



CWG 2026: Seema wins bronze in Women's...

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RNI Regn. No CHHENG/2011/43211

www.visionwatch.in

VOL . 15 | ISSUE . 234 RAIPUR | SATURDAY | AUGUST 01, 2026 | PAGES.10 | PRICE ₹ 3.00



India's fiscal deficit in Q1 touches 18.2 per cent...



Connect grassroots innovators with formal ecosystem...

Raashii Khanna gushes about receiving special gift from...



NEWS WATCH

Online nominations for Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2026 to close on Aug 15

New Delhi, The Ministry of Women and Child Development has extended the last date for submission of online nominations for the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar (PMRBP) from July 31 to August 15, an official said on Friday. The nomination process for the PMRBP commenced on April 1, through the National Awards Portal (https://awards.gov.in).

The awards are conferred on children who have demonstrated exceptional achievements in the fields of Bravery, Social Service, Environment, Sports, Arts and Culture, and Science and Technology, an official statement said. (P 5)

Professional criticism acceptable but not personalised mockery: IIT Kharagpur Director Suman Chakraborty

Kolkata, Amid a row over Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's "gaumutra expert" remark aimed at IIT Madras Director V. Kamakoti, another academician came to his aid. IIT Kharagpur Director Suman Chakraborty on Friday stated that "professional criticism" of any academician is welcome but he or she should not be subjected to "mockery at a personal level".

This comes a day after a group of academics and education leaders issued an open letter to Priyanka Gandhi, expressing concern over her alleged objectionable description of Professor Kamakoti and urging greater respect for scientific discourse and academic freedom in public life. Speaking to reporters, Chakraborty cautioned that one should refrain from using a serious context as a "platform for mockery". P 4

Taslima Nasrin returns to Kolkata after being forced to leave 19 years ago

Kolkata, Renowned Bangladeshi author and poet Taslima Nasrin returned to Kolkata on Friday, nearly 19 years after her departure due to the outbreak of violence in certain areas of the state capital in 2007, during the tenure of Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee in West Bengal, which was triggered by her book "Dwikhandito" (The Bifurcated).

On Saturday, she will be addressing a cultural programme at Rabindra Sadan in Central Kolkata organised by different cultural groups, one of which is "Secular Mission". Chief Minister Suvenud Adhikari is also likely to attend the same programme, said sources. She arrived at Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport in Kolkata at 12:50 p.m. (P 4)

Married daughters cannot be excluded from compassionate appointments: SC

New Delhi, The Supreme Court has ruled that a married daughter cannot be denied consideration for compassionate appointment merely because a state government policy allows such appointments only to divorced or deserted daughters, holding that such a classification is unconstitutional and violative of Article 14 of the Constitution.

A Bench of Justices M.M. Sundresh and Prasanna B. Varale allowed an appeal filed by Sayara Khatoon and her daughter against a Patna High Court order, which had upheld the rejection of the daughter's claim for compassionate appointment following the death of her father. The appellants had questioned the Bihar government's December 10, 2014 policy, under which only a divorced or deserted daughter is eligible for compassionate appointment.

The state government had also rejected the claim on the ground that the deceased employee's brother had objected to the appointment. However, the Supreme Court recorded that the



brother had earlier furnished a no-objection certificate, observing that "the said ground for rejection no longer survives". On the policy restricting compassionate appointment to divorced or deserted daughters, the Justice Sundresh-led Bench held that any distinction between sons and daughters in such matters is constitutionally impermissible.

"This Court has repeatedly held that any classification differentiating a daughter from a son is, per se, unconstitutional," the apex court said. It added that "classification restricting eligibility only to a divorced or deserted daughter cannot be sustained in the eye of law".

Rejecting the presumption underlying the Bihar government's policy, the Supreme Court observed: "There cannot be a presumption in law that, after marriage, a daughter severs her ties with her parental family and resides with her husband in her matrimonial home."

The order noted that the appellant had specifically stated that although her divorce had not been formally recognised in law, she had been living with her parental family and enjoyed the support of her mother and brother. "In any event, adopting a hyper-technical approach cannot be a ground to deny consideration of her claim for compassionate appointment," the bench said.

Setting aside the Patna High Court's order as well as the rejection of the compassionate appointment claim, the apex court directed the Bihar authorities to reconsider the appellant's case on merits. "The respondent (Bihar government) is directed to consider the case of the appellant for **contd. on page 3**

Day after filing contempt notice, Anurag Thakur calls Gandhi family 'arrogant'

New Delhi, A day after BJP MP Anurag Thakur submitted a notice to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla against Leader of Opposition and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi over his remarks in the Lower House during the debate on the anti-paper leak bill, the former remarked that the Gandhi family as well as the party is filled with "arrogance".

Thakur submitted the notice for breach of privilege and contempt of the House under Rule 222 read with Rule 223 of the Rules of Procedure in Lok Sabha. Gandhi, in his speech in the Lok Sabha, had attacked Union Home Minister Amit Shah over the alleged police crack-



down on young agitators during the July 20 Parliament march.

Speaking to reporters outside the Parliament House, Anurag Thakur said: "We have repeatedly seen that the Congress and some opposition parties never back off from insulting the Indian Army or the police. Whether it is airstrikes, surgical strikes, or Operation Sindoor, they keep raising questions and speaking the language of our foreign enemies. Unfortunately, today Congress leaders are using objectionable language inside the House and making baseless allegations that go against parliamentary rules." "Inside the House, **contd. on page 3**

K.C. Venugopal moves privilege motion against MoS Jitendra Singh for 'lying' in Parliament

New Delhi, Congress MP K.C. Venugopal on Friday initiated a privilege motion against Union Minister of State Jitendra Singh, accusing him of misleading the



Parliament while responding to Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi's attack on Union Home Minister Amit Shah over the alleged police excesses against protesters during the July 20 'Sansad Chalo' march.

The "firing" allegation by LoP Gandhi and its subsequent response were made during a debate on the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026, in the Lower House. In a post on X, Venugopal said: "Moved a Privilege Motion against MoS

Jitendra Singh for blatantly lying on the floor of Parliament and claiming that 'no firing took place' in response to the peaceful protests of our students. Referring to Rahul Gandhi's press confer-

ence which he addressed alongside a pellet gun victim, the Congress leader said: "LoP Rahul Gandhi ji met a pellet gun victim in front of the media, there are countless media reports documenting victims of such firing, and hospital records have also emerged of victims suffering from injuries from such firings."

"The Government cannot get away with such obvious falsehoods in Parliament. There should be action against the Minister," he added as the Opposition **contd. on page 3**

In call with Iranian counterpart, EAM Jaishankar raises issue of attacks on commercial shipping and seafarers

New Delhi, External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar on Friday held a telephonic conversation with Iran's Foreign Minister, Seyed Abbas Araghchi, during which he expressed India's deep concerns at the ongoing hostilities in the region.

"Had a tele-conversation with FM Araghachi of Iran this evening. Conveyed our deep concerns at the ongoing hostilities in the region. Strongly urged that attacks on commercial shipping and seafarers be avoided under any circumstance. India condemns any such attack by any party," EAM Jaishankar wrote on X. "Was apprised of Iran's per-



spective of current developments and discussions underway. India is always supportive of dialogue and diplomacy," he added. Earlier in the day, the US military released fresh details of its operations against Iran, saying American forces have redirected dozens of commercial vessels while maintaining an extensive surveillance and naval presence across the Middle East.

"As of July 30, CENTCOM forces have redirected 24 commercial vessels, disabled 2, and boarded 2 to ensure full compliance," US Central Command (CENTCOM) said, underscoring the scale of the ongoing operation. On **contd. on page 3**

Pakistan's current governance system has collapsed: Interior Minister Naqvi

Islamabad, Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has said that the country's current governance system has collapsed and is unable to resolve the issues faced by the country, local media reported on Friday.

In his address at the Pakistan Economic Summit, Naqvi called for talks among political parties to introduce reforms in the current governance system and proposed the creation of new provinces and bringing administrative reforms. "The system we are living under has collapsed. Problems cannot be solved through it," leading Pakistani daily Dawn quoted Naqvi as say-



ing. He said that Pakistan will continue to discuss the same issues even after 10 years if this system continues and stressed that a reset was important. Naqvi said that the "failed system" had continued in Pakistan for 70 years. He mentioned that Pakistan has been importing wheat despite being an agricultural nation, Dawn reported.

Naqvi's remarks come amid protests in Pakistan over the rising cost of living due to inflation and an increase in fuel prices. On Wednesday, members of the transgender community held a protest in Pakistan's Karachi against rising inflation and the recent hike in petroleum prices. They also spoke in detail about the problems faced by the transgender community in Karachi as the cost of living has increased due to the hike in prices of fuel and essential commodities.

Protesters carrying placards and shouting slogans against the government held the protest outside **contd. on page 3**

India slams crackdown on civilians in PoJK, urges intl community to hold Pakistan accountable for atrocities

New Delhi, India on Friday slammed Pakistan for launching a crackdown on peaceful civilians in Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK) and urged the international community to scrutinise Islamabad's actions holding it accountable for its atrocities.

Addressing a bi-weekly media briefing in New Delhi on Friday, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said that Pakistan's disdain for the people of PoJK was reflected in the remarks made by country's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif where he de-



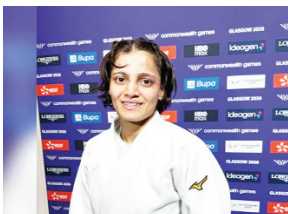
scribed protesters as "enemies" of the country. "The Pakistani establishment continues to unleash ruthless force against peaceful civilians in Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir. This crackdown has resulted in the tragic death of over 40 innocent people, and many more have been seriously injured. It's the es-

tablishment's absolute disdain for the innocent people of PoJK was laid bare when their Defence Minister branded the protesting civilians as enemies," said Jaiswal while responding to a question on the ongoing unrest in PoJK.

Khawaja Asif has defended Islamabad's brutal crackdown on peaceful protesters in PoJK, saying he considers the demonstrators as "enemies like India."

Jaiswal also referred to the recent comments made on PoJK protests by Rana Sanaullah, the Special Assistant to Pakistan's Prime **contd. on page 3**

CWG 2026: Asmita Dey wins women's 48kg judo gold, adds another title to India's tally



Glasgow, India's Asmita Dey produced a composed and determined performance to clinch the women's 48kg judo gold medal at the Commonwealth Games 2026, defeating Canada's Heidi Quach in a hard-fought final on Thursday.

In a closely contested title clash, Dey edged past Quach by 2-1, holding her nerve during the decisive

stages to seal the biggest victory of her Commonwealth Games campaign. The Indian judoka displayed excellent tactical awareness and defensive discipline to stay ahead and finish on top of the podium.

The gold medal is another significant addition to India's growing medal tally in Glasgow and underlines the country's rising stature in judo on the Commonwealth stage.

Dey had looked impressive throughout the competition, progressing confidently through the earlier rounds before delivering her **contd. on page 3**

Wrestling: Nikita Sehrawat clinches 57kg silver; Kamna and Garima bag bronze in U17 World C'ships



Baku, Azerbaijan, India's women wrestlers delivered strong podium finishes at the 2026 U17 World Championships in Baku, Azerbaijan, bringing home a silver and two bronze medals in highly competitive weight categories.

Leading the charge in the 57kg division, Nikita Sehrawat put together a brilliant campaign to reach the championship final. Facing a formidable opponent in the reigning U17 World silver medallist Epenesa Elison of the USA, Nikita fought valiantly but ultimately sustained a 0-6 defeat. She finished second on the podium, securing a well-deserved silver medal for India. In the 49kg category, Kamna Babal showcased excellent resilience to claim the bronze medal. Following a semifinal setback against Japan's **contd. on page 3**

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Lifter Lovepreet Singh settles for silver after missing gold by just 1kg in men's +110kg



Glasgow, India's Lovepreet Singh produced a valiant performance but fell agonisingly short of the gold medal, claiming silver in the men's +110kg weightlifting event at the 2026 Commonwealth Games on Thursday. Lovepreet finished with a combined lift of 388kg, just 1kg behind New Zealand's David Liti, who won gold with 389kg. England's Andrew Griffiths completed the podium with a total of 356kg.

The Indian lifter opened strongly in the snatch, successfully lifting 176kg to stay in contention for the top spot. In the clean and jerk, he cleared 205kg and 212kg before making a bold attempt at 217kg in his final lift. Although the final attempt was unsuccessful, his total of 388kg was enough to secure the silver medal. David Liti, **contd. on page 3**

Swapna Barman, India's first heptathlete to win Asiad gold medal, retires from athletics

New Delhi, Swapna Barman, India's first heptathlete to win a gold medal at the Asian Games, announced her retirement from athletics on Friday, citing the run of injuries.

The 29-year-old Arjuna awardee won the historic gold at the Jakarta 2018 Asian Games. Competing with a jaw injury, she became the first Indian to win an Asian Games heptathlon gold. "This is one of the most difficult decisions of my life. Athletics has been more than just a sport for me-it has been my identity, my passion, my dream, and a journey filled with countless sacrifices,



struggles, tears, and unforgettable memories," she wrote in an lengthy Instagram post.

"Over the years, I have faced many injuries, including a slipped disc and knee injuries. I tried to fight through the pain and keep going, but now my body is no longer supporting me the way it once did," Barman

noted in her retirement message.

Injuries and setbacks followed in the years after, but Barman kept fighting back and secured silver medals at the 2019 and 2023 Asian Championships. She also bagged a pentathlon silver at the 2023 Asian Indoor Championships.

Swapna Barman narrowly missed out on a podium at the Hangzhou 2023 Asian Games, finishing fourth - just four points short of compatriot Nandini Agasara, who claimed bronze. "This is one of the most difficult decisions of my life. Athletics has **contd. on page 3**

Connect grassroots innovators with formal ecosystem: Minister

New Delhi, Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh on Friday called for a seamless national innovation pathway to connect grassroots innovators with the formal innovation ecosystem. Addressing the 'Grassroots Innovator Recognition Ceremony 2026' at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre here, the minister honoured 26 grassroots innovators.

These innovators developed practical, affordable and community-driven solutions across agriculture, healthcare, clean energy, assistive technology, water management, circular economy and sustainable livelihoods.

The minister said that India's next wave of growth will emerge from villages, small towns and community innovators rather than only from laboratories and large cities. Dr Singh called for a seamless pathway to transform grassroots innovations into nationally scalable enterprises,



adding that innovation must move beyond recognition to scientific validation, technology translation, incubation and market adoption.

He called for stronger integration between the grassroots innovation ecosystem nurtured by AIM and the Department of Science and Technology's National Initiative for Developing and Harnessing Innovations

(NIDHI). Such convergence would provide innovators access to Technology Business Incubators, Centres of Excellence, prototype development, scientific validation, intellectual property support, product testing, certification, manufacturing partnerships, finance and market linkages.

The government has transformed innovation into a nation-

wide movement by democratising access to science, technology and entrepreneurship, he noted. Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) has expanded the innovation ecosystem beyond premier institutions and metropolitan centres, enabling talented innovators from rural, tribal, hilly, coastal, aspirational and remote regions to become active partners in India's development journey.

India currently hosts over 2.4 lakh startups, making it the world's third-largest startup ecosystem. Innovations that reduce drudgery, enhance productivity, generate livelihoods and create sustainable local enterprises, represent the true spirit of inclusive development, the minister noted. The minister noted that 25 Atal Community Innovation Centres (ACICs) are already operational, which have supported more than 2,500 grassroots innovators and another 25 in the pipeline. (agencies)

AYUSH ministry partners with IndiaAI to accelerate innovation, research

New Delhi, The Ministry of Ayush has signed a memorandum of understanding with IndiaAI, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, to accelerate AI driven innovation in the Ayush sector; strengthen research, digital health and capacity building, an official statement said on Friday.

Further, the Ministry of Ayush will onboard the AIKosh platform for sharing eligible health research artefacts, including datasets, metadata, AI models, toolkits and relevant use cases.

This integration is expected to facilitate greater collaboration, innovation and responsible development of AI solutions for the Ayush sector, the statement said.

Kavita Jain, Joint Secretary & Chief Vigilance Officer, Ministry of Ayush underscored that the integration of Artificial Intelligence with Ayush will open new avenues for evidence-based research, knowledge management

and innovation.

She added that the collaboration with IndiaAI will help leverage advanced AI capabilities across areas such as research, medicinal plants, drug administration and capacity building, making the Ayush ecosystem more technology-driven and future-ready.

Sudeep Srivastava, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), highlighted the importance of integrating modern technology with India's traditional knowledge systems.

He said that the partnership will enrich AIKosh with traditional healthcare datasets and will empower researchers and practitioners of traditional medicinal sciences through AI-enabled innovation.

Naman Goyal, OSD, Ayush Grid, noted that under its Emerging Technologies component, Ayush Grid is developing AI-driven platforms to accelerate the digital

transformation of the Ayush sector.

The collaboration marks an important step towards building a technology-enabled Ayush ecosystem by bringing together the strengths of traditional knowledge and modern AI capabilities, the statement noted.

The partnership will focus on accelerating the adoption and application of AI across key Ayush domains, including research, capacity building, medicinal plants and drug administration.

The MoU will help access to GPU-based and high-performance computing infrastructure through the IndiaAI initiative at subsidised rates, subject to defined service-level agreements.

Access to advanced computing infrastructure is expected to help address critical infrastructure requirements and support the scaling of sophisticated AI research and applications in healthcare and traditional medicine.

Indian Railways launches online excess luggage booking with ticket reservations

New Delhi, Passengers travelling by train can now book and pay for excess luggage online while reserving their tickets, as Indian Railways on Friday rolled out a new digital facility aimed at making the travel process more convenient.

The service integrates excess luggage booking with the online ticket reservation system, eliminating the need for passengers to visit parcel offices separately before boarding. Previously, travellers carrying baggage beyond the free allowance had to complete a separate booking process at railway parcel counters, often leading to additional paperwork and long queues.

The online excess luggage booking facility is available only to passengers holding confirmed tickets and is restricted to travel classes where carrying

luggage beyond the free allowance is permitted upon payment of the prescribed charges.

Passengers travelling in AC First Class, AC 2-Tier, First Class, Sleeper Class and Second Class can avail of the service. However, those travelling in AC 3-Tier and AC Chair Car will not be eligible, as the maximum permissible baggage limit in these classes is the same as the free luggage allowance. Under the existing baggage rules, AC First Class passengers are entitled to carry up to 70 kg free of charge and can carry a maximum of 150 kg after paying excess luggage charges. Passengers in AC 2-Tier and First Class are allowed 50 kg free, with a maximum permissible limit of 100 kg. Sleeper Class passengers can carry 40 kg free and up to 80 kg in total, while Second Class passen-

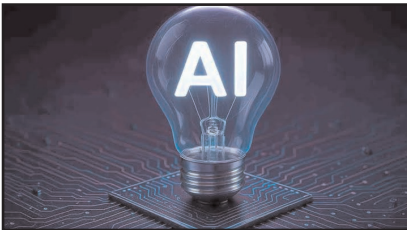
gers have a free allowance of 35 kg and a maximum limit of 70 kg. In contrast, AC 3-Tier and AC Chair Car passengers can carry up to 40 kg, which also serves as the maximum permissible limit. Indian Railways has clarified that passengers carrying baggage beyond the free allowance but within the prescribed maximum limits will be required to pay applicable excess luggage charges. Apart from weight restrictions, the Railways also enforces size limits for luggage carried inside passenger coaches.

Trunks, suitcases and boxes measuring up to 100 cm × 60 cm × 25 cm are generally permitted inside compartments. However, passengers travelling in AC 3-Tier and AC Chair Car coaches must adhere to a smaller size limit of 55 cm × 45 cm × 22.5 cm. (agencies)

AI-generated inferences to drive most privacy incidents by 2029: Report

New Delhi, Most privacy incidents will arise from AI generated inferences about individuals by 2029, rather than from direct exposure of personally identifiable information (PII), a report said on Friday. The report from Gartner, Inc said advances in generative AI and machine learning enable attackers to extract sensitive attributes such as health conditions or behavioural patterns from seemingly innocuous, anonymised or aggregated data.

