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Amit Shah Concludes Hyderabad Padayatra, Says Congress On Ventilator

Hyderabad, Nov 2

Union Home Minister Amit Shah here on Monday launched a blistering attack on the Opposition leader Rahul Gandhi for misguiding people on the ongoing SIR drive.

He addressed a meeting at MJ Market after participating in padayatra from Babu Jagjivan Ram at Nizam College to Mozamjahi Market crossroads here as part of the Telangana BJP's campaign against the alleged false narrative by the Congress regarding the SIR exercise.

"Rahul Gandhi alleged that the BJP won elections with EVMs. How did Congress win in Telangana and Kerala and its alliance party TVK in Tamil Nadu?" he said.

Congress party is on ventilator. The BJP Yuva Morcha candidate is enough to defeat Rahul Gandhi, he said adding that the Congress, MIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi and BRS cannot stop the ongoing corruption and only BJP would prevent it.

"RR is the tax paid to Rahul Gandhi through Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy," he alleged. Amit Shah called upon the people to strive for the victory of the BJP in Telangana. Rahul Gandhi organized vote bacho



rally in New Delhi but it the rally was aimed at protecting infiltrators

Amit Shah made it clear to Rahul Gandhi and Revanth Reddy that SIR drive would continue to weed out infiltrators. The Congress earlier used to win elections with bogus voters.

"We will remove each infiltrator from Bangladesh as part of the SIR drive," Amit Shah said. He said the Prime Minister Narendra Modi won the elections with the support of the people but not through the SIR.

Signal Free Drive, Clean City on CM's Revanth's Agenda

Hyderabad, Nov 2

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy directed municipal officials on Monday to take concerted measures to transform Hyderabad into a clean and traffic signal-free city. He said there should be no compromise on daily garbage collection, efficient waste management and traffic regulation.

At a review meeting with municipal officials at his residence, the Chief Minister instructed them to ensure that no garbage was found lying anywhere and that door-to-door waste collection was carried out every day without fail. He called for continuous monitoring and warned of strict action against negligent officials and staff.

Revanth Reddy also directed special arrangements for the collection and transportation of construction waste. In industrial areas under municipal limits, he asked officials to coordinate with Industrial Area Local Authority (IALA) representatives for proper disposal.

He stressed the need to promote the use of treated wastewater from sewage treatment plants (STPs) for construction, greenery maintenance, landscaping, gardening and park development instead of potable water. He asked officials to create awareness



about green water tankers and ensure their optimum utilisation.

He recalled that the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) had introduced green water tanker services in the first phase through 28 tankers linked to 19 STPs. He directed expansion of treated wastewater supply across GHMC, Cyberabad Municipal Corporation and Malkajgiri Municipal Corporation limits, keeping local requirements in view. This, he said, would conserve drinking water by meeting non-potable needs with treated sewage water.

Cyclone Murasu: Naidu directs officials to complete restoration works within 48 hours

Amaravati\, Nov 2

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday directed the administration to remain fully alert in view of cyclone Murasu, which is



set to cross the Andhra Pradesh coast tonight.

The Chief Minister conducted a review meeting on cyclone preparedness with senior officials and district collectors at the Real Time Governance Society (RTGS) Centre in the Secretariat.

He stressed the need for robust measures to prevent any loss of life or property.

Naidu asked officials to remain fully alert as moderate to heavy rainfall is expected in the South Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema districts. He stated that the impact of cyclone Murasu on the Andhra Pradesh coast was likely to be relatively limited. Forecasts indicated that wind speeds and rainfall intensity were also expected to be lower than those associated with cyclone Arnab, which crossed the coast last week.

The Chief Minister stated that normalcy had been restored to a large extent in areas affected by cyclone Arnab. He recalled that precautionary arrangements had been made from Srikakulam to Bapatla to tackle cyclone Arnab and directed officials to effectively manage the impact of cyclone Murasu as well.

Officials informed the Chief Minister that 31,000 electricity poles had been dispatched to the field from Srikakulam to Krishna district. They estimated that around 8,000 electricity poles in the South Coastal and Rayalaseema districts could be affected by winds associated with cyclone Murasu.

Another 1,000 personnel were arriving from Chennai to assist in power restoration work. Naidu directed officials to deploy them across various districts, including Nellore and Prakasam.

Officials informed the Chief Minister that Palnadu district was expected to receive the highest rainfall, at around 30 cm, followed by Prakasam with 24 cm and Markapuram with 19 cm. Krishna and Guntur districts could receive up to 9 cm of rainfall each. Eluru and Nellore were also likely to receive around 9 cm each.

The Chief Minister called for special attention to water management. He directed officials to fill tanks and reservoirs in Guntur, Bapatla, Palnadu, Prakasam, Nellore and Markapuram districts, which have been experiencing a rainfall deficit. He also instructed them to formulate an action plan to store water in reservoirs across the South Coastal and Rayalaseema basins.

Naidu directed officials to pay special attention to the safety of 6,800 tanks across the six districts likely to be affected by cyclone Murasu. He called for the activation of Water Users Associations and stressed the need to monitor the condition of tanks with public participation. He instructed officials to utilise the works undertaken under the Jaladhara programme and ensure that no tank breaches occurred. He also directed officials to take preventive measures to avoid crop inundation due to silt accumulation in drains.

The Chief Minister directed officials to complete post-cyclone restoration works within 48 hours. He also stressed the need to expedite the processes for crop insurance compensation and input subsidies.

BJP's 10-year double-engine rule in Uttarakhand betrayed people's aspirations, says Kharge

New Delhi, Nov 2 AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday strongly criticised the BJP's 10-year tenure in Uttarakhand, alleging that the party's 'double-engine' government had betrayed the hopes and aspirations of the state's people.

In a post on his X handle, Kharge said a collapsed law-and-order situation, serious concerns regarding the safety of women, the arrogance of those in power, and a persistent tendency to evade accountability had left the public deeply disappointed.

He said that the people of Uttarakhand were now demanding accountability and seeking change. According to him, the Congress party is vigorously championing the rights and interests of the people



from the streets to the legislative assembly.

Kharge asserted that the party is firm on its stand to earn the trust of the public so that it can provide 'Devbhoomi' Uttarakhand with a government that is secure, empathetic and accountable—one that prioritises the public interest above all else.

The Congress president's remarks come in view of the growing political activity in the hill state, where the opposition has been highlighting issues related to governance, women's safety and administrative accountability.

Kharge's statement indicates the party's attempt to position itself as an alternative focused on public welfare and responsible governance in Uttarakhand.

By pointing to the alleged failures of the ruling dispensation, the Congress is seeking to mobilise public opinion ahead of future electoral contests in the state.

Kharge's emphasis on security, empathy and accountability indicates the party's intent to build a narrative centred on good governance and the protection of citizens' rights.The statement also shows the Congress' broader strategy of raising questions about the performance of BJP-ruled states while projecting itself as a party committed to addressing the genuine concerns of the people.On Monday, Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge and the party's general secretary (organisation) KC Venugopal held a meeting with Uttarakhand leaders to discuss the strategy and action plan for the forthcoming state assembly elections. Both leaders urged the state unit to work aggressively, maintain solidarity and take a firm stand.

Harish Rao demands 15 more days of Jurala water for crops

Wanaparthy: BRS Legislature Party Deputy Floor Leader T Harish Rao on Monday demanded that the Congress government operate all five motors of the Kalwakurthy Lift Irrigation Project round the clock and release water from the Jurala project for another 15 days to save standing crops. He urged the government to take immediate measures to complete the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme and fill the Karivena and Vattem reservoirs.

He demanded compensation for crop losses across 25 lakh acres due to drought conditions, apart from the immediate release of Rythu Bharosa assistance for the ensuing Yasangi season, enhanced employment guarantee workdays for agricultural labourers and workers dependent on farm operations, and payment of the promised Rs 12,000 under the Indiramma Atmiya Bharosa scheme to eligible agricultural labourers.Addressing a public meeting with farmers after inspecting withered paddy fields in Alwala village of Peddamandadi mandal in Wanaparthy district, Harish Rao accused the Congress government of triggering an agrarian crisis in Palamuru by failing to utilise available Krishna River water. He said crops had dried up despite substantial inflows into the Srisailam and Jurala projects.He said around 250 acres had dried up in the village alone. He said farmers were left in distress at a critical harvesting stage despite water being available in the reservoirs.Blaming the ruling Congress for causing the drought rather than natural conditions, he said the Srisailam project had received 221 TMCft of water and the Jurala project about 252 TMCft. However, he said the government had failed to operate the Kalwakurthy project motors in time and that the project, which could have lifted 50 TMCft, had lifted only 18 TMCft this season.

