, and another identifies a drop-off before the material finally reaches its executors. This compartmentalised system is designed to make tracking the origin harder.”

Payment, too, was allegedly handled similarly. “The arrested were given hard cash for each task. The first suspect was left a packet of money and asked to drop it off for the second, and so on. Here, too, the suspects did not know what the packets contained,” the Punjab Police officer said. What stunned investigators more were the assailants themselves: young, poor and, for the most part, with no criminal record. “All five suspects were between 18 and 20 years and belonged to families of labourers,” the Punjab Police investigator said. “We found that they were substance abusers who had no recorded criminal antecedents. All suspects – including the two who executed the blast – were carefully handpicked.”

The brains behind the attack For investigators, the attack signalled the vulnerability of India’s security system against such sneak attacks. What was especially concerning were the brains behind the attack: the so-called foreign-based handlers such as Gurpreet Singh alias Gopi Nawanshahria, Jaspreet Singh alias Jassi Kulam and Sushant Chopra, all from SBS Nagar.

The most prominent among them, according to investigators, was Gopi Nawanshahria, long considered a close associate of Pakistan-based BKI terrorist Harwinder Singh alias Rinda. Investigators claim that Nawanshahria could have more than 25 criminal cases – including murder, robbery and dacoity – and is now stated to be hiding abroad while continuing his Punjab operations. Among the most significant killings linked to him was the April 2024 murder of Rattandeep Singh, a prominent Khalistani terrorist and the former chief of the Bhindranwale Tiger Force of Khalistan (BTFK). Singh was shot dead in Punjab’s SBS Nagar, with the police still investigating the killing. The second alleged handler, Jaspreet Singh alias Jassi Kulam, is believed to be a close associate of Nawanshahria. Originally from Kulam in SBS Nagar district’s Nawanshahr tehsil, Jassi is also suspected to have been involved in the April 2024 killing of Rattandeep Singh before fleeing to the United Arab Emirates. The third suspect, Sushant Chopra, is believed to be living in the US. Investigators claim that Chopra, a resident of Rahon in Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar, ran drug operations for Nawanshahria, and has also been suspected of having played a role in the movement of terrorist hardware through Punjab-based associates. A crucial part of the investigation now is to determine whether the explosives came from across the border. At the same time, the Punjab Police now also have another problem to resolve: how to stop Punjab’s vulnerable youth from playing into the hands of terrorist networks.



to disperse the mob. Three policemen suffered simple injuries,” Vaghela said. Windows of police vehicles and private vehicles were damaged in the violence. The standoff ended after the company agreed to pay Rs 30 lakh in compensation, police officials said. Gujarat Anand factory worker death Police and private vehicles were damaged during the violence in Kalamarsar.

The police said a separate case will be registered in connection with the vandalism. (Photo: Screenshot) Police presence ramped up Additional police teams were rushed to Kalamarsar from Khambhat and neighbouring areas. Personnel from the Local Crime Branch, Special Operations Group, Parole Furlough Squad and nearby police stations were deployed. Senior officers also reached the village late at night to bring the situation under control.”

6-month plot, 3 states, iCloud use: CBI joins dots on Adhikari aide killing



The killing in May of Chandranath Rath, personal assistant to Suwendu Adhikari, days before he took charge as West Bengal Chief Minister, was the culmination of an alleged conspiracy hatched over six months. The CBI uncovered the plot using digital evidence, including a photo on iCloud, and by joining the dots between CCTV footage, road tolls and multiple phones, including one at the bottom of the Hooghly river. The CBI filed a chargesheet before the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate’s court in Barasat on August 7. The probe, it is learnt, states that the man who allegedly pulled the strings was Sagar Sonkar, Rath’s 29-year-old assistant.

Rath was shot inside his vehicle in Madhyamgram in Kolkata around 10 pm on May 6. His associate Buddhadeb Bera was injured in the attack. The chargesheet names 12 people, of whom all but Krishna Kumar Singh (from Bihar) have been apprehended. The arrested include Sagar and his brother Saheb Sonkar (both from Kolkata); Uttar Pradesh residents Vikash Mishra, Vinay Rai, Sanjay Rai, Gyanendra Singh, Raj Kumar Singh, Golu Singh and Naveen Kumar Singh; and Bihar’s Mayank Raj Mishra and Vicky Maurya.

Sagar and Saheb, 20, were arrested on July 31, more than two months after the CBI held 11 people, including four alleged sharpshooters. The parents of the two brothers told The Indian Express earlier that they did not believe the police charges, as the two worked closely with not just Rath but also Adhikari, in his personal office, and played an active role in Adhikari’s Bhabanipur Assembly seat during the polls. “Sagar was like Chandranath’s shadow. He looked after the financial transactions, even handled payments. Later, he took Saheb along and he too was employed by Chandranath,” said a relative. According to the CBI probe, Sagar had allegedly come to resent Rath as he saw himself as his equal and believed that getting him out of the way was the only way he could get close to Adhikari. Sometime in November 2025, the probe found, he allegedly “roped in his brother Saheb to procure phones and SIM cards in the names of other persons”. Next, Sagar allegedly brought in Vikash Mishra, a school friend, who in turn knew Vinay Rai. The CBI claims WhatsApp call records show Sagar and Mishra, a resident of Salempur in Deoria, were in constant touch from January 20, 2026, onwards, allegedly “with the intent to hire contract killers”.

On January 30 this year, Vikash Mishra called Vinay Rai over WhatsApp, the probe found. According to the CBI, Rai has criminal antecedents with five criminal cases registered or pending against him, including that of murder. There were more calls between Sagar, Mishra and Rai, investigators said, alleging that on February 6, “in order to arrange the shooters... Vinay Rai contacted his acquaintance, Sanjay Rai, who was at Surat... and asked him to come to Dhanbad immediately”. According to the CBI, after Sanjay Rai came to Dhanbad, Mishra arranged a meeting between him, Vinay Rai and Sagar, where “the modalities for committing the murder were allegedly discussed”. Investigators say this was followed by repeated trips between Dhanbad, Kolkata, Ballia, Ghazipur and other locations. Not long after his meeting with Sagar, Sanjay Rai allegedly arrived in Kolkata and checked into a hotel under the name ‘Pankaj Singh’. The CBI says Sagar paid for his hotel stay and, later, for his accommodation in Salt Lake. On February 18, says the agency, Sagar allegedly took Sanjay Rai on a recce of Madhyamgram, and of Rath’s office, the Assembly and High Court areas. An Uber driver allegedly identified the two. Sanjay Rai went back to Dhanbad the same day, but reportedly came back for reconnaissance in March and April.

On April 7, Sanjay Rai, Gyanendra Singh and Raj

Jamia Millia Islamia suspends four students, bars them from entering campus

According to the order, the university alleged that protesters blocked access to the billing counter and the girls’ common room, put up material on walls and continued the sit-in despite repeated directions from the proctorial department to disperse. According to the order, the university alleged that protesters blocked access to the billing counter and the girls’ common room, put up material on walls and continued the sit-in despite repeated directions from the proctorial department to disperse. Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) has suspended four students and barred them from entering the campus following protests over alleged irregularities in the university’s 2026-27 spot admission process, with student body National Students’ Union of India (NSUI) demanding that the disciplinary action be withdrawn and the administration hold an open dialogue with the protesters.

The disciplinary notices issued by the university identified those suspended as JMI’s NSUI office-bearers Dhruv Chauhan, Tabrez Afsar and Ebin Basil. The fourth is a student named Mohd Jasim. The NSUI is the student wing of the Congress. The protests were triggered by allegations that candidates lower down the waiting lists had been admitted while students with higher ranks were denied seats. Students have also questioned the decision to conduct offline spot admissions this year, based on which vacant seats were allotted and merit and waiting lists were published. The university, however, has rejected the allegations, describing them as baseless. It has maintained that its admission process is transparent. The JMI’s admission portal shows that it has issued notices for offline spot registration for the 2026-27 session in July and August.

The disciplinary action has particularly focused on the conduct of the protesters and their interaction with JMI officials. In a showcase-cum-suspension-cum-campus-ban order dated August 26, the chief proctor alleged that Tabrez Afsar and Ebin Basil had helped organise the protest at the central canteen on August 24 despite a university notification designating Gate 18 as the place for student congregations and protests. According to the order, the university alleged that protesters blocked ac-

Kumar Singh visited a vehicle dealer in Patuli (Kolkata) and examined a Maruti Swift, as per CCTV footage procured by the CBI. On April 18, the vehicle was purchased for Rs 3.80 lakh, with CCTV footage and road toll records allegedly showing trips made in it to Dhanbad. The CBI says that the accused also acquired a Nissan Micra and a Hero Super Splendor motorcycle, with the engine and chassis numbers of both obliterated. All the vehicles were subsequently fitted with fake registration plates, as per the agency. On May 3, CCTV footage and FASTag records purportedly show the accused travelling from Dhanbad to Kolkata, a distance of 275 km, and then going back via Birati. The next two days, further arrangements were allegedly made, including the preparation of another number plate for the Nissan Micra.

The day of the murder The shooters allegedly travelled to Kolkata from Dhanbad the same day, i.e. May 6. As per the reconstruction, via call-detail records, CCTV footage, and alleged communication between the men, before leaving Dhanbad, they split up. “Krishna Kumar Singh, Gyanendra Singh and Sanjay Rai left for Kolkata in a Swift Car, whereas Mayank Raj Mishra, Vicky Maurya, Golu Singh and Raj Kumar Singh left in Nissan Micra,” the probe says, recording a toll tax payment enroute. The CBI claims that Sagar informed Sanjay Rai of Rath’s location over FaceTime, and that Rai passed the information on to Gyanendra and Krishna. As Rath’s car, a Scorpio, entered the Doharia Lane in Madhyamgram, Raj allegedly parked the Nissan Micra across to block it. Then, the probe agency alleges, Krishna and Gyanendra “committed murder of Chandranath Rath and attempted to murder Buddhadeb Bera”. After the shooting, Raj, Krishna and Gyanendra allegedly got onto the Hero Honda Splendor parked nearby, and fled. The motorcycle was found abandoned near the Gouri Kali Bari Bus Stand, and the CBI believes the men allegedly used the Swift next to drive back to Ballia, destroying or disposing of phones and SIM cards along the way. The evidence

The CBI claims it has mobile tower-dump data from several locations, including Dhanbad, Birati, Jessore Road, Doharia Lane and Barasat Railway Junction, to place the accused there. It also claims evidence that several SIM cards were procured in other people’s names and repeatedly moved between handsets. One significant finding, as per the CBI, was a photograph of Rath on an iCloud account linked to one of the numbers, loaded onto the cloud on March 18, when the phone was at Madhyamgram. The CBI claims to have found at least one FaceTime communication between phones allegedly being used by Sagar and Sanjay Rai shortly after the killing, at 10.16 pm on May 6. Another call followed soon after, and the CBI believes Sagar placed it to ascertain Rath’s condition. Ballistic examination showed that two pistols recovered from Naveen were allegedly used to shoot Rath and Bera. Eight firearm injuries were found on Rath’s body, and two bullets recovered. The agency also claims to have found a financial trail, with Rs 30 lakh allegedly handed over on February 24 by Saheb and a friend, Raja Das, to Sanjay Rai at Jamtara, Jharkhand. This was allegedly shared between the accused, with more payments made for vehicles and logistics, as per the CBI. After the murder, around 10.30 pm on May 6, the investigators claim, “Sagar Sonkar handed over an iPhone to Rishabh Sonkar, his cousin, with the direction to dispose of the same... in the Hooghly river... In CCTV footage of Howrah bridge... Rishabh Sonkar is seen throwing something from the bridge at 22.53 hrs.”

The CBI says that it used divers to try and retrieve the iPhone but was not successful. According to the agency, after the murder, Raj, Gyanendra, Golu, Krishna and Sanjay Rai drove in the Swift to the house of Manoj Rai at Tajpur Manjha village in UP’s Ghazipur, with Krishna getting off at Buxar en route. At the residence of Manoj Rai, Gyanendra Singh collected the remaining amount, which was kept there for safe custody on 13.03.2026,” investigators say, adding that Manoj got Rs 50,000 for his alleged part in the plot. After this, the CBI claims, Gyanendra, Raj and Golu went to Naveen’s house in Ballia and handed over a bag containing the firearms used in the crime. Out of Rs 30 lakh, Mannu Singh (Gyanendra) gave Rs 5 lakh to Raj Kumar Singh at the house of Naveen Kumar Singh and dropped him there,” says the agency, adding that Rs 2.85 lakh was later seized from Raj’s father, Tribhuvan Narayan Singh.



cess to the billing counter and the girls’ common room, put up material on walls and continued the sit-in despite repeated directions from the proctorial department to disperse. It also alleged that some outsiders and former students participated in the gathering and that politically motivated slogans were raised. The university’s order has alleged that attempts had been made from August 24 to contact the protesters and facilitate discussions, including a meeting with the proctorial department. It said the chief proctor went to the North Campus around midnight after students sought a meeting there and subsequently met them at the central canteen. The order accused the protesters of disrupting academic and administrative functioning and said complaints had been received from several departments and centres, including Psychology, Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics, Economics and the University Polytechnic. The JMI said the protests affected routine functioning of departments, libraries, laboratories and other facilities.