As organisations reduce the amount of personal data they store due to regulatory and cost pressures, threat actors' access to AI now lets them perform inference-based attacks. "There is a fundamental shift underway from data exposure to insight exposure," said Bart Willemsen, VP Analyst at Gartner. "Organisations have historically focused on protecting raw personal data, but AI can now reconstruct deeply personal in-



sights without ever breaching traditional data controls. Privacy risks are increasingly emerging from what AI algorithms infer about individuals rather than what data is directly exposed," he added.

Inference attacks are particularly dangerous because they often evade conventional detection mechanisms, Willemsen said. "Individuals can be exposed through AI-generated conclusions rather than leaked records, creating privacy risks that undermine data integrity and

are difficult to detect, explain and mitigate," he added. The report predicted that spending on data integrity protections will reach parity with data confidentiality investments by 2028 as organisations respond to risks from inaccurate, biased or unauthorised AI generated profiles. Organisations that continue to treat privacy solely as a data protection challenge will be increasingly vulnerable to privacy incidents driven by AI-generated inferences.

The firm urged security leaders to embed AI governance into privacy programmes, adopt privacy enhancing technologies such as differential privacy and synthetic data, along with strengthening data minimisation and lifecycle controls. "Limit data collection to essential business needs and ensure strict access control and timely deletion of data to reduce the information available for inference-based attacks," it noted. (agencies)

IBM partners Sarvam to strengthen India's sovereign AI ecosystem

New Delhi, IBM and homegrown AI startup Sarvam have partnered to accelerate the development and adoption of sovereign artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in India, with a focus on government agencies, public sector organisations and regulated enterprises, according to a statement on Friday. Under the partnership, the two companies will jointly demonstrate and pilot sovereign AI technologies for use cases such as citizen services, grievance redressal, document processing and administrative workflows.

The collaboration combines IBM Sovereign Core, the company's sovereign-by-design AI software platform, with Sarvam's India-first sovereign AI stack, which includes reasoning models and multilingual language and voice AI developed and trained in India. The combined offering is designed to help organisations deploy AI while maintaining greater control over data, governance, security and compliance in line with India's regulatory and operational requirements. In addition, the initiative aims to accelerate sovereign AI adoption through innovation pilots, solution accelerators, technical advisory services and knowledge-sharing programmes.

The IBM GovTech AI Innovation Center in

Lucknow will serve as a joint incubation and demonstration hub where government departments, public sector organisations and enterprises can evaluate practical sovereign AI applications and address technical, operational and governance requirements before scaling deployments. "Sovereign AI is not simply about where AI runs. It is about giving organisations control over how AI is governed, deployed and operated," said Sriram Raghavan, General Manager, IBM Software, India and Software Innovation Lab. He said IBM Sovereign Core provides an enterprise-grade platform designed to help governments and regulated enterprises scale AI while addressing governance, security and compliance requirements.

Pratyush Kumar, Co-Founder of Sarvam, said sovereign AI must work within the systems governments and enterprises already rely on while supporting large-scale operations. "Our stack puts models, voice and language technologies on top of it, so a citizen can access a benefit or resolve a grievance in their own language, on a phone call," Kumar said. (agencies)

Favara-UPI cross-border payments go live between Maldives and India

New Delhi, The Maldives Monetary Authority has announced the successful go-live of the integration between the Maldives Instant Payment System, 'Favara', and India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI), according to a press statement issued by the Finance Ministry on Friday. The new service, which kicked in on Thursday, enables individuals in the Maldives to transfer funds using Favara to beneficiaries in India in real time. Transactions are initiated in Maldivian Rufiyaa (MVR) and credited to recipients in Indian Rupees (INR) through UPI. This marks a transformative milestone in cross-border dig-

ital financial connectivity and bilateral economic cooperation between the Maldives and India," the statement said.

The service has commenced with the participation of two local banks: Bank of Maldives Plc and Maldives Islamic Bank Plc. Customers of these banks can initiate person-to-person (P2P) transfers directly to UPI-enabled bank accounts in India using their mobile banking applications and the Favara payment rail. Permitted remittance categories include family-maintenance-related remittances under both Foreign Inward and Foreign Outward Remittance, as well as gift-related remit-

tances permitted under Foreign Outward Remittance. "The implementation reflects close collaboration between the Maldives Monetary Authority (MMA), the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL), participating financial institutions, and other stakeholders in both countries," the official statement said. The agreement for the Favara-UPI integration was executed between the NIPL and the MMA in July 2025. This was followed by an accelerated 10-day timeline for testing, certification, onboarding, and live validation, after which the corridor achieved

full operational readiness. Subsequent phases of the collaboration will introduce additional cross-border payment use cases, including QR-based merchant payments and other innovative digital payment services, further strengthening economic and financial ties between the Maldives and India, the statement said.

UPI is already accepted in nine countries -- Cambodia, Singapore, United Arab Emirates, France, Mauritius, Nepal, Bhutan, Qatar, and Sri Lanka -- enabling Indian travellers to make seamless payments abroad through UPI. (agencies)



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NOTICE OF SALE THROUGH PRIVATE TREATY

SALE OF IMMOVABLE ASSETS MORTGAGED TO HHFL UNDER THE SARFAESI ACT, 2002

READ WITH PROVISO TO RULE 8(8) AND 9(1).

The undersigned, as Authorized Officer of HHFL, has taken possession of the schedule property under Section 14(1) of the SARFAESI Act. Public at large is hereby informed that the secured property described in the Schedule is available for sale through Private Treaty/Public E-Auction, on terms agreeable to HHFL, for realization of its dues on an "AS IS WHERE IS", "AS IS WHAT IS" and "WHATEVER THERE IS" basis.

CT/CTG/BLPR/A000000628	Outstanding Amount -	Rs. 47,71,075/-	EMD Deposition Last Date -	14-08-2026
Mr. ALOK JAIN	Reserve Price -	Rs. 45,00,000/-	till 1700 hrs.	
Mr. AALESH JAIN	EMD -	Rs. 4,50,000/-	Date / Time of E-auction -	17-08-2026
			1100hrs - 1300hrs	
			Bid Increase Amount -	Rs. 10000/-

House No. 24 Dabal Print Chir Marg Ward - 26 Khasra NO 17 PHNO. 03 Kawardha, Chhattisgarh , India - 491995 Total Area - 70.36 sq. mtr.
Four Boundaries - East- Shop of Sunita Jhade, West - Road, North - Shop of Chandanmal, South - Road

Standard Terms & Conditions : 1. Sale will be conducted strictly on "AS IS WHERE IS", "AS IS WHAT IS" and "WHATEVER THERE IS" basis. 2. Purchaser must deposit 10% of the offered amount along with the application and KYC documents. This will be adjusted against the 25% deposit required upon acceptance. No interest shall be payable on the EMD. 3. On acceptance of the offer by HHFL, purchaser must deposit 25% of the sale consideration (inclusive of the initial 10%) by the next working day. 4. Balance 75% of the sale consideration must be paid within 15 days of confirmation of sale. 5. Failure to remit amounts within stipulated timelines will result in automatic forfeiture of all deposits made, including the initial 10% and the property may be resold without further notice. 6. If HHFL does not accept the offer, the initial 10% deposit will be refunded without interest. 7. For bids exceeding Rs. 50,00,000/- the successful purchaser must remit 1% TDS under Section 194-IA of the Income Tax Act. 8. The property is sold with all existing and future encumbrances, whether known or unknown to HHFL. HHFL shall not be responsible for any third-party claims, rights, or statutory dues. 9. Purchaser must conduct independent due diligence on all aspects of the property. No claims will be entertained later. 10. HHFL reserves the right to reject any offer or cancel the auction without assigning reasons. 11. Auction/bidding shall only be through "online electronic mode" through the website www.bankauctions.com Or Auction provided by the service provider M/S C1 India Pvt. Ltd., 12. The bidders may participate from their place of choice through online portal. Secured Creditor/service provider shall not be held responsible for the any internet connectivity issue. 13. For any details on a-auction prospective bidders may contact the Service Provider M/S C1 India Pvt. Ltd., Plot No- 68, 3rd floor Sector 44 Gurgaon Haryana -122003 (Contact no. 7291981124,25,26) Support Email - Support@bankauctions.com, Mr. Mithlesh Kumar, Mob. +91 70808 04466. Email: delhi@c1india.com and support@bankauctions.com 14. For participating in the e-auction sale, the intending bidders should register their name at www.bankauctions.com well in advance and shall get the user ID and password. The intending bidders are advised to change only the password immediately upon receiving it from the service provider. 15. For participating in e-auction, intending bidders have to deposit a refundable Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) i.e. 10% OF RESERVE PRICE (as mentioned above) shall be payable by interested bidders through Demand Draft/NEFT/RTGS in favour of "Hinduja Housing Finance Limited". 16. Interested parties may contact the Authorized Officer Vaidhava Shrivastava - 9755225338, Sachin Bhalekar - 8779984037, Dharamveer Yadav - 82694 20174 for details and submit Offer, EMD along with KYC documents on or before 14-08-2026 at 5.00 p.m. 17. Successful auction Purchaser shall bear all stamp duty, registration fees, taxes and other statutory expenses related to the mortgaged property. The Borrowers/Mortgagors' right of redemption under Section 13(8) of the SARFAESI Act stands extinguished upon the date of publication of this notice as per the latest judicial mandates. 19. Sale shall be conducted in accordance with the provisions of the SARFAESI Act and Rules.

Date- 01-08-2026

Authorised Officer



बैंक ऑफ महाराष्ट्र
Bank of Maharashtra
भारत सरकार का उपक्रम

JABALPUR ZONAL OFFICE, WRIGHT TOWN,
JABALPUR PH: 0761-2480065,67,68

PUBLIC NOTICE FOR SALE

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower/s and Guarantor/s that the below described immovable properties mortgaged/charged to the Bank of Maharashtra, the possession of which have been taken by the Authorised Officer of Bank of Maharashtra, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" & "WITHOUT RECOURSE BASIS" on **18.08.2026**, for recovery of the balance due to the Bank of Maharashtra from the Borrower (s) and Guarantor(s) as mentioned in the table. Details of the Borrower/s and Guarantor/s, amount due, Short description of the immovable property and encumbrances known thereon, possession type, reserve price and the earnest money deposit are also given as under-

Name & Address of Borrower / Guarantor	Outstanding Dues for Recovery of which Property are being sold	Description of properties	Type of Possession	Reserve Price EMD Amount Bid Increase Amount
1) Branch - Asset Recovery Branch Borrower: M/s. BAKD Steel Pvt. Ltd. Directors: (1)Mr. Ganesh Parida s/o Mr. Raghunath Parida (2)Mrs. Ratnaprabha Parida w/o Mr. Ganesh Parida Address: Near Bhanpuri Sub- Station, Ward No. 19, Urkura, Raipur (C.G.) 493221 Guarantor: (1) Mr. Ganesh Parida s/o Mr. Raghunath Parida (2) Mrs. Ratnaprabha Parida w/o Mr. Ganesh Parida (3) Mr. Kartikchandra Parida s/o Mr. Raghunath Parida (4) Mr. Sankarshan Parida s/o Mr. Balram Parida. Village- Birgaon, Raipur (C.G.) 493221	Rs.3,53,78,712.78/- (Rupees Three Crore Fifty three Lakh seventy Eight Thousand Seven Hundred twelve rupees and Seventy eight paise only) (Ledger Bal: Rs. 3,53,78,712.78/- + unapplied interest of Rs.28,96,121/- upto 15/08/2023 + penal interest @ 2.00% p.a. other expenses w.e.f. 16.08.2023 + penal interest and other charges / expenses	(A) Diverted Plot bearing Kh. No 84/128, PH. No. 108/40, Area admeasuring 3200 Sq. feet located at Village – Urkura, ward no. 19, (Madhav Rao Sapre ward) RIC – Raipur, Tehsil & Distt- Raipur (C.G.) in the Name of Mr. Sankarshan Parida s/o Mr. Balram Parida (B) Diverted Plot bearing Kh. No 84/127, PH. No. 108/40, Area admeasuring 3100 Sq. feet located at Village – Urkura, ward no. 19, (Madhav Rao Sapre ward) RIC – Raipur, Tehsil & Distt- Raipur (C.G.) in the Name of Mr. Kartikchandra Parida s/o Mr. Raghunath Parida Note – The sale is subject to order/outcome of S.A. No. 1149/2023	Symbolic	Rs.9360000/- EMD: Rs. 936000/- Bid: Rs. 10000/-
2) Branch - Asset Recovery Branch, Jabalpur (1) Shubhankar Marketing Pvt. Ltd. Address: C/o Ashirvad traders, 76/3, Nehru Nagar (East), Opposite to Shivaji Square, Bhilai, Distt Durg (C.G.) Directors: 1) Abhilash Joshi s/o Manohar Joshi 2) Manohar Joshi (Deceased) Guarantor: 1) Abhilash Joshi s/o Manohar Joshi Address: B/52, Phase 2 Surya Vihar Colony, Near TI Mall, Junawani, Bhilai Distt Durg (C.G.) 2)Smt. Sudha Joshi; Address: HIG 153, Padmanbhpur, Durg (C.G.) 491001 3) Subodh Joshi; Address: HIG 153, Padmanbhpur, Durg (C.G.) 491001 4) Sudhir Joshi; Address: HIG 153, Padmanbhpur, Durg (C.G.) 491001 5) Vardha Joshi Address: HIG 153, Padmanbhpur, Durg (C.G.) 491001	Rs.63,05,781/- (Rupees Sixty three lakhs five thousand seven hundred and eighty one only) + unapplied interest and penal interest + other charges / expenses w.e.f. 01.01.2021.	Flat no-37-E, Kh.No.13472,PH.No.16, Second Floor, Ayodhya Apartment, Ward no.24, Deepak Nagar, Durg, R.N.M Durg-1, Tehsil & Dist: Durg	Physical	Rs.2070000/- EMD: Rs.207000/- Bid: Rs. 10000/-

Inspection of Properties by bidder: 13.08.2026 & 14.08.2026 between 11:00 am. and 4:00 pm

Last Date & Time for Submission of Bid application/KYC documents/EMD etc. 18.08.2026 up to 11.00 a.m.

Date & time of E-auction with auto extension for 10 minutes- 18.08.2026 between 12.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m.

The auction sale will be On-line E-Auction / Bidding through website <https://baanknet.com>, email: support.baanknet@psballiance.com. Mob. - 8291220220 The intending Bidders / Purchasers are requested to register on portal using their mobile number and email id. Please take note that the registration and KYC approval etc take 2-3 working days. For detail terms and conditions of sale please refer to the link provided in <https://bankofmaharashtra.bank.in/asset-for-sales-search> and <https://baanknet.com>. Also prospective bidders may contact the authorized officials **Contact details: Shri Onkar Kumar (Zonal Manager) - 9823296164, Shri Nikhil S Patil (DZM) - 7387211200, Shri Bhushan Mohite (CM Recovery - Z.O.) - 9923257090, Dr. Ravikumar Verma (Sr. Manager) (9300955688) & Shri Hariom Trivedi (CM & Authorised Officer) - 9405719723**

Note - The sales are subject to the order/outcome of any case pending/ filed if any before Court/Tribunal

Date: 01/08/2026

Sale Notice to Borrower/Guarantors/Legal Heirs(LR's)/Coparceners

The above shall be treated as Notice of 15days u/r 9(1) of security Interest (Enforcement) Rule, 2002

Authorised Officer, Bank of Maharashtra

Chhattisgarh CM seeks Arunachal-style road connectivity norms for Bastar under PMGSY-IV

Raipur, (VW) Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai met Union Minister for Rural Development and Agriculture Shivraj Singh Chouhan in New Delhi on Friday and urged the Centre to adopt the "Arunachal Pradesh model" under PMGSY-IV to accelerate road construction across inaccessible regions of Bastar division.

Submitting a formal proposal, the Chief Minister requested a special relaxation under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY-IV) to group habitations within a 10-kilometre radius in Bastar as a

single cluster, replacing the existing 500-metre rule. Sai explained that small, isolated villages located in dense forests and hilly terrain currently remain outside the scope of all-weather road coverage due to rigid population and distance criteria. Adopting the Arunachal Pradesh cluster model would allow hundreds of remote tribal hamlets to be connected.

The Chief Minister highlighted that Bastar is rapidly moving away from Left-Wing



Extremism and noted that rural road infrastructure is essential for delivering healthcare, education, agricultural support, and welfare schemes to isolated communities. Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan assured the state delegation of positive consideration, stating that the Central government remains committed to expanding basic infrastructure in remote tribal belts. During the meeting, Chhattisgarh Deputy Chief

Minister Vijay Sharma briefed the Union Minister on ongoing rural infrastructure and development projects being executed across the Bastar region. Chouhan commended Chhattisgarh's execution of rural schemes, noting that the state's progress under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - constructing nearly 1,500 houses daily - represents a major benchmark in welfare delivery.

Union Rural Development Secretary Shailesh Kumar Singh and Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister Subodh Singh were also present at the meeting.

Chhattisgarh CM seeks early push for ₹3,500-cr Bastar line, 5 key rail links

Raipur, (VW) Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai has urged Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw to fast-track five strategic railway projects worth ₹3,500 crore in the state, prioritising links connecting the tribal-dominated Bastar and Sarguja divisions. The Chief Minister met Vaishnaw at Rail Bhavan in New Delhi on Wednesday, accompanied by Union Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs Tokhan Sahu and Rajnandgaon MP Santosh Pandey. Sai submitted a detailed proposal to expand the state's rail network, accelerate mineral logistics, and boost trade across remote districts.

Sai called for expediting the 295-km Katghora-Dongargarh railway line, being executed jointly by the Centre and the state through a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV). The line will pass through Kartala, Mungeli, Kawardha, and Khairagarh, introducing rail connectivity to underserved tribal areas. Reviewing the 140-km Raoghat-Jagdaldpur line, the Chief Minister informed the Railway Ministry that land acquisition has been

completed. He requested the immediate award of construction tenders to strengthen Bastar's rail infrastructure.

Sai also sought early Central approvals for three major rail corridors aimed at unlocking northern Chhattisgarh's industrial potential: Sardega-Pathalgaon-Ambikapur line: 244 km, Dharamjagadh-Pathalgaon-Lohardaga line: 301 km, Ambikapur-Barwadih line: 200 km.

These routes will streamline coal and mineral freight movement, boost ecotourism, and create job opportunities across the Sarguja division, the Chief Minister added. The delegation also discussed ongoing feasibility surveys for two cross-border corridors - the 180-km Kirandul-Kothagudem line and the 490-km Gadchiroli-Bijapur-Kirandul (Bachel) route. Sai urged early completion of the surveys, emphasizing that better rail access supports local development and internal security operations in Bastar. Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw assured the state delegation that the proposals would be evaluated on priority to accelerate execution.

Chhattisgarh seeks Central nod for 2,305 mobile towers in remote areas

Raipur, (VW) Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Friday met Union Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia in New Delhi and sought early Central approval for 2,305 new mobile towers under the Digital Bharat Nidhi (DBN) scheme to strengthen telecom connectivity across remote and tribal belts. During the meeting at Sanchar Bhawan, the Chief Minister submitted a proposal emphasizing that robust digital infrastructure in geographically challenging regions was vital for education, healthcare, banking, and welfare service delivery.

Sai also expressed gratitude to the Centre for approving 577 additional mobile towers for Naxal-affected areas, stating that improved communication would integrate isolated regions like Bastar into

the digital mainstream. The Chief Minister informed the Union Minister that state district administrations are expediting ground clearances. Land No Objection Certificates (NOCs) have already been issued to Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) for 489 of the 577 approved sites, with the remaining 88 clearances in final stages.

BSNL has commenced installation at cleared sites, with state departments coordinating closely to prevent project delays. Sai added that digital networks are being expanded alongside roads, electricity, and health services in remote pockets, helping local youth access online learning, enabling telemedicine consultations, and allowing farmers real-time access to market prices and weather updates.

Bhanupratappur police book Gautam Hospital head over deaths of woman, newborn

Bhanupratappur, (VW) Bhanupratappur police have registered a First Information Report (FIR) against Dr Anil Gautam, manager of Gautam Hospital, nearly two-and-a-half months after a pregnant woman and her newborn baby died during treatment at the private facility in Kanker district.

The legal action follows a formal complaint lodged by the deceased

woman's husband and the conclusions of a preliminary probe into alleged medical negligence during delivery on 17 May.