EDITORIAL

Shah does it again—revives UCC rhetoric

Union Home Minister Amit Shah is at it again. By promising to roll out the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in Uttar Pradesh if the BJP is returned to power in next year's Assembly elections, he has reignited a controversy that is bound to foment further divisions in society. In an already polarised political atmosphere, Shah's move must be seen as mischievous and uncalled for. He chose a meeting of the Uttar Pradesh State BJP executive to make the loaded announcement. In what appears to be a carefully crafted pattern, the senior BJP leader had, in September this year, made an impassioned plea to the NDA-ruled States to implement the UCC before the 2029 Lok Sabha elections. Two years ago, Prime Minister Narendra Modi chose the ramparts of the Red Fort to root for the Uniform Civil Code, calling it a secular civil code and dubbing the existing structure as a "communal civil code". It is rather intriguing that the senior BJP leadership has chosen to periodically push for the common civil code idea despite being aware of the fact that the NDA 3.0 is dependent on the support of allies such as the Janata Dal (United) and the Telugu Desam Party to provide a stable government. The coalition partners have already voiced reservations over the issue. The BJP leadership has made no attempt to take the allies on board over this far-reaching policy move. The UCC has been one of the three core ideological agendas of the saffron party, along with the Ram temple in Ayodhya and the abrogation of Article 370, which ended Jammu and Kashmir's special status. And it still remains unfulfilled.

Though four BJP-ruled States—Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Assam and Madhya Pradesh—have already passed UCC legislation, the party's central leadership has so far refrained from pushing for a national policy and put the issue on the back burner. Being home to different religions, customs and cultures, India has been a role model to the world for its unity in diversity. Any attempt to impose uniformity in the name of unifying communities would go against the spirit of democratic diversity. The time is not ripe for India to experiment with a common code, as it might lead to social friction and an erosion of faith in the constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion. Opposition parties have raised objections over the proposed law, dubbing it an anti-minorities move. NDA allies JD (U) and TDP also have reservations about the UCC, fearing a backlash from the Muslim community. Instead of pushing for a national law on a common civil code, the BJP leadership appears keen on persuading the States to pass such a law. This strategy allows the saffron party to test different models, deal with local customs and demonstrate implementation without first confronting the full political and constitutional complexity of a nationwide law.

Bike delivery executive allegedly flees with gold jewellery worth Rs 62,383

Hyderabad: A bike delivery executive allegedly fled with gold jewellery worth Rs.62,383 after collecting a parcel from a security guard in Jubilee Hills.

According to the complaint, an administrative manager working with Vivo had booked a bike parcel service to send gold jewellery from Banjara Hills to a relative's house in Nagole. The manager handed over the parcel to a security guard, who in turn gave it to the rider.

The delivery executive allegedly demanded an additional Rs.100 towards fuel expenses and got the amount transferred through PhonePe and left. However, the parcel never reached its destination.

When the manager tried to contact the rider over the phone, he found that his number had been blocked.

After failing to get a response from customer care,



the manager approached the police and made a complaint. The police are looking into the incident.

Nalgonda electric bus services disrupted for three hours as drivers protest over wages



Nalgonda: Electric bus services were disrupted for three hours at the Nalgonda depot on Saturday as drivers staged a protest demanding higher wages and an end to alleged victimisation by the manpower agency.

The protest began early in the day, with drivers refusing to operate buses. They raised slogans against representatives of manpower agency JBM Siscon and accused them of harassing employees for forming a union, according to reports.

CITU (Centre of Indian Trade Unions) leaders alleged that the drivers had been facing harassment for organising themselves under a union. The drivers, who have been working for the past 16 months, demanded a wage revision.

They pointed out that drivers at the Suryapet and Warangal depots were being paid Rs. 26,000 per month, while their counterparts in Nalgonda received only Rs. 20,000.

The protesters also demanded the reinstatement of Somayya, Murali, Krishna Reddy and 15 others who had been taken off duty.

CITU District Secretary MD Salim and other unions leaders joined the protest and extended support to the drivers. Following negotiations, the agency's representatives assured the drivers that their wage-related concerns and other issues would be addressed. The management also agreed to hold a joint meeting on November 4 to discuss their demands.

The drivers called off the protest after receiving these assurances, bringing bus operations back to normal after a three-hour disruption.

KTR questions IDBI Bank privatisation, demands transparency in valuation

Hyderabad: Raising concerns over the proposed privatisation of IDBI Bank, BRS working president KT Rama Rao demanded that the Union government explain the urgency behind selling a reputed public sector bank to a private player, particularly amid allegations of undervaluation of its assets.

Stressing the need to safeguard Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) and public sector banks, which he described as national assets, Rama Rao questioned the transparency of the proposed sale.

"Before selling off a reputed public sector bank to a private player, the Union government owes the country some straight answers. What's the hurry?" Rama Rao asked on X.

Pointing out that IDBI Bank owns valuable real



estate assets, including prime land in Hyderabad, he sought to know whether their value had been properly assessed and accounted for in the proposed sale.

"Reports about undervaluation of IDBI Bank are really concerning. Why were the rules and valuation methodology changed when bids fell below the reserve price? Why are the concerns raised by the IDBI employees not being addressed?" Rama Rao questioned.

Meanwhile, the All India IDBI Officers Association, which has been opposing the bank's privatisation, urged the BRS working president to intervene and demand a review of the proposed sale. The association also sought measures to protect the interests of employees and their families.

It alleged that despite consistently recording profit growth in recent years, IDBI Bank was being proposed for sale at a lower valuation. Such a move would not serve the nation's interests, the association argued.

"A profitable and strategically important Indian bank should not be sold at a throwaway price, thereby risking foreign control and adversely affecting customers, MSMEs, agriculture and the broader economy," the association stated on X.

The proposed privatisation also raised serious concerns over employees' job security, reservation safeguards, public interest and the future of a strategically important financial institution, it added.

Two students die after electric shock in Moinabad

Hyderabad: Two youngsters were electrocuted to death after coming into contact with an electrified fence installed to protect crops from wild boars on the outskirts of Peddamangalaram village in Moinabad mandal of Rangareddy district in the early hours of Saturday.

The victims, both aged around 20, accidentally touched a live GI wire fence erected around an agricultural field in Survey No. 330, belonging to Penta Reddy of the Bolen Cheruvu area.

According to preliminary information provided by officials, the farmer had installed the GI wire fence around his paddy field to prevent wild boars from damaging the crops. However, the fence was connected to an electricity supply, turning it into a death trap.



The two youngsters, who were passing by the field, accidentally came into contact with the live wire and suffered fatal electric shocks.

Following the incident, TGSPDCL appealed to farmers and the public not to install electrified GI wires or electric fences around agricultural fields to protect crops from wild animals.

The power utility warned that such dangerous practices pose a serious threat to farmers, passers-by, children and livestock, and could lead to fatal accidents.

Officials cautioned that installing electrified fences around agricultural fields was illegal and highly dangerous. Unauthorised use of electricity for such purposes could attract action under Section 135 of the Electricity Act, 2003, which deals with electricity theft.

Further, if such negligence results in loss of human life, criminal action could also be initiated under Section 106(1) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, depending on the circumstances and findings of the investigation.

Devarakadra youth walks 200 km to meet KCR

Mahabubnagar: Driven by his admiration for BRS president K Chandrashekhar Rao, a young man from Devarakadra mandal undertook a padayatra to Erravalli and fulfilled his dream of meeting the former Chief Minister.

Chinna Narasimha, a resident of Gurakonda village in Devarakadra mandal, was overjoyed after meeting Chandrashekhar Rao at his Erravalli farmhouse. He covered nearly 200 km on foot.

Narasimha began his padayatra from his native village on October 27, hoping to meet the BRS chief personally and express his desire to see him return as Chief Minister. He also wished to see former BRS MLA Alla Venkateshwar Reddy win the next Assembly election from Devarakadra constituency.

Expressing his admiration for Chandrashekhar Rao, Narasimha said he firmly believed that Telangana could develop only under the former Chief Minister's leadership. He also wanted to bring several issues affecting farmers to the BRS chief's attention, particularly the shortages of irrigation water, electricity and urea.

During his journey, former MLA Alla Venkateshwar Reddy met Narasimha on the Hyderabad-Bengaluru National Highway near Balanagar and commended his determination.

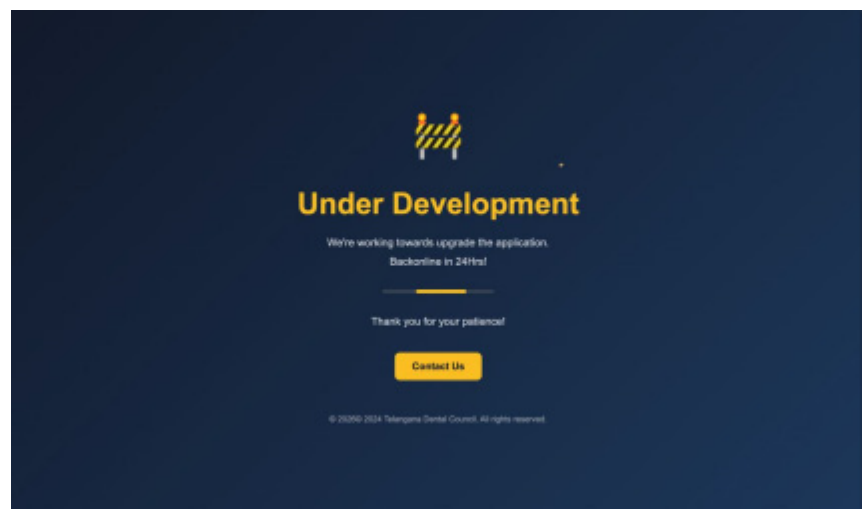
Appreciating the young man's affection for Chandrashekhar Rao, the former MLA said Narasimha's decision to undertake the journey on foot reflected his admiration for the BRS chief and his desire to see him return to power.

