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Telangana Defence Hub By 2030: Revanth



Hyderabad: Octy 24Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy said the government would unveil the 'Telangana Aerospace and Defence Policy 2.0' to position the state as a national leader in aerospace and defence manufacturing, with a target of making Telangana India's aerospace and defence capital by 2030.

The policy would align with the Telangana Rising 2047 vision, he told the curtain-raiser for the Raksha Expo 2026 here on Saturday. Over 90 industry leaders, including representatives of global and national defence manufacturers and start-ups, attended the event.

Revanth Reddy invited industry leaders to Raksha Expo, to be held as part of the Invest Telangana Global Summit at Bharat Future City from December 7 to 9. He assured investors of fast-track approvals, land allotments and incentives through the single-window system, besides protection for their investments and a conducive business environment to help them double their profits.

He said the second edition of the Global Summit would be organised on a larger scale, with Raksha Expo serving as an international platform for defence, aerospace, space and security stakeholders to explore investment and technology opportunities.

Representatives of DRDO, HAL, BDL, Midhani, Tata, Airbus, Safran, Skyroot, Lockheed Martin and Bharat Forge were among those attending. The participation of major manufacturers, start-ups and experts would strengthen Telangana's industrial ecosystem, he said.

The Chief Minister said Hyderabad was strategically located, among the safest cities in the country and home to research institutions and strategic establishments of the Indian Army and Air Force. Though Telangana was the only landlocked state in southern India, it was providing important services to the Indian Navy. A very low frequency (VLF) naval radar station was being constructed in the Damagundam reserve forest in Vikarabad district.

Telangana had the talent and institutions required to support aerospace and defence manufacturing, including IITs, IIITs, NITs, ISB and BITS-Pilani. The government was establishing the Young India Skills University and had transformed ITIs into Advanced Training Centres (ATCs) to develop skilled manpower. Successful incubators in the state would also support startups and innovation, he said.

Revanth Reddy said India should move from importing defence technologies to exporting them and emerge as a global leader in the sector. Defence capabilities were essential not only to fight wars but also to preserve peace by deterring adversaries.

He called upon companies to increase their investment plans in Telangana and contribute to defence manufacturing and allied sectors such as space, aerospace, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence and drone technology. The government was ready to extend all necessary support to achieve the objective of making Telangana India's largest defence industrial hub, he said.

The Chief Minister said the Telangana Rising Vision 2047 aimed to make the state a $1 trillion economy by 2034 and a $3 trillion economy by 2047. Telangana, which accounted for over 2.5 per cent of India's population and around five per cent of its GDP, aimed to increase its contribution to 10 per cent by 2047.

Defence manufacturing, aerospace and allied industries would play a key role in achieving the targets, he said, adding that Raksha Expo would bring original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), startups and global companies onto one platform.

He urged industry representatives to bring innovative ideas and advanced technologies and interact with senior defence and security officials to strengthen India's capabilities.

"There is no policy paralysis in Telangana. Political and ideological differences will not come in the way of investments and development," Revanth Reddy said, adding that the state had skilled manpower, adequate resources, a clear development policy and the determination to move forward.

Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy said Raksha Expo was not merely an exhibition but an invitation to industry leaders to explore Telangana as a destination for investment, advanced manufacturing and technological innovation.

He highlighted Hyderabad's strong industrial base, citing the presence of Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Airbus and Safran, alongside Indian companies such as Tata Advanced Systems, Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) and numerous specialised component manufacturers.

Uttam Kumar Reddy pointed to the Tata-Boeing aerospace partnership at Adibatla, which manufactures Apache helicopter fuselages, and the Tata-Lockheed Martin partnership in aerospace structures as examples of Telangana's integration into global defence supply chains.

CM Yogi welcomes PM Modi, Rajnath Singh to Varanasi for 'Wings over Ganges' air show

Varanasi, Oct 25 Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday extended a warm welcome to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh ahead of the Indian Air Force's 'Wings over Ganges' air show in Varanasi, highlighting the event's significance for national defence, industrial development and the region's cultural heritage.

In a post on X, CM Yogi said the skies over the holy city of Kashi would witness the valour and prowess of the Indian Air Force as part of the celebrations marking its 94th anniversary.

He welcomed the Prime Minister and the Defence Minister to the sacred city of Baba Vishwanath and invited them to the aerial display scheduled to take place at Namo Ghat.

"Today, the sky over the immortal Kashi will be adorned with pride by the valor and prowess of the Indian Air Force," the Chief Minister wrote.

CM Yogi also highlighted the industrial development agenda linked to the Prime Minister's visit, announcing that PM Modi would inaugurate a new garment manufacturing unit of Arvind Limited. According to the Chief Minister, the facility is expected to provide fresh momentum to the textile industry and industrial development in the region.

Describing the broader significance of the occasion, CM Yogi said the event would bring together the spirit of national defence, industrial progress and India's enduring cultural heritage on the banks of the Ganga.



The air show, titled 'Wings Over Ganga', is being organised to commemorate the 94th anniversary of the Indian Air Force and is expected to showcase the force's aerial capabilities, precision flying and operational coordination.

150 Cr Drought Mitigation Project In 3 Telangana Mandals

Hyderabad: Octy 24

The state government will implement permanent drought mitigation measures in three mandals at a cost of ?150 crore to help people and farmers withstand drought conditions, Revenue minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy held a review meeting with officials on Saturday to finalise modalities for implementation of pilot project at Midjil in Mahbubnagar district, Uppunuthala in Nagarkurnool district and Makthal in Narayanpet district.

The sites have been selected based on their historical vulnerability to drought, dependence on rainfed agriculture, socio-economic backwardness and livelihood needs of farming families. The project, being taken up on a pilot basis, with support from the National Disaster Management Fund (NDF), aims to improve water resource utilisation, strengthen farmers' livelihoods and reduce economic hardships during droughts.

Srinivas Reddy reviewed the project's implementation, drought-resilient agricultural practices and permanent solutions for drought-prone areas with agriculture and disaster management officials. The disaster management department will supervise the project, with the agriculture department acting as the nodal agency. Disaster management principal secretary Rahul Bojja, agriculture commissioner Surendra Mohan, agriculture director N. Gopi attended the meeting.

He directed officials to establish committees at village and mandal levels in coordination with local



representatives and conduct gram sabhas in every village. Comprehensive action plans should be prepared based on public opinion and local needs, ensuring that the benefits reach all sections.

The minister said officials should continuously monitor fund utilisation, selection of works, implementation and field-level outcomes. The project's success should be assessed not merely by expenditure or completion of works, but by the actual benefits to people and progress in addressing drought-related problems, he said.

Srinivas Reddy also asked officials to give priority to women, youth, farmers and families dependent on traditional occupations, noting that drought affects rural employment, household incomes and livelihoods beyond agriculture. He called for an integrated plan offering permanent solutions suited to local conditions.

CM Naidu Directs Officials To Prepare For Cyclone, Conserve Resulting Rainwater



Vijayawada:Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has directed officials to remain on high alert and take precautionary measures following the heavy rainfall forecast under the influence of a developing cyclone over Bay of Bengal.

He instructed officials to make effective use of the expected rainfall in coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema by filling reservoirs and irrigation tanks. He stressed the need to prevent rainwater wastage, conserve available water, and manage irrigation resources efficiently to benefit farmers.

Uttam Kumar Reddy blames BRS for Telangana's El Nino challenges

Hyderabad, Oct 24 Irrigation Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy blamed the previous BRS government



for Telangana's difficulties in dealing with the El Nino crisis. He said the State would have been better equipped to withstand the prevailing drought conditions but for the construction of Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Scheme (KLIS).

Uttam Kumar said water could not be lifted from the Medigadda barrage as the National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA) had specifically instructed the State to keep the gates of the Medigadda, Sundilla and Annaram barrages open. The pump house could not be operated while the gates remained open, he said at a press conference here on Saturday.

However, the NDSA had told the High Court that the decision to lift water from the barrages rested with the State government, in contrast to the Minister's statement.

Jhota killing, Ludhiana death put spotlight on drug sales through chemist shops



The killing of anti-drug activist Parvinder Singh Jhota in Mansa and the death of a 27-year-old man in Ludhiana after he allegedly consumed intoxicant capsules have brought renewed focus on the sale of habit-forming medicines through chemist shops. A new report on Punjab's drug crisis points to the scale of pharmaceutical-drug seizures in the state, rising heroin seizures, an increase in juvenile cases under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, and gaps in treatment coverage.Released earlier this month by PANJ Foundation, an independent, non-partisan policy research think tank based in Punjab, the report — State of Punjab: Data Story of 15 Years — draws on official data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), the National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre (NDDTC) at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), parliamentary replies and government records.

Of the 5.13 crore pharmaceutical-drug units seized across India in 2024, Punjab accounted for 2.94 crore units, the report says. They include tablets, capsules, injections, cough syrup bottles and other medicinal preparations.The report also records that Punjab's average annual heroin seizures increased from 829 kg in 2018–21 to 1,390 kg in 2022–24. Its share of national heroin seizures reached 47 per cent in 2023 and over 44 per cent in 2024.

During the Punjab government's 2025 anti-drug campaign, Yudh Nashian Virudh, police seized 1,714 kg of heroin. Using official Narcotics Control Bureau valuation benchmarks, PANJ estimated the haul's value at Rs 3,428 crore. Heroin accounted for 94 per cent of the estimated value of all drugs seized during the campaign.The findings come against the backdrop of two recent incidents involving alleged pharmaceutical-drug sales. Jhota was shot dead on October 13 following a confrontation over the alleged sale of addictive medicines at a medical store in Mansa. In Ludhiana, Sahil Thakur, 27, died after allegedly consuming intoxicant capsules that his family said he had obtained from a medical store. Both incidents remain subject to investigation.Punjab recorded 1,113 drug-overdose deaths between 2014 and 2024, accounting for 13.4 per cent of the national total of 8,290, despite having around 2.3 per cent of India's population, the report says. The state ranked first among states and Union territories in recorded overdose deaths in 2015, 2016, 2022 and 2023, and second in 2014 and 2024.The annual average fell from 156 deaths in 2014-16 to 61 in 2017-21, before rising to 113 in 2022-24. PANJ cautions that the figures cover deaths registered by police as drug overdoses and may not capture the full extent of drug-related mortality.Juvenile NDPS cases riseCiting NCRB data, the report records an increase in juvenile cases under the NDPS Act, with the annual average rising from 19.4 in 2017-21 to 33 in 2022-24. Punjab accounted for 7.6 per cent of such cases nationally during 2022-24, against around 2.3 per cent of the country's population.Of the 37 juvenile NDPS cases recorded in Punjab in 2024, 25 involved trafficking-related offences and 12 involved personal use. The state's 25 trafficking-related cases accounted for 11.6 per cent of the national total that year.Treatment coverage remains limited

The report flags a gap between the estimated number of people dependent on opioids in Punjab and the coverage of a central government treatment programme.Under the National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR), Punjab recorded 11,603 beneficiaries in 2024-25, against 7,98,893 nationally, accounting for 1.5 per cent of the total.PANJ estimates that treatment under this programme reached about 3.5 per cent of Punjab's estimated 3.3 lakh opioid-dependent population. It clarifies that this comparison covers only the central programme and does not include all treatment provided through government and private facilities.Funds released to Punjab under NAPDDR fell from Rs 11.71 crore in 2018-19 to Rs 1.01 crore in 2022-23, before rising to Rs 2.96 crore in 2024-25.

Convictions rise, so does case backlogAverage annual registrations of NDPS cases increased from about 10,500 in 2017-21 to 11,000 in 2022-24, the report says.The conviction rate rose from 64.8 per cent in 2019 to 82.7 per cent in 2023, while cases pending trial nearly doubled, from 23,671 to 45,962.Between 2022 and 2025, 21,625 of the 25,797 cases decided ended in conviction, translating into a conviction rate of 83.8 per cent. The figures show rising convictions alongside a growing backlog, although they do not, by themselves, establish the reasons for the increase in pending cases.Researchers flag pharmaceutical-drug supplyThe report examines the role of pharmaceutical opioids in Punjab's drug crisis and the limits of using arrests and seizures alone to assess progress against drug abuse. Its authors cite the 2015 Punjab Opioid Dependence Survey, which found that 14 per cent of opioid-dependent respondents relied mainly on pharmaceutical opioids. They also point to enforcement action involving pregabalin formulations in 2024, when formulations worth around Rs 5.97 crore were seized from 72 premises, 12 licences were cancelled and 46 suspended. From February 2025, chemists were directed to report sales above prescribed thresholds for seven drugs, the authors said.The researchers said irregular sales of medicines could attract action under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act rather than the NDPS Act, depending on the circumstances. They called for stronger monitoring and follow-up to address illegal pharmaceutical-drug markets."The purpose of our report is to highlight ground realities so policymakers and law enforcement agencies can work in the right direction for the betterment of society. Arrests alone do not establish whether drug supply has declined," the authors said.The report has been sent to the Punjab government, said Deepratan Singh Khara, an assistant professor at the Thapar School of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology, Patiala, and Anmol Rattan Singh, co-founder of PANJ. The report's other authors are Harleen Gill, Sirjan Kaur and Agastya Shukla.The researchers said Jhota's killing might not by itself establish a wider trend. However, they said, it underlined concerns about pharmaceutical-drug supply, enforcement outcomes, violence and gaps in treatment.Prof Kuldeep Singh, a retired Punjabi University professor who has read the report, said studies based on authentic data helped diagnose the state's problems and identify possible solutions.

AAP chief spokesperson Neel Garg said such reports were useful both in highlighting the government's work and identifying areas for improvement. "The government takes note of such studies and analyses their data.

Stir over Dalit ministers being stopped from performing puja by senior cop



Bengaluru: A controversy has erupted on Thursday after Superintendent of Police, CB Rishyanth, deputed for security arrangements during the Mysuru Dasara celebrations, allegedly prevented three Dalit ministers from participating in the Nandi Dhwaja puja during the Jamboo Savari procession on October 21. The incident occurred near the Kote Anjaneya Swamy temple within the Mysuru Palace premises.

The incident has triggered widespread discussion, with questions being raised over who instructed the SP to restrict entry to the puja venue. There is also public outrage over why ministers were prevented from participating in the ritual without any direction from the Chief Minister.The controversy has taken a sensitive turn as the three ministers who were initially stopped belong to the Dalit community. Dalit organisations and progressive thinkers have condemned the incident, while videos showing the exchanges between the ministers and the police officer have gone viral on social media.

According to protocol, ministers and MLAs accompanying the Chief Minister are allowed to participate in the ritual. However, on Wednesday, only Mysuru district in-charge Minister Yathindra Siddaramaiah was initially allowed to enter the puja venue along with Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, while Kannada and Culture Minister Shivaraj Tangadgi, Agriculture Minister PM Narendra Swamy and Muzrai Minister KS Basavanteppa were stopped by the SP.When the ministers attempted to proceed towards the venue, SP Rishyanth allegedly blocked their way. Minister Shivaraj Tangadgi pushed past the officer, expressing his displeasure over being prevented from participating in the ritual.

Subsequently, the SP stood in the way of Ministers Narendra Swamy and Basavanteppa, preventing them from entering the venue. Noticing the commotion, Chief Minister Shivakumar intervened and instructed the SP to allow the ministers to participate in the puja. Minister Narendra Swamy reportedly reprimanded the officer and asked him not to touch him and to maintain some distance.The ministers were subsequently allowed to take part in the ritual. Earlier, the SP had also reportedly prevented senior Congress MLA Tanveer Sait from reaching the puja venue.Chief Minister Shivakumar later intervened and took Sait to the site to participate in the worship. Other local MLAs and MLCs were reportedly left watching the ritual from a distance as they were not allowed to enter the venue. The episode has sparked debate over treatment of leaders from Backward Classes, the conduct of security personnel and the treatment of elected representatives during one of Karnataka's most prominent cultural celebrations.

Indian Americans' advocacy led USPS to print 20 million new Diwali stamps

Washington: The US Postal Service (USPS) has printed 20 million of its new Diwali Forever stamps, a number an official said was "a little bit on the higher side" because of strong advocacy by the Indian community.The stamp was unveiled at the Indian Embassy here on Wednesday (local time).