The NSUI has opposed the action against all four students. In a statement on Thursday, it demanded the immediate withdrawal of their suspension and campus ban, saying disciplinary action affecting students’ academic and campus rights should follow due process and provide them an opportunity to be heard. It also demanded that the university address the students’ admission-related concerns through an “open and transparent dialogue”.

Channi supporters disrupt Warring speech, expose Punjab Congress rift



In an embarrassment for the Congress, supporters of former Punjab chief minister Charanjit Singh Channi raised slogans in his favour in the presence of state Congress president Amarinder Singh Raja Warring and All India Congress Committee general secretary in charge of the state, Bhupesh Baghel, at a party event in the Patiala region on Saturday.

Channi's supporters repeatedly chanted "Charanjit Singh Channi Zindabad" and "Channi liaao, Punjab bachao (bring Channi, save Punjab)" slogans as Warring started speaking, creating a disruption. There was also some hooting directed at the state unit chief. Warring became visibly upset, demanded to know why the slogans were being raised, and warned that disciplinary action would be taken against those disrupting party programmes. He could be seen asking "koi problem hai, koi problem hai (is there any problem)" while pointing towards someone in the crowd that had gathered close to the dais. There was some jostling between the sup-

porters of Channi and Warring even as speakers on the dais kept asking everyone "not to spoil the atmosphere".

The sharp differences within the party cadres spilt into the open at the 'Har Booth Congress Mazboot' event, which was projected as one in a series of weeklong events to launch the Congress's 2027 election mission. Baghel is on a 10-day visit to Punjab and is holding meetings in various cities to launch the poll campaign. 'Important not to lose cool' Warring sought to maintain calm as the event continued and requested everyone who loved Congress to sit down even as the shouting continued. In his speech, Warring said that in the coming days all leaders of the party will be seen on one platform. "I will make efforts in coming days to ensure that everyone is on the same stage... It is also important not to lose cool in the enthusiasm," he said. Warring appealed to the cadres to maintain amity among themselves too. He repeated his past statement that all senior leaders, be it Partap Singh Bajwa, Charanjit Singh Channi or Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa, were better than him. The episode highlights ongoing factional tensions within the Punjab Congress unit ahead of the 2027 Assembly elections. These stem from the high command's July decision to retain Warring as state president while appointing Channi as chairman of the campaign committee. Channi's camp has held meetings expressing dissatisfaction, with some leaders and workers pushing for a larger leadership role for the former CM, amid claims of broader support among cadres. Channi and allies such as Randhawa have stayed away from certain programmes led by Warring or Baghel. The incident in Patiala has fuelled further discussion about internal differences, even as party leaders have previously sought to project unity under the high command.

After Karnataka amends Bengaluru mobility law, BJP's Tejasvi Surya writes to Governor



A day after the Karnataka Assembly passed an amendment to the Bengaluru Metropolitan Land Transport Authority (BMLTA) Act, BJP MP Tejasvi Surya Tuesday wrote to Governor Thawarachand Gehlot expressing his concerns about the law. The BMLTA (Amendment) Bill, 2026, to amend Section 19 of the BMLTA Act of 2022, which came into force in 2023 after being introduced by the previous BJP government, was passed by the Karnataka legislature Monday without a debate. "It has been reported that this provision would have the effect of retrospectively legitimising mega projects valued at nearly Rs 1 lakh crore, including the Tunnel Road Project, estimated to cost over Rs 40,000 crore, without the institutional scrutiny and due process envisaged under the BMLTA framework," the BJP MP said in the letter to the Governor. "The intent of the parent legislation enacted in 2022 cannot be retrospectively altered in a manner that defeats the safeguards and institutional oversight it was intended to establish," Surya further contended.

The amended BMLTA Act, 2026, which introduces a new Subsection 6 under Section 19, is seen as facilitating major Bengaluru infrastructure projects that had previously been criticised by BMLTA, like a 16.75 km-long city road tunnel project pushed by Karnataka Chief Minister D K Shivakumar. According to the amended Section 19 of the BMLTA Act, "all projects initiated during the period commencing from the date of commencement of the Bengaluru Metropolitan Land Transport Authority Act, 2022 (Karnataka Act 6 of 2023) and ending immediately before the date of notification of the Bengaluru Metropolitan Land Transport Authority Rules, 2026... shall be deemed to have been taken, prepared, undertaken or

instituted, as the case may be, under this Act." The amendment is necessary "to ensure continuity in administrative decision-making in view of the imminent and pressing need to decongest traffic and address the mounting mobility challenges in Bengaluru," the new law states in its statement of reasons. Prior to the recent amendment, Section 19 of the BMLTA Act, 2022, said the BMLTA had the power "to approve all major Urban Transport projects proposed" for Bengaluru "from the perspective of consistency with the Comprehensive Mobility Plan" in a time-bound manner. "No authority, agency, department under the state government shall initiate any public, private or public-private partnership project concerning Urban Mobility without obtaining prior approval of the Authority. The Approval of the Authority shall be necessary to seek any financial assistance..." from the state government, external aid agencies and the Centre, says Subsection 2 of Section 19 of the BMLTA Act of 2022. The Bengaluru tunnel road project incidentally envisages 40 per cent government funding. The amended law is seen as also circumventing controversial rules issued by the BMLTA on January 3, 2026, to facilitate retrospective clearances for big-ticket Bengaluru mobility projects – flyovers, tunnel roads, etc – that did not undergo the due process of scrutiny and analysis by state urban mobility experts and agencies. Last year, the BMLTA, in a review of the feasibility of the 16.75 km tunnel road project, had slammed the proposal – first floated by the then deputy CM and Bengaluru development minister D K Shivakumar – for allegedly not aligning with the Metro-centric Comprehensive Mobility Plan for Bengaluru, the city's Climate Action Plan or the National Urban Transport Policy (NUTP). The BMLTA review of the tunnel road said the Comprehensive Mobility Plan for Bengaluru targets a 70 per cent share for public transport by 2035 and that tunnel roads would encourage car-based commuting instead of usage of public transport. One of the major criticisms of the proposed north-south tunnel road project in Bengaluru is the absence of a scientific travel demand assessment. The BMLTA said the feasibility study ignored interactions with other major infrastructure projects, such as Metro Phases 2A, 2B, 3, and 3A, suburban rail corridors, and the Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) policy. "I hope BMLTA's sound advice is heeded and the government drops the unscientific car-only Tunnel Road.

CM Suwendu Adhikari says infiltrators will be sent back as digital census begins in Bengal

West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari on Saturday said it is not India's responsibility to take care of infiltrators and that such people will be sent back to their homeland. Speaking at an event in Bidhannagar to mark the launch of the fortnight-long digital self-enumeration phase of the census exercise in the state, the chief minister also assured the audience that personal information collected during this period would not be misused.

"The data is completely confidential and legally protected. It will be used only for statistics, planning, and development. There is no chance of anyone's personal information being made public or misused," Adhikari remarked. Explaining the details of the enumeration system, the chief minister said, "Those who are unable to use the online system or who live in remote areas need not worry. Government representatives will reach their homes directly. The entire process will be conducted in accordance with the guidelines of the Census Authority of India. Completing this census work is the constitutional duty of every government employee." Thereafter, delivering a stern message on border security, Adhikari said, "Illegal infiltrators will not remain in this state or in this country. Through the prescribed legal process, they are being identified and sent back with due caution, and this will continue in the days ahead as well. It is not India's responsibility to take care of illegal infiltrators." The Bengal chief minister also claimed that "out of 27 lakh deleted electors in Special Intensive Revision (SIR), only 7 lakh applied to the tribunal." Drawing a clear distinction between infiltrators and refugees, the chief minister remarked that under the provisions of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), people from the Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, and Christian communities who have come from Bangladesh are not infiltrators but refugees.

"According to the Government of India's notification dated September 1, 2025, the rules are clear. No case



West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari said illegal infiltrators will be identified and sent back while assuring that data collected during the census self-enumeration process will remain confidential.

may be filed against any refugee who came to this country by December 31, 2014, after suffering religious persecution or to save their life, and the police also cannot harass them in any way." After the digital enumeration phase, physical house listing and house enumeration exercise under the census will be conducted from August 16 to September 14. During this period, detailed information related to the condition of the household, such as drinking water, toilets, electricity, cooking fuel, and internet connectivity, will be collected. Information on assets such as radios, televisions, computers, and two- and four-wheelers will also be gathered. The second phase of the census will be held in February next year. In that phase, officials will collect information on the name, age, gender, caste, and religion of each family member.

CAG flags acute staff shortages, drug shortages in Bengal's public health system



Acute shortage of doctors and frontline health workers, inadequate infrastructure, poor availability of essential medicines and deficiencies in patient care have plagued West Bengal's public healthcare system, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has said in its report on the state's health services. In its report, Public Health Infrastructure and Management of Health Services in West Bengal, tabled in the Assembly on Saturday, the CAG flagged significant gaps in the three-tier system, comprising primary, secondary, and tertiary healthcare facilities despite the state's extensive public health network.

The Sub-Centres (SCs), Primary Health Centres (PHCs) and Community Health Centres (CHCs), also known as Rural Hospitals (RHs)/ Block Primary Health Centres (BPHCs) in West Bengal, are primary level healthcare units, which provide healthcare services to the rural population. As of March 2022, 10,368 SCs, 916 PHCs and 348 CHCs, had been created in the State. Patients requiring more serious healthcare attention are referred to the second tier of the healthcare system, by the primary healthcare units, which comprises District Hospitals (DHs), Sub-divisional Hospitals (SDHs) and State General Hospitals (SGHs). At present 18 DHs, 36 SDHs and 24 SGHs, are functioning.

Among its most serious findings, the audit reported a 54.27% shortage of medical officers (general duty) and a 91.14% shortage of specialist medical officers in Community Health Centres (CHCs). At the state level, shortages stood at 36% for specialist MOs and 49% for general duty MOs, while the sampled districts recorded an overall shortage of about 41%. In the District Hospitals, the shortage of General Duty Attendants was 63.20%. The report also pointed to severe shortages of other healthcare personnel. Nearly 89% sub-centres (SCs) had no male healthcare worker, 46% of staff nurse posts at Primary Health Centres (PHCs) were vacant, and 75% of laboratory technician posts remained unfilled. More than 92% of PHCs were functioning without either a male or female health assistant, while 251 of the state's 348 CHCs had no radiographer; and no staff nurses were posted in 51 CHCs. Twenty-nine CHCs had no Pharmacists, 30 CHCs had no laboratory technicians and 341 (almost 98%) CHCs had no O.T. attendants posted.

The audit also highlighted major infrastructure gaps.

SIT to probe Gujarat man's 'custodial death' after Supreme Court order

The Gujarat Police has constituted a three-member special investigation team (SIT) to investigate the alleged custodial death of 70-year-old Zahiruddin Shaikh at Ahmedabad's Vejalpur police station, days after the Supreme Court directed the registration of a First Information Report (FIR) and ordered an independent probe.

The SIT has been constituted by Gujarat Director General of Police G S Malik in compliance with the Supreme Court's July 23 order. The team will be headed by Superintendent of Police (CID Crime) Rohan Anand and comprise CID Crime Deputy SP P D Vala and CID Crime Police Inspector N H Siddiqui. The officers have been directed to take over the investigation immediately after the FIR is registered at the concerned police station and submit a final report before the jurisdictional magistrate in accordance with the Supreme Court's directions.

In a communication to the Ahmedabad police commissioner, the DGP has directed that an FIR be registered on charges of murder and abetment of suicide, in accordance with the Supreme Court order. The DGP's direction also states that all necessary police assistance be extended to the SIT. Subsequently, the in-charge Ahmedabad City Commissioner of Police, Sharad Singhal, on July 31 instructed the concerned police station to "register the FIR without delay, transfer the case papers to the SIT and provide full cooperation to the investigating officers". What the Supreme Court said

The SIT was constituted following a July 23 Supreme Court order by a bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana. The bench observed that there was a prima facie case for registration of an FIR after considering the submissions made by Senior Advocate I H Syed, appearing for the petitioner's family. "We are satisfied that a prima facie case for registration of an FIR under Sections 103 and 108 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, without naming any suspects at this stage, is made out. Consequently, the said FIR shall be investigated by an Special Investigation Team, comprising of a police officer of the rank of deputy commissioner of police along with two more officers, to be nominated by the director general of police, Gujarat...", the order states.