Venkateshwar Reddy claimed that public admiration for Chandrashekhar Rao was growing and that more people were expressing their desire to see him return as Chief Minister.

Telangana Dental Council portal goes offline after data leak

Hyderabad: A critical data security lapse on the official web portal of the Telangana State Dental Council left sensitive personal and academic records of registered dental doctors exposed for several days before authorities scrambled to secure the vulnerable section.

The serious vulnerability came to light after cybersecurity researcher and content creator Ankit Sahay (@thebrokenapp) highlighted the issue in a detailed video breakdown.



Demonstrating the flaw in the Council's portal document re-upload and account recovery section (telanganastatedentalcouncil.in/reupload_documents.php), Sahay pointed out that the website suffered from an Insecure Direct Object Reference (IDOR) vulnerability.

The Telangana Dental Council portal allowed anyone to access confidential professional profiles simply by modifying sequential numerical ID counters, such as shifting from ID 0041 to 0042, without requiring login credentials, session authentication or authorisation checks, Sahay said in the video.

The loophole exposed vast amounts of personally identifiable information (PII), including registered dentists' full names, profile photographs, mobile numbers, residential addresses with PIN codes and government-issued identification numbers.

Moreover, anyone could freely open and download highly sensitive personal files, such as school mark sheets, college degree certificates, examination attempt records and internship completion letters, Sahay said in his post.

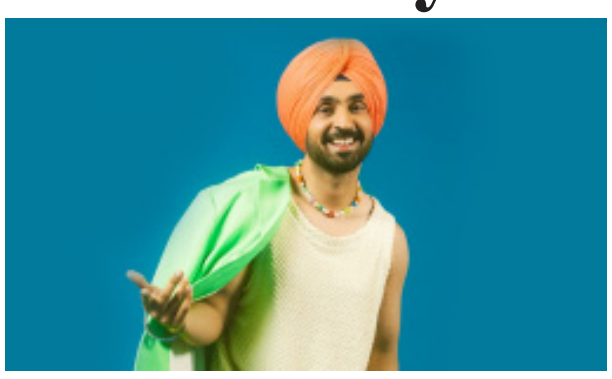
Responding to Sahay's post, social media users and doctors pointed out that the sensitive database had remained exposed to potential bulk scraping and identity theft for several days. State Dental Council authorities reacted only after public criticism mounted, and the affected section was pulled offline.

Following the widespread circulation of the security failure, the specific section of the portal was abruptly taken offline.

Visitors attempting to access the URL are now greeted with an 'Under Development' maintenance screen carrying a notice that reads: 'We're working towards upgrade the application. Backonline in 24Hrs!'.

The incident and Sahay's social media post have triggered widespread concern among medical professionals over digital accountability. Doctors have raised urgent questions about cybersecurity measures and vulnerability management in State-run professional registries handling critical citizen data.

Extra Metro trains, security at JLN Stadium



New Delhi: The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) has decided to extend Metro train services until midnight on Friday to facilitate the movement of spectators attending Diljit Dosanjh's "Aura India Tour 2026" concert at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium on October 30, an official said.The Delhi Metro has made special operational arrangements, including extending train services beyond normal operating hours on all Metro lines except the Airport Express Line and Rapid Metro in Gurugram, Anuj Dayal, Principal Executive Director, Corporate Communication, DMRC, said in a statement on Thursday.

The DMRC has planned to extend train services on all lines, except the Airport Express Line, until midnight on the day of the concert, which is expected to attract over 70,000 spectators, the statement said.Additional train trips will be operated across the network to facilitate the smooth dispersal of spectators after the event. Standby trains will also be kept ready for deployment, if required, to cater to any unforeseen surge in passenger traffic, it said.In addition, the timings for QR ticket purchases through the DMRC mobile app, Delhi Metro Sarthi, will be extended by an hour in view of the extended service hours, the statement said.To ensure the smooth entry and dispersal of spectators, the DMRC has made special arrangements at JLN Stadium Metro Station and other major interchange stations. Additional DMRC staff, customer service personnel and Customer Facilitation Agents (CFAs) will be deployed to guide commuters and regulate passenger movement, the statement said.To further strengthen passenger convenience and safety, additional security personnel will be deployed at JLN Stadium Metro Station. Door Frame Metal Detectors (DFMDs) and enhanced security screening arrangements will be put in place to facilitate orderly passenger movement while ensuring compliance with security protocols, it added.

The concert is expected to attract approximately 70,000 spectators, many of whom are likely to use the Delhi Metro to travel to and from the venue. JLN Stadium Metro Station, on the Violet Line's Kashmere Gate–Raja Nahar Singh corridor, is the nearest Metro station to the venue, the DMRC said.The DMRC has encouraged spectators to use Metro services for a convenient, safe and environmentally friendly travel experience while reducing dependence on private vehicles.Earlier, the Delhi Traffic Police issued details of traffic diversions and alternative routes on Wednesday, advising commuters to use public transport, particularly the Delhi Metro.In a post on X, the Delhi Traffic Police said traffic restrictions and diversions might be in place from 1 pm to midnight on October 30 in view of Diljit Dosanjh's live music concert at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium."Commuters are advised to plan their journeys, avoid affected roads around JLN Stadium and use public transport (Delhi Metro recommended)," it added.

Three sentenced to life imprisonment in Gujarat cow slaughter case



Gandhinagar: A court in Gujarat's Gandhinagar district has sentenced three persons to life imprisonment in a cow slaughter case after they were found in possession of 277 kg of beef, citing Hindu scriptures to underscore the religious significance of the cow.Gujarat Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi hailed the verdict, calling it a clear message that the law would never spare those who commit cow slaughter in the state.In his judgment on Monday, Additional Sessions Judge BR Rajput also imposed a fine of Rs 3 lakh on the convicts — Vasim Qureshi, Mohammad Rafiq Qureshi and Asfaq Bahelim.

Quoting the Manusmriti, an ancient Sanskrit text, the court observed that the cow is not merely an animal but is regarded as a pillar of material prosperity and dharma (righteousness)."Sage Manu entrusted the primary responsibility for the protection and care of cattle to the 'Vaishya' class. Furthermore, in the context of 'Arsha Vivaha' (a traditional form of Vedic marriage), the pair — a cow and a bull — holds special significance," the judge said.

Further quoting the Vedas and other Hindu scriptures, the court said that, according to religious accounts, when drops of amrita (nectar) fell to the earth through the power of penance, the divine cow Kamadhenu emerged and came to be regarded as the progenitor of all bovine species on earth."The cow is regarded as the 'mother of the world', serving as an abode for 33 crore deities. Her four legs are symbolic of the four Vedas," the court said.According to the prosecution, six persons were arrested with 277 kg of beef, weapons allegedly used to slaughter cows and a vehicle meant to transport the meat after a raid on a house in Jamla village in Gandhinagar district on August 22, 2024.The prosecution said a father-son duo would purchase weak or non-lactating buffaloes. They would then bring four individuals from Ahmedabad to their home and have the animals slaughtered in a cruel manner for beef, allegedly for financial gain.Citing the investigation, the prosecution said the accused intended to sell the beef to one Ghulam Moin. After the trial, the court found three of the six men guilty. The prosecution produced 54 witnesses and 18 pieces of documentary evidence to establish the charges.Sanghavi congratulated the Gandhinagar police and the prosecution for what he described as an accurate investigation and the presentation of strong evidence that led to the sentencing."This verdict under the Gujarat Animal Preservation Act is a clear message that the law will never spare those who commit cow slaughter in Gujarat. Protecting the cow mother is Gujarat's unwavering resolve. Congratulations to the Gandhinagar Police and the government side for the accurate investigation and presenting strong evidence," he said.Through a 2017 amendment to the Gujarat Animal Preservation Act, 1954, the state government enhanced the punishment for cow slaughter to life imprisonment, making Gujarat the first state in the country to prescribe such a sentence for the offence.The Gujarat Animal Preservation (Amendment) Bill approved by the state legislative assembly also provides for a 10-year prison term for the transportation, storage or sale of beef.In 2011, when Narendra Modi was the chief minister of Gujarat, the state government amended the Act to impose a complete ban on cow slaughter and on the transportation and sale of cow meat.