The dual deaths on 17 May triggered widespread outrage among family members and local residents, who staged protests accusing the hospital administration of gross medical malpractice and demanding criminal proceedings against the attending

Chhattisgarh seeks ₹435-cr Central aid to electrify 461 Bastar villages

Raipur, (VW) Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai met Union Minister for Tribal Affairs Jugal Oram in New Delhi on Friday and sought ₹435 crore in special Central assistance to extend grid electricity to 461 remote, formerly Naxal-affected villages across Bastar division.

Submitting a detailed roadmap under the Dharti Aaba Gram Utkarsh Yojana, the

Chief Minister stated that bringing grid power to tribal pockets where development was halted for decades due to Left-Wing Extremism remains the state government's top priority.

Sai informed the Union Minister that the total electrification project carries an outlay of ₹973 crore. The state has requested ₹435 crore in Central support spread over three financial years - ₹85

crore in 2026-27, ₹250 crore in 2027-28, and ₹100 crore in 2028-29 - with the state funding the remaining balance.

The Chief Minister urged Oram to accord special approval under Article 275(1) of the Constitution, noting that reliable power supply would transform education, healthcare, and local micro-enterprises across seven districts in Bastar.

Union Minister Jugal

Oram assured the Chief Minister that the proposal would be processed on priority under the Dharti Aaba Gram Utkarsh Yojana, promising full Central funding and support for the initiative.

Sai added that grid expansion across these 461 isolated villages marks a major milestone in accelerating Bastar's socio-economic transition into the development mainstream.

Chhattisgarh High Court rejects NEET-UG candidate's OMR tampering plea

Bilaspur, (VW) The Chhattisgarh High Court has dismissed a writ petition filed by a NEET-UG 2026 candidate alleging manipulation of his OMR answer sheet, holding that judicial interference in national-level examinations cannot be based on suspicion without credible evidence.

A Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Ramesh Sinha and Justice Ravindra Kumar Agrawal refused to grant relief to the petitioner, describing the plea as lacking substantive proof. The petition was filed through a minor candidate from Bhilai in Durg district who appeared for the NEET-UG 2026 examination held on 21 June. The student alleged that while the roll number and signature on the scanned OMR sheet released by the National

Testing Agency (NTA) were his, the marked responses did not match what he had filled during the test.

The petitioner claimed that based on the official answer key, he should have secured over 600 marks instead of the 200 marks awarded by the NTA. He sought directions from the High Court to summon the original OMR sheet and re-evaluate his score.

Opposing the plea, the NTA argued that the candidate approached the High Court directly under Article 226 without using the agency's official grievance redressal mechanism. The NTA also cited the High Court's earlier ruling in the Amisha Gupta vs Union of India case, which established that allegations of OMR tampering must be backed by con-

crete evidence. The Division Bench observed that the petitioner's claims rested entirely on self-prepared comparative charts and personal apprehensions. The court noted that no independent or objective evidence was submitted to substantiate the tampering allegations.

The court held that unwarranted judicial interference based on mere suspicion would undermine the sanctity and credibility of standardized national examinations. It also clarified that an interim order of the Bombay High Court cited by the petitioner did not constitute a binding legal precedent. Finding no procedural irregularity or arbitrariness in the evaluation process conducted by the NTA, the Division Bench dismissed the writ petition.

Married daughters ...

compassionate appointment on merits within a period of eight weeks from the date of receipt of a copy of this order;" it ordered. (agencies)

Chhattisgarh CM ...

individuals have undergone medical screenings. Tertiary medical infrastructure is being built rapidly, anchored by a new medical college in Geedam and specialized clinical facilities in Jagdaldpur.

Transport infrastructure projects are accelerating regional transformation, led by the ₹3,513-crore Jagdaldpur-Raoghat railway line, expanded regional air routes, and the final stretch of the Raipur-Visakhapatnam Expressway. Additionally, the proposed Indravati barrage is set to bring around 32,000 hectares of agricultural land under assured irrigation.

The state is simultaneously positioning Bastar Dussehra as a global cultural brand while safeguarding indigenous heritage. Youth engagement has received a massive push, evidenced by over four lakh participants competing in the recent Bastar Olympics.

On the economic front, Chhattisgarh has attracted investment proposals valued at nearly ₹8 lakh crore under its Industrial Development Policy 2024-30. Capital flows are targeting frontier sectors including AI data centres, semiconductors, electronics, global BPOs, apparel manufacturing, and medical technology.

Sai attributed this momentum to regulatory reforms under the Chhattisgarh Ease of Doing Business Act, 2026, which earned the state the top spot in NITI Aayog's Investment Friendliness Index. On women's empowerment, 10,42 lakh women have achieved "Lakhpati Didi" status, with targets set to empower an additional 14 lakh women.

Concluding the meeting, the Chief Minister invited Prime Minister Modi to attend the proposed Lakhpati Didi Conference in Raipur in 2027. He also outlined Chhattisgarh's ₹500-crore AI Mission, digital service delivery through the Seva Setu portal, and strengthened fiscal management, expressing confidence in full central support for Chhattisgarh's growth trajectory.

Day after ...

Rahul Gandhi makes false allegations against the country's Home Minister. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra calls the media

'paaltu' inside the House, and outside, Rahul Gandhi calls the media 'BJP wale' and questions the country's police," he remarked.

Adding to the criticism, the BJP MP said: "This family and the party (Congress) are filled with arrogance. Despite staying out of power for 12 years, they raise questions and insult constitutional establishments, raise questions over the Lok Sabha Speaker, use unparliamentary language inside the House...this style of working reflects that this family is arrogant due to which the party has to suffer."

BJP MP Manoj Tiwari echoed a similar view, saying, "Rahul Gandhi and Kharge sahab (Rajya Sabha LOP Mallikarjun Kharge) used such words while opposing this Bill (in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha respectively). They may not say it, but even the Congress MPs know that Rahul Gandhi has become a destroyer of the party."

"The allegations made by both of them against the Home Minister and the use of abusive language will never be forgiven by the people of the country," he added.

However, Congress MP Tariq Anwar came in defence of Rahul Gandhi.

"This is nothing but sycophancy. Rahul Gandhi did not say anything inappropriate. It is the Home Minister's responsibility to oversee the country's law and order. Whatever happened on July 20 was witnessed by everyone and people have condemned it," he told IANS. (agencies)

K.C. Venugopal ...

stepped up its attack on the Centre.

Later, while speaking to reporters outside the Parliament House, Venugopal said: "The privilege motion is very clear: While replying in the Lok Sabha, MoS Jitendra Singh said that there was no firing...the pictures were available on social media. Our Leader of Opposition has already presented clear evidence of a boy having pellet gun injuries. How can a Minister mislead the House like this?"

"Students as well as the entire nation know about it; however, he (Jitendra Singh) denied that such a thing took place. I moved a privilege motion because of this misleading statement," he asserted.

Venugopal's move comes a day after BJP MP Anurag Thakur submitted a notice to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla against Rahul Gandhi over his remarks in the Lower House during the debate on the anti-paper leak bill.

The notice for breach of privilege and

Contd. from page 1

contempt of the House was filed by Thakur under Rule 222 read with Rule 223 of the Rules of Procedure in Lok Sabha. (agencies)

In call ...

Wednesday, the United States launched a new wave of military strikes against Iran in retaliation for what American officials described as an attempted Iranian attack on US forces in the Middle East, marking another sharp escalation in the months-long conflict.

The strikes came less than 24 hours after Iran launched ballistic missiles targeting US military positions in Jordan, an attack that US officials said was thwarted by air defences. President Donald Trump had earlier vowed a forceful response, saying the United States would hit Iran "very hard" following the attempted attack.

CENTCOM did not immediately disclose the locations or scope of the latest strikes inside Iran.

Reports from Iranian state media, however, said explosions were heard in several southern provinces, including Hormozgan and Khuzestan, with strikes reported near oil infrastructure and on islands in the Persian Gulf. (agencies)

Pakistan's current ...

Karachi Press Club and urged the government led by Shehbaz Sharif to reduce the price of essential commodities and fuel. The protesters warned that continued inaction would increase problems for the vulnerable section of society, leading Pakistani daily The Express Tribune reported.

Addressing the protesters, Gender Interactive Alliance spokesperson Zehrish Somroo said that the community was holding a protest as inflation continued to erode the livelihoods of people. The spokesperson urged the Pakistani government to provide employment, education and equal opportunities to transgender community and not let inflation impact the charity and donations that many of the community members rely on for survival.

Last month, leaders of the All Government Employees Grand Alliance (AGEGA) Punjab said that the rising inflation in Pakistan has reduced the purchasing power of government employees and they were facing problems in managing household expenses due to their limited in-

come.

In a joint statement, AGEGA leadership stated that provincial government employees, especially those in Punjab and other provinces, have not yet received the 30 per cent disparity allowance announced in the Federal Budget 2025-26, The Express Tribune reported.

They stated that the Punjab government's recent amendments to leave encashment rules have deprived employees of substantial leave encashment benefits, which they receive after retirement. The alliance alleged that retired and serving employees of Punjab are facing reductions in pension, gratuity and leave encashment benefits. (agencies)

India slams ...

Minister on political affairs, where he openly admitted about Pakistan's support to anti-India terror groups.

"Adding to this, the Special Assistant of the Prime Minister on Political Affairs openly admitted that the very 'mujahideen' that Pakistani establishment trained, funded, armed and sent to India have now turned their guns inward, weaponising themselves against the state. The so-called elections stand as a humiliating rejection of the Pakistani establishment. Facing a violent regime, the people there have requested international organisations for an independent investigation into the unlawful killings. We urge that the international community should scrutinise Pakistan's actions and hold it accountable for its atrocities."

Over 40 people have been killed and hundreds critically injured during the ongoing protests and the long march organised by the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) in PoK.

Several videos posted on various social media handles, including that of the JAAC, have showed the brutality of Pakistani forces.

On Thursday, videos shared on social media showed women protesters running desperately to save their lives as local police unleashed tear and opened fire on a peaceful protest rally in PoK's Kotli.

Dozens of civilians have been killed and hundreds injured during the ongoing protests in the region, including Rawalakot, Mirpur, and other areas of the occupied territory.

Expressing grave concern, local groups

have said that more than 100 people have been killed since June 5, several hundred have been critically injured, and hundreds have reportedly been subjected to enforced disappearance by the Pakistani security forces. (agencies)

Swapna Barman, ...

been more than just a sport for me - it has been my identity, my passion, my dream." Walking away from something you have loved your entire life is never easy. My heart still wants to compete, to jump, and to chase my dreams, but I have to accept that this chapter of my life has come to an end. I am forever grateful to everyone who stood by me throughout this incredible journey," she wrote.

Swapna Barman first announced herself as a force in Indian athletics in 2017 when she claimed the heptathlon gold at the Asian Athletics Championships in Bhubaneswar. Her last competitive outing was at the 2025 National Open Athletics Championships in Bengaluru, where she secured third place.

"I leave athletics with a heart full of gratitude and memories that I will cherish forever. Being an Asian Games gold medalist and an Arjuna Awardee is an honour that I will always carry with immense pride," Swapna signed off. (agencies)

CWG 2026: Asmita Dey ...

best performance in the final. Against an experienced Quach, the Indian maintained her composure under pressure and capitalised on crucial scoring opportunities to secure victory. With the triumph, Asmita Dey etched her name among India's Commonwealth Games gold medalists, providing another memorable moment for the Indian contingent in Glasgow.

The victory also reflects the steady progress of Indian judo, with Dey's success expected to inspire the next generation of athletes aiming for international honours.

Wrestling: Nikita ...

Saika Uchida, Kamna bounced back in the third-place play-off against Russia's Irina Tsydeeva. In a tense and closely fought bout, the Indian grappler edged out her opponent with a 3-2 victory to secure her spot on the podium.

Adding to the nation's tally, Garima delivered a dominant performance in the 73kg bronze medal match. After a narrow 5-7 loss to USA's Kaili Manuel in the semifinals, the former U15 Asian Champion re-

from a panel of medical experts.

The incident has sparked fresh debates regarding regulatory oversight, patient safety standards, and accountability mechanisms across private healthcare facilities in the Bastar division. Police reiterated that the investigation remains open and further charges may be framed as additional evidence emerges.

grouped effectively. She completely outclassed Spain's Paula Benaixa Perez, registering a flawless 10-0 victory by technical superiority (VSU) to win the bronze.

Earlier, in the 60kg Greco-Roman category at the U17 World Championships in Baku, India's Darpan Raju Chaudhari kept his campaign alive by securing a hard-fought 5-3 victory (VPO1) over Greece's Pavlos Tsentidis in the repechage round.

Consolidated results:

57kg: Nikita Sehrawat (India) vs. Epenesa Elison (USA); 0-6

49kg: Kamna Babal (India) vs. Irina Tsydeeva (Russia); 3-2

73kg: Garima (India) vs. Paula Benaixa Perez (Spain); 10-0, VSU.

Lifter Lovepreet ...

who had lifted 166kg in the snatch, produced a decisive 223kg clean and jerk to edge ahead of Lovepreet by the narrowest possible margin and clinch the Commonwealth title.

Despite the heartbreak of missing gold by just one kilogram, Lovepreet's performance added another medal to India's tally in Glasgow and highlighted his consistency on the biggest stage. His silver medal was the result of a composed display under pressure, with the Indian heavyweight pushing the eventual champion until the very end. The medal further strengthened India's impressive campaign in weightlifting at the Commonwealth Games, where the country's lifters have once again emerged among the leading performers. Born on September 6, 1997, in Bal Sachandar village, Amritsar, Punjab, Lovepreet Singh comes from a humble family. Inspired by local weightlifters, he began weightlifting in 2010 at the age of 13 under the guidance of local coaches. Despite financial hardships, his determination and disciplined training helped him progress steadily through the junior and senior ranks.

Lovepreet represented Punjab in national competitions before joining the Sports Authority of India (SAI) National Camp at NS NIS Patiala in 2017. He initially competed in the 105 kg category, winning medals at the Junior Commonwealth and Asian Junior Championships. After the introduction of new IWF weight categories, he moved to the 109 kg category, where he won bronze at the 2022 Commonwealth Games and gold at the 2022 Commonwealth Weightlifting Championships. (agencies)

Professional criticism acceptable but not personalised mockery: IIT Kharagpur Director Suman Chakraborty

Kolkata, Amid a row over Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's 'gaumutra expert' remark aimed at IIT Madras Director V. Kamakoti, another academician came to his aid. IIT Kharagpur Director Suman Chakraborty on Friday stated that "professional criticism" of any academician is welcome but he or she should not be subjected to "mockery at a personal level".

This comes a day after a group of academics and education leaders issued an open letter to Priyanka Gandhi, expressing concern over her alleged objectionable description of Professor Kamakoti and urging greater respect for scientific discourse and academic freedom in public life.

Speaking to reporters, Chakraborty cautioned that one should refrain from using a serious context as a 'platform for mockery'.

"...More so on an individual because individual attack is not desirable. So, I think that, you know, that the dignity of the individual, it is not just about Professor Kamakoti or any other professor, though personally, I admire his academic accolades...but it is a question of getting out of these personalised mockery based approach," he said.

"If there is a criticism, which is possible in a democracy, it should be a professional approach of criticising based on the context. For example, they may have an academic viewpoint which may be criticized by some others who may have a different academic viewpoint. It is very important and healthy in a democracy. But let there not be such kind of personalised mockery," he added.

Emphasising that academics and research are always kept separate from political ideology, the IIT Kharagpur Director said: "I have not come across any top academicians who have succumbed to purely political viewpoint of any association. Anyone can have personal support for any political party but let that not interfere with our profession. That sanctity is protected by all the top academicians, whom we have known."

In an address to politicians, Chakraborty said: "People from politics are most welcome to express their opinion because they actually have the pulse of the nation and are therefore important. But when they are giving their viewpoint, it should not be mixed with their personal opinion."

"My only appeal is that personalised comments, which can be derogatory or humiliating, should not be made on a respected academician, whoever that is," he underlined.(agencies)

CPI(M)'s free speech paradox comes home to roost

Thiruvananthapuram, The Communist Party of India (Marxist), which rarely misses an opportunity to lecture governments across the world on freedom of expression, appears to have discovered that the principle has an invisible footnote, provided it does not make the party uncomfortable. In the latest fallout of the now infamous 'Kallan Vijayan' episode, senior journalist K.R. Ajayan, one of the most respected editorial hands in the CPI(M)-owned Deshabhimani, has reportedly been given a stark choice - resign or proceed on long leave.

The oral direction, reportedly conveyed by Chief Editor Dineshen Puthelathu on the last working day of July, marks the culmination of an episode that has embarrassed the party far more than the headline it sought to suppress. Puthelathu in the past was the political secretary to the then Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan from 2016-22. The controversy began with a feature in Deshabhimani's weekend supplement commemorating the first death anniversary of veteran Communist leader V.S. Achuthanandan. On the back page was a profile of veteran theatre artiste Vijayan under the headline, "Kallan Vijayan, Dhanya Na d a k a g r a m a m, Muthathippara P.O."

The headline referred to a theatre personality affectionately known as "Kallan (thief)" because of a celebrated stage role. Yet somewhere inside the editorial establishment, alarm bells rang. What if political opponents or social media interpreted "Kallan Vijayan" differently? The presses were stopped. The printed supplement was withdrawn before circulation. When it finally appeared a day later, the offending article had quietly disappeared. Ironically, the only thing the party succeeded in doing was ensuring that a headline which might have otherwise passed unnoticed became one of Kerala's biggest media stories.



capital to championing freedom of artistic and literary expression, the CPI(M) has consistently projected itself as the custodian of civil liberties. Its leaders are often among the first to issue statements whenever a book is withdrawn, a film is censored or a journalist is silenced elsewhere. But within its own newspaper, a headline that violated no law, invited no judicial restraint and contained no defamatory content was deemed too risky because of how it might be interpreted.

The irony is difficult to miss. Even more intriguing is the role of Resident Editor M. Swaraj, who reportedly initiated disciplinary proceedings against Ajayan.

Swaraj himself is no stranger to controversy. During the bitter factional battle between V.S. Achuthanandan and Pinarayi Vijayan, he had courted criticism by remarking that it was time V.S. was given 'capital punishment' politically - a statement that many within the party considered excessive. Years later, Swaraj finds himself presiding over disciplinary action against an editor over a headline whose greatest offence was that it required imagination to become controversial.

The 'Kallan Vijayan' saga also illustrates what communication experts often call the Streisand Effect - the harder one tries to suppress something, the more public attention it attracts. A feature on a theatre artist has now become a case study in editorial censorship, internal party discipline and political hypersensitivity. In the end, the theatre artiste called 'Kallan Vijayan' escaped unscathed.

The journalist who wrote the article stood by it. The editor who allowed it believed it deserved to remain in print. The only casualty was the newspaper's claim to editorial independence. For a party that frequently asks governments to trust journalists, it has shown remarkably little trust in its own. And perhaps that is the real headline.(agencies)

Taslima Nasrin returns to Kolkata after being forced to leave 19 years ago

Kolkata, Renowned Bangladeshi author and poet Taslima Nasrin returned to Kolkata on Friday, nearly 19 years after her departure due to the outbreak of violence in certain areas of the state capital in 2007, during the tenure of B u d d h a d e b Bhattacharjee in West Bengal, which was triggered by her book "Dwikhandito" (The Bifurcated).

On Saturday, she will be addressing a cultural programme at Rabindra Sadan in Central Kolkata organised by different cultural groups, one of which is "Secular Mission". Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari is also likely to attend the same programme, said sources.



She arrived at Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport in Kolkata at 12:50 p.m. Nasrin received a grand welcome with the sound of conch shells. "I feel so good to come here again," said a visibly overwhelmed Nasrin. Considering the safety and security of Nasrin is an issue, the state police administration has assured watertight security for her during her stay in the state.

In 2007, pockets in Kolkata turned into virtual battlefields over the publication of Nasrin's novel "Dwikhandito" (The Bifurcated). Tensions broke out in minority-dominated areas in the city. The situation became so heated that the administration had to deploy the Army. The then West Bengal Chief Minister B u d d h a d e b Bhattacharjee-led Left Front government even banned the circulation of the book in the state. The Bangladeshi writer was even asked to leave Kolkata.