The Supreme Court order further directed, "The members of the SIT must be those who are not posted in the district where the alleged occurrence took place. The SIT is directed to file the final report after investigation before the jurisdictional magistrate as early as possible, and preferably within two months." The court also directed that, if the appellant remained dissatisfied after the investigation, he would be at liberty to file a protest petition before the jurisdictional magistrate seeking further investigation. It also directed the police commissioner to inquire into the family's allegation of threat perception and take appropriate action in accordance with law. "Was forcibly given tablets"

The Supreme Court's intervention came on an appeal filed by Zahiruddin Shaikh's son, Tofik, challenging the failure of the authorities to register a criminal case over his father's death after he was taken into custody by the Vejalpur police. Shaikh was arrested on May 18 in connection with an alleged cow slaughter case registered by the Vejalpur police. His family has alleged in their petition that police personnel forcibly administered

Though 55,000 deliveries had been conducted at homes across the state, in the last three years, none of the SCs had been upgraded with facilities for conducting deliveries. The CAG mentioned that the MOs had not visited 45% of the SCs, even once a month.

It found that 71% of PHCs lacked emergency or casualty services, while 90% were not equipped to provide emergency obstetric care, including Caesarean sections. Around 70% of PHCs had no functional beds, and labour rooms were unavailable in more than half of them. Only 11 new sub-centers and three new Primary Health Centres had been set up in the State in the last six years. At the CHC level, 285 of the state's 348 centres did not have a blood storage unit, while emergency newborn care was unavailable in several facilities. The report also noted that super-specialty services, barring oncology, were absent in 89 to 100 per cent of district hospitals.

The CAG also questioned the availability of medicines. It found that 63% of notified essential drugs had never been procured by district hospitals, while several others remained out of stock for prolonged periods. The report flagged deficiencies in maternal healthcare, noting that 35% of registered pregnant women did not receive even one check-up by a medical officer during their four scheduled antenatal visits. It also found that 99.56% of home deliveries were not assisted by skilled birth attendants. Traditional birth attendants and ASHA had not even been trained in 1,294 SCs. Against 454 cases of home deliveries, in areas covered by the sampled SCs, only 49 home deliveries had been assisted by ANMs. Reviewing the implementation of centrally sponsored health programmes, the CAG said progress under the National Programme for Control of Blindness and Visual Impairment had not been adequately assessed, while screening under the National Leprosy Eradication Programme remained inadequate. It noted that leprosy prevalence exceeded prescribed norms in six districts. The audit also criticised food services at Kolkata's SSKM Hospital, designated by the state government as a "Centre of Excellence". It found there had been no dietician at the hospital since 2018, no system for regular quality checks of food, and poor hygiene in the kitchen and storage areas. Implementation of centrally sponsored scheme CAG report stated, "Progress under the National Programme for Control of Blindness & Visual Impairment (NPCB&VI) had not been assessed. Adequate Vision Centres had not been set up. Vacancies of 44.26 per cent existed in the cadre of Medical Technologist (Optometry). Insufficient number of cataract surgeries and inadequate Corneal transplantation, were observed." It further added, "Adequate screening of the population was not done, as prescribed under the National Leprosy Eradication Programme. A considerable number of persons, prima facie suspected for leprosy during the screening, were not medically examined for confirmation. The prevalence rate of leprosy was more than the norms prescribed, in six districts of the State." During a joint inspection conducted in 2022, auditors found damaged flooring with stagnant dirty water, food grains stored directly



30 to 40 tablets of prescription medicines to Shaikh, resulting in a fatal overdose on May 20. It also alleged that before his death, Shaikh made two dying declarations, one recorded in medico-legal papers at SVP Hospital and another in two videos allegedly recorded by the petitioner, in which he named police personnel and described the alleged assault. The Supreme Court's directions came nearly two months after the Gujarat High Court declined to order registration of an FIR, holding that the petitioner must first exhaust the statutory remedies available under the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita. Even while dismissing the petition on May 29, the High Court had observed that it was "ironic" that an alleged violation of the Supreme Court's Constitution bench judgment in Lalita Kumari vs Government of Uttar Pradesh on mandatory registration of FIRs in cognisable offences could not be directly enforced through a writ petition because of the doctrine of alternative statutory remedy.

Singareni ready to partner with Karnataka GENCO in captive coal mines: Bhatti

Hyderabad: Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka has proposed that Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) and Karnataka Power Corporation Limited (KPCL) work together as a joint venture (JV) to ensure adequate coal availability amid growing electricity demand. In view of Karnataka's rising power requirements, he suggested that KPCL and Singareni jointly undertake mining operations in the captive coal blocks secured by KPCL in Chhattisgarh and Odisha. He said Singareni, with nearly 137 years of experience in coal mining, could undertake mining operations in the blocks. Bhatti Vikramarka met Karnataka Energy Minister KJ George in Bengaluru on Thursday. The two discussed issues related to the energy sector in both States, including coal supplies, payments for coal purchases and technology exchange. The Deputy Chief Minister said Singareni could also benefit from Karnataka's extensive experience in the power sector in operating the power plants it proposes to undertake

EYE SECRETS
Editorial

Beyond IFI rankings —
India's investment divide

Five States—Maharashtra (31%), Karnataka (21%), Gujarat (15%), Delhi (13%) and Tamil Nadu (6%)—accounted for nearly 85 per cent of India's cumulative equity inflow from October 2019 to March 2026, while the entire northeastern region attracted less than one per cent. The contrast is striking, especially given the Northeast's abundant natural resources, rich biodiversity, strategic international borders, and immense tourism potential. The disparity raises an important question: what really attracts investment?

The recently released Investment Friendliness Index (IFI) by the NITI Aayog offers some answers. More than a ranking of States, it provides a framework for understanding why some regions consistently attract investment while others struggle despite possessing significant potential. As India pursues the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047, these insights are particularly relevant. According to the NITI Aayog, India needs to sustain annual GDP growth of nearly 7.8 per cent to achieve developed economy status. Meeting that ambition will require far more than public expenditure; it will depend on creating business environments where private investment can flourish. India's investment rate has recovered to 29.9 per cent of GDP in FY2025, marginally above the average of the previous decade. While public investment has strengthened roads, ports, and digital infrastructure, long-term economic transformation will increasingly depend on private enterprises investing, innovating, and creating productive employment. Investors today evaluate much more than tax incentives. They look for quality infrastructure, policy stability, efficient institutions, skilled human capital, financial soundness, and an ecosystem that reduces business uncertainty. Recognising this reality, the IFI assesses all 36 States and Union Territories across eight dimensions: infrastructure, business climate, natural resources, government policy, regulatory ease, institutional environment, financial health, and environmental resilience. Together, these indicators reflect the broader conditions that influence investment decisions in an increasingly competitive global economy.

The findings reveal that India's investment divide is driven less by geography than by differences in economic ecosystems. States that dominate FDI have built diversified industrial clusters in automobiles, electronics, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, and engineering. These industries create supplier networks, specialised skills, research capabilities, and logistics infrastructure that reinforce investor confidence. By contrast, much of the Northeast remains dependent on relatively small-scale and low-value industries such as wood products, food processing, textiles, and non-metallic minerals. Without stronger industrial ecosystems, attracting large-scale foreign investment becomes considerably more difficult. Infrastructure presents another challenge. Many northeastern States continue to score below the national average on infrastructure and resource availability, increasing logistics costs and reducing industrial competitiveness. Policy consistency, fiscal capacity, and institutional effectiveness also shape investment decisions. Tourism presents the Northeast's greatest opportunity, as the region possesses assets that few parts of India can match. Yet, it accounted for only 0.43% of India's domestic tourist visits and 1.17% of foreign tourist visits in 2024. Beyond these measurable factors lies a perception gap. Concerns over connectivity, distance from major markets, and historical security issues continue to influence investor sentiment even where conditions have improved significantly.

IISER Pune students begin
indefinite sit-in, seek action on
mental health and academic pressure

Students at Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Pune began an indefinite sit-in protest on August 27 against the suspension of the general secretary of the Student Council Raj Bagwe and various other demands. The protest comes in the wake of the death of a student on campus. The police have not yet provided details of what caused the death.

Bagwe was earlier suspended for one year, reduced to six months, in an unrelated incident of an alleged "strip search" of students on campus. The students claimed Bagwe had raised concerns regarding student safety which resulted in severe disciplinary action against him. Furthermore, students demanded a relaxation of academic requirements in the wake of the student's death, an overhaul of mental health infrastructure with an increase in counselors, a rollback of recently introduced gender-based segregation, and no disciplinary or administrative retaliation against students advocating for systemic change.

A student said the sit-in would continue indefinitely till a satisfactory resolution is reached. In a statement, the institute said, "A disciplinary action was taken on the student council general secretary after a thorough investigation by a committee based on complaints received, which the student appealed against. The appeal resulted in some reduction in action. IISER Pune follows rules and protocols to ensure the safety and security of the residents. We are committed to maintaining a safe and dignified environment for all residents of the hostel. Stricter implementation of hostel rules have been made in order to avoid unauthorized entry into hostel buildings, after some of the girls residents of Hostel 3 raised concerns about their safety. The common areas on the ground floor, however, continue to remain accessible to all students." The statement added, "To accommodate new students who joined in August 2026, we had to convert some common spaces in hostels into residential rooms.

Therefore, to create alternative common spaces for our students, we are opening up the space in the dining complex on the ground and first floor, and converting that into a sitting, co-working space for all students where safety will be achieved. We are working on renovating and furnishing these halls and other existing spaces like the dance room.

How agrivoltaics
can boost farmer income



Can the same piece of farmland be effectively used to grow crops and generate solar power? Researchers at the BAIF Rural Innovation Centre in Uruli Kanchan are testing this through an agrivoltaics project involving 17 types of solar-panel installations and 30 crops. The project is examining which crops can be grown under or around solar panels, how different panel designs affect crop productivity, and whether combining agriculture with solar generation can provide farmers with an additional source of income. Instead of relying only on conventional ground-mounted solar panels, researchers are testing vertical and elevated structures, including panels raised up to four metres to allow tractors and other farm machinery to pass underneath. Solar panels have also been integrated with polyhouses, cattle sheds and poultry sheds, while floating solar installations are being tested on farm ponds and wells.

"The objective is to study how agricultural land can be used for both cultivation and solar power generation. We are testing different structures with different crops to understand which combinations are suitable for farmers," said Vitthal Kauthale, chief thematic programme executive, Farm Research and Seed Programme, BAIF. A key part of the study is understanding how the height and spacing of solar panels affect individual crops. "Crops such as radish and beans can be considered with vertical panel installations. For taller crops such as banana and papaya, elevated structures could be more suitable, depending on the height of the installation," Kauthale explained.

Turmeric cultivation along inclined solar panels. Turmeric cultivation along inclined solar panels. (Express Photo) The panels have been installed over the past one-and-a-half years, and researchers have completed nearly three crop cycles. They are now repeating some experiments to check whether the initial observations remain

consistent. The final report is expected by March 2027. "Solar power generation has received a lot of attention, but there has been less work on how different solar installations can be integrated with agricultural land. We are therefore testing multiple designs and crop combinations to assess their effect on crop productivity," Kauthale said. The preliminary results have varied across crops and seasons. Some crops have performed better under the panels than in the corresponding control plots. "During the kharif season, crops such as spinach, lettuce and coriander have shown 100 per cent more yields compared with the controlled plots. Brinjal, on the other hand, has recorded yields of around 80 per cent of the control," he added.

The researchers said the outcome depends on the type of solar structure, its elevation and the space between panels. The panels may also provide some crops with protection from intense summer heat and erratic rainfall, although the effect differs from crop to crop. BAIF researchers intend to examine the economics of different agriculture-compatible solar structures and submit recommendations to the Government of India and NITI Aayog after the study is completed. PM-KUSUM has largely focused on conventional solar installations. The findings from current trials could help policymakers assess how elevated and other agrivoltaic structures perform on agricultural land and consider suitable support or subsidy mechanisms for such installations," Kauthale said. Crops growing alongside vertical solar panels. Crops growing alongside vertical solar panels. The centre is also conducting training and awareness programmes linked to agrivoltaic farming. More than 100 farmers from Pune, Nashik and Ahilyanagar have participated in awareness programmes. The Uruli Kanchan campus is completely off-grid and supplies electricity to more than 70 electric light poles in the neighbouring village. Moreover, Kauthale said the initial investment in solar infrastructure was significant, but the electricity could subsequently be used or sold. "If the appropriate combination of crop and solar structure is identified, farmers could potentially earn from both agricultural production and electricity generation on the same land," he said. The BAIF Development Research Foundation, which was founded by social activist Manibhai Desai in 1967, entered its 60th year of service at its Foundation Day programme at Uruli Kanchan on Monday. BAIF president and managing trustee Bharat Kakade said the organisation had expanded its work to 18 states and reached 50 lakh people in 2025-26. "We aim to reach one crore families by 2030.