Uttar Pradesh revises government job eligibility rules for character verification

Lucknow: The Uttar Pradesh government has tightened character verification rules for candidates selected for direct recruitment to government jobs, declaring that individuals associated with organisations advocating violent changes to the existing social system will be considered ineligible for appointment.The move comes amid controversy over calls for 'regime change' during a recent protest and has drawn criticism from the Opposition Samajwadi Party and Congress.Under the revised guidelines, participation in protests or activities aimed at changing the existing system through violence could render candidates ineligible for government employment. However, the government has clarified that no candidate will be disqualified solely on the basis of their political ideology.The directive was issued by M. Devraj, Principal Secretary of the Appointments Department, and applies to direct recruitment in government departments, corporations, councils and local bodies.According to the order, individuals who are members of organisations whose stated objective is to change the existing social system through violence will be considered unsuitable for government appointments.

"Notwithstanding anything contained in the above paragraphs, no person will be considered unsuitable for appointment solely because of their political ideology. However, individuals who are members of an organisation whose stated objective is to change the existing system of society through violence will be considered ineligible for appointment under the government," the order stated.It further specifies that participation in such activities after attaining the age of 21 and within the three years preceding verification will be treated as evidence that the individual remains actively involved, unless concrete evidence demonstrates a change in their tendencies during that period.The revised policy also clarifies that the registration of a First Information Report (FIR) or a pending investigation will not automatically disqualify a candidate from government employment.Candidates who have been acquitted, cases settled through compromise and matters covered under juvenile justice laws will also not attract automatic disqualification under the guidelines.The government has further clarified that delays in receiving character verification reports need not necessarily delay the issuance of appointment letters. Authorities may issue provisional appointment letters after obtaining the prescribed documents and a self-declaration from candidates.However, if a candidate is subsequently found ineligible during verification or is found to have furnished false information, the appointment will be cancelled immediately, and legal action may also be initiated.



The order also exempts employees already serving in government departments from undergoing character verification afresh. The appointing authority may, however, seek relevant information from their previous departments wherever necessary.The police have been directed to submit character verification reports within 30 days to ensure that the recruitment process is not unnecessarily delayed.The government said the revised guidelines seek to streamline the character verification process while ensuring that pending investigations and procedural delays do not automatically deprive eligible candidates of government employment.

Maharashtra MLA Sanjay Gaikwad says nobody should attend funerals of farmers who die by suicide

Buldhana: Shiv Sena MLA Sanjay Gaikwad has said that people should not attend the funerals of farmers who die by suicide, urging fellow farmers to support their families and not abandon them.If nobody attended a farmer's funeral and animals fed on the body, it might make others contemplating suicide realise the consequences and deter them from taking their own lives, the Buldhana MLA said.

Gaikwad made the potentially controversial comments at a press conference in Buldhana on Tuesday, when he was asked about a recent statement by a politician who apparently inadvertently used an expletive while talking about farmer suicides."If you (farmers) have a problem, write to the government, your MLA or your MP. Otherwise, let me know about your difficulties, and everyone will help you. But by taking your own life and leaving your children helpless, you are, in a way, punishing them," he said."You take the seven sacred rounds with your wife, vow to stand by her for seven lifetimes and promise to look after your children. Yet, if you end your life halfway through, what happens to those promises?" he asked.The Shiv Sena legislator said he had consistently maintained in his speeches that if someone died by suicide, no one should attend that person's funeral."Only when people realise that their bodies may be eaten by animals and understand what happens to their remains will they stop dying by suicide," Gaikwad said.Gaikwad, who has been involved in controversies before, flaunted a tiger tooth worn around his neck in 2024 and claimed that he had hunted the big cat in 1987. Last year, he slapped a canteen staff member, allegedly for offering stale food at the MLA hostel in Mumbai.



Allahabad HC suspends sentence of Azam Khan, refuses to stay conviction



Lucknow: In a major relief to Samajwadi Party (SP) senior leader Azam Khan and his son Abdullah Azam, the Allahabad High Court on Thursday suspended their sentences in the dual PAN card case and granted them bail.However, the High Court declined their plea to stay the conviction. Their release from jail will depend on the legal position in other pending cases.Justice Samit Gopal of the Allahabad High Court passed the order while hearing criminal revision petitions filed by the father and son challenging the convictions and sentences imposed by lower courts in the dual PAN card case.

According to the prosecution, the case concerns the alleged procurement and use of a second PAN card bearing a different date of birth.The allegations also included the purported use of the second PAN card in nomination documents filed for an election.Senior counsel representing Azam Khan argued the matter before the High Court. The defence challenged the lower court's verdict through criminal revision petitions and sought suspension of the sentences and bail pending the disposal of the case.The High Court allowed the pleas for suspension of sentence and bail but refused to stay the convictions.This distinction is legally significant: the convictions remain in force even though the sentences have been suspended. The revision petitions will be decided separately.Suspension of sentence allows a convicted person to be released on bail while an appeal or revision is pending, subject to the court's order and applicable conditions. A stay on conviction, by contrast, temporarily suspends the legal operation of the conviction itself.In this case, the court did not grant such relief. The convictions therefore continue to stand until the revision petitions are finally decided or the court orders otherwise.Despite securing bail in the dual PAN card case, Azam Khan and Abdullah Azam may remain in custody if they are required to do so in connection with other pending cases.Azam Khan and Abdullah Azam are already lodged in jail in connection with various cases.

Suda Chairman Puvvalla Durga Prasad inspects the Pattabhadru voter registration center

""Khammam Suda Chairman Mr. Puvvalla Durga Prasad along with Khammam Pattabhadru MLC Constituency Incharge Rayala Nageswara Rao visited the voter registration center set up at Shukrivitas Nilayam in Bypass Road area of Khammam city and inspected the voter registration process.""Speaking on the occasion, they called upon every graduate who has completed his degree to register as a graduate voter and participate in the democratic process and exercise his right to vote. Everyone who is eligible is requested to take advantage of this opportunity and complete the voter registration.""Leaders Sadhu Ramesh Reddy, division leaders, chief leaders, local colony residents and others participated in this program.



Northeast drug crackdown: Assam Rifles, Manipur Police make major seizures



Aizawl/Imphal: Assam Rifles seized methamphetamine tablets worth Rs 6.40 crore and heroin valued at Rs 3.71 lakh in Mizoram, while Manipur Police recovered brown sugar worth around Rs 15 crore in Churachandpur district and arrested a suspected drug peddler, officials said on Thursday.Methamphetamine tablets, a highly addictive synthetic drug banned in India, continue to be among the major narcotics smuggled from Myanmar into the Northeast.

A defence spokesman in Mizoram said Assam Rifles personnel launched a targeted operation on Wednesday night following specific intelligence about the transshipment of narcotics through Crossing Point-I at Zokhawthar, along the India-Myanmar border in Champhai district.During the operation, the troops searched the suspected area and recovered seven packets of methamphetamine tablets weighing approximately 8 kg, the spokesman said.

The seized contraband has an estimated market value of Rs 6.40 crore. The recovered narcotics were subsequently handed over to the Excise and Narcotics Department in Champhai for further action. Champhai district shares a porous, mountainous international border with Myanmar.In a separate operation on Wednesday, Assam Rifles seized heroin worth approximately Rs 3.71 lakh and apprehended two persons at Seling in Aizawl district.Acting on specific intelligence inputs received from its sources and corroborated by Bawngkawn Police Station, Assam Rifles launched an operation that led to the recovery of two soap cases containing 18.54 grams of heroin from a vehicle. The vehicle was also seized.The two apprehended persons, along with the recovered narcotics and the vehicle, were handed over to Bawngkawn Police Station in Aizawl for further investigation and legal proceedings under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985.The operations underscore the importance of actionable intelligence, inter-agency coordination and sustained vigilance in curbing drug trafficking in the region, an official statement said.In Manipur, state police conducted an anti-drug operation at Valpakot village in Churachandpur district, where a vehicle was intercepted and searched.The police recovered approximately 7.732 kg of brown sugar, valued at around Rs 15 crore. The driver, identified as Lunminlal Mate, 29, a resident of Longja village in Chandel district, was arrested in connection with the seizure.The contraband and the vehicle allegedly used to transport the drugs were also seized.Mizoram and Manipur have emerged as major drug-trafficking corridors in the Northeast, largely because of their long, porous international borders with Myanmar and their proximity to the Golden Triangle, one of the world's major illicit narcotics-producing regions.Six districts of Mizoram and five districts of Manipur share a 910-km international border with Myanmar, making the two states particularly vulnerable to cross-border drug smuggling.