Later, this unwritten ban on Nasrin remained in force even during the Trinamool Congress government from 2011 to 2016. The then CPI(M) led Left Front government in West Bengal faced strong criticism from literary circles nationally, who questioned why a Communist state government that always boasted of practising and protecting secularism had to succumb to the pressure from fundamentalist groups and force Nasrin to leave the state.

Even during the last 15 years of the Trinamool Congress regime in the state - 2011 to 2026 -- the previous Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee did not take any initiative to ensure Nasrin's return to Kolkata.(agencies)

Akali Dal submits memo to Punjab Govt; seeks CBI probe into 10 exam leaks

Chandigarh, The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) on Friday appealed to Punjab Governor Gulab Chand Kataria to intervene and order a high-level judicial probe into the alleged lathi-charge on Scheduled Caste women and sanitation workers in Barnala, besides ordering a CBI probe into the alleged 10 examination paper leaks in the state.

A delegation of senior party leaders led by its President Sukhbir Badal met the Governor and presented two memos to him, urging him to safeguard democracy by taking exemplary action against police officials who had allegedly committed brutality against the sanitation workers in Barnala town, besides securing the future of 10 lakh students who had been adversely affected by repeated paper leaks. Giving details of the memos to the media, Badal said the party delegation had requested the Governor to institute a judicial probe headed by a retired or sitting judge of the Punjab and Haryana High Court into the Barnala incident. "We apprised the Governor that



the police was being used as goons of the AAP government and had been given directions to suppress all democratic protests ruthlessly," he alleged.

"Accordingly we have demanded that an attempt to murder case should be registered against Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Satvir Singh Bains and all other police officials who had hit women and men sanitation workers on their heads with lathis. These officials should also be dismissed from service," he said. Badal also claimed that adequate compensation and proper medical treatment was not being provided to the injured sanitation workers. He called for initiation of a genuine dialogue with the sanitation workers and an early resolution to their genuine and long-pending demands.

The SAD delegation also briefed the Governor regarding the 10 paper leaks and alleged irregularities in government recruitments. It informed the Governor that an impression had gained ground that the examination leaks were occurring in consultation with senior functionaries in the Punjab government and that this was a case of jobs for money racket being run by an organised criminal network. Accordingly, the delegation demanded that the alleged role of the Chief Minister, Council of Ministers and AAP leaders, public servants and private persons in the examination scam should be probed thoroughly by the CBI.

It also called for forensic examination of all digital records, CCTV footage, servers, communication records and examination-related documents and a comprehensive audit of all recruitment examinations conducted by various state agencies in the past four-and-a-half years.(agencies)

Assam govt begins phased flood damage assessment

Guwahati, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday said the state government will begin a phased damage assessment in the flood ravaged districts, with Cabinet ministers visiting affected areas to evaluate losses in their respective departments before launching large scale infrastructure restoration from September. Speaking to reporters here, Sarma said ministers have been assigned to conduct department wise assessments of the damage caused by the recent floods.

"From today, all ministers will visit the affected areas to carry out damage assessments related to their respective departments. The immediate priority is to evaluate the losses suffered by families, livestock and other assets," he said. The Chief Minister said the government will initially focus on ensuring that displaced families can return safely to their homes before taking up major reconstruction work.



According to Sarma, restoration of roads, embankments and other public infrastructure will begin in the next phase after the flood situation stabilises completely.

"From September 1, we will start work on repairing damaged roads, embankments and other infrastructure. This exercise will require substantial financial resources, but we want to ensure that reconstruction is undertaken only after there is no possibility of fresh flooding," he said. The Chief Minister noted that carrying out large scale repair works while floodwaters continue to

pose a threat could result in wastage of public funds if the infrastructure is damaged again. He said the government has therefore decided to complete the relief and rehabilitation phase first, followed by approval and execution of infrastructure projects after August.

Sarma also announced that the government is preparing a special package for the worst affected districts of Sivasagar and Charaideo, which witnessed extensive damage to roads and public infrastructure during the recent floods. "We will introduce a comprehensive package for Sivasagar and Charaideo so that roads and other infrastructure can be rebuilt to a better standard than before," he said. The Chief Minister reiterated that the government's priority remains the rehabilitation of flood affected families while ensuring that reconstruction is carried out in a planned and durable manner to minimise future losses.(agencies)

Gujarat: Holiday declared in Surat for schools, colleges, diamond units and textile markets

Surat, Authorities in Surat on Friday declared a holiday for schools, colleges, diamond processing units, factories and textile markets as the city and district prepared for heavy rainfall and strong winds forecast by the India Meteorological Department (IMD). The decision was taken as a precaution after a 'Red Alert' was issued and a low-pressure system over the Bay of Bengal moved towards the region.

Surat Municipal Commissioner, M. Nagarajan, said the civic administration is continuously monitoring the evolving weather situation through senior officials and had already begun evacuating residents from low-lying

areas of the city. "Keeping the safety of students, citizens and workers in mind, holidays have been declared for schools, colleges, diamond units, factories and textile markets. Market associations have also announced a holiday," Nagarajan said. He said the Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) had initiated the evacuation of people living in vulnerable low-lying localities and urged residents to remain vigilant. Citizens in Kim and surrounding areas on the outskirts of the city, as well as upstream river locations including Valanja, Kathor and Gothan, were advised to



remain alert as heavy rainfall could lead to waterlogging.

With forecasts indicating heavy rain accompanied by strong winds later in the day, the Municipal Commissioner appealed to residents to remain indoors, move valuables and belongings to safer locations to minimise potential damage, and ensure that people living in low-lying areas took necessary precautions to

avoid any loss of life. Nagarajan said teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) had been positioned for emergency response. He also said the Surat District Collector had requested the State Government to deploy an Army team to strengthen preparedness if the situation deteriorated. He urged the public to cooperate with the administration and follow official instructions.

Separately, Surat District Development Officer, Devendra Prakash Meena, said the district administration had been placed on full alert after the IMD warned of heavy rainfall and strong winds linked to the low-pressure system over the Bay of Bengal. "The entire district administration is in the field and is closely monitoring the situation. Citizens should not pay attention to rumours circulating on social media or through other platforms and should rely only on information officially issued by the district administration," Meena said. Meena further urged people to maintain a safe distance from high-rise buildings, old and large trees and electricity poles during periods of strong winds. He advised residents to contact the district administration's control room immediately in the event of any emergency.(agencies)

Arunachal CM urges coordinated Northeast strategy to tackle child trafficking, online abuse, emerging threats

Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister, Pema Khandu, on Friday called for stronger regional cooperation and coordinated action among the Northeastern states to address emerging threats to children, including trafficking, online exploitation, substance abuse, child marriage, and cross-border vulnerabilities.

He stressed that safeguarding children's rights and well-being requires a collective and sustained effort by all the states in the region. Addressing the inaugural session of the North East State Commissions for Protection of Child Rights Convention 2026 at Tawang, the Chief Minister described the gathering as a historic milestone, marking the first time that all State Commissions for Protection of Child Rights from the North East have come together on a common platform dedicated exclu-

sively to the protection and promotion of child rights. Welcoming Chairpersons, Members and Member Secretaries of the State Commissions, representatives of national institutions, senior officials, development partners and civil society organisations, Khandu said Tawang, a land synonymous with peace, compassion and harmony, was a fitting venue for deliberations on safeguarding the rights and future of children.

Emphasising that child welfare is the true measure of good governance, Khandu said the success of any government cannot be judged solely by economic growth or infrastructure development but by how effectively it protects its most vulnerable citizens. He reiterated that every child deserves a safe environment free from violence, exploitation,

abuse and discrimination, along with access to education, healthcare, nutrition and equal opportunities.

Highlighting Arunachal Pradesh's commitment towards child welfare, Khandu outlined a series of initiatives aimed at empowering children, particularly the girl child. He informed that under the Duluri Kanya Scheme, more than 15,500 girls have benefited from financial assistance for higher education, with the State investing over Rs 38 crore. He further noted that over 134 awareness programmes have been conducted under the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao initiative across the state. He also informed that the state government has earmarked Rs 3.3 crore under the Girls Health & Hygiene Scheme in 2026-27 to provide sanitary napkins to more than 25,000 beneficiaries. Stressing that child welfare be-

gins with maternal care, Khandu highlighted several initiatives, launched by the Prime Minister, specifically aimed at improving maternal and child health outcomes.

He informed that more than 38,000 beneficiaries have received support under the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, while over 34,000 beneficiaries are being directly assisted through nutrition-related interventions. Under Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0, more than 1.8 lakh women and children are covered, with 152 Anganwadi Centres already upgraded and another 125 being developed under the Adopt an Anganwadi initiative. On strengthening the child protection ecosystem, Khandu said that under Mission Vatsalya, more than 2,500 vulnerable children are receiving sponsorship support, while 2,479 chil-

dren are benefitting from monthly assistance of Rs 4,000 under sponsorship, foster care and aftercare schemes.

He also highlighted the functioning of the 24x7 Child Helpline 1098, One Stop Centres in all 25 districts and Women Helpline 181 as critical support mechanisms for children and women in distress. Calling child protection a collective responsibility, Khandu stressed that governments alone cannot safeguard children. He urged schools, families, law enforcement agencies, the judiciary, health workers, community leaders, faith-based organisations and civil society groups to work together in creating a safe and nurturing environment for children. Highlighting the unique geographical and social realities of the Northeast region, the Chief Minister said issues such as trafficking, online

exploitation and substance abuse often transcend state boundaries, making inter-State coordination essential.

He expressed hope that the Convention would facilitate greater exchange of best practices, stronger implementation of child protection laws, improved coordination in cases involving missing and trafficked children, and more effective responses to emerging online threats. Urging participants to move beyond discussions and translate ideas into tangible outcomes, the Chief Minister said the true success of the Convention would be measured not by the number of speeches delivered but by meaningful improvements in the lives of children across the region.

Congratulating the Arunachal Pradesh State Commission for

Protection of Child Rights under its Chairperson Ratan Anya for organising the landmark Convention, Khandu thanked all participating State Commissions, national institutions, experts, officials and development partners for contributing to the collective mission of protecting children and advancing their rights across the Northeast.

A North East SPCPR Convention Souvenir was also released by the Chief Minister and dignitaries present to mark the occasion.

The two-day convention is being chaired by Women & Child Development Minister Dasanglu Pul, while the inaugural ceremony was attended by Advisor Home Mutchu Mitthi, Advisor Women & Child Development Tsering Lhamu, Tawang MLA Namgye Tsering among others.(agencies)

Online nominations for Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2026 to close on Aug 15

New Delhi, The Ministry of Women and Child Development has extended the last date for submission of online nominations for the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar (PMRBP) from July 31 to August 15, an official said on Friday.

The nomination process for the PMRBP commenced on April 1, through the National Awards Portal (<https://awards.gov.in>).

The awards are conferred on children who have demonstrated exceptional achievements in the fields of Bravery, Social Service, Environment, Sports, Arts and Culture, and Science and Technology, an official statement said.

Any child who is an Indian citizen residing in India, is aged above five years and not exceeding 18 years of age (as on July 31, 2026), is eligible for the awards.

Nominations, including self-nominations and recommendations by any citizen, would be accepted only through the National Awards Portal, the statement said.

In another development, the Ministry of Women and Child Development announced plans to observe World Breastfeeding Week 2026 from August 1 to 7 across the country.

This year's theme is Breastfeeding for a Sustainable Start in Life: Strengthen What Works, an official statement added.

The week-long campaign will create awareness among families, communities and health-care providers about early initiation of breastfeeding, exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, and continued breastfeeding up to two years and be-

yond alongside appropriate complementary feeding, it said.

Breastfeeding is among the most effective interventions for child survival, healthy growth and cognitive development, it added.

The Ministry urged families to ensure every newborn receives breast milk within the first hour after birth - the Golden Hour.

The first milk, colostrum, often called the baby's first natural vaccine, is rich in antibodies and essential nutrition, and must not be discarded.

Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months means feeding the baby only breast milk - no water, honey, ghutti, glucose or formula. Breast milk alone meets all of an infant's nutritional and hydration needs during this period, the Ministry statement said.(agencies)

Army Chief Gen Dhiraj Seth launches indigenous 'Xtreme Weather Grade' diesel

New Delhi, General Dhiraj Seth, Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), on Friday launched the indigenously developed 'Xtreme Weather Grade' (XWG) diesel. This fuel promises to improve the mobility of military vehicles at high altitude, an official said. Speaking on the occasion, the COAS described XWG Diesel as a game-changing indigenous innovation that would enhance mobility, operational readiness and mission reliability across extreme climatic conditions.

Developed jointly by the Indian Army and Oil Marketing Companies, the specialised fuel will enhance the mobility, safety and operational availability of combat and logistics vehicles in extreme climatic conditions, said an official statement. The technology also has wider

civilian use in high-altitude and severe winter regions and represents a significant step towards Atmanirbhar Bharat. Conventional diesel can thicken and clog fuel filters at very low temperatures, affecting the operation of vehicles in high-altitude and snow-bound areas. XWG Diesel overcomes this challenge and remains effective at temperatures as low as minus 42 degrees Celsius, the statement said.

Compliant with BS-VI standards and IS 1460:2025 specifications, it can be used in the Indian Army's existing vehicle fleet without any engine modification or re-homologation.

General Dhiraj Seth highlighted that the fuel would eliminate practices previously required to keep vehicles functional during severe winters, thereby improving the safety and morale of personnel. The COAS commended the Indian Army team and the Oil Marketing Companies for developing the solution within a year and expressed confidence that the collaboration would lead to further specialised fuels for diverse operational requirements.

Beyond its military applications, the technology will also benefit civilian users in high-altitude and extreme winter regions by improving the reliabil-

ity and safety of vehicles and equipment operating under severe climatic conditions, the statement said. Earlier on Wednesday, General Dhiraj Seth concluded a two-day visit to formations under the Eastern Theatre during which he reviewed the prevailing security situation and assessed operational preparedness. He also evaluated ongoing initiatives aimed at fostering peace, stability and development across the region, officials said.

A defence spokesman said that during the visit, the COAS reviewed the prevailing security situation, vigilance, operational preparedness and ongoing initiatives aimed at promoting lasting peace, stability and development across the region. The Army Chief was also given an update on ongoing flood relief operations.(agencies)



2,273 Indian nationals deported from US this year: MEA

New Delhi, The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Friday confirmed that 2,273 Indian nationals have been deported from the United States to India in 2026, so far. "The total number of Indians deported from the United States to India in 2026 from 1st January till date is 2,273. In 2025, a total of 3,567 Indian nationals were deported from the United States," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal stated during a biweekly media briefing.

"We continue to work with several foreign governments on deportation issues. As and when such issues are referred to us, we do conduct due diligence on our side to confirm the nationality of the person concerned who is being referred for deportation. Once we are fully satisfied that the person concerned is of Indian nationality, only then do we facilitate their travel or return to India," the spokesperson



spokesperson has stated earlier: Tightening the immigration regulations, the White House defended President Donald Trump's \$100,000 H-1B visa fee last month and vowed to appeal after a federal judge struck down the policy, ruling that the administration exceeded its authority and imposed an unlawful tax.

"President Trump has clear legal authority to restrict entry of any class of aliens he determines is not in America's best interests, and that is exactly what he did," White House spokeswoman Taylor Rogers said.

"The H-1B programme has been abused for decades, and President Trump finally took action to fix it. A federal judge in Washington already upheld a nearly identical order, and the Administration is confident this order will be reversed on appeal," she said in response to a question.(agencies)

further detailed. India has been reiterating its longstanding stance against illegal migration and emphasised its commitment to promoting legal pathways of migration.

"Whenever there is a person who does not possess a legal status in any country, and he or she is referred to us with documents if there are claims that he or she is an Indian national, we do the background check, we confirm the nationality, and then we are in a position to take them back. And this is what has been happening with deportations from the United States," the MEA

BJP demands strict action against those responsible for police 'assault', Oppn questions delay

New Delhi, Even as Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders believed that "anti-social elements" were behind the reported assault on police personnel during the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP)-led Parliament march on July 20, the Opposition questioned the delay in identifying the accused of the violent protest that left several agitators and policemen injured.

While maintaining that the matter should be dealt "sensitively", BJP MP Ravi Shankar Prasad said: "We respect the youth, but if criminals, including those facing allegations of serious crimes like murder and rape, are involved in attacking police personnel, then it raises serious questions." BJP MP Manoj Tiwari echoed, saying: "Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has said that whatever FIRs or cases were reg-

istered against students will be withdrawn. But undesirable elements who attacked police personnel cannot be considered students. Those who carried out such attacks appear to be professional criminals. They should be identified and strict action should be taken against them."

BJP MP Kamaljeet Sehrawat asserted that such attacks on police personnel "cannot be carried out by students" who were protesting over exam paper leaks. "However, some anti-social elements, under the garb of students, committed such acts," she added. BJP MP and former Director General of Police in Uttar Pradesh Brij Lal expressed his support for the police force.

"I wore the uniform for 37-and-a-half years alongside these personnel. I led them on the frontlines. Our security personnel make sacrifices for the coun-



try and for society," he told IANS. Criticising Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi's take on "brutality against protesters", the BJP leader said: "Rahul Gandhi ji has nothing else to say so they have made a big issue out of pellet guns. It is a non-lethal weapon used to disperse the crowd."

BJP leader Rohan Gupta sought answers for the families of the injured policemen while maintaining "if anyone has acted wrongly against students, accountability should be also be

sought for that as well". However, Trinamool Congress MP Kirti Azad questioned the delayed police action against "criminals" involved in the protest. "Action should be taken against the anti-social elements who attacked Delhi Police personnel or assaulted members of the press. But the police should also explain why, after 10 days, they are identifying and mapping those involved...If they knew that some of them were rapists, some were dacoits, and some were murderers, then why were they not arrested? The police must also be held accountable," he told reporters outside the Parliament House.

Indian Youth Congress President Uday Bhanu Chibb alleged a conspiracy behind the violent protest. "On the day of the Parliament march, a truck loaded with stones was parked

outside the offices of the NSUI and the Youth Congress, near Parliament. The Delhi Police cannot be so incompetent that they were unaware of it. This appears to have been a planned move...maybe they wanted the agitators to use those stones in order to justify the crackdown," he told IANS.

Meanwhile, CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke alleged that goons "linked to the BJP" carried out stone-pelting on the police. "The stone-pelting on the police was carried out by 'BJP goons', and I have been saying this since the very first day. However, the blame is being put on us. The people who have been associated with us for the past one month carried out the protest in a completely peaceful manner," he told reporters at his hometown in Maharashtra's Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar.(agencies)

139 Indian nationals released from Russian Army: MEA

New Delhi, The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) confirmed on Friday that 139 Indian nationals have been released from the Russian Army till now, and work is underway to get the remaining two dozen Indians released soon.

"We have been following up with the Russian side for the release of the remaining Indian nationals in the Russian army. So far, our efforts have led to the release of 139 Indian nationals; we continue to pursue the release of the remaining two dozen Indian nationals who are reportedly in the Russian army," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal stated during a bi-weekly media briefing. He also cautioned people regarding accepting job offers that include risk and are made by shady people

or organisations. "Once again, we would like to caution our people against job offers that are fraught with risk and made by unscrupulous individuals and agencies," the spokesperson reiterated.

The Ministry said in December that 202 Indian nationals were believed to have been recruited into the Russian armed forces. Concerted efforts by the government have resulted in early discharge of many while over two dozen had reportedly lost their lives and some were reported missing by the Russian side. In September 2025, the MEA had issued a stern advisory cautioning Indian nationals against joining the Russian Army, amid reports that several Indians who had travelled to Moscow were being pushed into combat roles

in the Ukraine war. The advisory followed a report in a leading newspaper, which stated that two Indian men, in the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine, alleged they were lured to Russia under the pretext of construction jobs but were instead deployed on the frontline.

Speaking over the phone from Selydove, a town captured by Russia in November 2024, they claimed that at least 13 more Indians were trapped in similar conditions.

The report stated that the two had travelled to Russia in the past six months on student or visitor visas. They alleged that an agent who promised them employment in the construction sector had misled them and sent them directly to the battlefield.(agencies)

Lifer for Tahir Hussain: Delhi minister calls it 'beginning of justice', pitches for death penalty

New Delhi, Delhi Minister Kapil Mishra on Friday welcomed the life imprisonment awarded to former Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Councillor Tahir Hussain, convicted for the murder of Intelligence Bureau (IB) officer Ankit Sharma during the Delhi riots in February 2020.