"There was so much advocacy on behalf of the Indian community to create a second stamp. And we just knew that this one was gonna be super popular like the first one, and hence we printed a little bit higher quantities for folks to enjoy," Sahibani Gambhir, a USPS vice president, told IANS at the ceremony.The rangoli design is only the second stamp USPS has issued to mark the festival of lights. The first came out in 2016. "The first stamp was wildly popular among the Indian community. We sold so many millions and millions of stamps," Gambhir said."We have printed 20 million Rangoli stamps, and we're very excited for the Indian community to enjoy these," the official said, adding that stamp collectors were also expected to buy them.The ceremonial first-day-of-issue unveiling and reception were held at the Embassy of India in downtown Washington. Gambhir, a USPS vice president, served as the dedicating official.

Speaking at the event, India's Ambassador to the US Vinay Mohan Kwatra said the festival was "first and foremost" about "the millions of Indian Americans who call this country their home, students, professionals, the artists, families".Indian Americans "are the ones who connect to society and hence become what we call as the living bridge of our relationship" between the two countries, Kwatra said, adding that the event "will mark one thread, important thread in that".In an interview with IANS, Kwatra said the stamp was a chance "for us to celebrate our cultural strengths, our cultural heritage with the Indian American diaspora and with the larger US society here.""This stamp is one of the important threads in our



celebration as we go forward into the Diwali festive season," the Ambassador said.The stamp features a vibrant rangoli by Houston-based artist Sangita Bhutada, set against a purple background. Bhutada, who has been making rangolis for nearly 30 years, used starch-based coloured powder and coloured sand, the agency said.Bhutada told IANS that the process began with an email from USPS asking whether she could create a rangoli for a stamp. After signing a contract, she sent design sketches to the agency and then made the rangolis on the floor in different colours. Her photographer friend Bijay Dixit was then contracted to photograph the artwork, she said.She said she chose vibrant colours such as red and orange because they are significant to Diwali.Jennifer Arnold designed the stamp, and William J. Gicker served as art director, according to USPS. The stamp is sold in panes of 20 at post offices and online, and as a Forever stamp it will always equal the current First-Class Mail one-ounce price.Diwali, observed by Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and others, marks the triumph of good over evil. Kwatra said the main festival falls on Sunday, November 8.

Relief for Avinash Bhosale as Bombay HC quashes ED takeover of 2 land parcels of Rs 30 crore

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday granted relief to Pune-based developer Avinash Bhosale, setting aside the attachment of two land parcels in Pune and Nagpur by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in the Yes Bank-DHFL money laundering case.The properties, valued at Rs 14.65 crore and Rs 15.52 crore, respectively, had been attached by the ED in 2022 as part of its probe into alleged proceeds of crime received by Bhosale and entities linked to his ABIL group.Bhosale had approached the High Court challenging an April 1 order of the Appellate Tribunal under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), which had partly set aside the ED's provisional attachments but refused to interfere with the attachment of the two properties.

Appearing for Bhosale, senior advocate Aabad Ponda argued against the continued attachment. The High Court found "no basis" for continuing the attachment of the properties.The properties included a 6,143-square-metre land parcel in Pune, held under the name Samit Realty and valued at Rs 14.65 crore, and a 20,200-square-foot land parcel in Nagpur, valued at Rs 15.52 crore and held in the name of his wife, Gauri Bhosale.

In August 2022, the ED had attached assets linked to Bhosale and his ABIL group, including a duplex flat in Mumbai worth Rs 102.8 crore, two land parcels in Pune valued at Rs 14.65 crore and Rs 29.24 crore, respectively, and two land parcels in Nagpur valued at Rs 15.52 crore and Rs 1.45 crore, respectively.According to the central agency, Bhosale and his entities, including Nibodh



Realty LLP and ABIL Dairy, had received alleged proceeds of crime totalling Rs 164.64 crore."We are unable to comprehend, nor has the Special Counsel for the ED been able to explain, how official bank transaction(s) between a bank and a corporate entity, carried out in the usual course of business, could be construed as proceeds of crime and thereby constitute the offence of money laundering," the bench observed.Holding that the ED's conclusion was "entirely baseless", the HC said amounts paid by DHFL to Bhosale under consultancy agreements before the loan was disbursed on April 12, 2018, could not be linked to proceeds of crime.

With regard to ABIL, the court observed that each transaction was "independent", involving an "independent corporate entity", and that none of the transactions was illegal. It found no nexus between them.

Bengaluru fruit seller assaulted while returning dropped phone

EMS News Agency, Oct 23A 19-year-old fruit seller was allegedly assaulted by a group of eight to ten people after he and his friend wre mistaken for thieves in Bengaluru's Chikkapet Monday evening.Shahid Khan, a resident of J J R Nagar in Bengaluru, sells fruits in the city. The incident occurred around 7 pm on Chikkapet RT Speed Road when Khan, who was riding a two-wheeler with his friend Fardin Pasha, was travelling from the Majestic side.

According to the complaint filed by Khan on October 19, an unidentified person hit their vehicle, following which the person's mobile phone fell to the ground. When Pasha picked up the phone to return it to its owner, a group of people gathered at the spot and allegedly mistook the two friends for thieves. The group then allegedly began abusing and assaulting them.

Khan stated in the FIR that "some members of the group punched him around the eye, while others hit him on the head with mobile phones, leaving him bleeding".After people in the crowd called the emergency helpline, police personnel arrived at the spot. The police then took Khan to a hospital.Based on Khan's complaint, the K R Market police registered a case against unidentified people under charges of intentional insult with intent to provoke a breach of peace, voluntarily causing hurt or grievous hurt using dangerous weapons or means, and unlawful assembly.The police have yet to establish the identities of those involved as they review CCTV footage as part of the investigation.

'Galat jagah pakad liya': Forest guard's split-second courage saves colleague from tiger

Ramnagar: "Galat jagah pakad liya chacha," 28-year-old Pitambar told his colleague moments after a tiger pinned him to the ground deep inside Jim Corbett wildlife sanctuary, words that capture the terror of an encounter he survived.Pitambar, a daily wager, was part of a four-member team on a regular patrol duty on July 20. While two of them were walking a little ahead, Ramnath, somewhere in between, suddenly realised Pitambar was not here.

As he turned around, Ramnath saw the big cat sitting on top of Pitambar.With little time to react, he did something few would dare to attempt: he struck the tiger with the wooden stick in his hand, thrice.The tiger, not expecting anything like this, released Pitambar and moved into the bushes."Give me your hand," he told Pitambar, helping him get back on his feet and away from the spot. All Pitambar could mutter at that moment to Ramnath, also a daily wager, was that the tiger had bitten him at the wrong place, that's his neck.The bite was not deep, and Pitambar survived due to timely help. He suffered bite injuries and was given first aid by the forest staff before being taken to Ramnagar and then to Kashipur for treatment.Not all forest guards are as lucky as Pitambar.

Dharampal Negi, a forester working for 37 years, told PTI that when they go out patrolling, everyone tells themselves that four are going inside but only three might return.Most of the dead get forgotten easily, and in some cases their bodies have also not been recovered.When the country's oldest national park decided to erect a memorial in the name of the forest guards who died in animal attacks, it took them 18 months to compile a list of 33 people.Now, no place is left on the plaque for another name and the staff at a museum at the Dhangarhi gate of the forest wish that another or a bigger plaque is never required.Around 700 forest guards, most of them daily wagers, patrol the park, spread across nearly 1,300 square kilometers including over 500 sq km of core area, in groups of four and in shifts. The patrol from posts built at different places is on foot and only one of them carries a gun. Others have wooden sticks only.

Residents of the town feel that they and hundreds of tourists who come here every day for safari owe it to the forest guards for them to move around safely.Miteshwar Anand, Assistant Commissioner (GST), said the forest guards put their lives at risk not just to thwart poachers and tree fellers; they also ensure animals are safe.Their work also requires them to recognise signs of wildlife distress. If an elephant is limping or a tiger appears injured, they inform veterinary and rescue teams, he added.The general manager of a top resort on the outskirts of the reserve said that a tiger would come once in a while to the human habitation, but the guards ensure that the humans are safe."The fact is that we have come into their territory; they have not come into ours," he said.Negi, who was also invited to speak at the country's first-ever literature festival in a national park held here earlier this month, said what stood out was not just the danger of the encounter, but Ramnath's presence of mind in those few seconds.Ramnath and Pitambar share a bond that goes beyond the demands of their work in the forest. Pitambar calls Ramnath uncle and Ramnath treats him like a son.The incident took place around 300- 400 metres from a forest outpost located nearly 18 km inside the forest."There was no time to call for help or assess the situation. Ramnath acted with the only weapon immediately available to him- the stick in his hand," Negi, a forester by designation, said.Ramnath's decision to strike the tiger may have been crucial to the rescue, but had he screamed or shouted, the tiger could have turned towards him.After Pitambar was rescued, the tiger continued to roar and move around the area, appearing agitated. More staff members were sent in to ensure safety, and bushes along the route were cleared. Camera traps were installed to monitor the animal's movements later, as he had apparently tasted human blood.The tiger remained in the area for three to four days, but no further incident was reported. The authorities finally declared the tiger was not yet a man-eater.For the forest staff, the episode was also a reminder of the risks involved in a job that requires them to enter the habitat of wild animals on foot, often far from immediate medical assistance.

"The nearest hospital in Ramnagar is around 18 km away, while patients requiring further treatment are often referred to Kashipur or Haldwani," Negi said.For an injured worker, reaching medical care can take time. In Pitambar's case, he first had to be brought on foot to the outpost, from where a vehicle was arranged to take him for treatment. The process took around 30- 40 minutes, despite staff members rushing to help him.Corbett has hundreds of employees working across different categories, including forest guards, foresters, rangers and daily-wage workers.

Ukraine's strikes on Russian data centres disrupt key services, derail AI research



Moscow: Russia prides itself on its digital advances — from an extensive e-commerce services sector to ambitious plans for developing artificial intelligence.But now, some of the key data centres at the heart of its technical prowess have been knocked out by Ukrainian drone attacks in the 4.5-year-old full-scale invasion, suffering damage that could take a long time to repair.

Ukraine this month hit three main data centres belonging to tech giant Yandex, one for Russia's biggest bank, Sberbank, and one for social media platform VKontakte, the country's equivalent to Facebook.While Yandex, Sberbank and VKontakte are coy about the damage, people and businesses across Russia have reported widespread interruptions to cloud services. Banking, e-commerce, geolocation and ride-hailing services, as well as Alisa, Yandex's virtual assistant, and multimodal AI chatbots all have suffered lasting disruptions.The fallout even spread to Russia's judicial system, reportedly forcing arbitration courts to cancel or postpone sessions and cutting database access.Most experts predict repairing the damage could take months, if not years. Some warn that Moscow's aspirations to become a leader in AI development could be significantly set back."This effectively sets Russia far behind in the AI race," said Mikhail Klimarev, head of the Internet Protection Society activist group.Data centres have been hit by both sides in the war

Data centres are the latest targets of aerial campaigns waged by both sides against each other's vital infrastructure.Russian missiles and drones have pummelled Ukraine's power grid and other key sites, part of Kremlin efforts to weaken morale and resistance. Moscow stepped up those attacks as winter approaches, taking advantage of a shortage of US-supplied Patriot interceptors, whose stockpiles have been drained by Washington's war with Iran.Ukraine retaliated with waves of drone attacks against Russian oil refineries, triggering a massive fuel crisis and bringing the war home to millions of civilians.US President Donald Trump has blamed the attacks for higher global oil prices, which have escalated largely due to the US war in Iran. Earlier this month, Trump struck a deal with President Vladimir Putin to import diesel oil, shocking Ukraine and its allies.Ukraine also hit huge warehouses for Russia's top online retailers, Wildberries and Ozon.Kyiv's attacks on Russian data centres closely followed Moscow's recent strikes on data centres in Ukraine, which disrupted the internet and TV broadcasts.

On October 8, Ukrainian drones hit a Yandex data centre in Sasovo in the Ryazan region that houses two of the company's three supercomputers. A data centre in Kaluga was hit a day later and the one in Vladimir was struck October 11.The data centre and AI hub for Sberbank was hit October 14 in Balakovo in the Saratov region, and four days later, Kyiv struck a data centre in St. Petersburg serving VKontakte.While oil refineries and warehouses are easy prey, data centres are even softer targets — massive buildings packed with servers and supporting power and cooling infrastructure. Lasting damage can result from a drone carrying a relatively light load of explosives.

The vulnerability of data centres was exposed by Iran, whose drones hit two Amazon Web Services data centres in the United Arab Emirates and one in Bahrain. AWS said last month it was unable to restore access to the resources and data hosted at two of them.Yandex has run drills for an accident that could incapacitate one of its six data centres, but it was caught unprepared when its three key facilities were hit over four days. It wasn't immediately clear why air defences near the sites had failed."The problem in Russia is that they've got to cover a big country with air defence and they don't have enough," said Nick Reiners, senior geotechnology analyst at Eurasia Group.Russia's efforts to build a sovereign internet backfireUkraine has stored critical data on servers in allied European countries, helping limit the damage from Russian attacks. But Moscow's strict digital sovereignty policy requires all data storage at home, making it extremely vulnerable."Because all the infrastructure and all the data is located inside Russia, it's relatively easier to take down," Reiners said.Klimarev predicted the data centre attacks could encourage many top Russian companies to move data abroad, while the authorities could ease their efforts to tighten internet controls to minimise the damage."Paradoxically, the strikes on data centres have saved the Russian internet from isolation, as they will now have to move computing assets, most likely, to Europe," Klimarev said. "It's quite likely that many Russian businesses are now roaming the European market to rent computing assets."Russians are vexed by service disruptions

Yandex dominates digital life in Russia and many former Soviet nations. It provides a wide variety of functions, including a search engine, cloud storage, payment apps, geolocation and ride-hailing services, and e-commerce platforms.Yandex is kind of like Uber and Amazon and Google and everything rolled into one," with everything "concentrated in just a few data centres," Reiners said. "From a strategic perspective, they're an excellent target." The attacks on Yandex caused unprecedented disruptions, paralysing payments, online orders, taxi rides and access to personal data.

Moscow resident Igor Mann said he couldn't collect an order he placed with Yandex Market, an e-commerce platform. He said he tried using a virtual private network, but "nothing worked." Taxi driver Pavel Belyavskiy, who gets orders via Yandex's ride-hailing app, couldn't connect with passengers."On several orders already, I've ended up waiting for a long time and had to cancel the ride because I couldn't even get in touch with the passenger," he said.The attacks also caused temporary disruptions at some major companies and banks that rely on Yandex cloud services."It's not just about convenience — it's also about work … tied to everyday life," said another Moscow resident, Eduard Malyavko.A blow to Russia's AI ambitions

Yandex said it restored most key cloud services in the following days as it turned to other data centres in Russia. But the damage to the company's AI development efforts is widely seen as massive and longer-lasting.Yandex has invested in huge data centres as the global AI boom fuels demand for computing power. The company's three supercomputers used to develop models are ranked among the top 500 in the world. Its most powerful computer — at the Sasovo data centre — was ranked 19th.Yandex didn't disclose the extent of the strikes' consequences, but satellite images indicated its data centres sustained serious damage. Some observers noted that fires triggered by the attacks probably seriously damaged high-end chips and other key equipment."With this kind of hit, it's hard to expect that at least something was left intact — the data centres' equipment is fragile, demanding and expensive," Klimarev said. "Soot from the fire is bad for electronics." While Russia already lagged years behind the US and China, "Ukraine's drone strikes will likely still set back Russian AI efforts further," said Connor Martin, an expert with the Council for Foreign Relations h the sanctions on their delivery to Russia, will make repairs long and costly."I'm not sure it can be done in half a year, a year, or even at all," he said.

India backs continuation of UN war crimes tribunal mechanism



United Nations: India backs keeping the mechanism established to continue the work of two international criminal tribunals, saying this would ensure continued accountability for the war crimes and genocide committed in the two regions."India underscores the importance of the mechanism continuing residual functions, including the protection of victims and witnesses, assistance to national jurisdictions, and the preservation and management of the tribunal's archives", Congress MP Manish Tiwari said on Wednesday (local time)."These functions remain essential to safeguarding the legacy of the ad hoc tribunals and ensuring continued accountability", he said.He was speaking at a plenary session of the General Assembly on the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT), which was set up by the Security Council in 2010 to take on the unfinished work of the International Criminal Tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia.