Replacing community name in caste
certificate: Haryana government says
CM made no 'announcement'

The Haryana government Thursday claimed that Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini had not announced that he will recommend to replace a term denoting a community formerly associated with leather work with "Meghwal" on caste certificates, saying he had only stated that the matter was under the Centre's jurisdiction. Cabinet Minister Krishan Panwar told a press conference that Saini, while addressing a Meghwal community event in Bawal on Sunday, had said that "this issue is beyond my jurisdiction".

"The Chief Minister had stated from the stage that it's a matter for the Centre, which takes a call on which caste is to be included in which group. The Chief Minister had made no such announcement, nor did he have any such intention," Panwar said at a press conference in Chandigarh. Soon after the minister's press conference, the state government also issued a formal statement. The clarification came amid resentment among sections of the community over the Chief Minister's remarks. Congress MLA and Dalit leader Geeta Bhukkal had accused Saini of attempting to create a "divide and rule" situation and said the statement had caused resentment in the community. The controversy follows Saini's address at the event organised by the Meghwal Uththan Samiti in Bawal, Rewari, where he responded to a 10-point memorandum submitted by the organisation. One of the demands was that members of the community associated with leather work who wished to do so should be allowed to use "Meghwal" on their Scheduled Caste certificates. Saini



had said: "As you have demanded, the members of the community want to adopt 'Meghwal' term.... To facilitate issuance of such (Meghwal) caste certificates, I will make a recommendation to the central government." Panwar clarified that the demand was beyond the Chief Minister's jurisdiction as decisions on the classification and inclusion of castes in Scheduled Caste categories were taken by the Centre. He said the community in question had a population of around 30 lakh in Haryana, while the Meghwal community had around 80,000 members. Bhupender Meghwal, secretary of the Meghwal Uththan Samiti, said around 60,000 caste certificates carrying the term "Meghwal" had already been issued in Haryana.

30-inch rainfall but no waterlogging: Shah's target
for flood-plagued areas of Ahmedabad

"Before I come to ask for your vote again, there will be such arrangements that water will not enter your homes even if there is 30 inches of rainfall." This is what Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah said at least three times in his 12-minute speech addressing the people of Bopal, Ambli, Ghuma and Sarkhej — localities in Ahmedabad — on Thursday. Shah was speaking at a Lok Darbar (townhall) event organised in a part of Ahmedabad that falls in his Gandhinagar Lok Sabha constituency and saw massive flooding in the last week of July.

These areas are also right in the middle of Gujarat CM Bhupendra Patel's Assembly constituency of Ghatlodia. Nearby is Ahmedabad Mayor Hitesh Barot's Thaltej ward. Shah said, "I was advised to hold this Lok Darbar in the Ghatlodia area. They advised me to do so because there was so much waterlogging in Bopal, Ambli and Ghuma. I thank you for not criticising me, but I've come here for this purpose alone. We may say that it happened because there was 21-22 inch rainfall, something that hasn't happened in the last 50 years, but all the arrangements made by the administration fell short. I just want to say one thing. Before I come to ask for your vote again, there will be such arrangements that water will not enter your homes even if there is 30 inches of rainfall."

The event's entry was tightly controlled by the BJP, with passes given to chairpersons and secretaries of societies in Bopal, Ambli and Ghuma. Only three of the nine speakers raised the issue of the flooding that saw multiple teams of firefighters, NDRF and police being deployed to rescue and aid people during the harrowing week of rainfall. A society representative, Bhadesh Bhatt, said, "Waterlogging is the main issue. There was intense rainfall in July, and the water could not be cleared. As we

common people understand it, it was due to the lack of drainage pipeline, and too much development in the area. Our suggestion is that the chairman and secretary of societies must be involved in planning to set up the pipeline network and pumping stations." Kunjan Soni of Vibhusha Bungalows in Ghuma said, "There was a lot of waterlogging. But another issue is that the Narmada water we get is not enough to meet the demand of the population. Drainage lines are also backed up. And more stormwater lines are required." In response to these questions, Shah, speaking to the packed mandap, said, "The planning for this began the very next day after the waters receded, and the responsibility to make sure this planning reaches its logical end will not be of the councillors, or the mayor, or the MLA, but mine alone. I've been your representative for the last 30 years, and you have never reduced my votes, only increased them. Whenever the ballots of this area are opened, the Congress doesn't get anything; it is always 'kamal' (lotus)..." Amit Shah also reiterated the reasons given by CM Patel and Mayor Barot that the waterlogging had been the unfortunate result of excess rainfall. He said, "We are all sad about the waterlogging that happened here. But we must accept that the rainfall this year was more than what we could imagine. But now it is clear that it can rain more than 21 inches, so we will now make arrangements for 30 inches. Then, if it rains more than that, we will again have to augment the systems." Regarding the Narmada water pipelines to societies in the areas that were recently merged into the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC), Shah said the Narmada water would reach these areas in the next six months. Shah reminisced that when he was an MLA, the issues were those of safety and security, which had been successfully addressed.

'Institutionalised corruption' in
Punjab: HC seeks state
response, ED letters to DGP



The Punjab and Haryana High Court on Thursday sought to know from the Punjab government what action it proposed to take on allegations of "large-scale and institutionalised corruption" involving senior state officials, observing that the "nature of allegations made are serious" and would require a "careful response from the respondents". A Division Bench of Acting Chief Justice Ashwani Kumar Mishra and Justice Rohit Kapoor also directed the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to place before it the communications allegedly sent to the Punjab Director-General of Police (DGP) and sought the State's stand on the matter.

"Before we proceed to take cognizance of the grievance raised... it would be appropriate to call upon the counsel representing ED, to place before the court the communications sent to the DGP... as is alleged by the petitioner. If such communication is sent, we would also like to know from the Advocate-General, Punjab, as to what stand/action is proposed to be taken by the State police and the State itself," the bench said while listing the matter for September 3. The directions came on a petition filed by Advocate Nikhil Saraf alleging abuse of official position, criminal conspiracy and manipulation of governmental, tender and administrative processes. The petition alleges that senior Punjab officials were involved in various scams, including "cash for transfers; cash for getting favourable policies; cash for tenders, and such other illegal activities".

The petitioner claimed that the ED had sent communications under Section 66(2) of the Prevention of Money-Laundering Act, 2002, to the State authorities, but alleged that no action had followed despite the allegations of corruption in high public office. Appearing for ED, Additional Solicitor General of India Satya Pal Jain, assisted by Senior Panel Counsel Lokesh Narang, told the court that three communications had been sent to the Punjab DGP on July 24, July 31 and August 7, 2026. The counsel said the communications were on similar lines to the allegations made in the petition... the nature of allegations made are serious and would require a careful response from the respondents," the Bench observed and subsequently issued notice of motion, with counsel accepting notice for the State, the Union of India, the ED and the CBI. Advocate General, Punjab, however, questioned the maintainability of the writ petition and raised objections regarding the petitioner's credentials. The plea seeks an independent investigation into vehicle procurements, alleged illegal gratification and related offences. The petitioner has contended that the existing investigating machinery is "institutionally connected to the persons against whom allegations are made", creating a potential conflict of interest. The petitioner has sought transfer of the investigation to an independent agency, preferably the CBI, along with a comprehensive probe into vehicle procurements during the relevant period. The petitioner further alleged that a detailed complaint submitted to the Punjab Vigilance Bureau on October 31, 2025, along with invoices, comparative analysis and supporting documents, had not led to registration of an FIR or a meaningful investigation. Relying on the Supreme Court's judgment

Days after Jadavpur
University clashes, Bengal
Governor likely to meet
ABVP leaders

West Bengal Governor R N Ravi is expected to meet members of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the student organisation of the RSS, during a visit to Jadavpur University in Kolkata, it is learnt. The Governor, who also serves as the Chancellor of the state university, is expected to meet ABVP representatives during the Vande Mataram singing event being organised on campus by Chief Minister Suvenudh Adhikari on Friday.

As per sources in the Lok Bhavan, the Governor is also expected to meet members of a JU teachers' body affiliated with the Sangh. The visit comes days after the ABVP and the CPI(M)'s Students' Federation of India (SFI) clashed at JU campus on August 19 and 20. The Governor has so far remained silent on the clashes. A senior official of Lok Bhavan told The Indian Express, "The Chancellor was closely monitoring what was happening in the Jadavpur University. However, he will first meet two organisations regarding the developments." Meanwhile, JU Vice-Chancellor Chiranjib Bhattacharya said that the Chancellor has so far not asked the university to submit any report over the recent incidents. However, an ABVP leader said it is not yet confirmed when the leadership will meet the Governor. The student body leader said, "We have already approached the Governor regarding the JU issue. He has also conveyed that he wants to know about the incidents that happened in Jadavpur. However, when we will meet with him, that is yet to be confirmed." The timings of the expected meeting are also pertinent. The Governor is expected to meet the two RSS-linked bodies just after the '10 Sahsra Kanthe Vande Mataram' event in Jadavpur, where CM Adhikari is also expected.

Reacting to the JU clashes, Adhikari had earlier said, "Those who are crying in the media over Jadavpur university, I am telling you the state government will not compromise on nationalism and Rashtrabad." "Do you know one cannot chant Vande Mataram inside Jadavpur (University), the national flag is not given respect, they don't allow CCTVs to be placed inside, education department officers are not allowed. There are jihadi and anti-national elements (on campus) who do not allow celebrations on January 26 (Republic Day) and August 15 (Independence Day)," the chief minister had said.

Six months on, Iran war changed West Asia, but not how its architects hoped



Dubai: It's been six months since the United States and Israel attacked Iran with the perennial goal of transforming the Middle East through military force. The region has changed, but not in the way they had hoped. The Islamic Republic survived the assassination of its top leaders and weeks of heavy bombing, and found a potent form of leverage in the Strait of Hormuz. Gulf Arab nations saw worrying gaps open up in the American security umbrella they have relied on for decades — and some are looking at alternatives.

Israel has once again thrashed its enemies without defeating them, and after nearly three years of war in Gaza and new land seizures, is at risk of a generational rupture with the US, its closest ally. Hopes of normalising relations with Saudi Arabia — another enduring US and Israeli aspiration — have dimmed even further. When they attacked Iran on February 28, the US and Israel hoped to topple its clerical leadership and replace it with a pro-Western government. Instead, they've ended up with a "hardened and very radical regime," said Barbara Leaf, a former ambassador who served as assistant secretary of state for the Middle East in the Biden administration. "That is going to be exceptionally difficult to deal with, to say the least," she said. Iran's "confidence has grown over the months that it cannot only survive, but it can prevail, it can reset the regional landscape." In the runup to the war, the Islamic Republic appeared more vulnerable than at any point since Saddam Hussein's Iraq invaded in 1980. Iran's currency had cratered, setting off some of the biggest anti-government protests in its history, which were brutally suppressed in January, with thousands killed. Israel and the US had pounded its military and nuclear sites during a 12-day war the previous summer, and its militant allies had been throttled in the wars that followed Hamas' October 7, 2023, attack out of Gaza. But the tide changed shortly after the initial US and Israeli strikes, as Iran's leaders were quickly replaced and its people — sheltering from the war — ignored exhortations from the attackers to rise up again. Iran effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz, a critical trade route for oil and gas, and attacked Gulf countries hosting US troops, rattling the global economy. US President Donald Trump agreed to a ceasefire in April and signed a deal with Iran in June, which crumbled weeks later. Iran is now determined to exert permanent control over the strait, to use it to ward off future attacks and secure other concessions, while giving no ground on its disputed nuclear programme. It's a risky gamble, especially as the US tightens its blockade and vows new sanctions on Iran's already battered

Opposition leaders slam govt over energy crisis, economic hardship, worsening law and order

Dhaka: Bangladesh's opposition leaders have rejected the BNP government's claims of success during its first 180 days in office, citing continuing energy crisis, frequent load shedding, industrial plant closures, rising unemployment concerns and the deteriorating law and order situation in the country, local media reported. Speaking at the national Parliament on Thursday, independent lawmaker Rumeen Farhana criticised the government and highlighted growing public frustration over the ongoing gas and electricity crisis, saying people sarcastically remark, "Here comes Tuku, there goes Tuku," referring to the country's Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Iqbal Hassan Mahmood and the prolonged crisis. "Fuel prices are rising, there is an outcry over electricity, and gas is unavailable... this is the same government that promised one crore new jobs during the election. Yet within six months of coming to power, 62,000 people have lost their jobs. More than 900 factories have shut down. Will new jobs be created? Those who are employed, only God knows how long their jobs will last," Bangladesh's leading newspaper the Daily Star quoted Rumeen as saying.