Kapil Mishra took to his official X account to welcome the court judgement and hailed the life term for Hussain and four others, as "the beginning of justice". Recalling the brutality and savagery inflicted on the IB officer during the Delhi riots, the Delhi Minister said that the cruelty with which Ankit

Sharma was murdered, stabbed with knives even after death and the body thrown into a drain - accounts for "rarest of the rare" cases.

He also hoped that that life imprisonment gets converted into death penalty as the case goes to the higher Court. The convicted ex-Councillor is likely to move to Delhi High Court to challenge his conviction and seeking relief in the IB officer's murder case. Delhi's Karkardooma court which pronounced life term for Tahir Hussain made some strong observations in the case, describ-



ing the act as that of 'extreme brutality'.

"The manner of the crime was of utmost brutality," the court said while announcing the life sentence for Tahir Hussain. "The crime tilts towards the rarest of rare. The monstrosity of the crime also outweighs the mitigat-

ing circumstances," it added.

Ankit Sharma (26), a security assistant with the IB was brutally murdered by the violent mob, having caught in the communal violence that swept through the North-East Delhi in February 2020. He was dragged, attacked with rods and stones and stabbed with knives allegedly at the directions of Tahir Hussain. The investigation into bestiality inflicted on him deduced that he was stabbed repeatedly even after losing consciousness and as many as 51 knife wounds were found on his corpse.

A day later, his body was found dumped in a filthy drain and was pulled out by cops, only after his parents lodged his missing report with the police. According to the chargesheet, Ankit had gone to pacify two warring groups near Tahir Hussain's house, when he was surrounded by the mob, dragged inside the building and killed in cold blood. Earlier this month, the court convicted Hussain, Javed, Anas, Nazim and Kasim after holding them guilty of offences, including murder, kidnapping, rioting and promoting enmity between different groups.(agencies)

SC slams Rajasthan govt for reviewing prosecution sanction against doctor under political pressure

New Delhi, The Supreme Court has come down heavily on the Rajasthan government for reviewing its earlier decision refusing sanction to prosecute a public servant in a corruption case without any fresh material, saying the decision-making process under the Prevention of Corruption Act cannot resemble the dilemma in 'Hamlet's Soliloquy' and that the record disclosed "blatant" political interference.

Dismissing a Special Leave Petition (SLP) filed by the State of Rajasthan, a Bench of Justices J.B. Pardiwala and K. Vinod Chandran upheld the Rajasthan High Court's decision quashing the sanction granted to prosecute a government doctor in an alleged bribery case.

"The decision-making process under Section 19 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 cannot resemble the dilemma in 'Hamlet's Soliloquy: to be or not to be'. If there is ambivalence, it could be presumed that extraneous considerations weighed and here is a case where political dictate is blatantly displayed," the Justice Pardiwala-led Bench observed. The case arose from allegations that the respondent doctor had demanded and accepted bribe money from the relatives of a patient for a knee surgery in 2017. While the Anti-Corruption Bureau

laid a trap and recovered Rs 2,000 from a drawer at the doctor's official residence, senior officers of the Rajasthan government had initially found the evidence insufficient to justify prosecution. In its order, the apex court recorded that both the Joint Secretary and the Principal Secretary in the Department of Personnel had concluded that the available material did not establish a clear demand for bribe. They had also found the recovery of money from a locked drawer, which had to be broken open, to be suspicious, particularly as the surgery had already been completed a day earlier.

The administrative authorities had also taken note of the absence of any complaint from the patient or family members, inconsistencies in the complainant's claim of being a relative, and reports suggesting that members of a political party had publicised the trap operation. Despite these findings, the matter was sent back for reconsideration by the Joint Secretary in the Chief Minister's Office, who asserted that the recovery of money and the handwash test sufficiently established acceptance of bribe, even though no fresh material had emerged. The apex court held that there was "absolutely no occasion" to revisit the earlier decision on the basis of the same materi-

al. Reiterating settled law, the Justice Pardiwala-led Bench said that refusal of sanction for prosecution cannot be reviewed merely because another authority forms a different opinion on the same record. "A mere change of opinion per se on the same materials cannot be a ground for review or reconsideration of an earlier order, refusing to grant sanction," the top court said, relying on its earlier decisions. It added that reconsideration would be permissible only if fresh material was collected by the investigating agency and the sanctioning authority independently applied its mind to such new evidence.

The judgment also stressed that where two views are possible while deciding whether to sanction prosecution of a public servant, the view favouring the officer should ordinarily prevail. "It is trite that, when there are two views possible, especially in proceeding with a criminal prosecution against a public servant, the view exonerating the officer should be taken," the Justice Pardiwala-led Bench observed. Reiterating that sanction serves as a safeguard against unwarranted prosecution, it said, "Sanction is a weapon to ensure discouragement of frivolous and vexatious prosecution and is a safeguard for the innocent but not a

shield for the guilty." The Supreme Court said the facts of the case demonstrated that the review of the earlier decision was prompted by external influence from the Chief Minister's Office, resulting in unnecessary harassment of a public servant. "We find absolutely no reason to interfere with the impugned order, and we deprecate such instances bringing out interference leading to unnecessary harassment of public officers discharging public duties; which is sought to be avoided by Section 19 of the Prevention of Corruption Act," it said.

Expressing disapproval of the state government's decision to challenge the High Court verdict before the apex court, the Justice Pardiwala-led Bench observed: "The petitioner has been dragged unnecessarily to the High Court by the review, prompted by the office of the CM. The State at least should have rested content, when the highest Constitutional Court within its boundaries interfered with a patently illegal and blatantly tainted order of sanction."

Dismissing the state government's SLP, the Supreme Court imposed costs of Rs 50,000 each for proceedings before the High Court and the apex court, directing the amount to be paid within two months.(agencies)

कार्यालय कार्यपालन अभियंता लोक स्वास्थ्य यांत्रिकी खण्ड बिलासपुर (छ.ग.)					
पता :- पुराना कम्पोजिट बिल्डिंग, कक्ष क्र. 18, कोटवाटरेट के सामने, Phone No. 07752-250893, Email ID - cehil-phc-cg@gov.in					
:: ई प्रोक्थोरमेंट निविदा सूचना::					
जिला जल एवं स्वच्छता मिशन बिलासपुर की ओर कार्यपालन अभियंता एवं सदस्य सचिव, जिला जल एवं स्वच्छता मिशन बिलासपुर द्वारा एकीकृत पंजीयन व्यवस्था के अंतर्गत उपयुक्त श्रेणी में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से निम्नांकित कार्य हेतु प्रपत्र "अ" (प्रतिशत दर) ऑन लाईन निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है :-					
कार्य का नाम:- बिलासपुर जिले के जल जीवन मिशन में स्वीकृत एकल ग्राम योजना अंतर्गत पाईप लाईन विस्तार, उच्चस्तरीय जलागार, घरेलू नल कनेक्शन एवं योजनांतर्गत शेष संपूर्ण कार्य (संलग्न शेड्यूल अनुसार)					
क्र.	निविदा क्र./दिनांक /सिस्टम क्र.	कार्य का नाम	कार्य की लागत (रु. लाख में)	घरेलू दर (रु. में)	
1	01/29.07.2026/196159	ग्राम डिपरापाड़ा एवं हथकोडावा (बस्तोरी) विकासखण्ड बिल्हा	54.99	41500.00	
2	02/29.07.2026/196160	ग्राम बिलाई विकासखण्ड मस्तूरी	162.93	122500.00	
3	03/29.07.2026/196162	ग्राम मिलोनी विकासखण्ड तखतपुर	57.05	43000.00	
4	04/29.07.2026/196163	ग्राम बिनोरी विकासखण्ड तखतपुर	76.87	58000.00	
5	05/29.07.2026/196164	ग्राम चुलचट विकासखण्ड तखतपुर	20.64	15500.00	
6	06/29.07.2026/196167	ग्राम मंगला (पा.) विकासखण्ड बिल्हा	29.12	22000.00	
ऑनलाईन निविदा की अन्य विवरण एवं विस्तृत जानकारी छ.ग. शासन लोक स्वास्थ्य यांत्रिकी विभाग के ई-प्रोक्थोरमेंट वेबसाइट https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in दिनांक 07.08.2026 सुबह 11:00 बजे से तथा दिनांक 18.08.2026 समय 17:30 बजे तक बीड डाले जा सकते हैं एवं अन्य विवरण कार्यालयीन समय पर लोक स्वास्थ्य यांत्रिकी खण्ड बिलासपुर (छ.ग.) में देखे जा सकते हैं।					
G-262702459			कार्यपालन अभियंता लोक स्वास्थ्य यांत्रिकी खण्ड बिलासपुर (छ. ग.)		

Domestic capital takes centre stage

Domestic institutional investors (DIIs) have strengthened their hold on the Indian equities, as their ownership in the Nifty 500 rose to an all-time high of 21 per cent while foreign institutional investor (FII) ownership declined to 17 per cent, a report said on Friday. The report from Motilal Oswal Financial Services said the rise marked the ninth consecutive quarter of rising DII ownership. Sustained domestic inflows have comfortably absorbed \$58 billion of cumulative FII outflows over the past 22 months while DIIs invested a record \$166 billion in the same period. During this period, resilient SIP inflows averaged around \$3 billion per month, providing stability to the market despite continued foreign selling. The report noted the shift in ownership was broad based, with DIIs increasing holdings in 19 of the 24 sectors within the Nifty 500 over the past year. The largest increases were seen in private banks, telecom, real estate, technology, health-care, insurance, automobiles, PSU banks, NBFC-lending, retail and capital goods. FIIs, meanwhile, reduced their holdings across 19 sectors, while selectively increasing exposure to metals, PSU banks, NBFC-lending, capital goods and logistics.

The report highlighted continued preference for financials among institutional investors. BFSI accounted for 34.6 per cent of sector allocation for FIIs within the Nifty 500, followed by automobiles at 8 per cent, health-care at 6.9 per cent, oil & gas at 6.5 per cent and capital goods at 6.2 per cent. For DIIs, BFSI remained the largest allocation and touched an all-time high of 29.4 per cent, followed by automobiles at 7.9 per cent, capital goods at 7.4 per cent and oil & gas at 7.3 per cent. DII ownership reached record highs across large, mid and small-cap stocks, while FII ownership moderated across all three segments. Within the Nifty 500, DIIs increased their holdings in 73 per cent of companies, while FIIs reduced their stakes in 59 per cent. In the Nifty 50, DIIs raised holdings in 82 per cent of stocks, whereas FIIs trimmed their exposure in 72 per cent. While foreign capital will always remain vital for global connectivity and deep market liquidity, the rising dominance of domestic capital marks a major milestone. India's stock market is no longer solely at the mercy of international sentiment. By channelling domestic savings into national wealth creation, Indian investors have built an internal fortress—one that gives the country's capital markets true financial self-reliance.

Ukraine war: inside the longstanding conflict between politicians and military commanders

Sarah Whitmore and Bettina Renz

The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelensky, has dismissed the country's commander-in-chief Oleksandr Syrskyi after a turbulent week in which he also removed his defence minister, Mykhailo Fedorov. The dismissal of the popular defence minister, who is credited by many as the brains behind Ukraine's successful drone strategy, brought thousands on to the streets in protest.

Despite the clear public pressure to fire Syrskyi, Zelensky has presented his removal as part of an overall restructuring of Ukraine's armed forces. He has appointed Mykhailo Drapatyi, commander of Ukraine's joint forces group, to take over as commander-in-chief.

Much analysis of this episode has focused on personalities, presenting the episode as a personal conflict within Zelensky's team. Some saw the president's decision to side with the unpopular Soviet-style military leadership of Syrskyi rather than the popular moderniser as illogical. But our research shows that tensions between the civilian defence minister and the military leadership are institutional.

Where such conflicts arise, the war makes it logical for the president to side with the commander-in-chief. Zelensky's recent sacking of Syrskyi due to public pressure will not alter this dynamic.

Disagreements between civilian and military leadership are normal in any country, democratic or otherwise. There will inevitably be conflicting interests. Democratic civilian control - civilian oversight of the military - with a clear chain of responsibility - helps to manage these differences on a day-to-day basis. Nevertheless, war exacerbates normal competing interests and their political importance due to the existential threat. In Ukraine, institutional weaknesses make such conflicts more likely, and more difficult to regulate.

Zelensky's dismissal of Fedorov highlights a pattern identified in our research of the period between 2019, when Zelensky was elected, and 2022 when Putin launched his full-scale invasion. Democratic civilian control of the military was an official goal in line with Nato/EU requirements. Legislation was passed but its imple-

mentation was hampered by key people's limited acceptance of the core idea - the notion that the defence minister should be a civilian.

Our interviews with participants in the defence reform process immediately prior to the 2022 full-scale invasion made it clear that the military leadership was, perhaps predictably, resisting all manifestations of civilian control. Perhaps more surprisingly, Zelensky remained ambivalent about even its most basic requirement (a civilian defence minister). One Ukrainian defence expert captured this, telling us that Zelensky "failed to understand the logic that civilians must do the strategic policy making".

In line with the 2018 law adopted after western pressure, since 2019 Zelensky has appointed five civilians as defence ministers. But the people we spoke with explained that he has always relied on the commander-in-chief for defence policymaking.

This has marginalised successive defence ministers and their attempts at reform - whether modest or radical.

It doesn't help that the ministry has faced repeated corruption scandals relating to defence procurement. Three men who served civilian defence ministers between 2010 and 2014 (plus the chief of the general staff 2012-14) are now accused of treason for allegedly selling off military equipment without authorisation.

This has made establishing the trust needed for a functioning relationship between the military and civilian leadership particularly challenging.

Institutionalised conflict

Sidelining the minister was possible because the 2018 law preserved a Soviet legacy system where both the minister and the commander-in-chief were both separately responsible to the president. This means that military chiefs tended to resist taking strategic direction from the minister - usually a central tenet of democratic civilian control. When they disagreed with the minister, military commanders went directly to the president.

Conflict resurfaced despite personnel changes. For example, one senior figure we interviewed told us that, between 2017 and 2019, defence minister Stepan Poltorak and his military counterpart Lieutenant-General Viktor Muzhenko "would not even be

in the same room together". During 2019-20, relations between General Ruslan Khomchak and new minister Andriy Zagorodniuk "went south very quickly" according to our sources. Zagorodniuk, a reformer, was then sacked by Zelensky after just six months. In 2020-21, Khomchak's conflict with Zagorodniuk's successor Andriy Taran became spectacularly public when one sued the other.

During 2020-21 there was a huge push by reformers in the ministry, parliament, civil society and by western defence advisers to solve this institutional conflict by subordinating the commander-in-chief to the minister. But this reform failed. The military leadership strenuously resisted and Zelensky did not intervene.

All roads lead to Zelensky

Military resistance was predictable because in Ukraine's weakly institutionalised system of power, the president is the key political player. Access to him remains the most valuable political asset. The ongoing war made Zelensky more dependent on the military top brass. He needed their trust in the face of the threat from Russia. Our research tells us that Zelensky is more likely to side with the military leadership in the event of conflict with the defence minister. In the most recent crisis he also initially sided with his general - although this time it triggered a political crisis and the president was forced to also dismiss the military leader. A long existential war is a complicating factor for civil-military relations because public interest in defence policy is much higher than during peacetime. Fedorov came to symbolise a more modern and hi-tech approach to warfare in contrast to Syrskyi's Soviet style of military leadership. With protests demanding Syrskyi's resignation and Zelensky keen to retain public confidence, a change of commander-in-chief became unavoidable.

But new personnel will not change the underlying structures which generated the political crisis in the first place. Civilian control of the military remains contested. Meanwhile the institutional arrangement allows the military leadership to bypass ministers and engenders conflict - and war strengthens the military's ability to resist reforms that might change this.

Deepika Bhan

New Delhi, It should never have taken a street protest to force governments to address a problem that has plagued India's examination system for many decades. But that is precisely what the Cockroach Janata Party's (CJP) protest at Jantar Mantar in Delhi has exposed.

The protest, though projected as an agitation against examination paper leaks and carrying an unmistakable political hue, has brought to the fore a problem that has plagued the country for decades.

Year after year, India has witnessed discrepancies in examinations. Sometimes paper leaks were detected; perhaps many more went unnoticed and unaddressed. One can only imagine how many doctors, engineers, policemen and other public servants may have secured their positions through unfair means. Every time a leak surfaced, the routine response was to cancel the examination and conduct a retest. That has been the story for decades.

This time, however, students

have had enough; their anger forced the government to act, something that should have happened long ago without public pressure.

It was in 1986, under the Rajiv Gandhi government, that the National Policy on Education (NPE) formally acknowledged examination malpractices as a serious threat to academic integrity. It recognised systemic vulnerabilities, noting that everything from evaluation bias to the physical security of question papers required urgent attention. The policy laid the conceptual groundwork for treating paper leaks as a major security issue affecting students, but a comprehensive central law to deal with organised paper-leak syndicates never materialised.

None of the political parties or governments at the Centre that followed seriously attempted to plug these loopholes. Since 1986, Congress remained in power or was in coalition for nearly 23 years until 2014, yet it failed to address the menace through a dedicated legal framework.

It was only in 2024, after nationwide outrage over repeated

leaks in major entrance examinations, that India enacted its first dedicated anti-paper leak law - the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024. The law came into force on June 21, 2024, specifically targeting central testing agencies.

Despite the new legislation, paper leaks have continued, with the 2026 NEET paper leak becoming the latest flashpoint.

The CJP, a collective of young people reportedly backed by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and projecting itself as the voice of Gen Z, found an opportunity in the growing public anger. With activist Sonam Wangchuk sitting on a hunger strike at Jantar Mantar, the protest acquired momentum and threatened to snowball into a nationwide movement.

The agitation, which turned violent and reportedly left nearly 200 policemen and dozens of protesters injured, should serve as a wake-up call not merely for the government but for the entire political establishment.

Whether certain political forces attempted to fuel the

protests or derail them through violence is a separate debate. What cannot be ignored is the deep frustration among the country's youth over a system repeatedly compromised by examination leaks.

For far too long, India's political class has taken people for granted. Fundamental issues have often been overshadowed by the compulsions of electoral politics. Even today, most parties continue to view such issues primarily through the prism of vote-bank calculations.

Take the NEET paper leak as an example. The controversy surfaced in April, but Congress became visibly active only after the CJP protests gathered a certain momentum and Sonam Wangchuk's agitation began attracting public support. Rahul Gandhi, returning after a 20-day foreign tour, suddenly made the issue a political priority as Parliament's Monsoon Session approached. He held special media events, including one near the Prime Minister's residence, to underline his party's concern.

AAP national convenor

Arvind Kejriwal, widely perceived as the force behind the CJP, also faces uncomfortable questions. His party's government in Punjab has repeatedly been accused of failing to curb examination scandals in the state. It is alleged that six paper leaks have taken place over the past four years.

The Congress, the Shiromani Akali Dal and the BJP have all accused the Punjab government of recruitment irregularities and repeated examination leaks, demanding the resignation of Education Minister Harjot Singh Bains. Interestingly, whenever CJP leaders are questioned about the Punjab paper leaks, they conveniently sidestep the issue.

The Samajwadi Party, too, has been vocal over the present controversy. But it was the Mulayam Singh Yadav government that abolished Uttar Pradesh's stringent Anti-Copying Act in 1994. The law had been introduced in 1992 by the BJP government led by Chief Minister Kalyan Singh to curb rampant cheating in examinations. After assuming office, the Samajwadi Party repealed

it, describing it as excessively harsh on students.

Then, in 2015, when Mulayam Singh Yadav's son Akhilesh Yadav was the Chief Minister, it took the intervention of the Allahabad High Court to force the removal of Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission chairman Anil Yadav.

Anil Yadav was accused of favouring one particular community in recruitment to various government posts. Students repeatedly agitated against him, and several protests ended in police lathi-charge. He also courted controversy after the 2015 PCS (Preliminary) examination paper leak.

Whatever forces may have helped propel the CJP protest, the agitation has undoubtedly shaken the system and compelled the government to respond. The real lesson from the CJP protests is not about one organisation or one government. It is about a political culture that responds only when public anger spills onto the streets. A system that waits for protests before correcting its failures is not merely inefficient; it has already failed the very people it is meant to serve.