The Rwanda tribunal tried those responsible for the genocide of the Tutsis during a civil war and ended its work in 1994, while the Yugoslav tribunal that rendered justice on war crimes closed in 1993.The Yugoslav tribunal held 111 trials and convicted 90 persons, one of whom has an appeal pending with the IRMCT.The Rwanda tribunal indicted 86 persons in connection with the genocide of about 800,000 Tutsi ethnic group and some moderate Hutus by the Hutu extremists who controlled the government of Rwanda.The IRMCT convicted 61 people after it picked up some of the cases from the tribunal."We recognise the mechanism's contribution to the fight against impunity and reiterate the importance of fulfilling its mandate in accordance with the principles of justice, impartiality, fairness and due process, upholding the interests of justice and protecting the rights of victims remains essential", Tiwari said.As the IRMCT "moves towards completing its mandate, we emphasise the need for an efficient, orderly and time-bound transition without compromising judicial independence or the effective discharge of its remaining responsibilities", he said.

Indian nationals in France asked to remain vigilant amid ongoing protests

Paris: The Indian Embassy in France issued a travel and safety advisory on Wednesday, urging its nationals and those travelling to the Western European country to remain vigilant after protests over the rising cost of living broke out into violent clashes.The clashes erupted in late September 2026 over poor conditions in schools and teacher shortages. The movement quickly expanded into nationwide anti-government demonstrations driven by soaring living costs, high fuel prices, public sector budget cuts, and general frustration with President Emmanuel Macron's administration.The alert follows ongoing protests, localised curfews, and potential transport disruptions across the region.

Indian citizens residing in or visiting France are advised to exercise caution, particularly in crowded areas or locations experiencing demonstrations, the Indian Embassy said in a statement on social media platform X.Protests and civil unrest in France have led to localised curfews and potential delays or reductions in road travel and public transport, the Indian Embassy said.Travellers and residents should closely follow updates from local French authorities, the French Prefecture of Police, and official statements from the Indian Embassy in France's X account, the Indian Embassy said in the statement."Those planning trips to or within France are recommended to stay in direct contact with their airlines or travel agencies for real-time schedule changes," the Indian Embassy in France added in the statement.In its official X account, the Indian Embassy in France said: "In view of the recent developments and localised curfews imposed in France, please remain vigilant and exercise due caution. Please avoid large gatherings and crowded places where protests are taking place, and follow the instructions and advisories issued by the local French authorities. Please also stay informed through local news, follow official updates (https://gouvernement.fr) and check for public transport disruptions (https://ratp.fr). In case of any emergency, Indian nationals can contact: Embassy of India, Paris: +33 6 48 34 00 63 | cons.paris@mea.gov.in Consulate General of India, Marseille: +33 7 43 16 25 59| cgo.marseille@mea.gov.in."



The French government has vowed to do everything within its power to prevent violence at fresh social demonstrations announced for Saturday, after riots around the country caused widespread destruction and thousands of arrests on October 17, Xinhua news agency reported.French President Macron told media on Wednesday that the government will use all available legal tools to stop such violent scenes from reoccurring.Speaking to journalists during a visit to Qatar, Macron emphasised the French government's resolve ahead of a new round of demonstrations scheduled for October 24, French television channel BFM TV said.Addressing calls from some politicians to declare a state of emergency, the French President said such a measure was not necessary at this stage, although it could be deployed later if required.France imposed targeted curfews in several cities after the October 17 riots, and Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu said on Tuesday that this had helped maintain calm overnight on Monday.Meanwhile, French Interior Minister Laurent Nunez said on Tuesday that the government would deploy soldiers from the Army's Operation Sentinelle to help prevent violence during the October 24 demonstrations.Rioting and violence have broken out on the sidelines of mostly peaceful youth-led protests in other European countries including France, Spain and Albania.

India slams UN rapporteur for falsely projecting Dawood Ibrahim as 'India-based'

United Nations: India has taken strong exception to a report by a UN monitor falsely projecting that wanted terrorist Dawood Ibrahim is based in India and warned that such actions cause the organisation "tremendous harm".Raghoo Puri, a first secretary in India's UN Mission, on Wednesday (local time), accused Ben Saul, the Special Rapporteur on Counter-Terrorism and Human Rights, of "incompetence" in putting "particularly glaring inaccuracies" in his July report.Special rapporteurs are not paid directly by the UN and are supposed to work independently of it.According to a database created by the watchdog group, UN Watch, Saul has received $150,000 from China.

A professor of international law at the University of Sydney and an Australian Research Council Future Fellow, Saul received a total of $1.7 million, according to UN Watch.The other contributors include his university, three universities in the US, and Switzerland and Spain.His report described Dawood Ibrahim as the leader of the "India-based" D-Company criminal gang with terrorist ties, and said that the Security Council sanctioned him for association with al-Qaeda.Puri said, "Read in isolation, this line paints a very different picture from the actual reality."

However, "this organisation (D-Company) and its listed leader, Dawood Ibrahim, have been wanted in India for terror attacks since 1993".Saul has refused to note this fact, which "is clearly written in the narrative summary of reasons of listing under the 1267 sanctions regime" by the Security Council, Puri said.Saul did not clarify that Dawood Ibrahim lives outside India and is wanted by New Delhi as a terrorist.Not mentioning this fact is regrettable and such incompetence on the part of special mandate holders does this organisation (the UN) tremendous harm," he warned.India had Interpol issue a 'Red Corner Notice' for Dawood Ibrahim, requiring law enforcement around the world to look out for him and arrest him for extradition.

"For the record, this individual (Dawood Ibrahim) fled India much before the 2003 listing" as an international terrorist by the Security Council, Puri said."And it was during this period from outside our country that he was listed for being associated with al-Qaeda and with Osama bin Laden," he clarified."To date, he remains a wanted criminal in my country, and as per the UN's listing entry, resides in the same country where Osama bin Laden was found and neutralised," he said.Bin Laden was found hiding under Pakistan's protection in Abbottabad in 2011 and killed by US Navy SEALs."Human rights framework cannot be the refuge of the perpetrators of terror and those who propagate radicalisation and extremism.Terrorism can never be justified," Puri said.

Puri said India was concerned by media allegations against this important office of rapporteur and added, "We would urge that the highest standards of probity and impartiality be maintained."Coincidentally, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who was in Mumbai, the city of the deadly 26/11 attack by Pakistani terrorists in 2008, on Wednesday questioned the competence of the special rapporteurs."'The UN experts' are the oxymoron", he said.Turning to Pakistan, which had brought up Kashmir, Puri said, "Everyone in this room knows that what has been mentioned against my country, including about the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, is pure propaganda made for very narrow political gains."The allegations against India have been made by "the actual rulers of Pakistan, which is its military", he said.He dismissed them, saying, "I would like to reiterate for the record that Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh are an inalienable part of India and have been so and will always remain."

US-designated terrorist Muhammad Sarwar dies in Lahore

Lahore: Muhammad Sarwar, designated as a global terrorist by the US Treasury Department, died in Pakistan's Lahore

"Pakistan Markazi Muslim League (PMML) Punjab President Muhammad Sarwar has passed away. He was on his way from home to the mosque to offer prayers when he collapsed and died," a PMML spokesperson said in a statement.The exact cause of his death has not been specified by PMML. However, 24NewsHD TV Channel reported that Sarwar died "due to a head injury sustained after falling down the stairs".PMML is a political offshoot of Mumbai attack mastermind Hafiz Saeed's Jamaat-ud-Dawa. Saeed has been in Lahore's Kot Lakhpat Jail since 2019 in multiple terror financing cases, for which he was convicted for multiple years, as per officials.PMML leaders — Khalid Masood Sindhu, Saifullah Qasuri, Hafiz Talha Saeed,

UN warns 'wrecking ball' El Nino could trigger global economic shocks



United Nations: The United Nations (UN) is warning that the El Nino is a "wrecking ball" that will create "shocks for the global economy" and hit Asia and other regions in the Global South with droughts, floods and extreme heat."This El Nino is a behemoth. It is a wrecking ball. It will tear through, as you've heard, Latin America, Eastern and Southern Africa, Asia and the Pacific with extreme heat, droughts and floods," UN Under-Secretary-General Tom Fletcher said on Wednesday.

"The damage will not stay in the countries in the immediate path of this El Nino," he said."It will create economic shocks for the global economy and drive further conflict, displacement, migration.""The next two weeks are the critical window to act before that damage is done" and "Asia and the Pacific must prepare for droughts, floods and cyclones," Fletcher said at a news conference in Geneva.The UN Under-Secretary-General proposed "a much wider global mobilisation of solidarity, expertise and action across governments, civil societies, academics, businesses".

"I'm writing to countries with existing disaster response capacity, part of our coordinated emergency network, to ask them to place that capacity on immediate standby to support the effort," Fletcher said.India has taken on an international role in weather disaster forecasting and relief in the aftermath.New Delhi's India–UN Development Partnership Fund has sponsored projects for early warning systems, and disaster risk reduction in seven Pacific Island countries.India along with the other members of the Quad, the US, Japan and Australia, also has Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) programmes for the Indo-Pacific region.Neither Fletcher nor the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) Head Celeste Saulo, who spoke at the briefing, gave country-specific information."It would be an extraordinary failure to see this crisis coming, to hear the predictions from the experts, and yet still squander the opportunity to protect people in its path," Fletcher said, whose portfolio is humanitarian and emergency relief.Saulo said that although the El Nino will peak towards the end of this year, "its impacts will be felt long after that".It "could be (of) unprecedented in strength, literally off the monitoring charts that we have used for the past four decades," she added.For Southeast Asia, she foresaw "warmer conditions and rainfall deficits increase the risk of heat exposure and place additional pressure on agriculture and water supplies, like the increasing wildfire and smoke hazards risks we are already seeing".A news bulleting from the WMO last week said that "normal to above normal maximum and minimum temperatures are likely" over most parts of the southern part of South Asia for the rest of the year.

Trump says Iran war could end soon, predicts sharp fall in oil prices

Washington: US President Donald Trump said that the war with Iran could end soon, predicting a sharp fall in global oil prices once the conflict concludes, even as he warned that Washington must ensure Tehran cannot rebuild its nuclear weapons capabilities in the coming years.

Speaking to reporters in the Oval Office alongside Vice President JD Vance, Trump defended the economic costs of the military campaign, saying higher petrol prices were a relatively small price to pay for preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.The President also criticised European allies for declining to assist the United States during the conflict.Responding to a question about public dissatisfaction with the economy, Trump said the Iran conflict was the principal factor keeping energy prices elevated."As soon as the war is over, it's going to end very soon the Iran war," Trump said."Oil is going to drop like a rock and that's the only thing holding it back," he added.The President did not provide a timetable for ending the conflict or explain what military or diplomatic developments could lead to its conclusion.

EDITORIAL

Manipur, the festering wound

Not long ago, there was an air of optimism in strife-torn Manipur following the restoration of a popular government with fair representation for the warring ethnic groups. However, the euphoria has turned out to be short-lived, and the violence and grief have returned to the sensitive north-eastern State. A fresh wave of attacks and counterattacks has battered the State, raising questions about the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies and political initiatives. The latest incident involved an ambush targeting a group of Meitei men, leaving three dead. The attack, followed by protests and a 48-hour strike across five valley districts, reflects deepening public anger and growing insecurity. The killings come amid an all-round deterioration in law and order. Clashes in Thoubal district claimed another life, while an improvised explosive device injured three CRPF personnel in Imphal West. Reports of houses being torched and civilians fleeing their homes in Kamjong district further underline the scale of the crisis. The ethnic strife that began in May 2023 has claimed at least 300 lives and displaced thousands. The spiralling violence serves as a grim reminder of the widespread ethnic fault lines in the sensitive region that could flare up at any time. The crisis can no longer be seen as a battle zone confined to two communities—Meiteis and Kukis. It has evolved into a broader conflict involving Nagas and Kukis as well, spreading across Ukhrul, Kamjong, Senapati and Kangpokpi, and opening a new and more difficult front for the administration.

While Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh has directed officials to strengthen security in vulnerable areas and continue joint operations involving State police and Central security forces, security deployment alone cannot bring lasting peace. Its effectiveness must be judged by whether civilians are protected and perpetrators are brought to justice. The strife-torn State is looking for a political initiative to find a lasting solution to the ethnic divide. The opposition Congress has demanded the Chief Minister's resignation, alleging failure to restore normalcy. While political accountability is essential, the issue cannot be reduced to a game of political one-upmanship to score brownie points. There is an urgent need to prevent further bloodshed. Authorities must conduct impartial investigations, act on credible intelligence, curb the spread of inflammatory rumours and ensure that relief reaches displaced families. It is also important to foster sustained dialogue among Meitei, Kuki, Naga and other communities affected by the violence. Collective blame and retaliatory attacks will only deepen mistrust and prolong suffering. With Assembly elections just a few months away, restoring peace must take precedence over political posturing. The Central and State governments must demonstrate that protecting every citizen is their foremost responsibility. The people of Manipur deserve to live without fear. The State remains deeply fractured, with invisible borders and fortified ethnic zones, making day-to-day reconciliation exceedingly difficult.

From 47,000 to nearly a lakh, daily ridership doubles in a year

Shweta Sharma, who lives in Partapur in Meerut, said her son leaves home at 8.30 am, takes the Namo Bharat train to Sarai Kale Khan and then the Delhi Metro to Kalkaji Mandir, reaching JIMS Kalkaji in time for his 10 am lectures. He is usually back home by 6 pm.

The Delhi-Meerut Namo Bharat corridor is making such daily journeys possible for more people. Average daily ridership nearly doubled in a year, rising from 47,745 in July 2025 to 94,936 in July 2026.The increase comes as the entire 82-km rapid rail corridor became fully operational in February, after phased openings that began in October 2023. The initial 17-km stretch between Sahibabad and Duhai Depot opened on October 21, 2023, followed by extensions to Modinagar North in March 2024 and Meerut South in August 2024.Average daily ridership jumped from 63,999 in February 2026 to 87,682 in March. It rose further to 92,364 in April and remained stable at 93,877 in May, before crossing the one-lakh mark in June, at 1.02 lakh.By August, average daily ridership climbed further to 1.13 lakh, with the corridor recording its highest single-day footfall of 1,68,510 on August 28.

Officials said the opening of the entire corridor, improved connectivity with the Delhi Metro, Indian Railways, inter-state bus terminals (ISBTs) and city bus services, along with better first- and last-mile connectivity, has helped drive ridership growth.Passenger amenities, accessible station infrastructure and parking facilities have also made the service more convenient.For some commuters, the corridor has made travelling between Meerut and Delhi feasible for everyday activities that would otherwise require a long commute or a stay in the Capital.Neena Oberoi, who travels to Meerut, said she preferred the premium coach for its comfort and safety. "A premium coach facility in Namo Bharat is the best part, as it is especially quite safe for women," Oberoi said.Accessibility has also widened the options for some passengers.Sanjay Yadav, 54, a wheelchair user from Meerut's Pallavpuram Phase 1, said he had earlier relied on expensive cab services to travel to Delhi because public transport was difficult to use. Since taking his first Namo Bharat journey in March 2025, he has been able to make regular trips independently."With facilities like lifts, ramps, and level boarding, I can now move around easily and travel independently," he said.Key stations account for over 40% of ridershipKey stations, including Sarai Kale Khan, New Ashok Nagar, Anand Vihar, Ghaziabad and Begumpul, together account for more than 40% of total ridership.Sarai Kale Khan is one of Delhi's major transport hubs, bringing together Hazrat Nizamuddin Railway Station,

Mumbai turns to treated sewage water to wash roads amid rising pollution, water cuts



A week after the civic standing committee stalled a proposal to wash Mumbai's roads to curb dust pollution, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) is considering using treated sewage water from its sewage treatment plants (STPs) for the exercise.Currently, the BMC has only one operational STP, in Colaba, with a capacity to treat 37 million litres per day (MLD). This accounts for just 1.68 per cent of the 2,190 MLD of sewage generated in Mumbai daily.

Last week, the BMC had tabled a Rs 8.13-crore proposal before the civic standing committee to carry out round-the-clock water sprinkling on roads. The exercise helps trap dust particles on road surfaces, preventing them from becoming airborne and lingering in the lower atmosphere.The drive is undertaken annually. However, Mumbai is currently facing a water shortage, with a 10 per cent cut in supply following deficient monsoon rainfall and the early withdrawal of the southwest monsoon. The civic standing committee stalled the proposal, calling the use of water on roads "insensitive".