Paralympic gold medallist Murlikant Petkar to flag off IITH run

Sangareddy: Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad (IITH) will host the IIT Hyderabad Half Marathon-2026 on November 22 at its campus, with India's first Paralympic gold medallist, Murlikant Rajaram Petkar, attending as the chief guest and flagging off the event. A Padma Shri awardee and recipient of the Arjuna Award (Lifetime) for para-swimming, Petkar's sporting journey inspired the film Chandu Champion, bringing his story of determination and resilience to a wider audience. IITH has invited students, faculty, staff, alumni, working professionals, amateur runners, experienced athletes, families and fitness enthusiasts from Hyderabad, Sangareddy and across Telangana to participate in the event.

The IIT Hyderabad Half Marathon-2026 will feature four categories for runners with different levels of experience: the Half Marathon (21.097 km), 10K Run (10 km), 5K Run (5 km) and 5K Fun Run. Prize money will be awarded to the top three male and female finishers in each of the three competitive categories:

Under Sardar's gaze, former Maoists will tell story of 'Naxal Mukt Bharat' on Ekta Diwas



Under floodlights in Ekta Nagar in Kevadia, men in black T-shirts are sprinting around, red sashes around their waists sweeping through the night air. Nearby, performers have locked arms to build human pyramids. Some others are clustering under stage lights, synchronised steps building up to a preformative crescendo.The ongoing rehearsals have a certain raw quality – an instinctive, energetic rhythm, rather than practised theatrical polish, is driving the movements of the performers on the ground.

For most of these 2,000-odd performers, the journey to Kevadia is as significant as the performance they are preparing for. They come from districts that have lived through decades of Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) – and among them are people who were once with the Naxals, but who now want to tell the story of their changing lives through theatre.On Saturday, this sprawling ensemble will take the stage at the Ekta Diwas celebration to mark the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. On Saturday, this sprawling ensemble will take the stage at the Ekta Diwas celebration to mark the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.'Naxal Mukt Bharat', a documentary-style stage production, will bring together tribal artists from districts scarred by decades of LWE violence, including several surrendered Maoists.Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be attending the two-day celebration over October 30-31, and is likely to be part of the audience.A docu-play based on lived experienceMore than 90% of the performers are from LWE-affected districts in Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, and Maharashtra, stage actor and director Chittaranjan Tripathy, Director of the National School of Drama (NSD), Bengaluru centre, who has conceptualised, written, and directed the production, told . Working with the performers had been a uniquely fulfilling experience, he said."They inspire you as an artist and as a human being. They are simple folk, they do not show off, even though they are naturally talented. They have an innate sense of dance and rhythm, which other artists have to work to cultivate," Tripathy said.

Tripathy said the NSD team had to rethink their approach to training for the production, moving away from technical vocabulary, abstract explanations, and established methods of communicating movement and emotion."There is a language of theatre for us. But when you direct them, you have to think differently about that language. It is a kind of rediscovery," Tripathy said. "With these performers, you don't use jargon or theory. You speak simply."Also, Tripathy said, barriers of language often mean that the performers don't always open up easily. Rehearsals have been more than just learning steps and sequences – the NSD has worked to build familiarity and trust, and find ways to translate the performers' lived experiences into theatrical language.The production is conceived as a docu-play, with performers enacting aspects of their lives and the changes they have witnessed. "Unlike a recorded or edited presentation, it will unfold live on stage, bringing together documentary elements and theatrical performance. A smaller number of actors from urban backgrounds will join the predominantly tribal ensemble," Triprathy said.

Beginning in July, he travelled to several LWE districts, including Bastar, Jagdalpur, and Bijapur in Chhattisgarh, to understand the conflict and its aftermath by interacting with people who had lived through them. Earlier this year, the government said the country was now free of active LWE, but the scars remain in areas that were formerly impacted."I went with a blank slate and an open mind. I wanted to know about the real problem and the kind of change that has happened and the current belief of the people," Tripathy said.The experience, he said, helped him understand the people behind the broad label of "Naxal-affected" districts – their lives, their artistic traditions, and their perceptions of society and societal change.As part of NSD's extension programs, workshops were held in Bastar to introduce surrendered Naxals to theatre. Two among those who attended, including a flute player, were extremely talented, Tripathy said. But neither is in Kevadia – "They are busy setting up businesses that they have been helped to start as part of their rehabilitation program," Tripathy said.

Their absence points to another dimension of the story – that rehabilitation of former Naxals or Naxal sympathisers is not a single or uniform journey. For some, theatre offers an opportunity to explore artistic abilities; for others, rebuilding their lives through livelihoods has taken priority.

A special venue, under the gaze of the SardarKevadia as a venue is of unique relevance to the docu-play, its subject and its performers, Tripathy said. "Performing in the shadow of the Sardar Patel statue is very special… Patel fought for the unity and integration of India. He is the father of the federation of India, the united country that we see today," Tripathy said.Gujarat government officials said the participation of these tribal communities "underline their resilience and show the role of cultural expression in national integration". This is NSD's second Ekta Diwas assignment after "Loha Purush", the 2025 play that was performed on Patel's 150th birth anniversary.

Many were tapped using existing networks of traditional artists, Tripathy said. Some of them were already known to the organisers, and they helped identify others, creating a chain that eventually brought together a large ensemble from across the affected regions, he said.The performers started arriving in Kevadia by train or bus over the last week or so, Tripathy said, and the cohort includes performers of all ages – from children of ages 7 or 8 to people in their seventies. Around 50 to 52 surrendered Naxals are part of the group.

An individual who has travelled to Kevadia from a former LWE district in Maharashtra and will attend the October 31 production, said: "There are some performers from our district who will perform on Saturday. It is a moment of pride for us. It is of enormous significance to young people living in these regions, a signal and hope that the real world is within reach. This will be the first time we will see people from LWE-affected villages perform before a national audience."A visitor from Odisha, who had earlier been part of a village-level support group for former Naxals, said: "The production focuses on the journey of communities who have lived with violence for years. Our talent and stories are also a part of India's identity. Being on a national platform gives our communities a sense of belonging. It tells us that we too can be part of the mainstream."The docu-play will be the centrepiece of the October 31 program, which will involve 5,000 artists in all, including 3,000 from Gujarat.On Friday (October 30), around 300 NSD artists will stage an adaptation of 'Anandamath', the Bengali-language novel by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay that was published in 1882, and of which India's National Song 'Vande Mataram' is part. The plot of 'Anandamath' unfolds against the backdrop of the Sannyasi Rebellion and the great Bengal Famine of 1770.

Supreme Court calls for innovative ways to curb firecracker pollution during Diwali



New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Thursday reserved its order on restrictions on firecrackers in Delhi-NCR during Diwali, observing that repeated judicial directions had failed to ensure compliance and calling for innovative measures to tackle air pollution.A Bench of Justices M M Sundresh and Prasanna B Varale said the issue required intervention at a higher level, noting that orders were issued every year but violations continued to outnumber compliance.

"Every year, we pass orders on the issue. For us, it has now become an academic exercise. Our orders are violated more often than they are followed," the Bench led by Justice Sundresh observed, stressing the need to explore new approaches instead of relying solely on restrictions.During the hearing, the apex court suggested involving prominent public figures, particularly sportspersons, to raise awareness about the harmful effects of firecrackers and encourage people to celebrate Diwali responsibly."Why can't you use the services of prominent personalities to make the public aware, like the sportsmen, or the public figures who are highly respected, from any walk of life?" the court asked.Referring to Indian cricketer Virat Kohli as an example, the Bench suggested that celebrated personalities could be requested to appeal to people to celebrate the festival in a manner that protects public health and the environment.It also stressed the need to sensitise children and the younger generation, suggesting that educational institutions be involved in spreading awareness about pollution and its consequences.The Supreme Court observed that a complete ban on firecrackers might not be the appropriate course, cautioning that an excessively harsh approach could have wider repercussions.It reiterated the need for a balanced approach that respects the festive spirit while safeguarding public health. It also underlined the importance of enforcement, warning that judicial directions would become a "mockery" if authorities failed to implement them on the ground.The apex court asked the Union government to file an affidavit detailing the steps taken to enforce the restrictions. The matter concerns restrictions on the sale and use of firecrackers in Delhi-NCR, where the Supreme Court has repeatedly intervened over concerns about deteriorating air quality during the festive season.Last year, the apex court permitted the limited sale and use of green crackers in Delhi-NCR on a trial basis, subject to stringent safeguards. A Bench comprising then Chief Justice of India B R Gavai and Justice K Vinod Chandran had allowed the sale of approved green crackers from October 18 to 20, 2025, while restricting their use to specified morning and evening hours on the day before Diwali and on the festival day.The apex court had directed that only licensed traders sell approved products bearing QR codes and prohibited online sales of firecrackers. It had also ordered the monitoring of air, water and soil quality to assess the impact of the limited relaxation.

Northeast drug crackdown: Assam Rifles, Manipur Police make major seizures

Aizawl/Imphal: Assam Rifles seized methamphetamine tablets worth Rs 6.40 crore and heroin valued at Rs 3.71 lakh in Mizoram, while Manipur Police recovered brown sugar worth around Rs 15 crore in Churachandpur district and arrested a suspected drug peddler, officials said on Thursday.Methamphetamine tablets, a highly addictive synthetic drug banned in India, continue to be among the major narcotics smuggled from Myanmar into the Northeast.