Once considered an appeal among young voters, Nepal PM's reclusive style now under scrutiny

For most part of the four months that he has been in office, Nepal Prime Minister Balendra Shah, or Balen popularly, has been under media scrutiny for his largely reclusive style, where his limited engagement with the Parliament and President Ramchandra Paudel stands highlighted, raising questions about whether he can balance his unconventional ways with the constitutional expectations of a parliamentary democracy.

The Kathmandu Post on Thursday called Balen "A Prime Minister who does not call on the President", stating that "Prime Minister Shah's engagement with President Paudel has remained limited to formal occasions. No substantive consultations have taken place in four months."

According to the report, apart from official events such as swearing-in and state

functions, "Shah has avoided direct meetings with the President".

It pointed out that major decisions, like Cabinet reshuffles, the summoning and prorogation of parliament, and issuance of ordinances, have all reportedly "moved forward without the traditional one-on-one briefings expected between the head of government and the head of state".

It quoted unnamed officials at Sheetal Niwas, the official residence of the President, viewing this behaviour as a "clear noncompliance of established democratic practices".

An official expressed disappointment over the government's failure to present the annual performance report of the Council of Ministers, where Prime Ministers earlier personally submitted the document to the President before it was forwarded to the Parliament, added the report.

Earlier reportage raised the issue of his absence from key parliamentary sessions, including the first meeting of the House of Representatives in April and debates on government policy in May.

And when he did, "Prime Minister Balendra Shah left the House of Representatives just 20 minutes after arriving to attend Tuesday's meeting," reported Republica on July 14.

He is said to have walked out mid-speech while President Paudel was presenting his government's agenda.

"Balen's politics of silence and absence: Not a harbinger of good omen", said an opinion piece in The Himalayan Times in May.

"People were further astonished by the walkout of the Prime Minister from the Parliament during the delivery of the annual plan and the programme by President

Ram Chandra Paudel," it stated.

The article, stressing the importance of the Prime Minister's presence in the discussion of government plans and programmes in the Parliament, alleged that the Opposition's demand for the Prime Minister's presence was ignored by the publication of a month-long schedule sans his participation in the parliamentary proceedings.

According to Balen's supporters, while earlier Prime Ministers sat for hours together in the Parliament and spoke sweet nothings, Balen is attending to real work.

The article, however, questioned this view, claiming that supporters little realise "that in a parliamentary system, the presence of the Prime Minister during parliamentary proceedings is also a responsibility".

However, Balen's reclusiveness is not

new.

During the run up to the March polls, he largely stayed away from mass rallies and public congregations. His campaign leaned heavily on social media and symbolic gestures rather than traditional political mobilisation. Many then thought his "aloof style" found an appeal among younger voters disillusioned with Nepal's noisy political culture.

But it also alienated allies who expected more visible leadership. More than the real world, Balen's larger-than-life aura was built online - on social media - that the engineer-rapper-politician confined himself to. This style/strategy carried into his premiership, where his preference for distance now appears less like discipline and more like disengagement, as reports imply. And that may risk being interpreted as arrogance or disregard for institutions.

Badakhshan - Territory in Turmoil

Sanchita Bhattacharya

Badakhshan Province is in the midst of severe disorders, experiencing violent anti-Taliban rebellions, intense internal mutinies within the Taliban structure, and crises over the mining of natural reserves.

On July 23, 2026, fighters of the Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF) killed 21 Taliban fighters and injured another 37, in a series of targeted operations against Taliban bases, units, and military detachments in the Zebak District of Badakhshan Province. One AFF fighter was also killed. During the fighting, AFF fighters captured ammunition, light and heavy weapons, military equipment, and other war materials, from the Taliban.

On the other hand, as reported on July 22, 2026, the Taliban ordered gunmen loyal to dissident local commander Juma Khan Fateh to surrender their weapons as soon as possible in the Shekay and Nusay Districts.

On July 17, 2026, Taliban authorities claimed that they had retaken the Yaftal-e Payin District in Badakhshan Province after an overnight attack claimed by anti-Kabul forces. Police Spokesperson Ehsanullah Kamgar stated that the attack occurred while several Taliban fighters and commanders were on leave, adding that, Taliban authorities had arrested seven people in connection with the incident and seized weapons and military equipment.

On July 13, the 2026, Taliban begun disarming their local fighters in the Shah-e Buzurg District of Badakhshan Province. Taliban's special forces have also been deployed in the area, alongside Mawlawi Saifuddin Tayeb, the Deputy Chief of the Taliban Administrative Affairs Office. The disarmament process began after the noon prayer in the district.

According to partial data compiled by South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), since the Taliban takeover on August 15, 2021, 216 people, including 57 civilians, 14 militants, and 145 in the Not Specified (NS) category have been killed in Badakhshan Province in 73 incidents (data till July 25, 2026).

Some of the major incidents include:

On October 12, 2025, at least 10 Taliban fighters were killed in fighting between rival factions of the group at Yalor village in the Yaftali Sufia District of Badakhshan

Province, over control of a gold mines.

On May 26, 2025, a local Taliban commander, Zaidullah, was killed along with his wife and child, during an internal armed clash in the Shahada District of Badakhshan Province. At least four Taliban members were also seriously wounded, including Abdul Saboor, the deputy head of the Taliban's intelligence unit in Shahada District, and Mahmood, another intelligence officer.

On May 8, 2024, at least three Taliban fighters were killed and another six were injured in an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) blast. Later, on the same day, the Islamic State-Khorasan Province (IS-KP) claimed responsibility for the blast.

On June 8, 2023, a Taliban senior commander identified as Mawlawi Safiullah and 15 others were killed in a bomb blast inside the Nabawi Mosque in the provincial capital of Faizabad.

On September 30, 2022, four Taliban fighters were killed when the National Resistance Front (NRF) attacked them in the Payan Mor area of ??Shahr Buzurg District of Badakhshan Province.

Amidst this chaos, a new anti-Taliban group, Sepahian-e Mihaan (Patriotic Soldiers Front) has appeared on the scene. On July 17, 2026, the group claimed responsibility for an attack in the Yaftali Sufia District and declared that its forces had controlled the district administration building for several hours. Following this attack, the Taliban sent Army Chief Fasihuddin Fitrat to the District, to lead operations. Fitrat claimed that the assault had been foiled and that the attackers had failed to achieve their objectives. Nevertheless, on July 22, 2026, Qayum Malang, Commander of the Sepahian-e Mihaan, released his first audio message, declaring that he and his fighters were safe: "I am in full health. Do not follow the enemy's propaganda. We are all safe and well." He also stressed that the front "has its own plans and objectives" and that its members desire freedom above everything else. The group reportedly consists of people from different sections of society, including residents of Badakhshan, who came together in response to growing dissatisfaction with Taliban rule in the province. The official logo of the group includes symbolic elements such as the Simurgh (a giant bird of Persian

mythology), the sun, the Hindu Kush mountains, lapis lazuli, a sword and the golden star of Bactria. The Hindu Kush mountains are seen as a symbol of the group's geographical roots, while the sword and star may represent its military and defensive character.

Further, Juma Khan Fateh, the influential and disgruntled Tajik commander of Badakhshan Province has become a festering wound for the Taliban leadership. Fateh, his relatives (including brothers Mohammad Musa Shahryar and Abdul Fattah), and his loyalist gunmen, have been linked to land seizures, extortion, and illegal control of gold mines in Badakhshan. As reported on June 27, 2026, increased movements and a military build-up by Juma Khan was reported in the Darwaz area of Badakhshan Province. He had organised his forces over the preceding days and held extensive meetings with residents in Nusay District.

The Taliban however, initiated a few official interventions to assess the situation. On June 25, 2026, Taliban Defense Minister, Mullah Yaqoob Mujahid travelled to Badakhshan, following unsuccessful negotiations between a special Taliban commission and Juma Khan Fatah. Taliban officials said Mullah Yaqoob's visit was to evaluate the security situation along the Wakhan, Ishkashim, and Shughnan border areas. However, sources suggest that he was also calculating military capabilities for a possible confrontation with Fatah. Later, as reported on July 9, 2026, Fasihuddin Fitrat, Taliban's Chief of Army staff, and Mawlawi Amanuddin, Taliban Governor of Helmand, travelled to Nusay District to meet with Juma Khan, in an effort to ease ongoing tensions. Thereafter, on July 10, Juma Khan was transferred to Faizabad, capital of Badakhshan, after receiving 'guarantees' from Taliban Army Chief Fasihuddin Fitrat. No details of the talks or any agreement between the two sides have yet been released. A day later, Juma Khan Fateh returned to the Darwaz region of Badakhshan after pledging loyalty to the Taliban administration.

In parallel to these ongoing 'negotiations' at the administrative level, Zabihullah Mujahid, Taliban Spokesperson, announced on June 22, 2026, that Juma Khan had been removed as Zabul Deputy Governor; without being assigned a new role. Mujahid added that Taliban Supreme

Leader Hibatullah Akhundzada had reshuffled several senior positions across government institutions. Moreover, as reported on July 9, Taliban forces established several checkpoints in the Shekay, Nusay and Maymay Districts in Badakhshan to monitor the movement of locals.

Badakhshan is a rugged and rocky, pre-dominantly non-Pashtun province in northeastern Afghanistan, rich in gold, silver, aluminium, limestone, lapis lazuli, etc. After their takeover in 2021, the Taliban leadership has been mistrustful of the local Taliban commanders of Tajik and other ethnic backgrounds. A major point of dispute has been the control of Badakhshan's rich mineral resources and mines. There have been frequent disputes between Taliban and local miners. For instance, on July 21, 2026, a number of mine workers gathered in front of Taliban's mining department building in Badakhshan, protesting against the Taliban's continued closure of mining sites, and saying that Taliban forces threatened and beat some workers and ignored their demands. According to the protesters, the situation had left hundreds of families facing serious financial hardship. Earlier, on May 9, 2026, eight people were injured after local miners and residents clashed with Taliban-affiliated forces over control of the Qatqati gold mine in the Shirin Nazm village of Shekay District in the province. The tensions began after Taliban beat several miners. Crucially, in order to take full control of mining sites, as reported on February 19, 2026, Hibatullah Akhundzada approved the deployment of 1,000 fighters to protect gold mining operations in Badakhshan. Subsequently, on July 23, 2026, Taliban's Ministry of Interior stated that it had signed an agreement with the Taliban's Ministry of Mines and Petroleum to provide security for four of Afghanistan's key economic projects, including the lapis lazuli mine of Badakhshan.

Badakhshan is in turmoil, substantially due to highhandedness and ethnic biases of the Taliban's central leadership. The perennial mistrust of non-Pashtuns, untamed greed in exploiting local resources without paying heed to the common people, the emergence of anti-Taliban forces, and the unapologetic nature of the Taliban is pushing Badakhshan deeper into distress and violence.



Nepal PM reaches out to Madhes parties as communal violence spreads in region

Kathmandu. Nepal Prime Minister Balendra Shah on Friday held meetings with Madhes-based political parties and lawmakers from the region over the communal unrest engulfing several districts in the country's southern province.

Three people have lost their lives so far in the violence engulfing the region. For long, Shah had avoided consultations with opposition political parties, addressing Parliament and even briefing President Ram Chandra Poudel regularly. His approach departed from the long-standing tradition of Nepal's parliamentary democracy, under which Prime Ministers consult opposition parties on major national issues, particularly during times of crisis. But communal violence in Madhes province bordering India has now forced him to break the silence he had maintained for weeks.

According to the Prime Minister's Secretariat, Shah invited the leaders to discuss ways to resolve the tensions that first surfaced in Sunsari district and later spread to several other Madhes districts, as well as measures to restore communal harmony.

During the meeting, the Prime Minister sought the leaders' views on maintaining law and order in Madhes and preventing similar incidents in the future.

The participating leaders said they had offered suggestions to address the problems in several Tarai districts and found the PM to be sensitive and committed to resolving the situation. The meeting was attended by Dr. C K Raut, Mahanta Thakur, Rajendra Mahato, Lalbabu Raut, Shamim Miya Ansari, Ram K Sharma, Prabhu Sah, Amaresh Kumar Singh, Sharat Singh Bhandari, Jayakant Raut and other leaders, most of whom represent political parties that are not represented in the House of

Representatives but have strong support in the crisis-hit region.

Speaking to journalists after the meeting, the leaders said such dialogue would play an important role in resolving the crisis.

Janamat Party Chair Raut described it as a very positive step that Shah had, for the first time, held discussions with Madhes-centric political parties. He said the leaders had also presented suggestions for resolving the problems in some southern Tarai districts. Earlier in the day, Shah also held a separate meeting with lawmakers representing the Madhes region, most of them from his own party, the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP). The discussions focused on the recent incidents in the region and the situation that has emerged in their aftermath.



Amid criticism over his alleged inaction in calming the situation in Madhes, Shah initiated political consultations with leaders representing the region, acknowledging them as key stakeholders.

The violence began on July 26 when localised clashes erupted between Hindu and Muslim groups in the Kaptanganj area of Dewanganj Rural Municipality-3 in Sunsari district. Hindu devotees carrying holy water for the Bolbam festival during the month of Saawan were heading toward Kaptanganj Chowk from the Koshi Barrage while playing loud DJ music.

According to police, some members of the Muslim community objected to the loud music, triggering an argument between the two sides. The dispute escalated into pushing and shoving before turning violent. During the operation, a youth identified as Om Prakash Mehta was killed after being struck by police gunfire.

The incident triggered a wave of protests and violence in other parts of Madhes, including Siraha district. Authorities imposed curfews in parts of Siraha and Janakpurdham in Dhanusha district, while prohibitory orders were issued in Parsa district, all of which border India. Curfews remained in force in all of these districts on Friday, while rallies calling for communal harmony were also organized in several parts of the country. Shah faced criticism from opposition parties, including those representing Madhes, over his alleged failure to address the nation promptly and take measures to restore communal harmony. Instead of the PM, RSP President Ravi Lamichhane convened an all-party meeting on Wednesday. Neither the Prime Minister nor the Home Minister attended the meeting, drawing strong criticism from opposition parties.

Opposition leaders criticised the PM both in Parliament and through press statements, saying he had failed to play the role of the nation's guardian during the crisis. As pressure mounted and the violence spread, Shah on Thursday addressed the nation, calling for calm and the preservation of communal harmony. He also briefed President Ram Chandra Poudel in

person on the evolving situation in Madhes and spoke with the Vice President by telephone. Meanwhile, RSP President Lamichhane held a meeting with Hindu and Muslim religious leaders to discuss ways to restore peace. Following the meeting with Lamichhane, leaders of religious organisations issued a joint appeal urging the public to remain calm and refrain from engaging in provocative or hateful activities or any actions that could disrupt social harmony.

"At a time when various vested interest groups are attempting to spread violence in the name of religion, we appeal to all citizens to exercise restraint and refrain from engaging in provocative or hateful activities or any actions that could disrupt social harmony," the joint statement issued by the Vishwa Hindu Mahasangh, Nepal, Al Salam Society, and Jamiat Ulema-e Nepal said. (agencies)

EU flags Pakistan's poor human rights record under GSP+ terms: Report

New Delhi. The European Union (EU) has raised serious concerns about Pakistan enjoying GSP+ benefits for its exports without matching accountability as Islamabad continues with repression of political opposition, restrictions on freedom of expression, enforced disappearances, and the use of military courts to try civilians, according to an article in the European Times.

The European Commission has stated in its final monitoring report under the current GSP regulation, covering the 2023-2025 period, that Pakistan has "regressed in a number of areas while positive change was limited."

Pakistan has benefited from duty free access to EU markets since 2014. This preferential status has been crucial, driving a 108 per cent increase in textile exports to Europe. In October 2023, the European Parliament unanimously extended GSP+ until 2027 for eligible developing countries, including Pakistan.

But the extension comes with sharper scrutiny. Beginning January 1, 2027, a new preferential trade framework will take effect. Pakistan will be required to reapply for GSP+, submit a written

plan of action, and secure Brussels' approval by the end of 2028.

The monitoring mission will closely examine Pakistan's record on the 27 conventions, with sustainability and governance requirements now more stringent than before, the report states.

The European Union's GSP+ (Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus) is a special trade incentive arrangement that slashes import duties to zero per cent for vulnerable developing countries. In return, these nations must effectively implement key international conventions.

For Pakistan, maintaining GSP+ status is critical to keeping export costs low, particularly for apparel, home textiles, and surgical instruments. Yet, the message from Brussels is clear: trade concessions will no longer be unconditional. Pakistan must demonstrate genuine progress on rights, governance, and compliance - or risk losing one of its most vital economic lifelines.

The report observed that Pakistan has "been facing compliance issues with its GSP+ obligations" and that continued access to the EU's preferential trade regime will depend on tangible improvements

in areas where concerns persist. Key priorities include accountability for human rights violations, stronger efforts against torture, prison and capital punishment reforms, and reversing negative trends in enforced disappearances and restrictions on freedom of expression, the report said.

The commission said the report was "shaped by persistent complaints about the integrity of the 2024 electoral process, harsh measures against opposition party leaders and supporters, and further increased military influence", also touched upon the situation of political rights. (agencies)

Israel says dismantled several key underground tunnels in southern Lebanon

Jerusalem. The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) on Friday said that it has dismantled several underground tunnels under the Beaufort Ridge in southern Lebanon.

According to an IDF statement, the tunnel network served as a central command centre from which Hezbollah terrorists directed fire towards IDF soldiers and people of Israel. While sharing the video of the tunnel on X, the IDF stated, "Dismantled: Several key underground tunnels in the tunnel network beneath the Beaufort Ridge in southern Lebanon. The tunnel network served as a central command center from which Hezbollah terrorists directed fire toward IDF soldiers & Israeli civilians. It's a strategic Hezbollah stronghold, consisting of several underground levels that were built over the course of two decades."

In another statement shared on X, the IDF said that soldiers dismantled structures that were used by Hezbollah.

"Found in the heart of civilian infrastructure, Kalashnikov rifles, magazines, ammunition, grenades, explosives, explosive devices, anti-tank missiles and mortar shells in the area of Majdal Zoun. In addition, troops dismantled structures that had been used by Hezbollah," the IDF posted on X.

On Wednesday, the IDF said that it has dismantled an underground tunnel that served as a headquarters for Hezbollah, located about 300 metres from a United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) building, beneath a factory developing construc-



tion materials.

In a post on X, the IDF wrote, "Dismantled: An underground tunnel route that served as a headquarters for Hezbollah, located 300 metres from a UNIFIL building, beneath a factory producing construction materials. The tunnel was ~55 meters long and contained 3 living quarters. Additionally, soldiers located an underground shaft connected to the route containing dozens of weapons."

In another statement, the IDF mentioned that it found Kalashnikov rifles, rocket-propelled grenade (RPGs), explosive devices, grenades, magazines and additional military equipment in the area of the Security Zone. "Additionally, IDF soldiers identified a suspect in the Ras Bayada area who approached the soldiers in a manner that posed a threat to them. The soldiers fired toward him in order to remove the threat," the IDF mentioned in a post on X.

The latest attacks have been reported before the next round of US-led talks between Israel and Lebanon. The talks between the two nations are set to be held in Rome from August 4 to 6, with technical teams seeking to advance a framework for an eventual peace and security agreement, the State Department said.

The discussions will focus on expanding a pilot zone in southern Lebanon, settling outstanding border disputes and moving towards full implementation of the framework agreement signed by the two countries last month.

"We are entering these discussions with significant momentum following the successful launch of the first pilot zone in southern Lebanon and President Aoun's productive meeting with President Trump last week," a State Department official said.

The Rome meeting will bring together technical groups from Israel and Lebanon. The United States has been brokering the talks between the two neighbours.

"In Rome, technical groups will focus on advancing the full implementation of the framework agreement," the official said. "That includes expanding the pilot zone process, resolving all outstanding border issues, and working on a comprehensive peace and security agreement." (agencies)

Bangladesh: Mob violence, political clashes claimed 74 lives between April-June

Dhaka. At least 33 people were killed in mob attacks in Bangladesh while political violence across the country claimed 41 lives and left 970 others injured between April and June this year, local media reported citing a quarterly report released by Dhaka-based human rights group 'Odhikar'.

In its report, Odhikar mentioned that most victims of mob attacks were beaten to death on suspicion of theft or robbery, and others were killed during informal village arbitration or over accusations of hurting religious sentiments.