With several pockets of the city recording unhealthy and poor air quality in recent weeks, civic officials are now considering treated sewage water as an alternative for road washing. The BMC's Mumbai Air Pollution Mitigation Plan (MAPMP) identifies the resuspension of road dust as a major contributor to worsening air pollution in the city."A quantity of water for cleaning the roads will be drawn from the Colaba STP. The treated water from this STP is not being used for any potable purpose and is supplied to the garden and roads department and private stakeholders for landscaping. Therefore, it will be absolutely feasible to use STP water for road washing," a civic official told The Indian Express.The BMC also plans to hire private tankers for the exercise. Around 29 tankers, each with a capacity of 10,000 litres, are expected to be deployed. With the average hiring cost at Rs 5,000 per tanker, the civic body will spend around Rs 1.45 lakh daily, or Rs 1.74 crore to Rs 2.17 crore over a four-to-five-month drive.The BMC is constructing seven large STPs in Worli, Dharavi, Bandra, Versova, Malad, Ghatkopar and Bhandup, with a combined treatment capacity of 1,200 MLD. Of these, the Bhandup facility is expected to be ready by December this year. Once operational, the plant, with a capacity of 215 MLD, is expected to supply treated water for road washing, officials said."Road washing is a primary aspect of controlling pollution levels. Therefore, the drive will be necessary. Mumbai is already facing low wind speeds and high pollution levels, so water sprinkling needs to be carried out regularly," the official said.The BMC plans to wash and sprinkle water on 377 public roads spanning 677 km, accounting for 33 per cent of the city's total road length. These roads pass through areas including Colaba, Churchgate,

Hunting trip gone wrong? Man's death at Mumbai national park, where poaching remains a threat



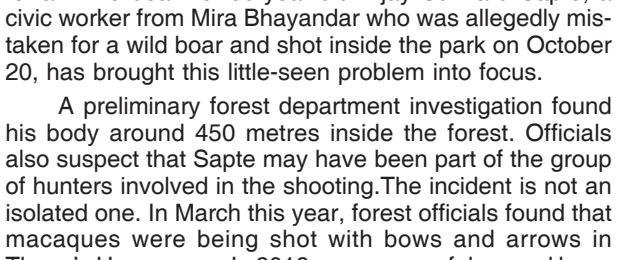
In a metropolis where roads, housing colonies, and expanding settlements increasingly hem in wildlife, hunting may seem unlikely to persist. Yet inside Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP), wild boars, deer, and hares continue to be hunted for their meat and hide, while forest officials struggle to monitor the park's vast, difficult terrain.The death of 60-year-old Vijay Sukharu Sapte, a civic worker from Mira Bhayandar who was allegedly mistaken for a wild boar and shot inside the park on October 20, has brought this little-seen problem into focus.

A preliminary forest department investigation found his body around 450 metres inside the forest. Officials also suspect that Sapte may have been part of the group of hunters involved in the shooting.The incident is not an isolated one. In March this year, forest officials found that macaques were being shot with bows and arrows in Thane's Upvan area. In 2019, carcasses of deer and leopards were found in separate incidents inside SGNP. The following year, the forest department launched an anti-snare drive after traps set for wild animals were discovered at multiple locations.Demand for wild animal meatForest officials said demand for wild animal meat in illegal markets remained a key driver for hunting wild boars, deer and hares, among others.Pawan Sharma, honorary wildlife warden of Mumbai and director of the Resqink Association for Wildlife Welfare (RAWW), said these animals were preferred because they were relatively easy to hunt."These animals are easy to spot and hunt. They don't attack you back and they also have a thick density. Therefore, poachers prefer hunting them considering these kinds of animals are easy targets," Sharma told The Indian Express. He added that such incidents were rare in Mumbai compared with the interior parts of Maharashtra.Forest officials said the October 20 shooting took place near the Yeoor Hills range towards Thane, adjoining a creek. The location was significant because animals often approach water sources to drink, making them easier to track, officials said.

(Hunting protected wild animals is prohibited under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. However, Sharma said the discovery of several live animal traps, or snares, at different locations inside SGNP in 2020 and 2021 had prompted an anti-snare drive. While the measures had reduced the problem, poaching continued."Most of the time poachers kill these animals like boars and deer for their meat as there is a huge demand in the black market. Some poachers may also preserve their skeleton remains as a trophy," Sharma said.

A forest difficult to policeSpread across 103 square kilometres, SGNP presents a formidable surveillance challenge. Its hill ranges, creeks and inaccessible stretches make it difficult for forest officials to monitor the entire area. A force of 433 Maharashtra Security Force personnel currently patrols the park, but officials said the terrain and the scale of the forest limited effective coverage."There are still many parts of the forest that are not accessible to the department. However, animals don't follow jurisdictions, and often go beyond forest areas. The poachers track their movements and attack them. However, in a city like Mumbai, these incidents are still rare, but in Maharashtra's hinterland such incidents happen very frequently," a senior forest department official told The presence of hamlets and encroachments within the forest adds to the challenge. Officials alleged that some residents provide information about animal movements or help poachers gain access to the forest.The department has started holding sensitising camps in these villages so that they co-operate with us. Many people are still not aware that killing animals is considered a crime as per the Wildlife Protection Act," the official said.

If you're a good politician, you have to be an actor: Tavleen Singh



Who is Guruji modelled on? Tavleen Singh, veteran journalist and Indian Express columnist, sidestepped the question through much of the launch of her debut novel, The Actor, at the India International Centre on Wednesday evening.In the book, Guruji is a ruthless theocrat who rules a near-future India as its four-time Prime Minister. Singh was in discussion with Najeeb Jung, former Lieutenant Governor of Delhi.

Asked if Guruji was modelled on Prime Minister Modi, Singh disagreed. Guruji, she said, was "a kind of warning" of where India ends up "if we continue to have a society that becomes less and less liberal and less and less pluralistic."She did, however, name other inspirations. Naresh Khanna, the MP who lures a fading Bollywood star into a new secular party, is "very loosely modelled" on Prashant Kishor, founder of Bihar's Jan Suraaj party. "Prashant Kishor is the only politician I have known in my lifetime, and I've covered politics for 50 years, who has actually done the hard work," she said, pointing to his two years travelling through Bihar's villages telling voters to stop voting on caste. "Which is why I support him."

But Kishor, Jung said, lacked Naresh's "solid principles". He offered former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi or his son Rahul Gandhi, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, as more natural models, which drew Singh's retort that dynastic politics began when former prime minister Indira Gandhi handed her younger son Sanjay "not just the Congress party" but the country. "When politicians bring their children into politics," she said, "what they're doing is starting a business. It's not public service."The actor of the title is Amit Singh, a superstar on the slide after three flops, whom Naresh recruits as the party's face. The author said she had Amitabh Bachchan, Vinod Khanna and Rajesh Khanna in mind, all stars turned politicians. While researching the book, she had breakfast with lyricist and screenwriter Javed Akhtar, who told her that a real superstar would never have gone into politics.The two worlds, she argued, draw the same kind of person. "If you're a good politician, you have to be an actor," she said. Some of the most decent men lost out for want of that gift; former prime minister Manmohan Singh "was a bad speaker".Jung steered the conversation to the treatment of Muslims, describing a "deliberate, conscious effort" over the past 12 years to make them feel like "second-class citizens". "That's what the book is about," Singh replied. "Once religion becomes part of politics, then you will end up with a Guruji type figure."

BITS Pilani Hyderabad campus to host ATMoS '26 from Oct 23

Hyderabad: ATMoS '26, the national techno-management festival of BITS Pilani's Hyderabad campus, will feature over 100 student technology projects, combat robots and high-speed drone racing, and is expected to draw more than 20,000 attendees from October 23 to 25.

The three-day festival is expected to draw attendees from more than 60 institutions across the country, including IIT Hyderabad, IIIT Hyderabad and BITS Pilani's Goa campus, a release said.

MP Avinash Reddy taken into preventive custody ahead of Andhra civic poll nominations



The Andhra Pradesh Police on Thursday took Kadapa MP Y S Avinash Reddy of the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) into preventive custody as he prepared to accompany party candidates for civic body poll nominations, which began on Wednesday. They said the move was intended to prevent clashes with Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and Jana Sena candidates.The Lok Sabha MP's detention comes amid allegations of intimidation and disruptions during local body election nominations.

The elections to 10,488 Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituencies (MPTC) and Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituencies (ZPTC) seats are scheduled on November 3. There are 659 ZPTC and 9,829 MPTC seats across 659 of 663 mandals. Of these, polling has been withheld for four ZPTC and 29 MPTC seats.The police detained Avinash Reddy outside the Kadapa YSRCP central office and whisked him away in a police vehicle. They asked the candidates filing their nomination papers to proceed to the nomination centres. Several YSRCP leaders, including former minister S Sailajanath and Ketireddy Peddreddy, have also been put under house arrest in Anantapur.As per Supreme Court directions issued on Wednesday, the State Election Commission (SEC) has paused the election process across all 100 urban local bodies. The elections to the urban local bodies were originally scheduled for October 28. The SEC is evaluating whether to grant a 48-hour extension for filing nominations in certain locations, with the official decision expected on Thursday.

The YSRCP on Monday moved the Supreme Court, seeking protection for its candidates, alleging they were being attacked, intimidated, and prevented from filing nomination papers for the urban local body elections.

The SEC has also requested reports from all district collectors and superintendents of police concerning any skirmishes between rival candidates and their supporters, as well as any incidents of candidates being prevented from filing nominations.YSRCP state coordinator Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy said that 76 incidents of violence occurred across 11 districts during ZPTC and MPTC nominations, including attacks, house confinement, threats, and destruction of nomination papers. The maximum incidents were reported from YSR Kadapa district, 22, followed by Palnadu, 18, and Annamayya and Tirupati, 11 each, with the remainder across seven districts.Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy stated that the party would bring these developments before the Supreme Court, seeking the transfer or removal of responsible officials from election duties. He further accused TDP cadres of threatening YSRCP candidates into withdrawing their nominations by raising threats of fabricated narcotics and other criminal cases.

Mumbai turns to treated sewage water to wash roads amid rising pollution, water cuts

EMS News Agency, Oct 23

A week after the civic standing committee stalled a proposal to wash Mumbai's roads to curb dust pollution, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) is considering using treated sewage water from its sewage treatment plants (STPs) for the exercise.Currently, the BMC has only one operational STP, in Colaba, with a capacity to treat 37 million litres per day (MLD). This accounts for just 1.68 per cent of the 2,190 MLD of sewage generated in Mumbai daily.

Last week, the BMC had tabled a Rs 8.13-crore proposal before the civic standing committee to carry out round-the-clock water sprinkling on roads. The exercise helps trap dust particles on road surfaces, preventing them from becoming airborne and lingering in the lower atmosphere.

The drive is undertaken annually. However, Mumbai is currently facing a water shortage, with a 10 per cent cut in supply following deficient monsoon rainfall and the early withdrawal of the southwest monsoon. The civic standing committee stalled the proposal, calling the use of water on roads "insensitive".With several pockets of the city recording unhealthy and poor air quality in recent weeks, civic officials are now considering treated sewage water as an alternative for road washing. The BMC's Mumbai Air Pollution Mitigation Plan (MAPMP) identifies the resuspension of road dust as a major contributor to worsening air pollution in the city."A quantity of water for cleaning the roads will be drawn from the Colaba STP. The treated water from this STP is not being used for any potable purpose and is supplied to the garden and roads department and private stakeholders for landscaping. Therefore, it will be absolutely feasible to use STP water for road washing," a civic official told The Indian Express.The BMC also plans to hire private tankers for the exercise. Around 29 tankers, each with a capacity of 10,000 litres, are expected to be deployed. With the average hiring cost at Rs 5,000 per tanker, the civic body will spend around Rs 1.45 lakh daily, or Rs 1.74 crore to Rs 2.17 crore over a four-to-five-month drive.

The BMC is constructing seven large STPs in Worli, Dharavi, Bandra, Versova, Malad, Ghatkopar and Bhandup, with a combined treatment capacity of 1,200 MLD. Of these, the Bhandup facility is expected to be ready by December this year. Once operational, the plant, with a capacity of 215 MLD, is expected to supply treated water for road washing, officials said."Road washing is a primary aspect of controlling pollution levels. Therefore, the drive will be necessary. Mumbai is already facing low wind speeds and high pollution levels, so water sprinkling needs to be carried out regularly," the official said.

Putin says Ukraine's 'provocative acts' will worsen situation



Moscow: Russian President Vladimir Putin said that an escalation of tensions would not achieve the outcome sought by Kyiv and could only worsen the situation in Ukraine."They must understand that no provocative acts or escalation of tensions will deliver the outcome they seek. Such moves will only make the situation worse for them," Putin said at a press briefing on Friday.

He said Russia's military responses had prompted Kyiv to seek ceasefire arrangements covering several areas, including attacks on energy facilities and airstrikes, Xinhua news agency reported.Russia has begun responding to what he described as actions taken by Ukraine, including an alleged bid to impose a naval blockade and strikes on storage facilities and civilian infrastructure, he said, adding that, according to Russian assessments, Ukraine had damaged more than 100 vessels in the Black Sea.Earlier this month, Moscow said that sanctions on Russia's oil and gas exports would not revive relations with the United States or lead to peace with Ukraine.

US President Donald Trump signed the Russia sanctions bill into law. The legislation targets Russia's energy and defence industries, as well as its "shadow fleet" of tankers.Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said that Russia has largely adapted to the sanctions and found ways to minimise their impact, adding that the country's trading partners oppose such restrictions.Earlier in the day, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said that he and President Trump had agreed to meet in New York, and said Ukraine was ready to take serious steps towards peace in coordination with the American team."We agreed to meet in New York, and this meeting could change a lot. There is diplomatic momentum," Zelensky said in a post on X after speaking with Trump.

US to host G20 trade talks in Milwaukee next week



Washington: US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer will host G20 trade ministers in Milwaukee next week for talks on forced labour, food trade, industrial overcapacity and possible changes to a core principle of the global trading system.The ministerial will be held from September 29 to October 1, according to a programme released by the Office of the US Trade Representative on Friday.

Greer will lead discussions on eliminating forced labour from global supply chains and addressing structural excess production and capacity. India would be represented by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal.Ministers will also discuss updating the Most-Favoured-Nation principle and denouncing what the USTR described as the weaponisation of trade in food.The Most-Favoured-Nation principle requires a World Trade Organization member to extend the same trade advantage granted to one member to other members, subject to exceptions recognised under WTO rules.The USTR release did not provide details about the changes to the principle that Washington may propose at the Milwaukee meeting.

The gathering will begin on Tuesday evening with a welcome reception hosted by the Business Roundtable and the National Association of Manufacturers.The formal programme will open on Wednesday morning with a ministerial meeting of the Global Forum on Steel Excess Capacity.Steel production and industrial overcapacity have become major points of dispute in international trade. The United States has repeatedly linked excess production to pressure on domestic manufacturers and workers.Following the steel meeting, Greer and the visiting ministers will tour a Rockwell Automation facility in Milwaukee.They will meet factory workers and industry executives while walking through the plant, according to the USTR.The visit is intended to highlight the Trump administration's claim that its trade programme is accelerating American reindustrialisation and strengthening supply chains.Greer will deliver opening remarks at the first formal session of the G20 Trade Ministerial on Wednesday afternoon.The Office of the US Trade Representative and the US Department of Agriculture will host a welcome dinner for the visiting delegations that evening.

The principal ministerial negotiations will take place on Thursday. The programme includes a morning session lasting until 1 p.m. and a second session during the afternoon.Greer is scheduled to hold a press conference between the two sessions.The three-day programme will end with a reception at the Harley-Davidson Museum in Milwaukee.

The USTR announcement did not disclose Greer's planned bilateral meetings with individual trade ministers. Such meetings on the margins of a G20 gathering allow participating countries to address disputes and negotiations that fall outside the broader ministerial agenda.The selection of Milwaukee places the meeting in an American manufacturing centre. The programme's emphasis on a factory tour, steel capacity, workers and supply-chain resilience also reflects the administration's focus on connecting trade policy with domestic industrial production.India is a member of the G20 and has consistently pressed for the concerns of developing economies to receive greater weight in global economic decision-making. Questions involving food trade, industrial capacity, supply chains and the future of non-discrimination rules have direct implications for Indian exports and manufacturing.The Milwaukee ministerial comes as governments are reassessing their dependence on concentrated supply chains and the effectiveness of existing international trade rules.