She recalled that the government had set improving law and order, controlling commodity prices and ensuring energy security as three major priorities for its first 180 days. Referring to the worsening law-and-order situation across Bangladesh, Rumeen said, "It is difficult to speak about it. Our home minister either mocks the issue or hides behind wordplay." "But if you talk to ordinary people, you will hear them say that, just as the foreign ministry has three ministers, even if Bangladesh had 64 home ministers for 64 districts, the situation could hardly

Death toll rises to 469, 977 remain out of contact

Kathmandu: The death toll from the devastating floods in Nepal's Bhotekoshi region has risen to 469, while 977 people remain out of contact, according to the latest update released by the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA) on Friday. The floods, believed to have been triggered by an avalanche on a transboundary river between Nepal and China upstream of the Bhoté Koshi River, have left a trail of destruction along the riverbanks downstream, sweeping away several human settlements, roads, hydropower projects and transmission infrastructure, among other facilities. According to the NDRRMA, 469 bodies have been recovered from various districts, with the highest number — 178 bodies — recovered in Chitwan district, followed by 110 in Nawalparasi East. Likewise, 44 bodies were recovered in Gorkha, 37 in Nuwakot, 28 in Tanahun, 27 in Nawalparasi West, 23 in Dhading and 12 in Rasuwa, the authority said. Of the 977 people out of contact, 517 are foreign nationals. India's Ministry of External Affairs said on Thursday night that as many as 290 Indians remain out of contact in the aftermath of the deadly

economy.

"Iran has demonstrated that Hormuz gives it significant leverage, but prolonged disruption also hurts its neighbours, China, and the global economy, while encouraging alternatives to the strait," said Yoel Guzansky, an expert on Iran and the Gulf at Israel's Institute for National Security Studies. "Tehran's danger is confusing its ability to survive with victory and demanding more than its leverage can deliver," he said. Gulf nations doubt US security guarantees. For decades, the US has been committed to protecting wealthy Gulf oil exporters from external aggression, using a sprawling network of bases across the region. The arrangement helped secure global energy markets, deterred Saddam's Iraq and later Iran, and contributed to the United Arab Emirates and other Gulf nations becoming havens of prosperity in a volatile region. It's been tested before, but never like this. Iran retaliated against Israel, but it also trained its missiles and drones on Gulf nations that had hoped to stay out of the war. It struck US bases and critical energy infrastructure, stretching air defences and drawing down American supplies of sophisticated interceptors. Iran responded to attacks on its civilian infrastructure by striking its neighbours' desalination plants. That raised fears that a war begun without consultation with Gulf nations could lead to catastrophic attacks on their water and electricity. "The fact that the war began without a clear political objective and against the advice of key regional partners, and that there has not been clear evidence of a Plan B once the initial attacks failed to dislodge the Iranian regime, is likely to undermine confidence in the US across the region and may take some time to repair," said Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, a Gulf expert at Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy. Last month, Saudi Arabia entered into a new defence pact with Pakistan and Türkiye, an early indication that stalwart American allies might seek new security arrangements. Their options are limited, however. "The dilemma facing Gulf states is there is no viable alternative to the full range of defence and security networks with the US," Ulrichsen said. Israel batters its enemies but risks losing its closest friend. Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah launched missiles into Israel days after the outbreak of the war, triggering heavy retaliatory airstrikes and another ground invasion. Israel has reoccupied large parts of southern Lebanon, adding to its wider seizure of territory following the October 7 attack. Its many tactical victories have come at a mounting cost in international isolation. Israel has been widely accused of genocide in Gaza, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been indicted by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity, all of which Israel adamantly denies. Of greater concern for Israel is its unprecedented erosion of support in the United States. That accelerated as some critics came to see it as having led the US into another Mideast war, something to which the Trump administration has at times lent credence. As the war settled into a stalemate over the summer, outspoken critics of Israel won some key Democratic primaries across the United States and more than half of House Democrats voted to cut aid to Israel. Israel has also come in for growing criticism from the right. In addition to deteriorating sentiment in the US, there's less chance of forming stronger ties with other countries. Normalisation of ties between Israel and Saudi Arabia appears increasingly distant. The conflicts that have swept across the region since October 7 have led officials in Saudi Arabia to view the current Israeli leadership as contributing to regional instability and not therefore a viable diplomatic partner at the moment," Ulrichsen said.



be any worse. That is the state of law and order," the lawmaker added. Meanwhile, the Jamaat-e-Islami-led 11-party alliance also slammed the government, saying the latter could not claim success amid the crisis confronting people in their daily lives and the deteriorating law-and-order situation. Jamaat's Assistant Secretary-General Hamidur Rahman Azad made these remarks while addressing journalists following a meeting of the alliance leaders, "Public suffering, deterioration of law and order, and insecurity have increased in the country, Bangladeshi daily Prothom Alo quoted Hamidur as saying. He further said: "The electricity and gas crises, the closure of industrial plants, unemployment, the deterioration of law and order, and the failure to ensure people's security must be viewed as failures of the government." Highlighting the law and order situation, Hamidur cited figures on abductions, enforced disappearances and killings.

floods in the Bhoté Koshi River. The United States said that approximately 90 Americans may have been affected by the floods in Nepal, while China said that nearly 100 Chinese nationals remain missing on the Nepali side following Wednesday's mudslide. Among those out of contact, 127 Nepalis residing abroad are also missing, according to the authority. The latest update also said that those out of contact include 28 Nepal Police personnel, 45 Nepal Army personnel, 13 Armed Police Force personnel, 15 Customs Office staff and four Immigration Office staff. At least 73 people have been injured in the disaster, including 43 in Rasuwa, three in Dhading and 27 in Nuwakot, the authority said. A total of 13,295 security personnel have been mobilised for search, rescue and relief operations, including personnel from Nepal Police, the Nepal Army and the Armed Police Force. Rescue teams have so far rescued 3,253 people, while helicopters have also been deployed to evacuate stranded people and transport relief materials to affected areas. relief materials

Apple CEO Tim Cook announces donation for Nepal-Tibet flood relief and rebuilding



New Delhi: Apple CEO Tim Cook on Friday expressed solidarity with people affected by the devastating flash floods and mudslides that have caused widespread destruction along the Nepal-Tibet border, saying the company will make a donation to support relief and rebuilding efforts. The disaster began on Wednesday after the lower portion of a glacier in the Himalayas collapsed. The debris briefly blocked the river before giving way, sending floodwaters and mud downstream, killing hundreds of people, displacing others, and damaging villages, roads, bridges, and other infrastructure.

In a post on social media platform X, Cook said that our thoughts are with all those affected by the tragic flash floods and mudslides in Nepal and Tibet. "Our thoughts are with all those affected by the tragic flash floods and mudslides in Nepal and Tibet. Apple is making a dona-

UK offers £5 million and emergency responders to flood-hit Nepal

London: The UK has offered £5 million and emergency responders to Nepal after flash floods in the country claimed hundreds of lives and left more than a thousand people missing, including around 33 British nationals. British Prime Minister Andy Burnham on Thursday described the scenes emerging from the region as "devastating" and urged British nationals caught up in the crisis to follow guidance from local authorities. He said the immediate action already taken by the UK included deploying consular support staff to the affected area to facilitate round-the-clock assistance for British nationals.

"It's a devastating picture that is emerging from what has happened in Nepal," Burnham told reporters during a visit to South Wales. "An offer has been made to send emergency responders to the region, but that's obviously a matter for the Nepalese government. We've also offered £5 million to help with the response effort." Obviously, there are a number of British nationals who are currently thought to be missing, and we'll be providing all the support we can to their families in what is a very distressing and devastating situation," he said. King Charles III and Queen Camilla said they were "heartbroken" to hear of the devastating flooding and expressed their "profound sympathy" with all those who have lost loved ones and those anxiously awaiting news of friends and relatives. "Many in the United Kingdom have strong, deep and personal ties to this part of the world," the royals said in a statement. "Our hearts also go out to the families of all the police and Armed Forces personnel who lost their lives while carrying out their courageous duty in the service of others, and we give our deepest thanks to those who have responded so selflessly in undertaking rescue efforts.

"Our special thoughts and prayers remain with all those affected and, as always, the United Kingdom stands ready to help support those in need," they said. The Prince and Princess of Wales, William and Catherine, also expressed their heartbreak at the "shocking" scale of the devastation. "We are thinking of everyone caught up in this terrible disaster. Our thoughts are especially with the families facing an unbearable wait for news and with the

World's deadliest glacier disasters

BEIJING, A glacial collapse triggered a massive flash flood on Wednesday in the Himalayan border areas of Nepal and adjoining Tibet, killing at least 270 people, with authorities fearing more casualties. Here are some of the deadliest glacial disasters in history. Stay up to date on the key companies, data, and decisions in the ESG world with the Reuters Sustainable Finance newsletter. Sign up here.

1941 — HUARAZ, PERUA glacial lake outburst flood destroyed one-third of the city of Huaraz in the high Andes of northern Peru, killing an estimated 5,000 people. It remains one of the deadliest glacier lake outbursts known in history.

1962 — RANRAHIRCA, PERUA colossal block of ice broke away from Peru's tallest mountain, Mount Huascarán, causing 10 million cubic metres of rock, ice and snow to slide down the mountain in just seven minutes. It buried the village of Ranrahirca and several nearby settlements under 12 metres of mud and debris, killing an estimated 4,000 people.

1970 — YUNGAY, PERUA magnitude 7.9 earthquake destabilized the northern wall of Mount Huascarán, triggering the deadliest glacier-related disaster in history. The mass of glacial ice and rock hurtled toward the towns of Yungay and Ranrahirca at speeds of up to 335 kph (208 mph), burying them in sludge. The avalanche killed an estimated 25,000 people, contributing to an overall earthquake death toll that exceeded 50,000. 1981 — CIRENMA CO, TIBETAN overhanging glacial ice mass plunged into Cirenma Co, a glacial lake 14 km from the China-Nepal border, sending a huge wave over its moraine dam. The impact sent nearly 20 million cubic metres of water, ice and debris rushing down into Nepal. The incident killed an estimated 200 people in Nepal and led to up to \$4 million in damage to bridges, roads, a hydropower plant and other infrastructure.

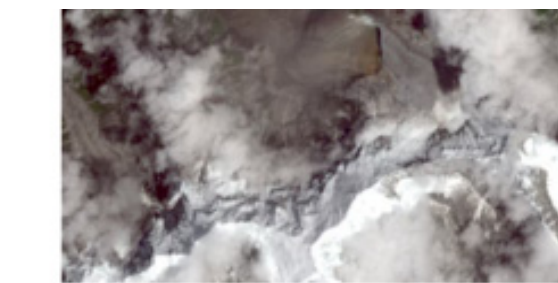
2021 — CHAMOLI, INDIA A large section of ice dislodged from Ronti Peak near Nanda Devi, India's second-highest peak, sending a destructive torrent of rocks, dust and ice 1,500 metres down the valley. It triggered a massive flash flood in the northern Indian state of Uttarakhand that killed more than 200 people, destroyed villages, and swept away two hydroelectric projects.

2026 — NEPAL-TIBET BORDER More than 1,000 people are missing across Nepal and Tibet after the lower section of a Himalayan glacier collapsed and crashed onto the valley floor, sending an avalanche of ice a

tion to support relief and rebuilding efforts on the ground," he stated. Cook did not disclose the amount of Apple's contribution or specify the organisations through which the funds would be channelled. The announcement comes as Nepal continues to grapple with the aftermath of a massive flash flood that swept through the transboundary Bhoté Koshi River after an ice-rock avalanche in the Tibetan region triggered a sudden surge of water and debris. The disaster has devastated settlements, roads, bridges, hydropower facilities and other critical infrastructure in several districts of Nepal. According to the latest reports, the death toll in Nepal has continued to rise, with hundreds of bodies recovered from districts along the Bhoté Koshi and Trishuli river systems. More than 800 people have also remained unaccounted for, including security personnel, tourists and local residents. The disaster has also affected foreign nationals, including Indian tourists. Nepalese authorities have been carrying out search, rescue and relief operations across the affected areas, while helicopters have been deployed to evacuate stranded people and deliver essential supplies. Earlier, the Indian Embassy in Nepal issued emergency contact numbers to assist Indian nationals affected by the floods. More than 100 Indians were among tourists initially reported missing in the affected region, although authorities have continued to verify and update the figures. The Nepal government has declared severely affected areas as disaster crisis-hit zones and launched efforts to restore damaged infrastructure and provide relief to displaced and affected communities. India, China and international institutions have also indicated support for rescue, relief and reconstruction efforts.



communities confronting such immense loss. "We are incredibly grateful to all those working in such dangerous conditions to rescue people and support those affected," they said. The UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) said it was looking to provide humanitarian support following a request by the Nepali government for food, shelter and health services. However, it indicated that comprehensive humanitarian assessments were likely to take some time because of the scale of the damage. "I spoke to the Nepali Foreign Minister, Shisir Khanal, this morning [Thursday] and expressed Britain's solidarity and deepest condolences for the disaster that has occurred," said Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband. "I thanked him for the efforts of the Nepali government in support of British nationals in the area. I also offered financial, search and rescue, and other assistance to aid the disaster response. Above all, I told him we will do everything we can to help Nepal in its hour of need," he said. The Foreign Office said it was engaging with development partners, donors and international allies on a coordinated response in the region following the natural disaster, which caused massive landslides on Wednesday. Global funds to which the UK contributes are already disbursing money to support the humanitarian response, including the IFRC Disaster Response Emergency Fund. Flash floods along the Nepal-Tibet border caused rivers to burst their banks and covered populated areas in thick mud, burying houses and creating difficult conditions for rescuers.