The rights body noted that the incidents reflected the persistent erosion of public trust in law enforcement and the justice system, resulting in people taking the law into their own hands, Bangladesh's leading newspaper 'The Daily Star' reported.

As per the findings, there were 57 incidents of internal conflict within the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and two within the National Citizen Party (NCP). It added that the BNP infighting left four people dead and 400 injured, while 16 were injured in NCP internal clashes.

According to the report, the internal BNP conflicts were largely driven by disputes over extortion, territorial dominance, the sale of excavated soil, local election nominations, party conferences and political programmes. It added that firearms and other lethal weapons were used in several of the incidents.

The rights group alleged that BNP leaders and activists engaged in a range of criminal activities, including extortion, land grabbing, abduction, rape, attacks on educa-

tional institutions and government offices, interference with police work, and assaults on political opponents, The Daily Star reported.

The report recorded 255 rape victims during the quarter, comprising 93 women and 161 girls. It said the delivery of justice in rape cases continues to remain slow due to inadequate DNA testing facilities, delayed medical reports, the absence of legal protections for victims and witnesses, and court backlogs.

Expressing concerns over extrajudicial killings by Bangladeshi authorities, the report documented three such incidents. It alleged that one person was tortured to death by Bangladesh's Detective Branch personnel, another was beaten to death during a Department of Narcotics Control operation, and a fisherman was shot dead by a Forest Department patrol team.

The report noted that Bangladesh's 75 prisons held over 85,000 inmates as of May 17, despite having a capacity of only 43,157.

According to the report, 16 prisoners reportedly died from illness during the quarter, noting that overcrowding, inadequate nutrition and a shortage of doctors continued to deny inmates adequate healthcare.

The report documented multiple incidents targeting journalists, with 17 injured, five assaulted, four attacked, and seven threatened while carrying out their professional duties.

Odhikar called for an independent probe into alleged extrajudicial killings, custodial torture and other abuses by Bangladesh's law enforcement agencies, while calling for those responsible to be held accountable. (agencies)

Italy PM Meloni threatens to suspend Schengen area with Spain over Ceuta migration crisis

Rome. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has announced that Rome was ready to take "extraordinary measures" to defend Italy's borders and the safety of citizens, including through the suspension of the Schengen area with Spain. In a statement shared on X, Meloni stressed that the images coming from Ceuta are "striking" and once again demonstrate that uncontrolled illegal immigration poses a threat to the security of Europe's borders. "The images coming from Ceuta are striking and demonstrate, once again, that uncontrolled illegal immigration poses a concrete threat to the security of Europe's borders. I have spoken with Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi. Italy will not stand by and watch," Meloni posted on X.

"We are convening the relevant bodies, and following these meetings, we are prepared to intervene with extraordinary measures to defend the borders and the safety of citizens, including the suspension of the Schengen Area with Spain. On illegal immigration, we will not yield an inch: defending the borders, stopping human traffickers, and ensuring effective repatriations will continue to be the line of this Government," she added. Italian



Deputy Prime Minister Antonio Tajani also made a similar call. In a statement, Tajani termed the Spanish government's decision to grant Spanish and European citizenship to more than 500,000 irregular immigrants "profoundly wrong" and expressed his support for closing the Schengen Area to Spain.

"I am in favor of closing the Schengen Area to Spain and have full confidence in Minister Piantedosi's actions. Irregular and uncontrolled immigration poses a danger to national security. The images coming from Ceuta show how the Madrid Government's decision to grant Spanish, and therefore European, citizenship to over 500,000 irregular immigrants is profoundly wrong and encourages human trafficking," Tajani posted on X. Italian leadership's statement came as hundreds

of people travelled from Morocco to Ceuta by swimming or using inflatable devices to reach Tarajal beach on Thursday. Meanwhile, Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares described Tajani's statement as "unbecoming" and announced that he has summoned Italy's ambassador.

In response to Tajani's post on X, Albares stated, "This message is unbecoming of the Foreign Minister of a partner and friendly country from which we expect European solidarity and not partisan demagoguery. Today's events are related to a court ruling, having nothing to do with what the tweet says. I have summoned the Italian Ambassador tomorrow." After many migrants reached Ceuta by swimming, Spain on Thursday announced that it would dispatch additional army in Ceuta to reinforce security. Euro News reported. As many as nine people reportedly died while trying to reach Ceuta. Spain's decision comes after Ceuta's regional president urged Madrid to announce a national emergency and take control of the situation in the autonomous city, stating that local authorities were overwhelmed by an increase in illegal crossings. (agencies)

China hacked US voter data, says White House

Washington. The White House released a fact sheet asserting that declassified US intelligence documents show the People's Republic of China and its proxies obtained the voter registration data of as many as 220 million Americans, including information that was not publicly available. The fact sheet was issued by the White House Government Transparency Task Force and said it had been approved by the directors of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, the National Security Agency, the Central Intelligence Agency and the Department of Homeland Security. It relates to President Donald Trump's recent declassification of intelligence documents concerning foreign election activities.

According to the fact sheet, "The People's Republic of China (China) and their proxies bought, stole, or hacked as many as 220 million Americans' voter registration data. China's collection included non-publicly avail-

able data." The White House also released what it described as the Intelligence Community's official definition of "election interference", saying the newly declassified documents distinguish it from the broader category of election influence. According to the released definition: "Election influence includes overt and covert influence activities of foreign governments or actors serving as agents of, or on behalf of, foreign governments intended to affect directly or indirectly a US election- including candidates, political parties, voters or their preferences, or political processes. Election interference is a subset of election influence targeted at the technical aspects of the election, including voter registration, casting and counting of ballots, and reporting of results."

The administration said the definition explicitly includes efforts by a foreign power targeting voter registration infrastructure or voter registration data.

The fact sheet further stated that Intelligence Community

documents from 2022 identified a Chinese Computer Network Exploitation (CNE) actor as having acquired voter registration data stored on commercial websites. According to the White House, CNE actors generally use cyber operations to obtain information that is not publicly available. The declassified material also outlines what intelligence agencies describe as the possible risks once a foreign adversary gains access to such information.

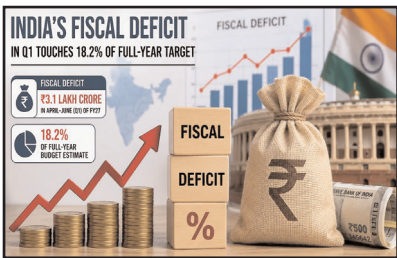
Quoting directly from the documents, the White House said: "Adversaries could alter data to potentially prevent individual voters or groups of voters from voting, causing delays on election day or forcing voters to use provisional ballots. Adversaries could also use the registration data which in some cases is also available publicly or for purchase - to tailor other interference or influence efforts."

The White House also disclosed details of the inter-agency process behind President

Trump's July 16, 2026 speech on what the administration described as China's election interference activities. It said representatives from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, the Department of Homeland Security, the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation coordinated with the White House in preparing the President's remarks.

According to the fact sheet, "The Intelligence Agencies approved the factual statements from their documents used in the President's speech." The release marks the latest step by the Trump administration to publicise newly declassified intelligence material concerning foreign activities targeting US elections. The administration has argued that making the documents public provides greater transparency into intelligence assessments related to election security and foreign cyber operations. (agencies)

India's fiscal deficit in Q1 touches 18.2 per cent of full year target



Mumbai, Indian benchmark equity indices extended their gains for a third consecutive session on Friday, supported by buying in auto and financial services stocks, even as information technology shares witnessed profit booking after a recent rally.

The Sensex climbed 166.49 points, or 0.21 per cent, to settle at 78,094.64, while the Nifty advanced 66.49 points, or 0.27 per cent, to close at 24,383.60. "On the downside, the 24,300 level now acts as immediate support, followed by the 24,200 zone. Holding above these levels will be important to preserve the ongoing recovery structure, while a close below 24,200 could trigger a fresh profit booking toward lower support levels," an analyst stated. Among the top performers on the Nifty were Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv and Jio Financial Services, which led the gains amid sustained buying interest in financial stocks.

The broader market also ended on a positive note with the Nifty MidCap and Nifty SmallCap indices each rising 0.44 per cent. On the sectoral front, auto stocks outperformed the broader market, lending significant support to the headline indices. FMCG stocks also remained among the stronger performers during the session. In contrast, the Nifty IT index underperformed and snapped its five-session winning streak as investors booked profits despite continued strength in global chip stocks. Experts said that positive momentum continued, although some profit booking emerged at higher levels as caution persisted amid elevated yields and potential rate-hike concerns. "The sustainability of the recovery will depend largely on the ongoing earnings season, which is currently outperforming forecasts, and on a reduction in global risks," an analyst stated. "As the earnings season gathers pace, markets will seek confirmation that the recent improvement in earnings is broad-based rather than concentrated in a few sectors," a market expert mentioned. (agencies)

under the expansion proposals will remain co-terminus with the maximum permissible concession period of the existing facility.

For the first time, the policy also provides a framework for awarding waterfront and associated land to eligible government organisations without resorting to competitive bidding, subject to availability and prescribed safeguards. Eligible entities include Central and state government departments, statutory authorities, autonomous bodies, Central and state public sector undertakings and government controlled joint ventures operating in sectors such as fertilisers, food, petroleum, oil and gas, coal, steel and other sectors notified by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways. The concessions will be awarded at the notified floor price, the statement said.(agencies)

New Delhi, Elon Musk-backed Tesla on Friday announced that the newly launched 2026 Model Y Premium Rear-Wheel Drive is now available for test drives across its experience centres in India. Along with that, the EV maker also rolled out Grok - its AI-powered assistant - for Tesla owners in the nation. The electric vehicle maker said Grok, developed by xAI, is being introduced alongside Tesla's existing suite of AI-driven technologies available on the Model Y Premium Rear-Wheel Drive and Model Y L through over-the-air (OTA) software updates. According to the company, the AI assistant can be activated by saying 'Hey Grok' or by long-pressing the voice button on the steering wheel.

It supports multiple Indian languages, including Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Telugu, Tamil and Kannada, it added. Tesla said Grok enables voice-based trip planning, hyperlocal location search, vehicle alert explanations and personalised interactions aimed at improving the ownership experience. The 2026 Model Y Premium Rear-Wheel Drive offers up to 2,138 litres of storage space, seating for five passengers and power-folding rear seats. The vehicle accelerates from 0-100 km/h in 5.9 seconds and offers a driving range of up to 500 km (WLTP). Starting priced at Rs 50.89 lakh, the model is available with a down payment of Rs 6 lakh and monthly EMI starting from Rs 39,990. In addition, customers placing orders before August 30 will receive a complimentary Wall Connector, while home charging support is available across all states, the company said. The company further said it more than doubled its onsite AI training compute capacity in Texas during the first half of 2026, with the infrastructure supporting the development of autonomous driving software and humanoid robotics. Earlier in the week, it announced that it expanded its after-sales network in India by opening its first approved body shop in Pune, Maharashtra. (agencies)

mand for its Galaxy A-series and a flagship phone model lineup.

Among other leading brands, Xiaomi's revenue fell 17 per cent, while OPPO and vivo reported declines of 10 per cent and 11 per cent, respectively, as higher prices failed to offset weaker shipments in entry- and mid-range segments.

Looking ahead, the report said memory shortages and rising component costs are expected to persist, prompting smartphone makers to further increase prices and focus on higher-value devices, while industry shipments are likely to face greater pressure in the second half of 2026, (agencies)

A mother and PhD scholar: Meet CWG bronze medallist discus thrower Seema Kaliramna

New Delhi, Seema Kaliramna, a daughter of a former basketball player and javelin thrower in the Indian Army, won the bronze medal in women's discus throw at the Commonwealth Games 2026 in Glasgow on Thursday, taking India's tally in athletics up to four.

The 27-year-old athlete had only two valid throws in six rounds as she repeatedly had the disc entangled in the side netting. The podium marked the first major international medal for Seema, who is also a PhD aspirant and a mother of a four-year-old boy Rudra.

Motherhood, in fact, has coincided with Seema's growth into a top athlete. Before her son Rudra was born in 2022, her personal best was 48.08m. She returned to competitive discus throw after 11 months break in 2024 and improved it to 57.19m before hitting 59.73m at the



Indian Championships in Bhubaneshwar earlier this year.

Seema, who is coached by her husband Ravinder Kaliramna, who is one of India's leading discus throw athletes and had won gold medals in the discus throw at the Indian U-18 and U-20 championships, is pursuing a Ph.D. in Physical Education at Chaudhary Bansi Lal University (CBLU), Bhiwani,

alongside her sporting career.

Her athletic career faced a major setback when a serious knee injury sidelined her for more than three years. Through extensive rehabilitation and perseverance, Seema made a successful return to competition and re-established herself among the country's top discus throwers.

She won the gold medal at the 2025 National Games and later claimed the national title. Her comeback was highlighted by winning the gold medal at the 2026 South Asian Athletics Championships and delivering a series of strong performances on the national circuit. In 2026, Seema achieved a personal best throw of 59.73m, emerging as one of India's top performers in the event and securing qualification for the 2026 Asian Games as well as selection to India's Commonwealth Games squad. (agencies)

'We are not able to eat food properly,' boxer Preeti on cutting weight after entering 54kg final

Glasgow, Indian boxer Preeti Pawar opened up about the gruelling process of weight cutting before the crucial bout after securing her spot in the women's 54 kg final of the Commonwealth Games, describing the process as tough as the players don't get to eat but stating that it motivates her to progress further and win the medal.

Preeti Pawar became the first Indian boxer to book a place in the final on Friday, defeating Zambia's Catherine Mwape 5-0 in the women's semifinal. She will face Canada's Scarlett Delgado in the final.

Reflecting on the tough preparation required ahead of crucial bouts, Preeti shared, "It is a part of our training. It motivates us. It is a little tough because we are not able to eat food properly. But it motivates us that we are one step away from the final." semifinal victory followed another impressive



performance in the Round of 16, where Preeti advanced after the referee stopped the contest in the second round against Malawi's Mtenje and a dominant unanimous decision victory over Nicole Clyde of Northern Ireland in the quarterfinal.

In the semifinal, both Preeti and Catherine started evenly, but the Indian quickly took control using her sharp jabs and strong lefts. Mwape was forced to take her first standing eight-count. Mwape kept pushing forward, but Preeti stayed calm and outmanoeuvred her. After landing several sharp combinations and a solid right hand,

Preeti forced two more standing counts on the Zambian. Preeti moved smoothly around the ring and landed clean body shots to handle Mwape's aggression to secure the win. The win in the semifinal guaranteed her at least a silver medal. "I am very happy that I have secured a silver medal for India. I will give my best tomorrow in the final bout. I will win the gold for India. There is a lot of support from the Indian Army, BFI, SAI and JSW Sports.

Preeti, who became the first woman athlete in the country to be directly inducted into the Indian Army at the rank of Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO) last year, also expressed her gratitude to the Indian Army for their continuous support. "I am very grateful to the Indian Army. They chose me, and I will give my best. I will make all Indians and soldiers proud," she added. (agencies)

'My job is to execute every phase of my jump well,' says Praveen Chithravel

New Delhi, India's national record holder Praveen Chithravel says he is focused on executing every phase of his jump and trusting his preparation rather than thinking about the outcome as he gears up for the men's triple jump final at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

Chithravel, who qualified for Saturday's final after producing a best effort of 16.41 metres in the qualification round, enters the medal event with unfinished business, having missed the podium by just three centimetres at the Birmingham Commonwealth Games four years ago.

Reflecting on that disappointment, the Asian Games bronze medallist said the experience helped shape his growth as an athlete.

"Missing the medal in Birmingham by such a small margin taught me a lot. Since then, every season has been about becoming a better athlete technically, physically and



mentally. I don't want to think too much about results before the competition. My job is to execute every phase of my jump well, stay calm and trust the work I've put in. If I can do that, I know the performance will come," said Chithravel.

The 23-year-old, who trains at the Inspire Institute of Sport (IIS) in Ballari under Cuban coach Yoandri Betanzos, credited the high-performance environment for helping him improve the finer aspects of his

event. "Triple jump is an event where the smallest details make a big difference. At IIS, I have the opportunity to work on those details every single day. Whether it's technical feedback after a session, strength work, recovery or nutrition, everything comes together in one place. Living on campus means I can stay fully focused on training, and that consistency has really helped me improve as an athlete," he said.

Looking ahead to the final, Chithravel said his priority remains continuous improvement.

"I'm always trying to improve, whether it's by a few centimetres or by becoming a better athlete overall. Every competition teaches you something new, and every season is a chance to move closer to the level I want to reach. Right now, my focus is on giving my best in Glasgow, enjoying the competition and making every jump count," he said. (agencies)

CWG 2026: Seema wins bronze in Women's Discus Throw, Tajinderpal, Parul fail to medal

Glasgow, Seema Kaliramna won a bronze medal for India in Women's Discus Throw with a best effort of 58.65m in the Commonwealth Games 2026 at Glasgow on Thursday night.

Seema had only two valid throws in six rounds as she repeatedly had the disc entangled in the side netting on the wild night. After starting with a foul, Seema reached 57.32m and then threw to 58.65 before ending her campaign with three foul throws. But the 58.65m was enough to earn her a bronze medal.

Another Indian, Nidhi Rani, ended fourth with a distance of

57.10m as Samantha Hall of Jamaica made history by winning the maiden gold medal for her country in discus throw. Julia Tunks of Canada took the silver medal with a throw of 60.67m.

Meanwhile, there were setbacks for India in track and field competitions with two-time Asian Games gold medallist Tajinderpal Singh Toor failing to medal in the men's shot put event and finishing fifth on Thursday night.

Toor, who won gold medals in the 2018 Jakarta and the 2022



Hangzhou Asian Games, managed to produce a best throw of 20.27m in the third round and could not better it in the last three rounds and had to be satisfied with a fifth-place finish.

The 31-year-old Toor, who has a personal best of 21.77m, opened with a throw of 20.06m. After reaching 19.98m in the second round,

Tajinderpal Singh heaved the iron ball to 20.27m. In the fourth, fifth and sixth rounds, he made throws of 19.93m, 20.26m and 19.79m to eventually end without a medal.

Chukwuebuka Enekwechi of Nigeria secured the shot put title with a throw of 21.07m while New Zealand's Tom Walsh got silver and Scott Lincoln of England bagged the bronze.

Meanwhile, in the Women's 5000m, India's Asian Games gold medallist Parul Chaudhary finished 13th with a timing of 15 minutes 08.56 seconds.

Australia's Rose Davies won the gold medal, finishing the race first with a timing of 14:44.53, with her compatriot Jessica Hull taking the silver medal in 14:45.01. Megan Keith of Scotland took the bronze medal by finishing third in 14:49.10. All three of the medallists produced season-best efforts to take the three spots on the podium.

The 19-year-old Sheriauna Haas of Canada thundered to victory in the Women's 100m T47 race, with compatriot Chloe Dunbar just behind. The pair powered past favourite Anna Grimaldi of New Zealand, who had to settle for bronze.

FIH WC: Mandeep, Abhishek and Lakra highlight importance of consistency and chemistry

New Delhi, As the Indian men's hockey team gears up for the FIH Hockey World Cup 2026, forwards Mandeep Singh, Abhishek and Shilana Lakra have underlined the importance of chemistry, consistency, teamwork and meticulous preparation as they look to spearhead India's campaign at the marquee event. The FIH Hockey World Cup, to be jointly hosted by Belgium and the Netherlands from August 15 to 30, will see India begin their campaign in Pool D against Wales on August 15 before taking on England and arch-rivals Pakistan. Veteran striker Mandeep Singh, who is set to feature in his fourth World Cup, said he has now taken on the responsibility of mentoring the younger forwards after learning from senior players earlier in his career.

"When I was younger, I used to ask a lot of questions to the senior players. I learnt a great deal from them, and now I try to pass on those experiences to the younger forwards. We talk about handling pressure, staying calm and making the right decisions in big matches," he said.