Iran awaits US move after WSJ report says Trump rejects peace plan

Iran on Saturday awaited a US response to its proposal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz and end fighting in the Middle East war after the Wall Street Journal ?reported that President Donald Trump had rejected the deal.Iran raised the diplomatic initiative at the UN General Assembly in New York, saying it had been transmitted to the Americans ?via Qatari mediators and could reopen the strategic waterway and put an end to hostilities in the region within seven days.

The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here.But Trump is privately sceptical that Iran would meet his demands and has told his staff that he sees a renewed bombing campaign as likely after the November US midterm elections, the Journal reported, citing unnamed US officials.Earlier, a US official had said discussions with Iran through mediators were "positive and constructive".

IRAN WON'T ACCEPT 'BULLYING, COERCION', PRESIDENT SAYSThe Iranians also engaged their Saudi rivals regarding ?the strait, underscoring the stakes of a seven-month-old conflict that has disrupted oil flows through one of the world's most critical shipping lanes and taken a toll on the global economy.Iranian Foreign ?Minister Abbas Araqchi told reporters at the United Nations on Friday the proposed deal would trigger a seven-day countdown to reopening the strait and a pause ?in regional fighting.

"If there is seriousness on the US side to come to a deal and reopen the Strait of Hormuz, everything is now prepared," Araqchi said. If the US were to agree, the warring ?parties could start wider talks "on mutually agreed subjects", he said.That could potentially include discussions of Iran's nuclear programme. Trump has vowed that Tehran will never acquire a nuclear bomb, while a senior Iranian official told Reuters ?that Iran will show no flexibility over its nuclear programme even if the United States accepts its peace deal.Iran would grant no concessions over its rights, including enriching uranium or shipping its highly enriched uranium out of the country, the official said.Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, in an interview with the CBS show "Face the Nation", said Tehran was ready for talks on its nuclear programme and other issues, but would not accept "bullying or coercion"."Iran is not seeking war, but will defend itself against pressure, ?threats and attacks," Pezeshkian said, adding that it had already agreed that "we're not supposed to develop nuclear weapons".

Araqchi said Iran had put forward a plan that would halt hostilities on all fronts, including Lebanon. The ?plan in turn would require the United States to lift its blockade on Iranian ports, release Iran's frozen funds, and waive its oil sanctions, Araqchi said.Previous attempts at diplomacy have failed to end the war, which began on February ?28 with ?US and Israeli attacks.Since then the war



has alternated between pauses and renewed strikes, killing thousands while degrading Iran's conventional forces and damaging Iran's already ailing economy.Iran and its allies have retaliated by extending the conflict throughout the region. Iran, which controls the strait along with Oman, has struck US allies in the Gulf with drones and missiles while its Houthi allies in Yemen have targeted Saudi interests. Iranian-aligned militias in Iraq were blamed for a pipeline attack that temporarily took more Saudi oil off the market. All the while, Iranian-backed Hezbollah has been engaged with Israeli forces in Lebanon.

SAUDI ALLIES UNITEAraqchi briefed his Saudi counterpart Prince Faisal bin ?Farhan on the understanding between Iran and Oman regarding ?safe shipping routes in the Strait of ?Hormuz, Iran's foreign ministry said early Saturday.The war's widening toll has also united Saudi Arabia's allies to shore up the kingdom's defences.The Saudi-backed, internationally recognised Yemeni government has come under assault from Iran-linked Houthi fighters, with Houthi missiles striking inside the kingdom.Yemen's Saudi-led coalition said early Saturday it intercepted two ballistic missiles launched by the ?Houthis towards Khamis Mushait and two drones headed towards the capital Riyadh.The Houthis, who control the most populous parts of Yemen and much of the ?north, have launched attacks against ?Saudi Arabia since declaring a naval blockade against Riyadh in July, with strikes targeting Saudi vessels in the Red Sea.

The attacks have targeted Saudi cities, energy infrastructure and shipping, adding to pressures on global oil supplies caused by the US-Israeli war on Iran and putting at risk the main alternative Red Sea route for Gulf exports while traffic through the Strait of Hormuz remains largely blocked.Defence officials of Turkey and Pakistan, both partners in a joint ?defence pact with ?Saudi Arabia, met in Riyadh on Friday to review the security situation and discuss intelligence cooperation, military coordination and integrating forces, ?the Saudi defence ministry said in a statement.The statement came a day after Saudi, Pakistani and Turkish foreign ministers met within the framework of the Mecca Joint Defense Agreement.The violence in Yemen has prompted

India, Russia reaffirm commitment to 'special, privileged' strategic partnership



United Nations: India and Russia reaffirmed their commitment to "the special and privileged" strategic partnership during a meeting between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov here, according to Moscow's Foreign Ministry."The sides reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening the special and privileged Russia-India Strategic Partnership and close coordination at the UN, G20 and BRICS," the ministry said in an X post after the Friday meeting.EAM Jaishankar wrote on X that they "exchanged views on a number of ongoing issues. Also took stock of our bilateral and BRICS cooperation".Lavrov had visited India earlier this month for the BRICS summit along with Russia's President Vladimir Putin.US President Donald Trump has invited Putin to the G20 Summit of industrialised and emerging economies in December, which Prime Minister Narendra Modi is also expected to attend.At his meeting with Putin at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Summit in Kyrgyzstan late last month, PM Modi firmly asked him to end the Ukraine War in the name of humanity.EAM Jaishankar had met Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha on Monday.

He wrote on X tersely after the meeting that they "focused on developments over the past few weeks", while Sybiha said more explicitly that they discussed "peace efforts".Neither EAM Jaishankar nor the Russian ministry mentioned the Ukraine War as a topic of discussion in the Lavrov meeting.But EAM Jaishankar cryptically mentioned their discussion covered a "number of ongoing issues".As founding members, India and Russia have often coordinated positions on issues ranging from reforming global financial institutions to technology transfer and the energy transition.The meeting also highlights India's active diplomatic calendar at UNGA, where EAM Jaishankar has been holding bilateral talks with counterparts from multiple countries.His engagements are expected to focus on strengthening partnerships, addressing global challenges such as climate change and terrorism, and reinforcing India's role as a voice for the Global South.

How three colonial powers gained – and then lost – control over the straits of Hormuz, Bab el-Mandeb

San Marcos: Over recent months, the straits of Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb have become synonymous with geopolitical jostling. Whoever controls these narrow waterways governs the flow of maritime traffic from the Arabian Sea and the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean – and with it, a vitally significant chunk of global trade.

However, conflict over these straits is almost as old as modern maritime trade itself. The war between the US and Iran over these chokepoints is just the latest chapter in a centuries-long history of extra-regional powers attempting to influence or dominate the Middle East by sea.Ming China offers one of the earliest examples of an extra-regional power projecting its power through naval might and diplomacy. In 1405, the Chinese Muslim admiral, explorer and diplomat Zheng He embarked on the first of seven expeditions across the Indian Ocean. Commanding fleets of more than 300 vessels, he reached the town of Hormuz around 1414, then Aden in Yemen, passing through Bab el-Mandeb into the Red Sea.

This Pax Sinica did not control the straits. Instead, it established a strong trading presence based on displays of naval power, diplomatic missions, and lucrative gift exchanges. Unlike later colonial powers, Zheng He did not establish colonies at Hormuz or along the Arabian coast. Instead, he entered the existing trading system established by the region's Arab, Persian, Indian, and East African merchants.The voyages also demonstrate the limits of overextended maritime power. After Zheng He's final expedition in the 1430s, shifting priorities in the Ming dynasty brought the voyages to an end. The state was unwilling to invest in its navy and its upkeep.

Today, China invokes Zheng He's voyages to bestow historical legitimacy upon Chinese-Middle Eastern relations. Beijing presents its modern investments in infrastructure, energy, and ports, such as Gwadar in Pakistan, as the revival of an ancient and peaceful relationship that stretches back to the pre-modern Silk Road.Back in the 1500s, however, the rise in global shipping traffic and the arrival of Europe's colonial powers would soon mark a shift towards more violent, aggressive efforts to control the straits.The Portuguese were naval innovators, introducing a more coercive form of maritime power employing heavy cannons on ocean-going ships. In 1513, Afonso de Albuquerque attacked Aden in an attempt to control access to the Red Sea. He failed to capture the fortified mainland city, which was surrounded by steep mountainous terrain.As the US has learned centuries later, naval superiority did not translate into immediate victory on land. Portuguese warships could destroy vessels and bombard a harbour, but commanding the waters outside a port was not the same as controlling the land behind it.

However, in 1515, Albuquerque managed to seize the town of Hormuz, where he imposed the cartaz, a paid permit for merchants to sail through the Gulf and Indian Ocean. This regulation of trade is, in essence, what Iran's toll is attempting to do in the present.This "Pax Lusitana" was more violent than its Chinese predecessor, and in 1622, forces from the Iranian Safavid dynasty and English East India Company vessels joined forces to expel the Portuguese from Hormuz and open up trade.With Portugal ousted, Ottoman, Safavid, Omani, Dutch and English forces vied for control. The system was dominated by powerful European ships, and by local rulers who controlled both the ports and the goods that flowed through them.The Dutch East India Company entered these waters in 1614. Supported by heavily armed ships, it established itself at the port of Mokha, in Yemen.Following Portugal's expulsion, the Dutch obtained commercial privileges in 1623 and competed with British traders in Bandar Abbas, the principal Gulf trading station across from Hormuz.While the British were famous for the tea trade, the Dutch came to dominate coffee. Previously the domain of traders based in Mokha, the Dutch broke Yemen's monopoly over the coffee trade by smuggling Arabica coffee plants to the Indonesian island of Java, where they were cultivated on a massive scale.The Dutch thus demonstrated that the balance of maritime power could shift through control of production and trade, rather than through cannons and coercion.However, once the British captured Aden in 1839, they gained the upper hand.

Iran will make no nuclear concessions, Iranian official says

UNITED NATIONS, Iran will show no ?flexibility over its nuclear program even if the United States accepts its proposal to reopen ?the Strait of Hormuz, which calls for steps including the lifting of a US naval blockade on Iranian ports, a senior Iranian official told Reuters on Friday.The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the waterway would remain closed until "all of Iran's conditions ?are met" by the United States.The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here.Under Iran's proposal, Tehran has offered to reopen the strategically vital Strait of ?Hormuz. Within seven days, hostilities would end on all fronts, including Lebanon, the United ?States would lift its blockade on Iranian ports, release Iran's frozen funds and waive its oil sanctions, Iran's ?Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said on Thursday.

The proposal follows a sharp escalation in Middle East tensions after seven months ?of war between Iran and the United States, with Iran-backed Houthi militias in Yemen launching missiles and drones at Saudi Arabia.The strait has become the central bargaining chip in efforts to end the US-Iran conflict, with Iran seeking relief from the US blockade ?that is choking its economy and Washington seeking free passage for ships on the global oil supply route ?now blocked by Tehran.

In a meeting with journalists on Thursday on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly, Iranian President Masoud ?Pezeshkian said ?he hoped a deal with Washington to end the hostilities could be reached before the US midterm elections on November 3.Tehran said it would be prepared to engage in detailed negotiations over its nuclear program only after its conditions are met by the US.But the official said Iran would give no concessions over its rights, including ?enriching



The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the waterway would remain closed until "all of Iran's conditions ?are met" by the United States.

uranium or shipping its highly enriched uranium out ?of the country, one of the main US demands.Israel, the United States and other Western states have long accused Iran of seeking nuclear weapons, including pointing to its ?move to enrich uranium to 60%, far higher than needed for civilian uses and ?closer to ?the 90% needed for a weapon. Iran denies seeking nuclear weapons.The International Atomic Energy Agency estimates that Iran had 440.9 kg of uranium enriched to 60% when Israel and the US attacked Iranian nuclear facilities in June 2025. How much ?of ?that has survived is unclear.Iranian authorities have said that Iran could agree ?to dilute its most highly enriched uranium.In May, Reuters reported that Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei has issued a directive that the country's ?

Britain, Canada, France warn Israel over 'egregious' Gaza tactics



“We are committed to recognising a Palestinian state as a contribution to achieving a two-state solution and are prepared to work with others to this end,” the statement saysThe leaders of Britain, France and Canada on Monday (May 19, 2025) condemned Israel's "egregious actions" in Gaza and warned of joint action if it did not halt a heightened military offensive in the Palestinian territory.

But Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hit back at British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, French President Emmanuel Macron and Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, saying their joint statement was a "huge prize" for Hamas in the Gaza war.Mr. Starmer, Mr. Macron and Mr. Carney slammed Israel's blocking of aid and comments by ministers in Netanyahu's government who have threatened the mass displacement of Palestinians."We will not stand by while the Netanyahu government pursues these egregious actions. If Israel does not cease the renewed military offensive and lift its restrictions on humanitarian aid, we will take further concrete actions in response," the leaders said.

My joint statement with @Keir_Starmer and @EmmanuelMacron on the situation in Gaza and the West Bank:They did not say what action could be taken but added: "We are committed to recognising a Palestinian state as a contribution to achieving a two-state solution and are prepared to work with others to this end."The statement coincided with a joint demand by 22 countries -- including Britain, France and Canada -- for Israel to immediately "allow a full resumption of aid into Gaza", noting that the territory's population "faces starvation".Israel has kept Gaza in a total aid blockade since March 2, but announced on Monday it would allow in a limited number of supply trucks.Netanyahu said the limited aid access was because "images of mass starvation" in Gaza could hurt the legitimacy of his country's war.The British-French-Canada statement said Israel's "denial of essential humanitarian assistance to the civilian population is unacceptable and risks breaching international humanitarian law".It also slammed "abhorrent language used recently by members of the Israeli government, threatening that, in their despair at the destruction of Gaza, civilians will start to relocate".The leaders said that "permanent forced displacement is a breach of international humanitarian law"."By asking Israel to end a defensive war for our survival before Hamas terrorists on our border are destroyed and by demanding a Palestinian state, the leaders in London, Ottawa and Paris are offering a huge prize for the genocidal attack on Israel on October 7 while inviting more such atrocities," he said, referring to the Hamas attacks in 2023 that set off the war.Netanyahu said "all European leaders" should follow U.S. President Donald Trump's example in supporting Israel.

"The war can end tomorrow if the remaining hostages are released, Hamas lays down its arms, its murderous leaders are exiled and Gaza is demilitarised. No nation can be expected to accept anything less and Israel certainly won't," Netanyahu declared."This is a war of civilisation over barbarism. Israel will continue to defend itself by just means until total victory is achieved.

The workings of an atomiser and its myriad applications



All of us have had this experience at some point: you wake up, find out you’re late for a class or meeting, clean up, put on some nice clothes, and run. When you finally get to where you need to be, you’re sweating. You pull out a small deodorant bottle from your bag, give yourself a spray, and you’re set. Wasn’t that handy? The spray nozzle, also known as an atomiser, is a nifty piece of technology that creates a mist of particles from a liquid on demand. Liquids are easier to store whereas a spray spreads better. Thus some enterprising engineers invented the atomiser to allow you, and in fact many industries in the world, to make the best of both worlds.

What is an atomiser?

An atomiser is a device that creates a spray. A spray is in turn a collection of drops that disperses as gas. There are different kinds of atomisers based on the kind of spray required. Since there are many hundreds of scenarios where sprays are required — including injecting fuel into internal combustion engines, manufacturing steel, and to irrigate gardens and quench small fires — atomisers are also expected to have different abilities.Some simple ways in which sprays differ are in the drop size, spray pattern, and angle of application.There are at least two ways to measure spray drop sizes: by the drops’ average surface area or average volume. Some use a statistical figure called the Relative Span Factor (RSF). It denotes the distribution of drop sizes as a ratio of the size difference between the largest and smallest drops to the median size. If the RSF is close to 1, it means the spray is close to being very evenly sized.There are also many ways to measure the drop sizes. For example, the greater the angle at which light is scattered by a drop, the smaller it is. So scientists can shine a laser light at a spray and assess drop sizes using a detector to record the scattered light.Spray pattern refers to the distribution of the spray’s drops once they hit the target surface. While the spray on a deodorant may want to deliver drops to a wide area on skin, a spray in a coal mine may need to deliver a ring of drops spreading in a conical shape through the air to quickly trap as many coal-dust particles as possible (devices that can achieve the latter are good at preventing clogging and can create sprays at low pressure.)Similarly, the angle of application matters to keep a spray from striking surfaces that shouldn’t be sprayed or, conversely, to cover a given area as efficiently as possible.