A defence spokesman in Mizoram said Assam Rifles personnel launched a targeted operation on Wednesday night following specific intelligence about the transshipment of narcotics through Crossing Point-I at Zokhawthar, along the India-Myanmar border in Champhai district.During the operation, the troops searched the suspected area and recovered seven packets of methamphetamine tablets weighing approximately 8 kg, the spokesman said.The seized contraband has an estimated market value of Rs 6.40 crore. The recovered narcotics were subsequently handed over to the Excise and Narcotics Department in Champhai for further action. Champhai district shares a porous, mountainous international border with Myanmar.In a separate operation on Wednesday, Assam Rifles seized heroin worth approximately Rs 3.71 lakh and apprehended two persons at Seling in Aizawl district.Acting on specific intelligence inputs received from its sources and corroborated by Bawngkawn Police Station, Assam Rifles launched an operation that led to the recovery of two soap cases containing 18.54 grams of heroin from a vehicle. The vehicle was also seized.

The two apprehended persons, along with the recovered narcotics and the vehicle, were handed over to Bawngkawn Police Station in Aizawl for further investigation and legal proceedings under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985.The operations underscore the importance of actionable intelligence, inter-agency coordination and sustained vigilance in curbing drug trafficking in the region, an official statement said.In Manipur, state police conducted an anti-drug operation at Valpakot village in Churachandpur district, where a vehicle was intercepted and searched.The police recovered approximately 7.732 kg of brown sugar, valued at around Rs 15 crore. The driver, identified as Lunminlal Mate, 29, a resident of Longja village in Chandel district, was arrested in connection with the seizure.The contraband and the vehicle allegedly used to transport the drugs were also seized.Mizoram and Manipur have emerged as major drug-trafficking corridors in the Northeast, largely because of their long, porous international borders with Myanmar and their proximity to the Golden Triangle, one of the world's major illicit narcotics-producing regions.Six districts of Mizoram and five districts of Manipur share a 910-km international border with Myanmar, making the two states particularly vulnerable to cross-border drug smuggling.



Bengaluru police call allegations fabricated, trace phone



The Bengaluru police on Thursday said that the preliminary investigation into a purported sting operation video involving former Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah, which has been circulating on social media, indicated that the allegations of sexual abuse depicted were part of a fabricated narrative.The police said the evidence collected so far did not substantiate the incident shown in the recording.They said all individuals appearing in the video had been identified and questioned, some on multiple occasions.

"The statements recorded, and evidence collected during the investigation thus far do not substantiate the occurrence of any such incident as depicted in the video," the police said, adding that the allegations made or implied against individuals in the recording appeared to be "false and concocted".Investigators are examining the circumstances in which the video was recorded, transferred and circulated online, as well as the possible motives of those involved.The police said the original mobile phone allegedly used to record the video had been traced, recovered and seized. The device has been sent for forensic examination to ascertain the authenticity and integrity of the recording, and the report is awaited.The video was allegedly recorded in 2023 and purportedly concerns an incident dating back to 2011. Investigators are examining why it was recorded nearly 12 years after the alleged incident and whether it was staged, fabricated, or manipulated to create a misleading narrative.The police are also reconstructing the chain of possession of the video, from its original recording to its circulation on social media in September and October this year.

The technical investigation established that the video was uploaded to multiple platforms, including YouTube and X, through anonymous accounts using virtual private networks (VPNs), masked IP addresses, virtual or spoofed phone numbers and other methods to conceal the identities of those involved. Some digital traces were linked to locations outside Karnataka, the police said.Investigators traced a mobile phone associated with a YouTube upload to a shop in Delhi dealing in used and refurbished devices. The individuals involved in procuring the phone have also been identified.A man linked to the procurement of the device, identified as Ritesh Pandey, was arrested in the National Capital Region (NCR) on October 24 and questioned by the Central Crime Branch. A Bengaluru court granted him bail on the same day, the police said.Investigators had earlier said that Pandey told them that he uploaded the video on the instructions of a person associated with the Janata Dal (Secular)'s social media team. This claim is also being investigated.His questioning yielded further leads in the investigation, the police said. Preliminary findings suggested that he worked as a freelance social media content creator and may have associations with politically connected individuals in New Delhi. The nature and relevance of these alleged associations are under investigation.The police said investigators had found leads suggesting that the video's circulation may have been part of a deliberate attempt to malign individuals holding positions of responsibility in the State, influence public perception and trigger political controversy.The possibility of a coordinated effort involving multiple individuals in planning, facilitating, uploading or amplifying the video for malicious intent is also being thoroughly examined," the police said.

Boxing federation meeting focuses on athletes amid leadership row



Hyderabad: Twenty-one of the Boxing Federation of India's 35 authorised state units participated in a two-day 'Mission Olympic Podium' meeting, bringing a majority of its state units together to discuss Indian boxing's Olympic ambitions and an athlete-first approach.Representatives of 18 units attended in person, while three joined through video conferencing. The participating units included the ad hoc committees of Mizoram and Jharkhand, along with a player representative from the BFI Athletes Committee.

The participation comes amid the ongoing dispute involving suspended Secretary General Pramod Kumar, with the gathering focusing on the Federation's sporting programme and coordination with its state units."Our responsibility is to the boxers and their future. The participation of a majority of our authorised state units demonstrates their commitment to working together as a federation towards our Olympic ambitions, with athletes at the centre of that effort. The work begins in the states — identifying talent, supporting coaches and creating a clear pathway for boxers to progress, gain competitive exposure and represent India. We must build a system that consistently prepares our boxers to succeed at the highest level," said BFI President Ajay Singh.The two-day meeting provided a forum for state representatives to discuss the 'Mission Olympic Podium' initiative, with athletes' perspectives informing the proceedings.The BFI said its priority remained maintaining institutional stability, strengthening coordination with state units and ensuring that boxers' development and preparation remained central to its work.

20-year-old NEET aspirant dies by suicide after failing to secure medical seat

Hyderabad: A 20-year-old NEET aspirant died by suicide at his residence on Wednesday, reportedly distressed over failing to secure a medical seat despite undergoing long-term coaching.

According to police, Abdul Riyan, son of Abdul

KTR's sewage treatment plan aids HMWSSB's water supply

Hyderabad: A blueprint envisioned during the previous BRS government by the then MA&UD Minister KT Rama Rao to make Hyderabad India's first city to achieve 100 per cent sewage treatment has now come as a boon to the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) in generating bulk treated water across the Core Urban Region Economy (CURE) area.

Though Rama Rao had then proposed 31 sewage treatment plants (STPs) with a combined capacity of 1,259.50 million litres per day, the water board built 20 plants with a capacity of 1,106 MLD due to the unavailability of land. A senior HMWSSB official told Telangana Today that 20 STPs had been completed and were generating treated water.HMWSSB Chief General Manager G Sujatha said a total of 1,872 MLD of sewage water was being treated and arrangements were being made to supply the treated water through the Green Water Tankers facility. The water will be supplied for construction, landscaping, industrial cooling, manufacturing, data centres and government agencies.

Of the 1,873 MLD of treated water, 1,520 MLD had been kept ready for supply to consumers in need from November 1. HMWSSB currently supplies treated water at Rs 25 per kilolitre, but there was no clarity on whether it should be supplied at the same price or free of cost, the CGM said.The State government has proposed 39 STPs with a combined capacity of 972 million litres per day, according to a senior HMWSSB official.

Spain reckons with 2nd deadly train crash of the year ahead of national election



Urda: Spain's second high-speed rail disaster this year, a crash in which one train struck another from behind, killing 68 people, has raised fresh concerns about the safety of the country's rail network.Spain's network of high-speed rail has been considered one of the nation's crowning achievements. It ranks second to China in track mileage in the world. Until this year, it had not endured a deadly crash since coming into service over three decades ago.The collision Wednesday that turned a sleepy stretch of rail lined by olive groves into a scene of carnage came just four weeks before the country votes in a national election.Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez visited the crash site in the central province of Toledo after regional authorities confirmed that more than 60 people had died and dozens more were being treated at hospitals.Only in January, 46 people had died when one train jumped the track and slammed into the side of another going the opposite way in southern Spain.Sanchez pledged an investigation into the latest collision and improvements to prevent another tragedy like the two that have shaken trust in a rail system that carried 45 million travellers last year, including millions of tourists."It is clear that we need to reinforce the safety of our train service to rebuild the trust in our high-speed rail," Sanchez said. "It is not acceptable for a country like Spain to endure two high-speed train accidents in the same year." Sanchez's government declared three days of mourning starting Thursday.Both deadly crashes this year involved a train operated by the state-owned RENFE company and one from the privately owned IRYO. Spain only liberalised its high-speed rail service in 2021, with the Italian IRYO starting service the following year.Political implications for Sanchez ahead of election