Highlighting the team's preparation, Mandeep added, "Our sessions as forwards are very specific. We spend a lot of time working inside the last nine yards, focusing on creating the right connections and making sure every attack has an outcome. We've also worked extensively on receiving the final pass and converting our chances." "A good striker is never just focused on scoring goals. Hockey is a team game, and the better your understanding and connection with your teammates, the more effective you'll be. Every time we enter the circle, our aim is to create an outcome, whether that's a goal, a shot on target or winning a penalty corner," he explained. Shilana and Lakra, who is preparing for his

maiden FIH World Cup appearance, credited the senior players, especially Mandeep, for helping him adapt to the demands of international hockey. "Whenever I make a mistake, the senior players tell me where I can improve. Mandeep always motivates me and guides me. Those conversations help me keep learning and focus on getting better," said Lakra.

The 27-year-old also emphasised that the role of a modern-day forward extends beyond scoring goals. "My focus is always on what I can do best for the team. Whether it's creating opportunities, scoring goals or making tackles, I try to contribute in every way I can. As a forward, it's not just about scoring anymore. We are the first line of defence, and if we defend well, we make life easier for our defenders and midfielders," he said.

Abhishek, one of India's most consistent goalscorers in recent years, said sustained success begins with hard work away from the ball. "For a striker, consistency starts without the ball. Off-the-ball movement and pressing are extremely important because the striker is the first line of defence. Once we win possession, the next step is building a connection with the other forwards, and then comes finishing the move, whether that's scoring a goal, getting a shot on target or winning a penalty corner." He also stressed the importance of mental preparation in high-pressure situations. "Composure inside the circle comes from training. Without putting in the hard work during practice, you can't expect to make the right decisions in those situations. We also work on the mental side through meditation and experience. The more you play, the calmer you become when those opportunities come your way," he stated.

Jr & Sub-jr Women Academy C'ship: Pritam Siwach, Khalsa and Raja Karan hockey gain big win

Gwalior, Pritam Siwach Hockey Academy (Sonepat), Sports Hockey Academy of Khalsa's Kolkata and Raja Karan Hockey Academy registered wins in the 4th Hockey India Sub Junior Women Academy Championship 2026 - Zone A & B in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, on Friday.

In the 4th Hockey India Junior Women Academy Championship 2026 - Zone A & B, which is being held concurrently, Khalsa Hockey Academy (Amritsar), Pritam Siwach Hockey Academy (Sonepat), Ritu Rani Hockey Academy and Madhya Pradesh Hockey Academy emerged victorious in their respective group matches. In Pool A of the 4th Hockey India Sub Junior Women Academy Championship 2026 - Zone A & B, Pritam Siwach Hockey Academy, Sonepat registered a com-

manding 20-1 victory over Hockey Family Badkhalsa NCR Hockey Society. Diya starred with five goals, while Mauki and Captain Aarti scored four goals each to lead Pritam Siwach Hockey Academy, Sonepat's dominant performance. Tannu scored two goals, while the remaining goals came through Chanchal, Akshra Dutta, Navya, Bhumi and Avni as Pritam Siwach Hockey Academy, Sonepat cruised to victory. Captain Simran Kaur scored the lone goal for Hockey Family Badkhalsa NCR Hockey Society.

In Pool B of the event, Sports Hockey Academy of Khalsa's Kolkata defeated R K Roy Hockey Academy 2-0. Ritu and Khushi Mallick scored one goal each to guide Sports Hockey Academy of Khalsa's Kolkata to victory.

In another Pool B fixture of the

sub-junior event, Raja Karan Hockey Academy registered a 25-0 victory over Mumbai Schools Sports Association. Tanvi starred with ten goals, while Riya scored eight goals and Sonika added seven goals to lead Raja Karan Hockey Academy's dominant performance and cruise to victory.

Meanwhile, in Pool A of the 4th Hockey India Junior Women Academy Championship 2026 - Zone A & B, Khalsa Hockey Academy (Amritsar) registered a 20-1 victory over Hockey Family Badkhalsa NCR Hockey Society.

Devi Archana starred with six goals, while Laxmi scored five goals and Kaur Anjot scored a hat-trick to lead Khalsa Hockey Academy (Amritsar)'s dominant performance. Kaur Jashandeep and Sharma Bhumika scored two goals each,



the ball into the path of Crispin C. Cleetus, who unleashed a stunning left-footed strike from outside the penalty area. The effort flew beyond the diving Aaryan Anjaneya and nestled into the top corner to level the scores.

Samaleswari, however, regained the lead in first-half stoppage time. Basit Ahmed Bhat's long free-kick into the penalty area struck Krizo on the thigh before looping over the stranded Baghpatt goalkeeper Ayan Bhattacharya and into the back of the net, restoring the advantage for the Odisha outfit just before the interval.

The second half belonged almost entirely to Samaleswari Sporting, who controlled possession and dictated the tempo. Their dominance was rewarded in the 56th minute when Basit Ahmed Bhat extended the lead, meeting substitute Veer Arjun Joshi's corner with a composed finish to make it 3-1.

Five minutes later, Basit struck again to put the result beyond doubt. A well-worked short-corner routine between Veer Arjun Joshi and fellow substitute Cris Nowang Sherpa created the opening, with Sherpa delivering an inviting cross into the box. Basit timed his run to perfection and powered a looping header beyond the goalkeeper to complete his brace and make it 4-1.

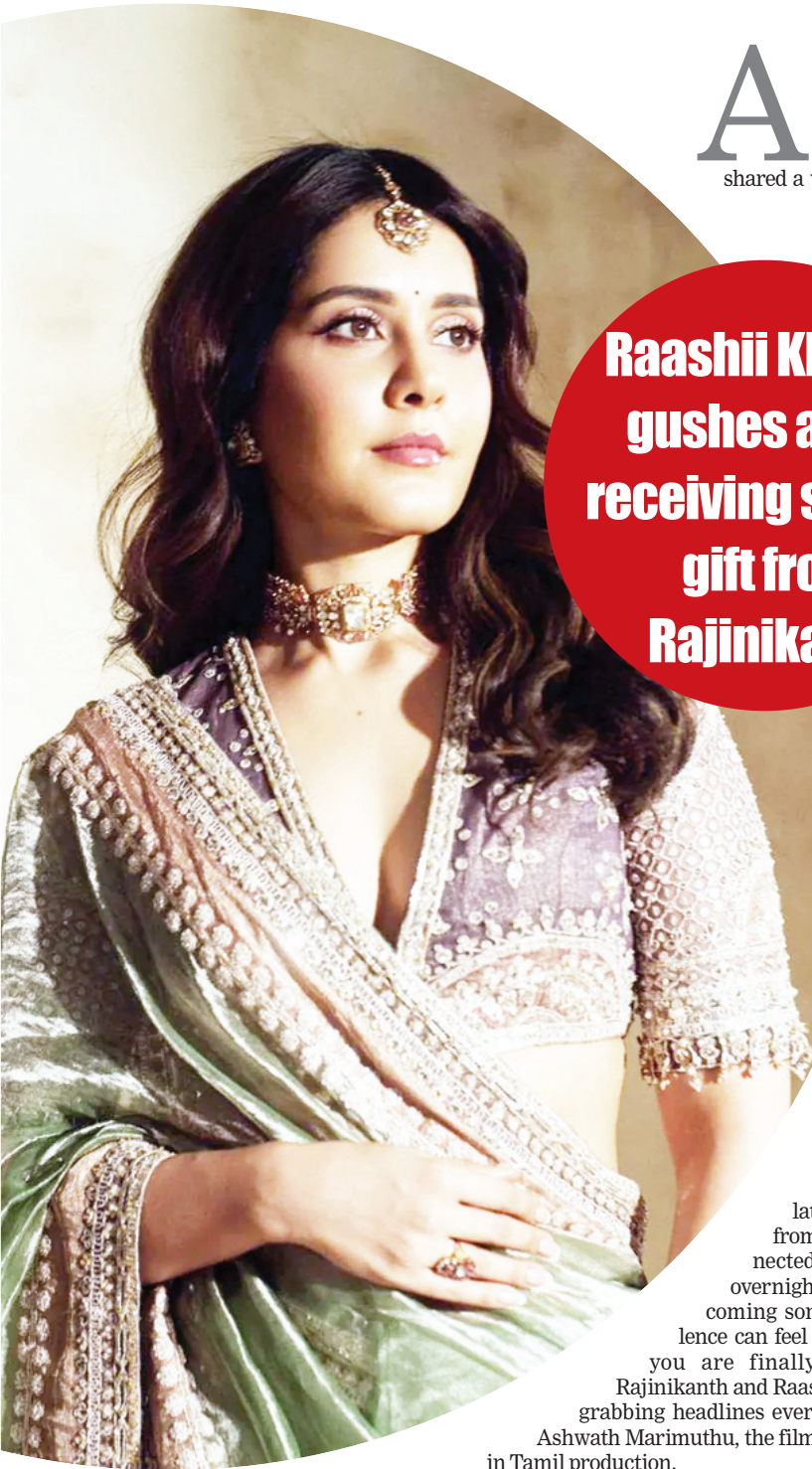
With a comfortable three-goal advantage, Samaleswari eased the tempo and controlled the remainder of the contest. They dominated possession, frustrated Baghpatt's attempts to mount a comeback and limited the debutants to very few openings in the final third.

The Odisha-based side nearly added a fifth goal in the 90th minute when Armand Bazie tried his luck from long range, but the Ivorian's powerful effort drifted narrowly wide of the target. Samaleswari comfortably negotiated the five minutes of added time to secure a convincing and thoroughly deserved victory.

Tomorrow's matches:

Shillong Lajong FC vs Ningkhseh SS & CC (Group A), 5:00 PM, Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium

East Bengal FC vs CISF Protectors (Group A), 7:30 PM, Kishore Bharati Krirangan (KBK), Kolkata (agencies)



Raashii Khanna gushes about receiving special gift from Rajinikanth

Actress Raashii Khanna, who was last seen in 'The Sabarmati Report', received a special gift from Tamil superstar Rajinikanth. On Friday, the actress took to her Instagram, and shared a video of herself talking to the camera. In the video, she explained how she received the thoughtful gift 'Living with the Himalayan Masters' while working with Thalaiva on the sets of her upcoming film 'Dharman'. The actress said that the book offered her a reflection into her inner self and the reason why there is a stark disconnection between people. She said, "Living with the Himalayan Masters found me in a very special way. I was on the sets of Dharman, shooting with Rajinikanth sir. During one of our conversations, we ended up talking about spirituality. He asked me if I had read this book; I hadn't. Two days later, he brought a copy and gifted it to me. I have been reading it diligently over the last couple of weeks because he also mentioned that he would test me on it. Anyway, I love it already, and every now and then, I come across a page that makes me stop".

Revealing her key takeaway from her latest read, she said, "What I took away from this is why so many of us feel disconnected. Not because we have lost ourselves overnight but because we have spent years becoming someone else. And maybe that's why silence can feel so loud. Because without distractions, you are finally left with yourself". Meanwhile, Rajinikanth and Raashi Khanna-starrer 'Dharman' has been grabbing headlines ever since it was announced. Directed by Ashwath Marimuthu, the film is one of the most anticipated releases in Tamil production.

Manushi Chhillar recalls emotional toll of retaking medical entrance exam after 2015 paper leak

Actress and former doctor Manushi Chhillar opened up about the emotional and mental challenges of retaking the medical entrance examination after the 2015 paper leak. The actress in a heartfelt conversation with Soha Ali Khan during the latest episode of the latter's YouTube talk show, All About Her, opened up about the emotional turmoil she had to go through and also explained how tough the entrance exam is. The episode, featuring Manushi alongside renowned psychiatrist Dr. Anjali Chhabria, explored the immense pressure surrounding India's competitive entrance examinations, academic burnout, anxiety, and emotional resilience.

During the conversation, Soha asked Manushi, "I want to take you back to 2015, if I may. You had prepared for months, secured a good rank, and done well in the exam. What was it like to be told that the exam had been cancelled and that you had to prepare all over again?" Reflecting on the experience, Manushi said, "There are two aspects to this, one is my personal experience, and the other is understanding the reality that most students in the country face. I had parents who had gone through the same journey years ago, so I was mentally prepared for the process. But it was still incredibly difficult because I had to sacrifice everything that brought me joy. I was a Kuchipudi dancer; I loved painting, and I had to put all of that aside for a year to focus en-

tirely on my entrance exam." She added, "While it was one of the toughest phases of my life, I realised it wasn't the hardest compared to what many other students were going through. I met students whose parents had borrowed beyond their means to send them to coaching centres. Many had moved cities, lived in cramped PG accommodations, and spent every single day preparing for one exam."

Speaking about the aftermath of the paper leak, the actress shared, "When you're told that after months of preparation you have to continue for another 45 days, you wonder how much more you have left to give. But I also recognise that I had immense privilege and support." Manushi credited her parents for helping her maintain balance during the preparation period.

"One thing my parents insisted on was an hour of exercise every day, no matter what. Whether it was basketball or going to the gym, it gave me an outlet, helped me stay connected to people outside the exam bubble, and protected my mental health. Many of my peers didn't have that luxury. Some had already returned to their hometowns after their accommodation leases ended, losing the environment they needed to continue preparing," she said.



'Bhai Tera Star Hai' actress Niharika NM reveals why Sai Pallavi inspires her

Actress and content creator Niharika NM has opened up about her admiration for South actress Sai Pallavi. Speaking exclusively, Niharika NM revealed that Sai Pallavi continues to inspire her. She praised the actress for her simplicity, beauty, talent and dignified personality, adding that these qualities make her stand out. Niharika also shared her admiration for several other celebrated actresses, including Tabu and Sridevi. She called Tabu an evergreen performer and appreciated her acting and dancing skills.

Speaking about her latest release, 'Bhai Tera Star Hai,' Niharika revealed what made the project special for her: "I really liked the script. I found it very fun, and the cast and crew were also very fresh. It is a very young and new film. In today's time, I feel the comedies that are coming out are not making that much of an impact. So, when I read the



script as an audience member, I felt this was something I would genuinely enjoy. And if I like watching such films, I want to be a part of them. This is exactly that kind of film." Niharika added, "I had a lot of fun working with Raghav. It was fun both on-screen and off-screen. Yes, exactly, it was like that. What you see in two or three seconds is basically stretched out for hours while shooting. Matching his energy in the scenes also pushes you to perform better because he brings so much energy to every moment. If the scene is written with that kind of energy, you have to match his pace and enthusiasm, and it turns out great."

Directed by Vivek B. Agrawal, the film also features Raghav Juyal, Sanjay Kapoor, Barkha Singh, Chandan Roy Sanyal, Vivian Bhatena, Niki Aneja Walia, Vikalp Mehta, and others. 'Bhai Tera Star Hai' was released in theatres on July 30, 2026.

Vishal Mishra: I have struggled with sleep all my life

Known for belting out chart-busters such as Pehle Bhi Main, Kaisa Hua, Jaan Ban Gaye and Kya Bataun Tujhe, singer Vishal Mishra has spoken about his lifelong struggle with insomnia, revealing that sleep has never truly been his friend.

Vishal shared a video of him singing a track about sleep and playing the piano. He said that this particular song feels like a glimpse of the peace he has always longed for, adding that it represents his "safe dream."

He wrote: "I have struggled with sleep all my life, I need and I have never really been friends. But this song makes me wonder what it would feel like to sleep in complete peace finally. It feels like my safe dream. Sorry, this is a random thought, but to everyone who struggles with sleep... I feel you."



"(I have struggled with sleep all my life. Sleep and I have never really been friends. But this song makes me wonder what it would feel like to sleep in complete peace finally. It feels like my safe dream. Sorry, this is a random thought, but to everyone who struggles with sleep... I feel you.)"

Vishal first appeared in a reality show aired on DD National. He auditioned for the competition Indian Idol but was disqualified. The 35-year-old made his debut as a composer in 2016 with the Tamil film Devi.

In 2017, he composed the song "Jaane De", sung by Atif Aslam, featured on the

soundtrack of Qarib Qarib Single. He also composed songs for Munna Michael, which marked his singing debut, and the Marathi film FU: Friendship Unlimited.

He composed the "Rafta Rafta" melody for Yamla Pagla Deewana Phir Se, marking his first project of 2018. His music video features Salman Khan in a special appearance.

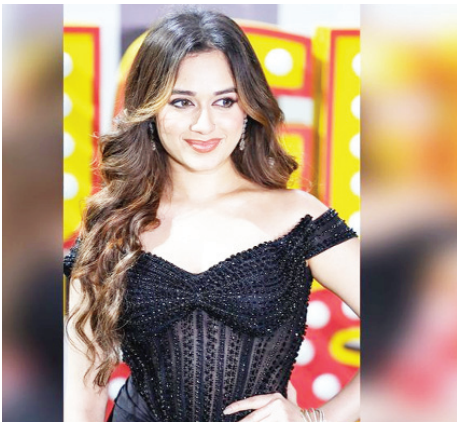
Vishal also composed the romantic song "Selfish", written by and starring Salman, for the action film Race 3, and the title track of Veere Di Wedding, starring Kareena Kapoor Khan, Sonam Kapoor, Swara Bhasker, and Shikha Talsania.

Vishal's first act as a solo composer for songs and score, came with the Salman Khan-produced romantic drama Notebook. He rose to fame with the hit song "Kaise Hua" from Kabir Singh.

Jannat Zubair talks about Shivangi Joshi's bond with Harshad Chopda: Looks like you two are together

Actress Jannat Zubair, who came as a visitor for her best friend Shivangi Joshi in "Lock Upp 2," gave her a reality check and addressed the growing speculation around her bond with actor Harshad Chopda. Jannat, during her visit to the Netflix show, was seen telling Shivangi that along with the outside world, those inside the house believe the two appear to be "together".

Jannat told Shivangi: "Don't cry now. What you have been doing in these past two or three weeks, just keep doing that. Whatever is happening at home or whatever you've come to know, don't think about what people outside are saying..." She went on to share that whatever is happening inside is exactly being shown to the outside world. The actress, who just won the third season of "Laughter Chef: Unlimited Fun" with partner Aly Goni, added:



"Whatever is going on between you and Harshad, that don't want that narrative that you and him are together; but you need to understand, it's not stupid that what's happening

inside is exactly what's being seen outside." "Forget about the people outside; even the people inside are telling you that it looks like you two are together. Understand that. And, he's a little too emotional. People tell him every week... You also cry..." Talking about Jannat, the 24-year-old actress, is best known for portraying Kashi in Kashi - Ab Na Rahe Tera Kagaz Kora, Phulwa in Phulwa, Phool Kunwar in Bharat Ka Veer Putra - Maharana Pratap and Pankti in Tu Aashiqui. In 2022, she was seen in the stunt-based show Fear Factor: Khatron Ke Khiladi 12.

Her most recent work includes "Glory" directed by Karan Anshuman. The series stars Divyendhu, Pulkit Samrat and Suvinder Vicky. The series was filmed mostly across Haryana. The story is set in a small-town boxing hub, where two brothers investigate a shocking murder while navigating a troubled reunion with their father, a renowned coach.

Karan Aanand on supernatural thriller 'LUPT': 'The film explores human emotions beyond fear'

Actor Karan Aanand has opened up about the supernatural thriller "LUPT" calling it a special project inspired by a true story. In an exclusive, he shared that the film goes beyond supernatural elements and explores human emotions, hidden fears and the impact of unresolved events from the past. Sharing his excitement about the film's digital premiere, Karan stated, "LUPT is a very special film because it is inspired by a true story, and that makes its journey even more intriguing and unsettling. When a story has its roots in real-life events, the fear and emotions feel much more relatable. The film is not only about supernatural experiences; it also explores human emotions, hidden fears and the im-



part of unresolved events from the past."

"Being part of LUPT was a memorable experience. I had the opportunity to work with an extremely talented and accomplished cast, and every character adds an important layer to the mystery. I am very happy that the film is now coming to WAVES OTT, where it can reach a much wider audience. I believe

viewers will enjoy the suspense, connect with the emotions, and remain curious about what happens next until the very end," he added. Directed by Prabhuraj, the upcoming thriller features a powerful ensemble cast including Jaaved Jaaferi, Vijay Raaz, Karan Aanand, Meenakshi Dixit, Rishabh Chadha, and Niki Aneja Walia. Inspired by real-life events, "LUPT" takes

viewers on a mysterious and unsettling journey where a family's seemingly ordinary trip turns into a terrifying experience. As strange and unexplained incidents begin to unfold, hidden secrets from the past slowly come to light, blurring the line between reality, fear, and the supernatural. Inspired by a true story, "LUPT" will stream on WAVES OTT from 31st July.