NYC Mayor Zohran Mamdani a 'radical' on 'wrong path', says US singer Mary Millben

Washington: Popular American singer Mary Millben has described New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani as a "radical" who is on the "wrong path", accusing him of embracing a socialist movement that does not represent American democratic ideals. "He is a radical, you know, that's what this DSA movement is," Millben said in an interview with IANS, referring to the Democratic Socialists of America. "There's just a bunch of radicals who don't understand how the world works. They don't understand how America works, and they certainly don't understand how New York works. He doesn't," she said. Millben was responding to questions about Mamdani's opposition to the New York visit of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat. The RSS leader is scheduled to address an August 29 gathering built around the themes of oneness and unity. The singer said Mamdani's criticism should be viewed in the context of his association with the socialist wing of the Democratic Party. "The real meat and potatoes of the controversy is Mamdani's association with the DSA," she said. "That is this democratic socialist organisation in the United States that is a part of the Democratic Party." Millben said she had several Democratic friends in elected office who did not subscribe to the socialist movement or its agenda. "But Mamdani has attached himself to that sect of the Democratic Party and that agenda," she said.

U.S.-China trade truce leaves military-use rare earth issue unresolved, sources say



The renewed U.S.-China trade truce struck in London left a key area of export restrictions tied to national security untouched, an unresolved conflict that threatens a more comprehensive deal, two people briefed on detailed outcomes of the talks told Reuters.Beijing has not committed to granting export clearance for some specialised rare-earth magnets that U.S. military suppliers need for fighter jets and missile systems, the people said. The United States maintains export curbs on China's purchases of advanced artificial intelligence chips out of concern that they also have military applications.At talks in London last week, China's negotiators appeared to link progress in lifting export controls on military-use rare earth magnets with the longstanding U.S. curbs on exports of the most advanced AI chips to China. That marked a new twist in trade talks that began with opioid trafficking, tariff rates and China's trade surplus, but have since shifted to focus on export controls.In addition, U.S. officials also signalled they are looking to extend existing tariffs on China for a further 90 days beyond the August 10 deadline agreed in Geneva last month, both sources said, suggesting a more permanent trade deal between the world's two largest economies is unlikely before then.The two people who spoke to Reuters about the London talks requested not to be named because both sides have tightly controlled disclosure. The White House, State Department and Department of Commerce did not immediately respond to requests for comment. China's Foreign and Commerce ministries did not respond to faxed requests for comment.President Donald Trump said on Wednesday the handshake deal reached in London between American and Chinese negotiators was a "great deal," adding, "we have everything we need, and we're going to do very well with it. And hopefully they are too."And U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said there would be no "quid pro quo" on easing curbs on exports of AI chips to China in exchange for access to rare earths.China ChokeholdBut China's chokehold on the rare earth magnets needed for weapons systems remains a potential flashpoint. China dominates global produc-

tion of rare earths and holds a virtual monopoly on refining and processing.A deal reached in Geneva last month to reduce bilateral tariffs from crushing triple-digit levels had faltered over Beijing's restrictions on critical minerals exports that took shape in April.That prompted the Trump administration to respond with export controls preventing shipments of semiconductor design software, jet engines for Chinese-made planes and other goods to China.At the London talks, China promised to fast-track approval of rare-earth export applications from non-military U.S. manufacturers out of the tens of thousands currently pending, one of the sources said. Those licenses will have a six-month term. Beijing also offered to set up a "green channel" for expediting license approvals from trusted U.S. companies.Initial signals were positive, with Chinese rare-earth magnet producer JL MAG Rare-Earth, saying on Wednesday it had obtained export licences that included the United States, while China's Commerce Ministry confirmed it had approved some "compliant applications" for export licences.

But China has not budged on specialized rare earths, including samarium, which are needed for military applications and are outside the fast-track agreed in London, the two people said. Automakers and other manufacturers largely need other rare earth magnets, including dysprosium and terbium.Big Issues RemainThe rushed trade meeting in London followed a call last week between Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping. Trump said U.S. tariffs would be set at 55% for China, while China had agreed to 10% from the United States.Trump initially imposed tariffs on China as punishment for its massive trade surplus to the United States and over what he says is Beijing's failure to stem the flow of the powerful opioid fentanyl into the U.S.Chinese analysts are pessimistic about the likelihood of further breakthroughs before the August 10 deadline agreed in Geneva."Temporary mutual accommodation of some concerns is possible but the fundamental issue of the trade imbalance cannot be resolved within this timeframe, and possibly during Trump's remaining term," said Liu Weidong, a U.S.-China expert at the Institute of American Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.An extension of the August deadline could allow the Trump administration more time to establish an alternative legal claim for setting higher tariffs on China under the Section 301 authority of the USTR in case Trump loses the ongoing legal challenge to the tariffs in U.S. court, one of the people with knowledge of the London talks said.The unresolved issues underscore the difficulty the Trump administration faces in pushing its trade agenda with China because of Beijing's control of rare earths and its willingness to use that as leverage with Washington, said Ryan Hass, director of the John L. Thornton China Center at the Brookings Institution.

AI and biomanufacturing: can India's policies match its ambitions?

India stands at a pivotal juncture in its quest to harness artificial intelligence (AI) for biotechnology innovation. On one hand, initiatives like the BioE3 Policy and the IndiaAI Mission reflect a bold vision to position the country as a global leader in AI-driven biomanufacturing and ethical AI development. On the other, fragmented regulations and lagging safeguards threaten to undermine this progress. As India races to capitalise on AI's transformative potential, a critical question emerges: can it balance ambition with accountability?India's biomanufacturing sector is abuzz with possibilities. For decades, the country has been the world's go-to supplier for generic medicines and vaccines, a reputation it has built on scale, cost, and reliability. But now, as AI sweeps through the global life sciences industry, there's a sense that something much bigger is in the works. Many modern biomanufacturing facilities already have robots running precision tasks, biosensors streaming real-time data, and AI models quietly optimising everything from fermentation to packaging.

Biocon, one of India's largest biotechnology firms, is integrating AI to improve drug screening and its biologics manufacturing processes. By leveraging AI-based predictive analytics, Biocon will enhance the efficiency of fermentation and quality control, reducing production costs while maintaining global standards. Similarly, Bengaluru-based Strand Life Sciences uses AI in genomics and personalised medicine, helping accelerate drug discovery and clinical diagnostics. Their platforms use machine learning to analyse complex biological data, making it easier to identify drug targets and predict treatment responses. These efforts illustrate how AI is already reshaping biomanufacturing and healthcare delivery in India.It's not just about swapping out people for machines. AI is transforming the very DNA of biomanufacturing. Imagine a production line where sensors feed thousands of data points every second into an AI system that can spot the faintest hint of trouble, like a temperature drift, a pH blip or a subtle change in cell growth. Before a human operator even notices, the AI predicts a deviation, tweaks the process, and keeps the batch on track. Digital twins, which are virtual replicas of entire manufacturing plants allow engineers to run simulations, test changes, and foresee problems without ever touching a real fermenter.The result? Fewer failed batches, less waste, and products that consistently meet the gold standard for quality. For a country like India, where every rupee and every dose counts, these gains can be transformative.The Government of India has clearly recognised this potential. The BioE3 Policy, rolled out in 2024, is a playbook for the future. The policy lays out plans for state-of-the-art biomanufacturing hubs, biofoundries, and "Bio-AI Hubs" that will bring together the best minds in science, engineering, and data. There's real money on the table too, with funding and grants designed to help startups and established players alike leap from the lab bench to the market shelf.Equally important is the IndiaAI Mission, which is working alongside BioE3 to ensure India's AI revolution is both innovative and ethical. The Mission is as much about building technical capacity as about building trust. By supporting projects that focus on explainable and responsible AI — such as efforts to reduce algorithmic bias or frameworks for "machine unlearning" — the Mission is helping set the standards for how AI should be developed and deployed in sensitive sectors like health and biotechnology.

But here's where things get interesting and complicated. While India's ambitions are sky-high, its regulatory framework is still catching its breath. The rules that govern how new drugs, biologics, and manufacturing processes come to market were written for a different era.



Today's AI-driven systems don't always fit neatly into those boxes. For example, when an AI model is used to control a bioreactor or predict the yield of a vaccine batch, how do we know it's reliable? Who checks that the data it was trained on is representative of India's diverse conditions, or that it won't make a catastrophic error if something unexpected happens? These aren't just technical questions. They are matters of public trust and safety.Globally, the rules are changing. The European Union's AI Act, effective since August 2024, classifies AI tools into four risk tiers. High-risk applications like genetic editing face strict audits while the U.S. FDA's 2025 guidance mandates a seven-step framework for AI credibility. These models emphasise two things India lacks: context-specific risk evaluation and adaptive regulation. For instance, the FDA's 'Predetermined Change Control Plans' allow iterative AI updates that are critical for evolving cancer therapies without compromising safety. India needs this kind of risk-based, context-aware oversight as it moves from pilot projects to full-scale, AI-powered manufacturing.

Picture an Indian biotech startup that develops an AI platform to optimise enzyme production for the specialty chemicals industry. This sector is already worth \$32 billion (Rs 2.74 lakh crore) and growing fast. If this AI is trained only on data from large, urban manufacturing sites, it might fail to account for the quirks of smaller plants in semi-urban or rural areas, like differences in water quality, ambient temperature or even local power fluctuations. Without clear standards for dataset diversity and model validation, the tool could recommend process tweaks that work beautifully in Bengaluru but flop in Baddi. The result: lost revenue, wasted resources, and a blow to India's reputation for quality. This is why the context of use and credibility assessment that are core pillars in the FDA's approach are so important. We need to be clear exactly what question the AI is answering, how it's being used, and how strict our oversight should be, depending on the risks involved.Of course, biomanufacturing is only one piece of the puzzle. Imagine a future where India not only supplies 60% of the world's vaccines but also designs them using algorithms that predict viral mutations. A future where farmers in Bihar receive AI-generated advisories to combat pest outbreaks and patients in rural Tamil Nadu are diagnosed by tools trained on India's genetic diversity. This isn't science fiction — it's the promise of AI-driven biomanufacturing, a field where India is making bold strides. Yet beneath this optimism lies a critical question: can our policies keep up with science?

With great power comes...The intersections are multiplying. In drug discovery, AI platforms can screen millions of compounds in silico, slashing the time and cost needed to find new treatments. Molecular design tools are helping researchers fine-tune drug candidates for maximum efficacy and minimal side effects. Clinical trials that were once notorious for delays and inefficiencies are being streamlined

India needs a sincere aircraft accident investigation



In a country where every life lost in an aircraft accident should result in justice, transparency, and reform, we find ourselves, instead, battling a system that is seemingly designed to obscure the truth.On paper, India's Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) is a statutory and autonomous investigative body. In reality, it is anything but independent. It functions as an office of the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA), the very same authority that oversees airlines, regulates aviation through the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), and, crucially, appoints the leadership of the AAIB and the DGCA. This structure presents an apparent conflict of interest. In railway accidents, investigations are typically carried out by the Commissioner of Railway Safety or, occasionally, a judicial authority, and not by the Ministry of Railways. Although, technically, under the MoCA, the Commissioner is functionally independent of railway operators, this ensures that those running trains are not the ones investigating the derailments. But in aviation, the MoCA controls airline operations and accident investigations.