How does an atomiser work?

There are many applications, so there are many atomisers. Perhaps the one mechanism they all share is that they create sprays by blowing up some liquid. In one simple implementation, liquid flowing through a wider channel is suddenly forced into a much narrower channel. A sufficiently high pressure drop will cause the liquid to break up into small drops. If the narrower channel has a notched opening at the other end, the spray emerges as a flat fan — of the kind used in spray painting.If the narrower channel opens after a short distance to an upward ramp, the fluid hits the ramp in a sheet and then shatters into drops — an output that’s useful when a thin coating is required, like an insecticide on a plant.Another design called a pressure-swirl atomiser works similarly to when you’re cradling a glass of chai in your hand. To help it cool, you might move the glass with your hand such that the liquid swirls inside, flowing more along the sides than in the centre. The atomiser does the same thing while allowing air to push through at the centre, keeping the fluid flowing along the walls. As gravity pulls the fluid down, a small opening allows it to flow out in a conical pattern.More complicated designs cater to specific applications. For example, an atomiser can also deliver an aerosol — which is a spray where the drops are so small (typically 10 µm or smaller) that they can stay airborne for many hours instead of settling down. To do this the shear, or tearing, force acting on the liquid at the liquid-gas interface should be much higher than in, say, an atomiser used to spray cleaning liquid on a household surface.Pressure-swirl atomisers can achieve this if the liquid is already at high pressure when entering the swirling chamber. Other techniques include ultrasonic nebulisation, where high-frequency vibrations induced on the liquid surface can cause small drops to break off, and air-assisted atomisers, where compressed air rips through the liquid as it flows out.

Where are atomisers used?

Aside from the applications mentioned thus far, atomisers are used everywhere where a liquid needs to be distributed in a specific and efficient way across a surface or through a space. In power plants, coolants are sprayed on spinning turbine blades and lubricants are often sprayed on machines with high-contact moving parts — in both cases to prevent heat build-up.A method called spray drying is used to make milk powder by creating a spray and passing it through hot gas to quickly dry it. In the automobile and aerospace sectors, fuel injectors spray pressurised fuel into engines.Firefighters’ only option for putting out fires involving flammable solids is often foam sprays.In addition to pesticides and fertilizers, farmers use spray-based irrigation systems when planting in soils that have poor percolation.Atomisers are ubiquitous in medicine: nasal sprays deliver drugs to the lungs, pain-relief sprays can quickly soothe aching muscles, antiseptics are sprayed on wounds, and disinfectants are used to keep air and hospital surfaces clean.In the early days of COVID-19 pandemic, there was some confusion over how far the virus could spread by air, leaving many scientists trying to model the pathogen as an aerosol. Climate scientists also study aerosols because of their cooling effects in the atmosphere, to subtract them and estimate the actual level of warming.

In the wake of crisis, the need for bipartisanship

The terrorist attack in Pahalgam, on April 22, 2025 has once again shaken our collective conscience, reminding us of the fragility of peace in a region long burdened by the weight of history. As India grieves the loss of innocent lives and strengthens its resolve against terror, we must also recognise the critical importance of bipartisanship — both in shaping our response and in ensuring that national security does not become another theatre for political posturing.

There is a distressing pattern that emerges whenever India faces a crisis of this nature: political parties, instead of closing ranks in defence of the nation, often resort to scoring points — weaponising grief for electoral advantage rather than forging a unified front. We saw this after the Pulwama attack in 2019, where swift retaliatory action became intertwined with campaign narratives. That was perhaps inevitable, since the general election was only weeks away from being called, and the national discourse swiftly veered from security imperatives to domestic politicking. But there is no doubt that this cycle weakens our ability to formulate a cohesive and long-term strategy, one that can fortify our defences without compromising our democratic integrity.

The challenge before us is clear: terrorism is a scourge that demands a decisive, well-coordinated response, not knee-jerk reactions shaped by party ideologies. Whether dealing with counter-terror operations, diplomatic negotiations, or intelligence reforms, decisions must be made collectively, informed by strategic foresight rather than short-term gains. National security is too vital an issue to be circumscribed by party affiliations; it must transcend ideological divides.Take, for instance, the Kargil conflict of 1999 — a moment when India, despite political differences between the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party and Opposition Congress, stood together in defence of the nation. The war effort saw bipartisan cooperation, ensuring that security strategies were aligned with national interests rather than partisan agendas. The Opposition, led by Congress President Sonia Gandhi, largely supported the government’s military response. She praised the armed forces, stating: “The bravery of our soldiers in Kargil has made every Indian proud. Their sacrifice will never be forgotten.” Similarly, when India conducted surgical strikes in 2016 in response to the Uri terror attack, it was done with clear messaging — demonstrating strength without overstepping into prolonged conflict — and the nation was united in applauding the action across political lines.Recent global history is replete with examples of bipartisanship across political divides in response to terrorism in various democracies. Following the September 11 attacks, both parties in the United States recognised the need for a more unified approach to national security, and a bipartisan effort ensured a swift and coordinated response to terrorism. After the terrorist attack on two mosques in Christchurch in 2019, then New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern led a bipartisan effort to reform gun laws. Within weeks, the government passed legislation banning military-style semi-automatic weapons, with support from both major parties. More recently, after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, bipartisan support emerged across Western Europe for military aid to Kyiv and sanctions against Russia. Traditionally neutral countries such as Sweden and Finland joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), with broad political consensus across party lines.These examples highlight how, despite political differences, nations can unite in times of crisis to prioritise security, unity and effective action. Should Pahalgam and its aftermath be any different?When I first became Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs, I declared that “there is no such thing as a Congress foreign policy and a BJP foreign policy; there is only Indian foreign policy, and Indian national interests.” I was reminded of a famous episode of Indian diplomatic history in 1994, when Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao picked Opposition Leader (and then Chairman of the External Affairs Committee) Atal Bihari Vajpayee to lead the Indian delegation to present India’s case on Kashmir, and counter Pakistan’s falsehoods, at a United Nations session in Geneva. The Congress Minister of State for External Affairs, Salman Khurshid, was named as A.B. Vajpayee’s deputy. Later, as Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee recalled with amusement just how bewildered



the Pakistani governing class was at seeing an Opposition leader representing his nation’s interests at such a prestigious forum, and at such a crucial moment. But such, he concluded, is our “vichitra loktantra” — as clamorous and chaotic as it is miraculous and mesmerising.Sadly, this episode has not been repeated in the last three decades, as our politics has turned ever more rancorous and bitter. There is very little mutual respect and friendship on display between the ruling party and the Opposition. The core assumption of democratic politics is supposed to be that both sides understand that the other is as committed to the national interest as itself, even if they disagree on how best to ensure the nation’s well-being. In that sense the two sides are not enemies but adversaries. But that assumption has yielded to a bitter polarisation in recent years. One could, of course, argue that this is merely a natural consequence of the pushes and pulls that are inevitable in a democratic polity. But the Indian discourse has taken on extreme hues that imperil any possibility of consensus. The Overton’s Window of political mobilisation (in other words, what is considered acceptable in the political arena) has become more vengeful, driven by resentment and an obsession to expiate past wrongs. And social media has emerged as an important tool for divisive discourse, through which the political benefits of this polarisation are reaped. From public debates to dinner-table conversations, the greys have given way to Manichaean blacks and whites.The result is that in recent years, political discourse on security has frequently devolved into blame games, sidestepping the actual need for strategic recalibration. India’s relationship with Pakistan, though complex and fraught, requires clarity. There can be no ambiguity in condemning acts of terror; the line between national security and political point-scoring is not a thin one. It is in India’s interest to unite in the response to terror, because a perception of division at home always emboldens the enemy. Inflammatory rhetoric, though politically expedient, serves no substantive purpose. If India is to emerge as a responsible power, it must ensure that its politics is mature, that the nation always comes ahead of party interests, and that its diplomacy walks in step with defence preparedness — balancing deterrence with restraint, security with stability, and democratic politics with national unity.Need for a non-partisan security doctrineWhat India needs today is a structured national security doctrine that remains insulated from electoral cycles — one that provides a clear vision on counter-terrorism, intelligence-sharing, and strategic deterrence without becoming a tool for political one-upmanship. Policies regarding defence, zero-tolerance of terror, the security of the homeland, regional strategy and global diplomacy, must be formulated with bipartisan consensus, ensuring that they remain consistent, regardless of which party is in power.True political leadership demands statesmanship over populism, clarity over chaos. If our lawmakers recognise this imperative, they will understand that safeguarding India’s security is not a party matter but a collective responsibility. In moments of grief and crisis, let bipartisanship be the force that unites us — not just in words, but in action. The promise of a secure, stable, and resilient India depends on it.Shashi Tharoor is a fourth-term Member of Parliament (Congress), Lok Sabha, for Thiruvananthapuram, Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs, and the Sahitya Akademi Award-winning author of 27 books, including ‘The Battle of Belonging: On Nationalism, Patriotism, and what it Means to Be Indian’

What India can learn from U.S. academic freedom crisis: When politics enters the classroom

With conservative State governments in the United States enacting policies that opponents claim jeopardize academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and intellectual diversity, American colleges have recently turned into arenas for ideological conflict. Although freedom of thought and inquiry have long been defended by the U.S. as essential components of its higher education system, that basic foundation is currently in jeopardy. This incident serves as a frightening reminder to Indian administrators, students, and policy intellectuals of how readily university integrity can be undermined by politicization.Laws that limit the teaching of subjects like race, gender, and sexuality in schools have been passed in a number of conservative-led U.S. states, including Florida, Texas, and Tennessee. These laws, which were framed as attempts to shield kids from political indoctrination, have caused: Critical Race Theory (CRT) being prohibited in public institutions; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) offices being dismantle; and control of course content and library resourcesMany educators are concerned about this top-down management because they perceive it as an open attack on their freedom to teach and conduct research. There are also requests to restrict or do away with tenure systems, which are a cornerstone of academic freedom.The theory known as Critical Race Theory (CRT), which was created in American law schools throughout the 1970s and 1980s, essentially explains how racism is ingrained in institutions, legal systems, and public policy rather than being limited to individual opinions. The key underlying concepts are:Racism is systemic; it is not limited to individual prejudice but is ingrained in institutions, laws, and structures.Race is socially manufactured; it is not biologically based; rather, it is a social construct used for control and classification.Privilege and power are important: Who gains from current structures? CRT poses challenging queries regarding inequality and justice.To fully tell the tale of law and history, the voices of the underprivileged must be heard.Intersectionality: When race coexists with other identities such as gender, class, or disability, particular difficulties might arise.Affirmative action, housing laws, education inequalities, and police reform are just a few of the topics that are examined utilizing CRT. It promotes critical thinking about history, equity, and how we formulate laws to create a society that is more inclusive.Although CRT is mostly taught in academic institutions, it has recently become politicized, particularly in the U.S., with detractors saying it sows discord. Advocates claim it makes it possible to have frank discussions on justice, history, and racism.Advocates of these regulations contend that liberal ideology have taken over universities, turning them into echo chambers. They think that more balanced, ideologically diverse learning environments will result from eliminating some types of content and regaining control over the curriculum. But rather than promoting conversation, the methods used to achieve this goal frequently entail stifling it.Some conservative leaders have publicly expressed hostility against prestigious universities. Donald Trump has questioned the worth of an Ivy League education and referred to American universities as “radical left indoctrination centers.”Florida Governor Ron DeSantis said that “education is not about imposing ideology” but rather “about



pursuing truth” in his criticism of the New College of Florida and his doubts about Harvard’s ideological neutrality. These remarks reveal a deeper hostility for academic institutions that are viewed as strongholds of progressive ideas.

The Harvard conflictThe difficulties are further exemplified by the recent impasse between the U.S. Department of Education and Harvard University, one of the most respected Ivy League universities. Following the 2023 Hamas-Israel crisis, a number of Harvard student organizations made contentious remarks that infuriated donors and the general public. The Department of Education launched a civil rights inquiry into Harvard amid claims that the university was encouraging antisemitism.Although this action was purportedly taken for campus safety, it was widely perceived as pressure with political motivations. Opponents cautioned that these inquiries might be used as instruments of ideological control, using federal supervision as a weapon to threaten organizations that don’t fit the prevailing political narratives.India’s higher education system is about to undergo a significant change. There is a major drive for increased autonomy, interdisciplinary learning, and international research collaboration with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. However, the U.S. case serves as a caution:Autonomy is brittle. It is difficult to get back once lost: Indian universities, especially public ones, frequently have to balance academic independence with governmental supervision. The danger of political ideology controlling curricula is not only intellectual homogenization but also a deterioration in research quality, international recognition, and student readiness.Politicization over pedagogy: The goal of education changes from inquiry to indoctrination when political narratives begin to influence curricula. It is discouraged for faculty to question prevailing views. Diverse worldviews and critical thinking are not presented to students. Additionally, the university stops being a forum for free discussion.This risk is not fictitious. We have already witnessed attempts in India to marginalize specific academic disciplines, remove inconvenient viewpoints, and rewrite history texts. The decline of academic freedom may resemble the American experience if these trends continue unchecked.Stakeholders in Indian higher education need to be proactive. They need to redouble their effort to boost institutional oversight to safeguard academic freedom; encourage scholarly organizations, not political appointees, to create curricula; encourage critical thinking instead than memorization; preserve research freedom and tenure.

After cases of drug, alcohol use by pilots, Air India stresses zero-tolerance, strict compliance



Air India has undertaken additional measures to reinforce compliance among employees performing safety-critical functions, sources said.Air India has undertaken additional measures to reinforce compliance among employees performing safety-critical functions, sources said.After one of its pilots tested positive for drug use and another failed an alcohol breath analyser test just before operating a flight, Tata group airline Air India has made various interventions in recent weeks to reinforce upon pilots the need for professional conduct and regulatory compliance, according to sources in the know. These incidents had raised questions about evident safety-related violations involving pilots. In their wake, the airline has now doubled down on its efforts to strengthen compliance and come down heavily on such transgressions, as per sources.

The pilot-in-command of an Air India Phuket-Delhi flight involved in a sudden altitude loss incident on August 4 tested positive for psychoactive substance, and was sacked after the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) in its preliminary report on September 4 flagged his positive drug test as a serious concern.Then on September 6, an Air India pilot failed a breath analyser test in Zurich before operating a flight to Delhi, and was suspended pending investigation and his final medical report. A similar incident occurred at the Vancouver airport in January.The recent incidents led to a missive to all Air India pilots from the airline's head of flight operations reiterating its "zero-tolerance policy towards the use of prohibited substances and reporting for duty under the influence of alcohol or drugs", according to airline sources. They added that Air India follows a zero-tolerance policy towards any violation of safety, security, or regulatory requirements, and confirmed breaches of rules and protocols are dealt with strict disciplinary action.

In the September 6 incident in Zurich, the pilot was immediately removed from operating duties upon receipt of a preliminary breath analyser test report from local authorities and referred for further medical evaluation. He was then flown to India as a passenger and is currently under suspension. According to airline sources, disciplinary action will be taken based on the findings of the investigation and his medical report."This approach is consistent with Air India's longstanding policy that safety-related violations, particularly those involving alcohol, prohibited substances or conduct that could compromise operational safety, are treated with the utmost seriousness," said a source.In the Zurich case, the issue was identified and reported through Air India's airport team to the airport authorities in line with the airline's internal monitoring and compliance processes, it is learnt. Sources in the airline said that the prompt reporting and immediate operational action in this case demonstrate the effectiveness of Air India's safety oversight and compliance framework. They said that Air India's internal safety management system is designed to "identify, report and address operational deviations and non-compliance proactively".The airline is now working to strengthen safety monitoring and reporting within the organisation. Air India has undertaken additional measures to reinforce compliance among employees performing safety-critical functions, sources said. Some of these include mandatory testing for psychoactive substances, enhanced awareness programmes focused on safety-critical responsibilities, reinforcement of reporting obligations and regulatory expectations, and continued monitoring of compliance trends and operational conduct."Air India enforces internal standards that complement regulatory requirements and maintains a strict stance on any failure to comply with alcohol restrictions, substance abuse regulations, mandatory reporting obligations or other safety-related protocols. Where violations have been established, the airline has taken disciplinary action, including suspension and termination of employment, depending on the nature and severity of the breach," said an airline source."Safety remains the cornerstone of Air India's ongoing transformation journey.