Sanchez has weathered many crises since taking power in 2018, staying in power and winning reelection after the COVID-19 pandemic and the global rise in inflation.But polls show he faces another uphill battle when voters cast ballots in Spain's first national election since 2023. The new rail disaster can't help the prospects of his Socialist party.Sanchez and other progressive parties had hoped to leverage a wave of discontent over housing costs and high rents when he called for early elections earlier this month.About an hour before news of Wednesday's crash spread, Sanchez had posted on X a message that "There are lots of reasons to be optimistic about this country." Now it appears he will have to handle concerns over the state of Spain's rail service along with attacks from right-wing parties over his liberal migration policies and accusations of corruption against his party and his wife, which both he and his wife deny.His transport minister, Oscar Puente, had to handle media questions over whether he would resign following a second major train wreck under his watch. His response was that he was fully focused on dealing with the collision, not his future.Sanchez's main rival, Popular Party leader Alberto Nunez Feijoo, demanded a full investigation of the crash. The conservative leader said that in respect for the victims, his party cancelled its campaign events for the day."This is the moment to respect the dead, the injured and their families," Nunez Feijoo said. "That does not mean we will ignore the fact that Spaniards are asking tough questions that demand answers." The far-right Vox leader, Santiago Abascal, who is likely hoping to enter a coalition government with the conservatives, did not show the same restraint.

"More dead. Another tragedy. More rage over being left to fend for ourselves, the despair and the betrayal that Spaniards are enduring," Abascal said just hours after the crash."I promise to work tirelessly until this government, which is a criminal organisation, is sitting in a courtroom to answer for its crimes," he said.Puente said that the crash was caused by what he called the "inexplicable" order from a central command centre for Spain's trains after a security system had failed. He said the train engineers were not to blame.Puente said that at 8:30 am the security system on a stretch of 63 kilometres (39 miles) stopped working due to a computer malfunction, causing all trains on that stretch to stop. At that point, the IRYO train was stopped near the town of Urda, while the RENFE train was 25 kilometres (15.5 miles) behind it.But a few minutes later the central command told the RENFE train to start running again without any speed restrictions, and it ended up colliding with the stationary IRYO train at 8:53 am Puente said that the train should never have been told to start moving again since there was still a "stop signal" active on that line. And if it had, at least it should have been told to go at reduced speed.Workers started to use cranes to move parts of the damaged trains late on Wednesday after a hectic day involving hundreds of emergency workers, firefighters, police and soldiers all pitching in to rescue survivors and recover bodies.

Intercommunal violence in southern Ethiopia displaces thousands: UN



United Nations: UN humanitarians have voiced deep concern about the intercommunal violence in the Ethiopian town of Moyale on the border with Kenya that has displaced thousands of people. Casualties have been reported, along with disruptions to transport, markets and cross-border trade, limiting access to essential goods and services, said the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on Wednesday (local time).On the Ethiopian side, the violence that erupted on October 18 has reportedly displaced thousands of people in Oromia and Somali regions. This is in addition to the thousands of people who have reportedly crossed into Kenya, reports Xinhua news agency, quoting OCHA.

Local authorities in Kenya estimate that up to 50,000 people have crossed into the country since Thursday, amid reports of further crossings, it said. Many of those fleeing are women and children. While some are staying with relatives and host communities, others have sought shelter in temporary locations, such as schools and churches. Food remains the most urgent need, alongside safe drinking water, emergency shelter, sanitation and health care, said the office."Continued insecurity has forced several partners to suspend activities," OCHA said. "The UN and its partners are preparing a joint assessment mission to areas affected by the violence as soon as security conditions permit."It is critical to ensure the safety of the population, as well as safe, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access to all people in need, said the office. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has deployed an emergency team to Moyale and is working closely with the Kenyan government, UN agencies, the Kenya Red Cross Society and other humanitarian partners to support the national and local response, said OCHA.The Kenya Red Cross Society is operating six health service points, screening for malnutrition and distributing relief items. Local communities have shared food and water, though their stocks are limited, said OCHA.The UN and its humanitarian partners are working to scale up the response. UN agencies have deployed staff and are mobilising additional supplies, including to prepare for potential further displacement. UNHCR is mobilising emergency relief supplies, including essential household items and temporary shelter materials, to support nearly 12,000 people, with efforts under way to scale up assistance as needs grow, said OCHA.

North Korea fires missile barrage toward sea as tensions with South rise



Seoul: North Korea launched a barrage of ballistic missiles toward the sea Thursday, South Korea's military said, days after the North threatened to resume front-line propaganda loudspeaker broadcasts and deploy new weapons along the rivals' tense border.The launches also followed leader Kim Jong Un's surprise weekend visit to China, the North's main ally and economic pipeline, to push for greater cooperation.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said it detected about 10 short-range ballistic missiles fired from the North's eastern costal town of Wonsan. It said South Korea's military bolstered its surveillance posture and was closely exchanging information about the launches with the US and Japan.Animosity between the Koreas have deepened after last month's land mine blasts that injured three South Korean soldiers. Seoul accused North Korea of planting mines south of the military demarcation line that caused the Sept 21 blasts, but Pyongyang has denied responsibility for the explosions and warned of retaliation if provoked.Last week, North Korea said it would restart propaganda broadcasts and deploy new weapons systems along the border in protest of what it called repeated warning shots by South Korean troops at border areas.South Korea later proposed talks on clarifying the border to prevent accidental clashes, but North Korea hasn't responded.

Thursday's launches were the latest in a series of weapons tests by North Korea in recent weeks, which involved submarine-launched cruise missiles and hypersonic missiles.Experts say North Korea likely aimed to pressure the US into making bigger concessions as President Donald Trump expressed his desire to restore diplomacy with Kim.On Saturday, Kim visited the Chinese border city of Dandong via a newly inaugurated bridge to pay respect at a memorial marking China's support of North Korea during the 1950-53 Korean War. It was his sixth visit to China since taking office in late 2011.At the memorial, Kim said North Korea will firmly carry forward "the invincible" friendship with China. Later he met top Chinese Communist Party official Wang Huning and reaffirmed his resolve to develop bilateral cooperation.Kim has recently taken steps to bolster ties with China after years of prioritising ties with Russia by sending troops and ammunitions to support its war against Ukraine.

United Kingdom announces extra 10-billion-pound support for Ukraine



London: The United Kingdom would provide 10 billion pounds (13 billion US dollars) of additional economic and military support to Ukraine, said British Chancellor of the Exchequer, John Healey.In the Budget 2026 speech in the House of Commons on Wednesday, Healey said the 10 billion pounds of additional economic and military support is "based on loans, Export Finance guarantees, and half a billion in urgent military funding for this winter."

He said British Prime Minister Andy Burnham and he called Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky earlier on Wednesday to tell him about the commitments. "This is the largest ever package of funding for Ukraine from the UK," said Burnham. With the announcement on Wednesday, Britain has committed a total of 35 billion pounds (47 billion dollars) for Ukraine, including 16 billion pounds (21 billion dollars) in military support, according to the British government.This funding will help Ukraine meet its immediate needs and support economic resilience, British Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband said on social media on Wednesday.Meanwhile, Burnham's first 100 days in office, which fell on Tuesday, have seen him put forward plans to devolve more power to the regions, reconsider Brexit, and pursue a more independent foreign policy. Since taking office on July 20, the former mayor of Greater Manchester has helped the Labour Party recover from the stark drop in popularity it experienced under former Prime Minister Keir Starmer.An analysis of polling data by the Press Association shows that Labour's average support has risen by around 10 percentage points compared with the period immediately before Starmer announced his resignation in June. Nevertheless, Burnham faces growing pressure to turn his proposals into results, with constitutional tensions, the legacy of Brexit and disagreements with Washington testing his government.

Trump backs Vivek Ramaswamy for Ohio governor at campaign rally

Washington: US President Donald Trump urged Ohio voters to elect Vivek Ramaswamy as governor, bringing the Republican nominee onto the stage at a campaign rally where Ramaswamy promised property-tax relief and action against sanctuary cities.Addressing supporters in Chillicothe six days before the midterm elections on Wednesday (local time), Trump predicted a Republican victory and repeatedly appealed for voters to support Ramaswamy and the party's congressional candidates."Six days from now, the people of Ohio are going to elect Vivek Ramaswamy as your governor," Trump said, according to the supplied rally transcript.The president later invited Ramaswamy to address the crowd, giving him another opportunity to set out his economic and immigration message in the closing stretch of the campaign against Democrat Amy Acton.Ramaswamy framed the contest around which candidate would improve voters' lives, explicitly linking his state-level promises to Trump's national agenda."President Trump puts Americans first," he said. "I'm going to put Ohioans first."He pledged what he described as the biggest property-tax relief package in Ohio's history if elected. He did not provide figures, a financing plan or a legislative timetable for that proposal in the remarks.