The accident on June 12, 2025, at Ahmedabad was not just an operational occurrence. It was a full-fledged aircraft accident that should serve as a wake-up call. Is India's aviation safety framework keeping pace with its exponential growth? There have been a number of helicopter crashes, accidents involving flying schools, there was a weather-related incident in May 2025 that affected a Delhi-Srinagar IndiGo flight, and, in addition, troubling ground handling lapses, that include the cancellation of ground handler Çelebi Aviation's permit over security concerns. These are not isolated incidents but point to something more profoundAre we identifying and fixing risks before they become headlines? Or are we merely reacting? We cannot keep firefighting. We need a system that prevents failures, and not just manages the damage.The high-level committee appointed to investigate the Air India AI171 crash must go beyond reviewing a single event. It must recognise that India's aviation ecosystem has outgrown the current National Civil Aviation Policy (NCAP). In a complete revamp of the NCAP, 'safety' should be deeply woven into every regulation, operation and decision. That is how we prepare for the responsibilities that come with being one of the largest aviation markets in the world.A report that told inconvenient truthsThe Air Marshal J.K. Seth Committee Report in 1997 was India's most honest and far-reaching review of aviation safety. But it was quietly buried because it told the truth. It highlighted key systemic flaws: fragmented oversight; lack of independence; inadequate training and resources, and regulatory capture. These issues remain largely unresolved. Any new committee must reckon with these truths and not repeat the pattern of superficial reviews and buried reports.Too many accident reports have internal contradictions. In an accident in 2001, that claimed the life of

How Vani Kapoor rediscovered her authentic golf self and reclaimed the joy of playing

Vani Kapoor's golf career started in Delhi with something as simple as wanting to spend more time with her father on Sunday afternoons. "We didn't think it would become a profession or anything," she said.Vani is on a high, having won the eighth leg of the HWPGT at the Bengaluru Golf Club (BGC) last week. "This is probably the best start I have had to the year in my entire career," she said, in reference to claiming four of the eight legs. The 31-year-old is the runaway leader on the HWPGT Order of Merit, with total winnings of ₹11,88,000.

The path to this latest title was not easy. She was trailing early in the third round, but key moments — a birdie on the ninth and a hot streak of birdies on holes 12 through 15 — put her back in the lead. "I just kept rolling, and by the time I reached the final two holes, I knew I had a cushion. I just needed to finish the job."Vani turned professional in 2012 at just 18 years old and quickly became a dominant force on the Indian domestic circuit. Her debut season brought three victories, a sign of things to come. Since then, she's steadily built a stellar record.

In 2019, she became the first Indian woman to earn a card on the Australian Ladies PGA Tour. That milestone opened doors to the Ladies European Tour (LET) and the prestigious Vic Open. She continued to rise and, in 2022, posted a career-best tied-third finish at the Big Green Egg Open in the Netherlands, ending five under par overall.In the 2025 season of the HWPGT, Vani opened with runner-up finishes in the second and third legs, followed by a dominant three-win streak in the fourth, fifth, and sixth legs. Ahead of her latest win, there was pressure, no doubt. But Vani remained unfazed.All-around player: Vani sees her long and short games as strengths, but putting is her biggest asset. She might not be the longest driver on the circuit, but her consistency off the tee and sharp play inside 100 yards makes her a regular on the leaderboard.All-around player: Vani sees her long and short games as strengths, but putting is her biggest asset. She might not be the longest driver on the circuit, but her consistency off the tee and sharp play inside 100 yards makes her a regular on the leaderboard. | Photo Credit: Getty Images"Everyone here is a good golfer, and anyone can have a great day. Whatever my result, it's a by-product of my own effort, and that's the only thing I can possibly control," said Vani.That kind of composure doesn't come out of nowhere. Vani identifies working with a sports psychologist, which she began doing seven years ago, as a turning point. "A few things were bothering me, so I got that out of the way and got more clarity," she said.Vani called her performance in 2024 average — an honest self-assessment for someone used to being at the top. She plied her trade primarily on the LET, where she managed only one top-ten finish. Vani competed in three HWPGT events and won once."Something had to change. I took some time off and worked on myself from all angles," she said.Vani attributes

a former Union Minister, 'entry into the cloud' was cited as the cause, while the meteorology section confirmed that there were no clouds around. Was it a mistake or does it point to something else? Overloading was evident in the Indian Airlines crash (IC491) in Aurangabad in 1993. Yet, the final report did not spell it out so clearly. This writer has pursued data for years in another case of suspected overloading on an Air India Express flight (IX611), in October 2018, from Tiruchi, Tamil Nadu to Dubai, only to be denied access. What is being protected?The Aircraft (Investigation of Accidents and Incidents) Rules, 2017 make one point clear — that the purpose of an investigation is to prevent future accidents, and not to assign blame. Yet, law enforcement and courts routinely misuse the AAIB's findings. The police, lacking the expertise and jurisdiction in aviation matters, rely almost entirely on the AAIB's reports, treating them as conclusive. The AAIB's findings are meant for safety learning, and not legal prosecution. When these reports are interpreted outside their technical scope, truth becomes a casualty.Investigating officers unfamiliar with aviation treat the AAIB's "probable cause" as a legal verdict. The judiciary focuses on what is immediately visible, while the AAIB is meant to dig deeper. But both often end up blaming the pilot, the case is closed and the truth is left behind.Why is pilot error so often the conclusion? Because it is convenient. Legally, it simplifies matters. From an insurance standpoint, a conclusion of pilot error helps expedite payouts. It closes the loop quickly, shielding other accountable entities — airlines, maintenance providers, and air traffic control, from scrutiny. The pilot becomes the system's scapegoat, even in death.A front to protect peopleToo often, accident investigations in India are reshaped to protect institutions, and not the people they serve. The MoCA holds all the levers, policy, regulation, appointments and investigations. With that much control, real accountability becomes a myth. Each time a family receives a hollow, contradictory report instead of honest answers, the system not only fails but also breaks faith. At times, the structure is so well-insulated from responsibility that it has perfected the art of getting away with murder — through delay, dilution and the quiet deletion of truth.The International Civil Aviation Organization's State Safety Briefing (2022) says that India has had zero fatal accidents recently. But 21 lives were lost in the Kozhikode air crash in August 2020. The recommendations in the investigation and those of the committee to review the accident report have not been implemented duly. There is no accountability. No systemic change. Just silence. India cannot claim global leadership in aviation while hiding behind data. Absolute safety comes from integrity.These are the steps needed. First, move the AAIB and DGCA to an independent statutory body that reports to Parliament. Second, stop having parallel committees that bypass or undermine established investigative bodies. Third, take legal steps to prevent the AAIB's findings from being used in criminal trials unless independently validated. Fourth, amend Rule 19(3) of the Aircraft Rules, 1937, which holds the powers to penalise a pilot for any mistake. There is a need to protect a pilot with a genuine no-blame culture, unless gross negligence is proven. Fifth, appoint an independent ombudsman to review how accident reports have been handled and mishandled.It is not that India lacks the talent or the tools to investigate accidents. What it lacks is the institutional courage to tell the truth. Therefore, this writer's plea. Have an honest, sincere aircraft accident investigation; one that shows that India values truth and precious lives over image. Let that be India's legacy for those lives lost



her 2024 season to internal pressure and expectations. "I tried very hard to do things the right way while keeping certain people in mind. What really changed was that I gave myself an opportunity to just play for myself, without any expectations internally or from other people, and just go back to basics. It's nice that everything is coming together now. I have started enjoying the game so much more, which I feel is the most important thing," she said.Vani sees her long and short games as strengths, but her putting is her biggest asset. While she might not be the longest driver on the tour, her consistency off the tee and sharp play inside 100 yards makes her a regular on the leaderboard. "I'm not one of the longest hitters, but I'm very accurate. So, I don't really have to worry that much off the tee. I've worked more on my short game, 100 yards in, to compensate. Putting has always been a strong point that I've had," she said.Off the course, Vani focuses equally on training both body and mind. Her approach blends mental clarity with a practice routine that's tailored to her needs. "You have to love the way you practise. It has to be your way — not someone else's version of what's right," she said.Her fitness regimen includes strength training to prevent injury and maintain swing-speed. This isn't just about being physically strong; it's about endurance.And then there's the gym, of course. You must work on strength. We swing at such fast speeds — you have to always be consistent and injury-free. We also need stability," Vani said.Need of the hour: Vani strongly feels that women's golf requires better structural support and more visibility. "It's not just about us players," she says. 'Our sponsors need visibility too.'Need of the hour: Vani strongly feels that women's golf requires better structural support and more visibility. "It's not just about us players," she says. 'Our sponsors need visibility too.' | Photo Credit: Getty ImagesTournament days can stretch long, and one loose shot late in the round can cost a title. Vani explained that staying in good physical shape helps train her mind to stay focused on the course.Vani's mindset was tested when she returned to the BGC, a course that she hadn't played in for six or seven years. "I didn't remember anything," she said with a laugh. "I was going on the wrong tee boxes and wrong greens during the practice round. I told my caddy, 'Just get me to the right tee and the right green — I'll handle the rest.'"

Nimisha Sajayan shines, but weak murder mystery holds it back



Babita Singh Reporting movie review: Babita aka Baby is your average Indian woman, trying to navigate politics at the work-place as well as in her domestic sphere. It could be the story played out in millions of households, but the thing that makes this film different is that Babita is a cop, elevated by circumstances into her position. The fact that hers is a 'compassionate posting' keeps coming up: a death in Baby's family empties up a spot at the police station, which she steps into, with her colleagues expecting her to earn her place over and over again. The fact that it parallels her home situation, as a wife and daughter-in-law, is not hidden either: dutiful bahus are expected to fill empty spots day after day, to keep the family happy.

This duality is captured deftly in Ambiecka Pandit's atmospheric film which threads societal ills through a police procedural, a well-established genre flourishing in the age of streaming. Arriving in small-town Rewa with husband Sharad (Anshumaan Pushkar) for her sister-in-

law's (Priya Yadav) godh-bharaai, Baby's focus is split between her domestic duties and the sordid murder of childhood friend Banshi (Barun Sobti).It is when the director and writer Amita Vyas train their sights on the spikiness that happens within the chaar-diwari — mother-in-law (Sunita Rajwar) ruling the roost, sister-in-law behaving like the entitled nanad, and husband doing the passive-aggressive act — that the film works best. Not this sari, that one; haldi doodh at the crack of dawn — all the petulance is saved for the daughter-in-law, who realises that she is being put upon but keeps soldering on regardless.

The ensemble cast is solid, led by a wonderful Nimisha Sajayan, as she does about trying to keep everyone happy, pausing to check in on herself only when she can. But the performances can't paper over the weaknesses of the film. The victim is thinly-written. We never really get a satisfactory sense of who he is. Why does Baby get so involved? Was there something between the two? Why would a woman who is clearly not confident of her own abilities go barrelling into tricky situations which are clearly above her pay-grade? This is where Baby, and the film stumbles: her attempts at understanding the weight of patriarchy and her tentative pushing back has more impact, than the unravelling of the mystery.You may get reminded of Sandhya Suri's 'Santosh' in the way an 'anukampa' posting is used to prop up a woman who learns to learn on the job, as well as Rajwar's presence. But the small town woman, and the small town cop, sometimes one playing the other, are in the danger of becoming tropes, if they haven't already: Sudip Sharma (Pataal Lok, Kohrra) is co-producer here, and well-versed in creating atmospheric, grounded crime thrillers.Having liked Pandit's short 'Under The Waters' very much, I was waiting to see what she did with her debut feature. It lags, but there is also no doubt that there is a voice here.Babita Singh Reporting cast: Nimisha Sajayan, Anshumaan Pushkar, Sunita Rajwar, Priyanka Setia, Priya Yadav, Barun Sobti, Ravi Jhankal, Geetika Vidya Ohlyan, Rajesh KumarBabita Singh Reporting director: Ambiecka PanditBabita Singh Reporting rating: 2.5 stars



Priyanka Chopra's mother, Dr Madhu Chopra, has weighed in on the controversy surrounding Kriti Sanon's Raksha Bandhan advertisement, saying that while she believes in the idea of "my body, my choice", there should also be "daayra", or boundaries, depending on the cultural setting and occasion.Madhu's comments come amid the backlash over Kriti's Raksha Bandhan campaign for jewellery brand GIVA. The advertisement showed Kriti in an ivory bralette-style blouse, matching cape and long skirt as she tied a rakhi to her on-screen brother and a pet. While the campaign was meant to extend the festival's message of love and protection to pets, a section of social media users objected to Kriti's outfit and the way Raksha Bandhan was portrayed. Kriti later defended her choice and the ad, and GIVA eventually withdrew it following the controversy.Madhu was asked about the row during an interaction with the media, where she shared her views on Kriti's outfit and the debate surrounding the advertisement.

"My body, my choice is right, but woh daayra zaruri hai. Dignity, respecting other people's values is important. Ab yeh cheezein aisi jagah kar sakte hai jahan par yeh normal hai. Par yeh yahan normal nahi hai. Sorry to say that. Hamare bacche bhi pehente hai, kaam ke liye pehente hai, shauk ke liye pehente hai par jahan yeh normal ho aur mere khayal se acceptable aesthetically hona zaruri hai. Agar aesthetically accha hota hai toh sab kuch accha lagta hai. Par yeh thoda aesthetically nahi na isiliye. (Of course, my body, my choice is absolutely true however, there should be some boundaries and limitations. There should be dignity, respecting people's values. You can wear such things where they are normal, but in our culture, it's not normal to do this. Sorry to say.