Understanding What Health Insurance Actually Pays For



Buying health insurance is an important step towards protecting yourself and your family from rising medical costs. However, having a policy does not automatically mean every medical expense will be covered.Many people discover this only when they file a claim. A hospitalisation is already stressful, and uncertainty about what the insurer will pay, which documents are required, or why deductions have been made can add to the pressure.The key is understanding what your health insurance policy actually covers before you need to use it.

What Does Health Insurance Cover?

Health insurance policies provide coverage based on specific terms and conditions. The sum insured is the maximum amount available under the policy, but it does not mean every medical expense will automatically be paid.Coverage depends on factors such as:

Waiting periods

Hospitalisation requirements

Pre-existing disease disclosures

Deductibles, co-pays and other policy limits

For example, a medical diagnosis does not always mean that every related expense is covered. Depending on the policy, treatment may need to involve hospitalisation or qualify as a daycare procedure.Similarly, emergency room visits can sometimes create confusion. A patient may undergo tests, scans, IV treatment or observation and assume the expense will be covered because the situation was serious. However, claim eligibility depends on whether the treatment meets the conditions mentioned in the policy.Why Understanding Waiting Periods MattersWaiting periods are an important part of health insurance coverage.Pre-existing diseases (PEDs), such as diabetes or hypertension, may have a waiting period before they are covered. Some insurers offer add-ons that can reduce this waiting period for specific conditions.This is why accurate disclosure while buying a policy is critical. If a medical condition is not disclosed correctly, it can lead to questions during claim assessment.How Policy Limits Can Affect Your Claim AmountEven when a claim is approved, the final amount received may not always match the hospital bill.Certain policy features can reduce the final payout, including:

Room rent limits

Co-payment clauses

Deductibles

Non-medical expenses

Sub-limits on specific treatments

For example, if a policy has a room rent restriction and a policyholder chooses a higher room category, the insurer may apply proportionate deductions across the hospital bill.Understanding these limitations before purchasing a policy can help avoid unexpected expenses during a medical emergency.Why Documentation Plays an Important Role During ClaimsDuring a claim, insurers may ask for documents such as medical reports, first consultation records, previous treatment papers, discharge summaries and pre-authorisation documents.

In some cases, additional queries or medical reviews may be required before the claim can be processed.Keeping medical records organised and understanding documentation requirements beforehand can make the claims journey smoother.A Real Claim Shows Why Understanding Your Policy Matters

A 55-year-old policyholder bought health insurance with an add-on to reduce the waiting period for two conditions she'd declared: diabetes and hypertension. That September, she was diagnosed with breast cancer and filed a claim for treatment, at a time when treatment itself was already enough to deal with.The insurer flagged the claim and asked for pre-hospitalisation OPD records, past treatment papers for her hypertension and diabetes, and first consultation records related to cholesterol. During the investigation, they alleged she had an undisclosed cholesterol condition that could void the policy altogether.Working with her son, Ditto Insurance found that hypertension had simply been recorded incorrectly on the proposal form. There was no evidence of a cholesterol condition to speak of, and diabetes was the only pre-existing condition she actually had.The insurer still pushed back, so Ditto Insurance pulled the underwriting records from when the policy was first issued. The medical check-up done at that stage had already tested her total cholesterol, along with a CBC and ECG, and the results were within the normal range.Ditto Insurance used these results to counter the non-disclosure allegation. Since cholesterol had been tested and found to be within the normal range when the policy was issued, the records did not support the allegation that it had been an undisclosed condition.The claim was eventually approved.This case highlights an important point. Buying health insurance is not only about having financial coverage. It is also about understanding what was disclosed, what the policy covers, and how claims are assessed when questions arise.Choosing the right policy is only one part of the insurance journey. Understanding the policy terms, maintaining documentation, and knowing how to respond during a claim can be equally important.An advisor can help you understand: What treatments are covered Which expenses may not be payableHow waiting periods workWhat medical information needs to be disclosed Which documents may be required during claims

Ditto Insurance supports customers beyond policy selection by helping them understand claim-related questions, documentation requirements, and communication with insurers.When a claim involves questions around pre-existing diseases, alleged non-disclosure or policy interpretation, having support can help policyholders understand what is being asked and how to respond.If a genuine claim is rejected, Ditto Insurance can also help customers escalate the matter through appropriate channels, including the insurer's grievance process and, when required, the Insurance Ombudsman or consumer courts. Where legal escalation is required for a genuinely rejected claim, Ditto Insurance bears the associated legal costs.This does not mean every claim will be approved. Instead, the focus is on helping policyholders understand the decision-making process and pursue available options where there are valid grounds.Health Insurance Is About Knowing Your Coverage Before You Need It

Health insurance is designed to provide financial protection during medical emergencies. However, that protection works best when policyholders understand the conditions attached to their coverage.Before buying or renewing a policy, it is important to ask:

What treatments are covered?

Which treatments require hospitalisation?

Which daycare procedures are included?

How do waiting periods apply to my medical history? What deductions could affect the final payout?

Which documents may be needed during a claim?

Reviewing these details in advance can reduce uncertainty when a medical emergency occurs.With Ditto Insurance, the aim is to provide clarity before a claim and support when one actually happens. This includes helping customers understand policies at purchase, supporting them with claim-related documentation, and assisting with escalation routes when required.If you're comparing health insurance policies, you can explore plans and see how they differ in coverage, waiting periods and other important terms.Understanding these details before you buy can help you choose a policy that fits your needs and avoid surprises when you need to use it.

NSE's primary duty is of a regulator, even at cost to business, says Chairman Srinivas Injeti



The primary duty of the National Stock Exchange (NSE) is to ensure a safe and trusted market for investors even if it comes at the cost of business for the exchange, Chairman Srinivas Injeti said here on Friday, amid the ongoing tightening of regulations for derivatives markets which has been a "cash cow" for both the bourse operators, NSE and BSE."We can't be distracted from our primary duty of giving you a market with integrity and a market where investors are protected," Injeti said during a media briefing here, a day after NSE's listing.MD and CEO Ashishkumar Chauhan and other senior management of the bourse operator were also present.

On regulatory tightening in the derivatives segment, Injeti said, "This imbalance, excessive dependence (on the derivatives segment), you know, will have to be reduced. So, I think that is the big picture. And given this, there is no way, there is no jugglery, there is no way in which quarter to quarter you can do some magic."Before this tightening, NSE and BSE were deriving over 90% of their revenues from the derivatives segment at one point.Diversifying revenue streamsNSE's management emphasised the need to take steps to better protect retail investors and diversify its revenue streams going forward."Maybe if this domination in options was unquestioned, they (SEBI) may not have looked at the commodity. They may not have lookedat … what are the small, small things we can do to sort of get data connectivity, some money here, some money there, some data modernisation. All that is happening because of this imbalance, excessive dependence (on revenues from derivatives), you know, will have to reduce," Injeti added.A study by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) last month showed that despite signs of retail participation in India's equity derivatives (F&O) cooling for the first time in at least five years, nearly 9 in 10 individual traders continued to face losses in 2025-26, as the average loss per trader rose 2% year-on-year to Rs 1.17 lakh crore.This was despite steps taken by the regulator such as limiting expiries to one per exchange and increasing lot sizes of derivative contracts, among others.

NSE has considerably reduced its revenue dependence on derivatives, and aims to continue doing so through more focus on the cash market, electronic gold receipts, and the commodity market, among others.In fact, SEBI on Thursday permitted foreign investors to participate in physically ?settled non-agricultural commodity derivatives, a move expected to boost trading volumes in bullion contracts. This will also bring in significant capital for NSE, whose facilities have been used by FPIs for decades to invest in equities, the management said.The NSE chairman also said that the SEBI should allow exchanges to list on their own platforms as the Indian market has matured.While self-listing is permitted across various major markets, like in the US, the Indian market regulator continues to prohibit it, citing conflict of interest concerns."Prior to 2012, even listing was not allowed. A stock exchange or an MII could not list. In 2012, it was allowed," Injeti said, adding that there is merit in aligning the Indian norms with global standards.Similar concerns have also been raised by foreign investors, it added.NSE's shares listed on the BSE on Thursday at a premium of around 1%. The management said it had not yet approached SEBI for approval regarding its shares trading on its own platform through the "permitted-to-trade" route without listing.The "permitted-to-trade" route enables a share to trade on an exchange without listing on it, leaving the regulatory burden to the exchange it is listed on.

CISCE to bring together 16 lakh students to help shape mental-health guidelines

The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) will organise a three-tier national initiative on student mental health and well-being, involving nearly 16 lakh students from Classes VI to XII, 32,000 teachers and more than 3,300 affiliated schools.The CISCE Student Mental Health and Well-Being Conclave 2026 will begin with school-level discussions in October and culminate in a national conclave in Hyderabad from November 20 to 22. The initiative will coincide with World Mental Health Day on October 10.

The first stage, School-Level Mental Health and Well-Being Dialogues, will be held from October 4 to 31 across CISCE-affiliated schools. Students from Classes VI to XII will take part in weekly classroom discussions on four areas — student stress and academic pressure; emotional well-being, digital life and positive relationships; drugs, substance abuse and healthy choices; and resilience and help-seeking behaviour.

The discussions are intended to collect students' views and experiences on mental health and encourage schools to strengthen mechanisms for listening to students, peer support and access to appropriate help.The second stage will consist of Regional Student Mental Health and Well-Being Conclaves, which will be conducted virtually across 18 regions from November 4 to 14. Selected student representatives and teacher mentors will take part in these discussions. School-level issues and experiences will be discussed at the regional level, following which representatives and mentors will be selected for the national conclave.

The final stage will be held at the CISCE Centre of Excellence in Hyderabad from November 20 to 22. It will bring together 72 students representing 18 regions, 18 teacher mentors, mental health and policy experts, CISCE representatives and partner organisations.A key outcome of the national conclave will be a CISCE Student Mental Health Charter. The charter will set out principles, rights, responsibilities and recommendations for creating supportive and emotionally safe school environments.The initiative will also work towards developing a Student Well-being Index, compiling examples of practices followed by schools, and preparing a White Paper on Emerging Mental Health Concerns among Adolescents.CISCE has said it may later make the Student Mental Health Conclave a biennial initiative, held around World Mental Health Day.



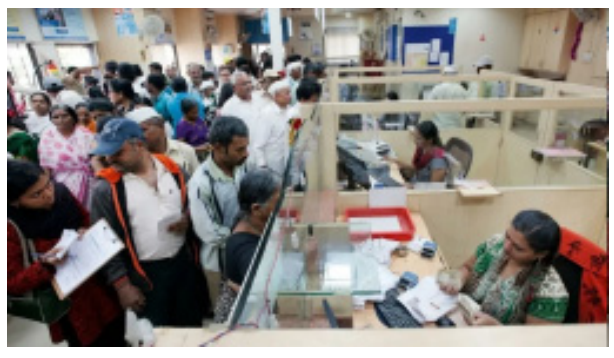
The 2026 programme is designed to take student concerns from classroom discussions to regional and national platforms and use them to develop recommendations for school-level practices and student well-being.

Government never agreed to 5-day work week for banks, facts being twisted: Official sources

The government never agreed to a 5-day working week for banks, a finance ministry official has said ahead of the three-day strike announced by the United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU) from September 28 to 30 because this key demand has not been met."The five-day week was never agreed at the time of the last wage negotiations. It was never a negotiating tool. They (bank unions) are twisting the facts," the official said on the condition of anonymity.

In a letter dated September 22, the All India Bank Officers' Confederation said there had been no response to this demand "which was agreed and signed in March, 2024 under the last wage revision settlement". The letter added that officials from the Indian Banks' Association (IBA) had informed union representatives that the issue of five-days banking is "under consideration by the Government".Currently, bank branches are open on the first, third, and fifth Saturdays of every month.The 12th Bipartite Settlement, agreed in March 2024, said that "in terms of an understanding" was reached between the IBA and unions to declare all Saturdays as holidays for banks.

"…IBA has accordingly recommended to the Government. The due changes in the working hours, will be effective after approval by the Government of India and necessary clearances from Government / Reserve Bank of India," the Settlement said.However, the finance ministry official asserted the government had not agreed to a five-day work week, although a lot of other concessions were made.



"The IBA didn't want to go beyond an 11% hike in the wage negotiations, but the government intervened and a hike of 17% was announced. Even on the issue of family pension, the IBA was not keen but the government said that post-retirement, they will be on the other side, and they should not fight it," the source said, adding that the performance-linked incentive (PLI) scheme had been kept on hold for the current financial year following opposition.Announced in November 2024, the PLI scheme for public sector banks' employees faced intense pushback and was called "discriminatory" because it was only for Scale 4 officers and above. According to bank unions, the scheme is divisive, demotivating, and distortionary.

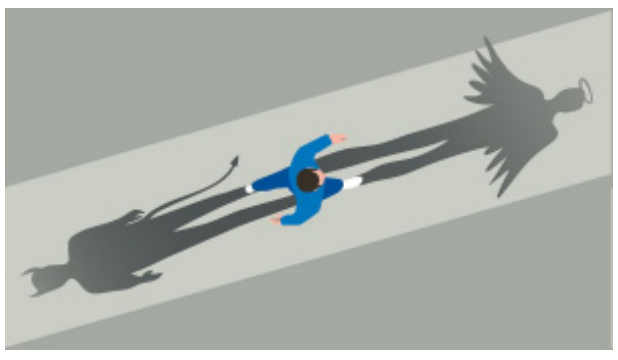
With the three-day strike that begins on Monday in mind, the government on Wednesday said public sector banks and regional rural banks will function as normal on September 27, Sunday.

Angad Bedi remembers father Bishan Singh Bedi on his 80th birth anniversary

Mumbai: Actor Angad Bedi has remembered his late father, legendary cricketer Bishan Singh Bedi, on his 80th birth anniversary on Friday. He spoke about his legacy and the changes in their lives since his passing.

Angad shared a video montage featuring his late father from his cricketing days, moments with family, photographs with daughter-in-law Neha Dhupia and hid grandchildren.Angad wrote in the caption: "Happy 80th today, Dad. Hope you are at peace with yourself. Mehr and Guriq are growing up well. Guriq has taken to cricket and football and Mehr is pushing herself in swimming and track n field.. Both the Nehas are fine (sic)."

The silent toll of institutional complicity - moral injuries



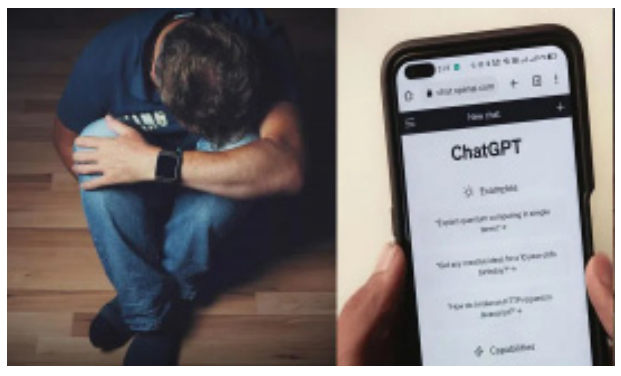
On April 13, 1919, colonial soldiers from the 9th Gurkha and 54th Sikhs infantry regiments stood at the entrance of Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar and, on Brigadier-General R. E. H. Dyer's orders, opened fire on a peaceful crowd gathered for Baisakhi and to protest the Rowlatt Act. Over ten minutes, more than 1,650 bullets were fired by the soldiers (recruited from Nepal and Undivided Punjab) into the trapped gathering, killing hundreds, including women and children. While General Dyer was "forced into retirement", the emotional aftermath for the soldiers who executed the firing remains undocumented.What, then, did those who fired feel inside their minds and hearts as they shot at unarmed civilians? Was there guilt? Shame? Anxiety? Or was the act simply normalised within a chain of command, leaving no inner mark at all? No testimonies, letters, or psychiatric records exist to reveal their inner world. For decades, such questions remained unasked. Wars came and went—World War II, Korea, Vietnam—yet the psychological toll on those ordered to commit or witness violence stayed in the shadows.In the 1980s, philosopher Andrew Jameton introduced the concept of 'moral distress', particularly in healthcare settings. In the 1990s, psychiatrist Jonathan Shay identified 'moral injury' in Vietnam veterans, suffering rooted not in fear, but in moral betrayal.