My kids also wear such clothes, for work and because they like wearing but I also feel, they need to look good aesthetically as per the occasion. If it's not looking aesthetic, it will draw criticism)."After the advertisement was criticised on social media, Kriti responded to the backlash and defended both the campaign and her choice of clothing. She questioned why a woman's outfit was being used to judge her respect for culture and traditions."Imagine being this bothered by what another woman chooses to wear. Respectfully, evolve. PS: I'm the one she tied the rakhi to, and if I don't have a problem with it, why do you? The essence of festivals is not in the clothes you wear; it is in the emotions and meaning you attach to the traditions."Kriti also explained the idea behind showing her tying a rakhi to a pet in the advertisement, saying that, for her, Raksha Bandhan represents a bond of protection that goes beyond the traditional relationship between a brother and sister.

"Raksha Bandhan is a bond of protection. My sister and I tie rakhi to each other. We know we can protect each other just as much as a brother would. We pray for each other's health, happiness, and long life. For us, this prayer and promise extend to our dogs too. After all, they are family!"She further addressed the criticism over her clothing and wrote, "Also, when will we stop telling women what to wear? Ethnic fashion has evolved over the years, yet a woman's respect for her culture is still measured by her clothes. Culture and traditions are in her heart, not in her neckline!"Kangana was among the prominent voices who criticised the campaign. Without naming Kriti in her initial post, she questioned why someone would choose such an outfit for Raksha Bandhan and described the advertisement as "intentionally creepy."'"From all the options that are available to us today why would you tie your brother a Rakhi in your bikini/under garments? Where are all your styling options? Ha ha the advert looks intentionally creepy."

'Who is stopping Kriti from wearing what she wants?'

In a later interaction with Doordarshan, Kangana said Kriti's bralette was not her main issue. She objected to the way Raksha Bandhan was portrayed, saying the advertisement lacked traditional elements such as images of gods, teeka, dhoop and deep.Responding to Kriti's statement about women being told what to wear, Kangana said, "Who is stopping her from wearing whatever she wants? Who has ever stopped her? I don't think anyone has bothered about her clothes."On the advertisement being withdrawn, she said, "I think everyone was shocked and appalled. I think the bralette was not even the major point there... But where were the parents? Where is the halwa and poori and pictures of gods and teeka, dhoop, deep? Nothing was there."As the controversy grew, GIVA pulled down the Raksha Bandhan advertisement from all media platforms. Kriti is also a strategic investor in the jewellery brand.In a statement, GIVA said, "We have the highest regard and deep respect for Indian culture, traditions and festivals. As a brand, we have always believed in celebrating these joyous moments with the entire family and this time we wanted t

Samay Raina turns cyber cell felicitation into a joke, CM Fadnavis can't stop laughing



A video of Samay Raina is going viral on social media — this time, for all the right reasons. The stand-up comedian recently attended the launch event of the cyber-awareness short film Digital Arrest and the 1930 Maharashtra Cyber Anthem, organised by Maharashtra Cyber in Mumbai on Wednesday. The event was a star-studded affair, with actors including Ashish Vidyarthi, Pankaj Tripathi, Sharad Kelkar, Sonali Bendre, Javed Jaffery and Mangesh Desai, along with singer Sunidhi Chauhan, in attendance. However, it was Raina's quirky comments that stole the show. He joked about the irony of the situation, given that the cyber police, who were after him last year, had now invited him to felicitate him.

Raina, who was felicitated by Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis for his contribution to cyber-awareness short film, praised Maharashtra Cyber's helpline number 1930 before taking a cheeky dig at his own past association with the department:"Thank you for the felicitation, sir. My association with Maha Cyber has been going on for a very long time," he said.The remark immediately sent the room into laughter, including actors Sharad Kelkar and Pankaj Tripathi, who were seated on either side of him. Fadnavis too was seen bowing his head and laughing, seemingly anticipating where Raina's

joke was headed.The comedian continued, "1930 is really a great number. I have actually saved it because I often get calls from there."He was referring to the controversy that erupted in February 2025 after controversial comments by Ranveer Allahabadia on his YouTube show India's Got Latent went viral.Raina went on to praise the cyber cell for its efficiency, saying, "The Maha Cyber Cell is very active. I can tell you this for sure — whether you are in the US or India, they will catch you. They are brilliant. This is for the first time when a cyber cell officer went to a comedian's house, picked him up, and felicitated him."The comment was met with another round of applause and laughter from the audience, including the chief minister.In another video from the event, Raina was seen being felicitated by Fadnavis when he spotted a plate of biscuits kept on the chief minister's table. He picked one up and cheekily asked, "Can I take this?" Fadnavis immediately replied, "Haan, bilkul," before breaking into laughter. The room soon echoed with laughter as well.The celebrities were felicitated for their contribution to the Digital Arrest cyber-awareness short film and the 1930 Maharashtra Cyber Anthem. Fadnavis also shared pictures from the event on social media.In February 2025, an episode of Raina's India's Got Latent sparked massive controversy after Ranveer Allahabadia asked a contestant an inappropriate "would you rather" question involving their parents. The episode drew widespread backlash, with critics accusing the show of crossing the line from edgy comedy into obscenity.Multiple FIRs were subsequently filed against Raina, Allahabadia and Apoorva Makhija, among others, following which they issued public apologies. Raina also deleted all episodes of India's Got Latent from YouTube and stayed away from the public eye for a period.He eventually returned to the stage in April 2026 with his stand-up special Still Alive, before bringing back India's Got Latent for its second season in association with Netflix.

Did Amrish Puri slap Govinda for arriving nine hours late? His son Rajeev responds

For years, a story about Amrish Puri reportedly slapping Govinda after the actor turned up nine hours late for a shoot has been part of Bollywood folklore. But Amrish's son, Rajeev Puri, has now questioned the popular anecdote, saying he does not believe his father would have ever slapped anyone.Rajeev appeared on Vickey Lalwani's podcast, where he was asked about the story, often linked to Do Qaidi. According to the widely circulated account, Amrish Puri had reached the set for a 9 am shoot, while Govinda arrived only around 6 pm. Reports over the years have claimed that the long delay led to a heated confrontation and that Amrish slapped Govinda in front of the crew.

However, Rajeev said the story does not sound like the father he knew.

"I don't think that is true. He was never the type to lose his temper. He never lost his temper like that. He would raise his voice only after somebody irritated him twice or thrice, but otherwise, I don't think he would have ever slapped anyone. That is not true. I have also heard and read about it, but it is not significant enough for me to think about it. I know that Daddy would never do something like that."

Rajeev Puri on why Govinda may not have worked with Amrish againRajeev did, however, speculate that Govinda's habit of arriving late may have affected his future working relationship with Amrish. He suggested that Govinda may have realised that his father would not have been comfortable with such delays."Because of that, perhaps Govinda did not work with Daddy in the future. Maybe he understood that coming late would not work with him, and perhaps that is why he did not work with him again. But I don't think Daddy held any grudges over such things."Amrish and Govinda worked together in Do Qaidi, released in 1989. The film is also widely reported to have been their last collaboration, although different versions of the story have circulated over the years about why the two did not work together again.Govinda recently addressed his reputation for not being punctual on sets.



Speaking on a podcast with ANI, Govinda said that during the peak of his career, he was often juggling four or five shifts a day, making it difficult to reach every set on time.

"Who has the strength to do five shifts and still arrive on time? Nobody can do it. It's simply not possible for anyone. How can you manage that?"It wasn't only me who did as many shifts. Nobody forced me into doing as many shifts. People would come and insist I work with them, promising they'd somehow manage my time, but they didn't end up doing that," he added.

The actor also joked that his late arrivals benefited some of his frequent co-stars, who were paid for the days they spent on set. "I've done 43 films with Kadar Khan and 42 with Shakti Kapoor. All these people, who used to stay in flats initially, ended up buying bungalows. So, all of their homes and families have run smoothly. They all earned money at that time and advanced in their careers," he added.Govinda further said that while being punctual is important, it should not come at the cost of one's health. "It's good to come on time as long as you're healthy. But if your health isn't great, then everybody would turn into Govinda," he said, laughing.About Amrish PuriAmrish Puri built a remarkable career across theatre and films and became synonymous with some of Hindi cinema's most memorable characters.

'Ab mujhe vida karo': Amaal Mallik takes break from film music, asks fans not to pester him

Amaal Mallik has announced that he is taking a break from film music until next year. The composer and singer said on Thursday that he will not take on new film music projects until next year, saying he needs time to focus on his mind, body, health and recovery. The announcement comes after Amaal recently spoke about being sidelined by powerful people in the film and music industry and claimed that attempts were being made to create negativity around his work.Amaal, who most recently composed the prominent track "Yeh Awarapan" for Awarapan 2, shared the announcement in a note on X.He wrote, "I am all good & I will go all the way in, this time, to do what is best for me & only do what is important to my heart & for my health. Need a break for my mind, body, soul and overall physical healing. Need to rise, recuperate and bounce back soon with a heart full of melodies for you all my dearest #Amaalians ??"

"Please request you not to pester me'The singer-composer clarified that although he is putting new film music on hold, some of his previously recorded and unreleased songs could still make their way to audiences if the films they were created for eventually release."PS – No more film music till next year, old unreleased film songs will arrive soon if the films even end up releasing, as they are smaller budget movies with good intent and such people don't get screens easily so don't know the future of those projects... Please request you not to pester me any further. Will update as I get to know. Music se cinema tak ka safar mujhe bohot door le aaya hai, ab music ki taraf wapas chalne laga hoon (From music to films, the journey has taken me far and I am going towards music now)."He ended the note with, "Ab mujhe Vida Karo (bid adieu), I'll be back. Anyway signing off for a bit..." I am all good & I will go all the way in, this time, to do what is best for me & only do what is important to my heart & for my health.Amaal's decision to take a break follows several emotional posts in recent months in which he has spoken about his struggles within the industry. In May, he accused unnamed influential figures in the film and music business of sidelining him and claimed that he had been removed from nearly five dozen projects over the years.Speaking about what he described as his struggle to continue working in Bollywood, Amaal said, "I'm trying my best for the last 8 years, with utmost sincerity & obviously some respectful terms & conditions of working but sadly it doesn't work for this place. Plus my inability to hide the truth about this place and its workings irks them further and leads to pointless threats to me and family. There are some very powerful set of people that don't want me to be part of their films or any film for a matter of fact, and it's not just LABELS, it's beyond that NOW, it's a mixed syndicate of egoistic humans," the singer-composer added.All of them are playing award-worthy politics for almost 8 years now, and that's why you hear less of my music in films. I can't be part of a clout, a power setup, or be part of petty groupism. Even the NEPOTISM isn't working. SO MUJHE MAAF KARO...MERA INDIE MUSIC SUNO...IF A FILM SONG COMES GREAT, IF NOT THEN DON'T FRET."Just two days before announcing his break, Amaal had once again voiced his frustration with sections of the music and film industry, accusing unnamed people of attempting to generate negativity around him and his



work through social media. He dismissed what he described as the "competitors and HATERS" game and maintained that popularity and genuine appreciation for music cannot simply be manufactured.Amaal also claimed that a paid PR campaign had been run around his latest song "Yeh Awarapan" from Awarapan 2, saying the episode left him "angry, upset and hysterical." While he did not identify anyone, he described the phase as his "most difficult chapter".About Amaal MallikAmaal is the son of composer Daboo Malik and the nephew of music composer Anu Malik. He entered Bollywood as a composer with Salman Khan's Jai Ho in 2014, before gaining wider recognition with "Sooraj Dooba Hai" from Roy the following year.Over the years, Amaal has composed music for films including Hero, Airlift, Kapoor and Sons, MS Dhoni: The Untold Story, Kabir Singh and Vedaa. He has also sung several songs, including tracks from soundtracks he has composed himself.

Dulquer Salmaan sings 'Loser' for 'I'm Game'

Chennai: The makers of director Nahas Hidayath's eagerly awaited action entertainer 'I'm Game', featuring actor Dulquer Salmaan in the lead, on Thursday released the single 'Loser' from the film, much to the delight of fans and film buffs.The song offers audiences a playful glimpse into the world of the upcoming thriller. The track also sees Dulquer stepping into the role of a singer, lending his voice to the song and adding a personal touch to the film's musical album. The song has been set to tune by Jakes Bejoy and has lyrics by Suhail Koya.'Loser' takes a refreshing approach to the idea of being a loser, turning what is often considered a negative label into something to celebrate. The song embraces the imperfect, unconventional and chaotic side of its characters, giving the track a fun and irreverent energy.Speaking about the song, Dulquer says, "It's a song that celebrates losers."