Unlike PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), symptoms of which are startling flashbacks, hyper-arousal, and nightmares, stemming from fear in life-threatening situations, moral injury is rooted in shame, guilt, disgust, and spiritual conflict after actions that violate deeply-held beliefs. It is about what one has done, seen, failed to stop, or been required to participate in. Moral injury occurs through three elements: betrayal of what is morally right, by someone in legitimate authority, in a situation of extreme significance. Later, in 2009, Brett Litz and colleagues broadened it to include perpetrating, witnessing, failing to prevent, or learning about acts that transgress deep moral beliefs.Modern definitions emphasise both cognitive and emotional components: feelings of intense guilt or shame, loss of trust (in self, others, institutions), spiritual or existential crises, self-condemnation, difficulty forgiving oneself, and a collapse of meaning or purpose. Scientists also note behavioural outcomes: self-sabotage, social withdrawal, substance use, demoralisation, and increased risk of suicide. Psychological risk factors include shame-proneness and neuroticism; protective factors include self-esteem, supportive relationships, and belief in justice and forgiveness.Studies of veterans show standardised tools (like the Moral Injury Symptom Scale–Military Version) measure exposure to morally injurious events and symptoms such as guilt, loss of faith, and shame-driven alienation. Importantly, research confirms moral injury is distinct from PTSD—even when both occur, treatments that only address fear-based trauma often fail to heal the wound created by moral conflict. Traditional PTSD therapies reframe frightening memories, but moral injury usually requires "forward-looking" interventions that help individuals accept moral responsibility while rebuilding purpose and self-forgiveness.The burden of moral codes

Colonel Paul Tibbets, who piloted the Enola Gay and bombed Hiroshima in August 1945, expressed no regret, believing his act ended the war and saved lives. In contrast, Emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century BCE felt remorse after the Kalinga War and undertook a deep moral reckoning, despite being the authority responsible. This highlights that moral injury is subjective, rooted not in the act itself but in personal moral beliefs.The risk of moral injury varies from individual to individual and culture to culture, depending on how strongly actions clash with personal or institutional values. It is about how deeply that act clashes with one's personal moral framework. During the COVID-19 pandemic, (many, though not all) healthcare workers experienced similar inner conflict. They were harmed by impossible choices regarding whom to save and whom to turn away. For some, the inability to meet their moral duties led to lasting guilt, helplessness, and a sense of betrayal by the very systems they served.Although the term is little known in India, the same moral conflicts occur daily in police, medical and journalistic offices and bureaucratic settings. A junior police officer told to falsify records in an undisclosed custodial death, a doctor forced to ignore malpractice in an organ transplant scam, a journalist ordered to sensationalise grief for TRP, an officer coerced into turning a blind eye to sexual harassment charges or corruption—all are at risk of moral injury. These scenarios mirror the components defined in literature: transgressions of deeply held moral codes, authority-imposed betrayal, internal moral dissonance, and emotional turmoil. But the phenomenon rarely enters public discussion—research in India on moral injury is minimal.

Healing an ethical woundThough moral injury isn't an official psychiatric diagnosis, it is increasingly treated seriously within mental health fields. There is no universally accepted treatment for moral injury; responses vary widely. Even cognitive behavioural therapy has limitations. Recognition remains the first step toward developing effective, individualised interventions through research. Critically, institutional acknowledgement matters: moral injury only begins to heal when wrongdoing is named, responsibility is accepted, and support is offered; not judgment or ostracism.Why recognition helpsPublic attention often fixes on the victim, and rightly so. But without recognising the psychological injury borne by those within the system—especially those coerced into complicity—we lose part of the story. Moral injury creates professionals numbed to empathy, disengaged or cynical, and institutions that tolerate ethical compromise. If unaddressed, it erodes conscience, accountability, and institutional moral integrity. Moral injury rooted in guilt can disrupt sleep, impair focus, and increase mistakes at work. Over time, those suffering a moral injury may turn to addictive behaviour, reflecting a silent struggle that alters both daily function and emotional well-being.India needs systemic reform for accountability and compassionate recognition of the moral costs borne by individuals. How do we understand the suffering of someone who is both complicit and wounded? How can we acknowledge that some of the brutality we see may emerge not just from cruelty but from repeated moral injury

Validation, loneliness, insecurity: Why youth are turning to ChatGPT



New Delhi: An alarming trend of young adolescents turning to artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots like ChatGPT to express their deepest emotions and personal problems is raising serious concerns among educators and mental health professionals.Experts warn that this digital "safe space" is creating a dangerous dependency, fueling validation-seeking behaviour, and deepening a crisis of communication within families.

They said that this digital solace is just a mirage, as the chatbots are designed to provide validation and engagement, potentially embedding misbeliefs and hindering the development of crucial social skills and emotional resilience.Sudha Acharya, the Principal of ITL Public School, highlighted that a dangerous mindset has taken root among youngsters, who mistakenly believe that their phones offer a private sanctuary.

"School is a social place – a place for social and emotional learning," she told PTI. "Of late, there has been a trend amongst the young adolescents… They think that when they are sitting with their phones, they are in their private space. ChatGPT is using a large language model, and whatever information is being shared with the chatbot is undoubtedly in the public domain."Acharya noted that children are turning to ChatGPT to express their emotions whenever they feel low, depressed, or unable to find anyone to confide in. She believes that this points towards a "serious lack of communication in reality, and it starts from family."

She further stated that if the parents don't share their own drawbacks and failures with their children, the children will never be able to learn the same or even regulate their own emotions. "The problem is, these young adults have grown a mindset of constantly needing validation and approval."Acharya has introduced a digital citizenship skills programme from Class 6 onwards at her school, specifically because children as young as nine or ten now own smartphones without the maturity to use them ethically.She highlighted a particular concern — when a youngster shares their distress with ChatGPT, the immediate response is often "please, calm down. We will solve it together.""This reflects that the AI is trying to instil trust in the individual interacting with it, eventually feeding validation and approval so that the user engages in further conversations," she told PTI."Such issues wouldn't arise if these young adolescents had real friends rather than 'reel' friends. They have a mindset that if a picture is posted on social media, it must get at least a hundred 'likes', else they feel low and invalidated," she said.The school principal believes that the core of the issue lies with parents themselves, who are often "gadget-addicted" and fail to provide emotional time to their children. While they offer all materialistic comforts, emotional support and understanding are often absent."So, here we feel that ChatGPT is now bridging that gap but it is an AI bot after all. It has no emotions, nor can it help regulate anyone's feelings," she cautioned."It is just a machine and it tells you what you want to listen to, not what's right for your well-being," she said.Mentioning cases of self-harm in students at her own school, Acharya stated that the situation has turned "very dangerous".We track these students very closely and try our best to help them," she stated. "In most of these cases, we have observed that the young adolescents are very particular about their body image, validation and approval. When they do not get that, they turn agitated and eventually end up harming themselves. It is really alarming as the cases like these are rising."Ayeshi, a student in Class 11, confessed that she shared her personal issues with AI bots numerous times out of "fear of being judged" in real life.

"I felt like it was an emotional space and eventually developed an emotional dependency towards it. It felt like my safe space. It always gives positive feedback and never contradicts you. Although I gradually understood that it wasn't mentoring me or giving me real guidance, that took some time," the 16-year-old told PTI.Ayushi also admitted that turning to chatbots for personal issues is "quite common" within her friend circle.Another student, Gauransh, 15, observed a change in his own behaviour after using chatbots for personal problems. "I observed growing impatience and aggression," he told PTI.He had been using the chatbots for a year or two but stopped recently after discovering that "ChatGPT uses this information to advance itself and train its data."Psychiatrist Dr. Lokesh Singh Shekhawat of RML Hospital confirmed that AI bots are meticulously customised to maximise user engagement."When youngsters develop any sort of negative emotions or misbeliefs and share them with ChatGPT, the AI bot validates them," he explained. "The youth start believing the responses, which makes them nothing but delusional."He noted that when a misbelief is repeatedly validated, it becomes "embedded in the mindset as a truth."

This, he said, alters their point of view — a phenomenon he referred to as 'attention bias' and 'memory bias'. The chatbot's ability to adapt to the user's tone is a deliberate tactic to encourage maximum conversation, he added.Singh stressed the importance of constructive criticism for mental health, something completely absent in the AI interaction."Youth feel relieved and ventilated when they share their personal problems with AI, but they don't realise that it is making them dangerously dependent on it," he warned.He also drew a parallel between an addiction to AI for mood upliftment and addictions to gaming or alcohol. "

Why soft skills are essential to success

One thing that endures at a time when information is readily available online and technical know-how is always changing is the value of interpersonal relationships. The real differentiator in achieving both personal and professional success are the abilities that enable us to lead teams, negotiate relationships, comprehend viewpoints, and communicate clearly. Contrary to popular belief, "soft skills" are typically the most difficult to acquire but often the most necessary for success.Hard vs. softHard skills are the teachable, measurable abilities, such as coding, data analysis, or financial modelling that are often acquired through formal education or training programmes. In contrast, soft skills refer to attributes like emotional intelligence, adaptability, creativity, problem-solving, leadership, and effective communication. They are not just about what you know, but how you interact, think, and respond. They influence how well you work with others, how you respond to challenges, and how effectively you lead or contribute to a team.There's a reason why soft skills are difficult to develop. Unlike hard skills, which follow a logical path of instruction and practice, soft skills are deeply rooted in behaviour, mindset, and personality. They are shaped by experiences, upbringing, environment, and culture. This makes them less straightforward to teach or even to assess.

For example, developing empathy isn't not just about attending a workshop. It involves becoming more self-aware, listening without judgement, and being open to diverse experiences. Similarly, learning how to manage conflict, give constructive feedback, or navigate workplace politics requires a blend of patience, reflection, and consistent effort over time.Moreover, there is often no one-size-fits-all model for soft skills. What works in one setting or culture might be ineffective in another. This nuanced, context-dependent nature makes soft skills a lifelong learning journey rather than a box to be ticked.Many high-performing individuals hit roadblocks in their careers not because they lack technical knowledge, but because they struggle with people skills. Lack of soft skills can lead to miscommunication, toxic work environments, poor leadership, and even loss of clients or opportunities. As workplaces become more collaborative and global, the ability to build trust, adapt quickly, and relate to others is not



optional, it's critical.What to do

Fortunately, soft skills can be developed with intention and consistency. Here are some ways to begin: Self-reflection: Regularly assess your own behaviours and communication style. Journaling or seeking feedback can help identify areas for improvement. Practise active listening: Truly listening — not just waiting to speak — is a foundational soft skill that improves empathy and collaboration. Take the initiative: Volunteering for leadership roles, presentations, or group projects helps build confidence and adaptability. Seek mentors: Learning from those who demonstrate strong soft skills in action can offer valuable insightsEngage with diverse groups: Exposure to different perspectives fosters openness, empathy, and better communication. Most importantly, building soft skills requires a growth mindset; the belief that you can improve through effort, learning, and persistence.While AI and automation remake industries, hard skills will keep changing and evolving. But empathy, creativity, complex decision-making, leadership ... these are human abilities that cannot be automated or imitated by machines. A World Economic Forum report identifies critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and teamwork as important skills for the future workforce. With the increasing competitiveness in the job market, these "soft" skills will be what differentiates applicants from one another.Soft skills don't necessarily come with degrees or certificates, but they are often the key to long-term success.

New light on a powerhouse

My mother was very possessive and finicky about her kitchen; she always left it sparkling clean and locked it at night before going to bed, perhaps to prevent unauthorised access to leftover ice-cream in the refrigerator. A year after my marriage, she handed over the kitchen keys to my wife.By then, she was convinced that my wife understood the harms of night-time coffee and took it seriously. The kitchen continues to be securely locked at night, with the access code unavailable.By the time of the handover, the tremor in mom's hands was becoming more difficult to hide, her drooling speech more obvious. In the next six months, she needed help to walk, and by the year-end, she was confined to bed and unable to recall my name. A rapidly progressive type of Parkinson's disease was eating up my mom's brain from the inside. She died on July 1, 2010, Doctor's Day.

Some 1.5 billion years ago, a free-floating single unicellular anaerobic organism (a single-cell life form that lived out of fermented product, not oxygen) accidentally engulfed a passing-by aerobic (oxygen-living) bacterium. For some unusual reasons, the "gentleman" organism did not kill or digest the bacterium, and instead, let it live and thrive inside its cytoplasm. The thankful bacterium continued to produce nutrients using oxygen and supplied it to the organism in return for a safe habitat. This endosymbiosis turned the bacterium into a modern-day "mitochondrium". The mitochondrium is the powerhouse (the kitchen) of the cell. It produces ATP (energy) by taking in nutrients and oxygen. It also carries its own 37-gene DNA that gives it a degree of autonomy. Interestingly, the mitochondrial DNA comes entirely from the mother. This acquisition of mitochondria is the biggest evolutionary jump in the development of complex multicellular life. New research indicates that mitochondria are not just a "battery pack", but a cellular motherboard.

Parkinson's disease is a neurodegenerative disease thought to be the result of a reduction of a neurotransmitter called dopamine in specific areas of the brain. Present-day treatment aims at increasing the amount of dopamine while treating associated disabilities. New research now points to a possible defect in the mitochondria.

The brain claims only 2% of our body weight but uses 20% of our total energy expenditure. This is the reason the energy-hungry brain neurons carry over 2 million mitochondria per cell (compared with hundreds in a liver cell, and thousands in a hard-working muscle cell). In an article and an interview published in Scientific American in May, researcher Martin Picard from Columbia University suggested that a defect in mitochondria might be a key driver of Parkinson's disease. Already, researchers have identified abnormal mitochondrial function in PINK1 and PRKN, two types of genetic Parkinson's disease. The disease has no known treatment. A recent update from the University of Michigan indicates that regular exercise, a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, and reduction of mental stress can contribute to its prevention.Early treatment of hypertension, diabetes and lipids helps. Interestingly, caffeinated drinks (coffee) seem to be beneficial too.The cellular kitchen (aka mitochondria) turns out to be so much more than a powerhouse; it is an HQ where ideas evolve, and plans are drawn and strategies laid out. The mitochondrial gene passed from mother to childen ensures that the coffee-addict father or the ice-cream crazy child has to obey the rules, both at home and in biology. The mitochondria seem to have a profound effect on cellular function and survival. Mitochondria-directed therapy might be the key to hitherto non-curable neurodegenerative and cardiovascular diseases.But our present kitchen admin is yet to be convinced about the protective effects of coffee. Our kitchen continues to be locked at night.



Tropical rain destabilises oceans only when it falls lightly: study

When it rains over the ocean, does it make the surface water more buoyant? Scientists have long assumed so because rainwater is fresh and freshwater is lighter than seawater. However, a new study by researchers at the University of Washington in Seattle, US, has found that the answer is actually more complicated. The study was published in July.Rain in the tropics often comes with large clouds and cold, dry air called cold pools. These cold pools can actually cool the ocean's surface by blocking sunlight and increasing the transfer of heat from the water to the air. So instead of making the surface lighter, which would help mix waters in the ocean, rain sometimes makes the surface heavier and more stable. ely.

COVID and flu may trigger relapse in breast cancer survivors: Study

New Delhi: Common respiratory infections, including Covid-19 and influenza, can awaken dormant breast cancer cells that have spread to the lungs, setting the stage for new metastatic tumours, according to a new study.The findings published in the journal Nature, based on mouse studies as well as meta-analysis of human patients, support research showing increases in death and metastatic lung disease among cancer survivors infected with SARS-CoV-2 — the virus that causes Covid."Our findings indicate that individuals with a history of cancer may benefit from taking precautions against respiratory viruses, such as vaccination when available, and discussing any concerns with their health care providers," said Julio Aguirre-Ghiso, from the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, US.Previous evidence suggests that inflammatory processes can awaken disseminated cancer cells (DCCs) — cells that have broken away from a primary tumour and spread to distant organs, often lying dormant for extended periods.An increase in cancer death rates during the Covid pandemic bolstered the idea that severe inflammation may be waking up the dormant DCCs, Aguirre-Ghiso said.The team tested the hypothesis on mice and exposed them to SARS-CoV-2 or the influenza virus — both triggered the awakening of dormant DCCs in the lungs, leading to a massive expansion of metastatic cells within days of infection and the appearance of metastatic lesions within two weeks.Molecular analyses revealed that the awakening of dormant DCCs is driven by interleukin-6 (IL-6), a protein that immune cells release in response to infections or injuries.

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