Ramaswamy also promised to end sanctuary cities in Ohio, presenting the commitment as a state-level extension of the administration's immigration policies. In his earlier address to the rally, he said he would act by executive order on his first day in office.Both commitments were campaign promises. The speech did not announce an enacted tax measure or a new state immigration order.Trump repeatedly returned to the importance of turnout, telling supporters they could not take victory for granted. His endorsement was part of a wider appeal to elect Republicans across the ballot and preserve the party's ability to advance his agenda in Washington.The president also defended Ramaswamy against criticism of his campaign, accusing the media of treating him unfairly. He attacked Acton's record and political positions, while Ramaswamy criticised her handling of the state's response to Covid.Trump combined his appeals for Ohio candidates with a renewed promise to give adult US citizens $5,000 each if Republicans won both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

If Republicans win the House of Representatives and the Senate, I am going to give all adult citizens in the United States $5,000," he said.He described the proposed payment as a dividend, put its cost at approximately $1 trillion and said recipients should spend the money inside the United States. He did not set out a payment schedule or detailed funding mechanism at the rally.The president also promoted tariffs and domestic manufacturing, arguing that his trade policies encouraged companies to produce in America. Those claims formed part of his broader campaign argument that Republican victories would protect jobs and household incomes.Ramaswamy



closed his appearance by urging supporters to vote and expressing confidence that the party would win. Trump repeated his appeal for the candidate near the conclusion of the event.Ramaswamy and Acton are contesting Ohio's governorship in the November 3 elections. The Chillicothe event brought the state race together with Trump's campaign for Republican congressional candidates, allowing the gubernatorial nominee to present his priorities directly to the president's supporters.

India votes in favour of UNGA resolution calling for end to US embargo on Cuba

United Nations: India voted in favour of a UN General Assembly resolution calling for an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the US against Cuba, reiterating that the restrictions should be lifted to help the Caribbean nation pursue its development aspirations.The 193-member General Assembly adopted the resolution on Wednesday with 130 countries voting in favour, 17 against and 25 abstaining.Delivering India's statement, Counsellor at India's Permanent Mission to the UN Soumya Nair said the General Assembly has repeatedly called for an end to the embargo and rejected laws and regulations with extraterritorial effects that adversely affect the sovereignty of other states and the progress and prosperity of their peoples.

"India reiterates the Assembly's call to all states to refrain from promulgating and applying, and to repeal and invalidate, such laws and measures in conformity with their obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and international law," she said.Nair said India's commitment to multilateralism is rooted in the belief that international challenges are best addressed through dialogue and diplomacy, in accordance with the UN Charter.

"It is in this spirit that India hopes that the embargo will be lifted at the earliest to help create an environment that would enable the people of Cuba to participate more fully in international cooperation and pursue their legitimate development aspirations," she said.Citing a report by the UN Secretary-General, Nair highlighted the impact of the restrictions on Cuba's economy and essential services.Cuba's health system faces shortages of over 60 per cent of essential medicines, while food production has declined by more than 50 per cent in the past five years, she said."The restrictions on fuel exports to Cuba have also aggravated the country's ongoing energy crisis. The shortages have disrupted essential services, including healthcare, education, water supplies, food distribution, and transportation," Nair said.

The conflict between America and Cuba stems from a decades-old political, economic, and ideological divide that began when Fidel Castro overthrew a US-backed government in 1959 and aligned the island with the Soviet Union.

Washington has maintained a strict trade embargo and sanctions against Cuba for over six decades to pressure its communist regime. Cuba blames these restrictions for crippling its economy, causing severe fuel shortages, blackouts, and deep poverty.The resolution, titled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba", reflects the General Assembly's longstanding opposition to the US restrictions. However, General Assembly resolutions of this nature are not legally binding.On Tuesday, unprecedented scenes unfolded in the UN General Assembly hall as tensions escalated between US Ambassador to the UN Mike Waltz and Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla.While Waltz was addressing the UNGA on Cuba, Parrilla and other Cuban diplomats rose from their assigned seats and walked up towards the podium to confront the American envoy, triggering a verbal duel between the two sides.As Parrilla walked up to the podium, Waltz stepped aside from the lectern and gestured the Cuban minister "to back away from this podium"."Mr President, this individual needs to back away from this podium. He is not going to intimidate me in the United States of America like he tries to intimidate political prisoners," Waltz said, as Parrilla and other Cuban diplomats continued to confront him.

US lawmakers warn banks, ports of congressional probe over Russian diesel imports

Washington: A bipartisan group of US lawmakers has warned American banks, port authorities and fuel distributors that importing Russian diesel could invite legal action and congressional investigations.

In letters to the heads of major financial institutions, ports and fuel distributors, the lawmakers said companies facilitating imports in violation of US law could face criminal and civil liability.The letters came amid reports that shipments of Russian diesel were headed to American shores after President Donald Trump earlier this month granted a waiver allowing Moscow to supply diesel to global markets, including the US.

The lawmakers cited Section 2 of the Ending Importation of Russian Oil Act of 2022, which generally prohibits the importation of Russian-origin energy products, including diesel fuel.Such imports are allowed only after the President certifies to Congress that Russia has ceased all military hostilities in Ukraine and that it poses no immediate threat to NATO members.

US Supreme Court upholds childproofing porn sites



Washington: The US Supreme Court handed down a decision on June 27, 2025, that will reshape how States protect children online. In a case assessing a Texas law requiring age verification to access porn sites, the court created a new legal path that makes it easier for States to craft laws regulating what kids see and do on the internet.In a 6-3 decision, the court ruled in Free Speech Coalition Inc. v. Paxton that Texas' law obligating porn sites to block access to underage users is constitutional. The law requires pornographic websites to verify users' ages – for example by making users scan and upload their driver's license – before granting access to content that is deemed obscene for minors but not adults.

The majority on the court rejected both the porn industry's argument for strict scrutiny – the toughest legal test that requires the government to prove a law is absolutely necessary – and Texas' argument for mere rational basis review, which requires only a rational connection between the law's legitimate aims and its actions.Instead, Justice Clarence Thomas' opinion established intermediate scrutiny, a middle ground that requires laws to serve important government interests without being overly burdensome, as the appropriate standard.The court's reasoning hinged on characterizing the law as only "incidentally" burdening adults' First Amendment rights. Since minors have no constitutional right to access pornography, the state can require age verification to prevent that unprotected activity. Any burden on adults is, according to the ruling, merely a side effect of this legitimate regulation.The court also pointed to dramatic technological changes since earlier similar laws were struck down in the 1990s and early 2000s. Back then, only 2 in 5 households had internet access, mostly through slow dial-up connections on desktop computers.Today, 95 per cent of teens carry smartphones with constant internet access to massive libraries of content. Porn site Pornhub alone published over 150 years of new material in 2019. The court argued that earlier decisions "could not have conceived of these developments," making age verification more necessary than judges could have imagined decades ago.More importantly for future legislation, the court embraced an "ordinary and appropriate means" doctrine: When states have authority to govern an area, they may use traditional methods to exercise that power. Since age verification is common for alcohol and tobacco, tattoos and piercings, firearms, driver's licenses and voting, the court held that it's similarly appropriate for regulating minors' access to sexual content.The key takeaway: When States are trying to keep kids away from certain types of content that kids have no legal right to see anyway, requiring age verification is an ordinary and appropriate way to enforce that boundary.This decision could resolve a fundamental enforcement problem in child privacy laws. Current laws like the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act protect children only when companies have actual knowledge a user is under 13. But platforms routinely avoid this requirement by not asking users' ages or letting them enter whatever age they want. Without age verification, there's no actual knowledge and thus no privacy protections.

The Supreme Court's reasoning changes this dynamic. Since the court emphasized that children lack the same constitutional rights as adults regarding certain protections, states may now be able to require age verification before data collection. California's Age-Appropriate Design Code and similar state privacy laws would gain substantially more regulatory power under this framework.Meanwhile, social media platforms could face more restrictions. Several states have tried to limit how social media platforms interact with minors. Florida recently banned kids under 14 from having social media accounts entirely, while other states have targeted specific features such as endless scrolling or push notifications designed to keep kids hooked.

The Supreme Court's reasoning could protect laws that require age verification before kids can use certain platform features, such as direct messaging with strangers or livestreaming. However, laws that try to block kids from seeing general social media content would still face tough legal challenges, since that content is typically protected speech for everyone.The decision also supports state laws regulating how minors interact with app stores and gaming platforms. Minors generally can't enter binding contracts without parental consent in the physical world, so states could require the same online.Proposed legislation such as the App Store Accountability Act would require parental approval before kids can download apps or agree to terms of service. States have also considered restrictions on "loot boxes" – digital gambling-like features – and surprise in-app purchases that can result in massive charges to parents.Since States already require an ID to buy lottery tickets or enter casinos, requiring age verification before kids can spend money on digital gambling mechanics follows the court's logic.But this decision doesn't give states free rein to regulate the internet. The court's reasoning applies to content that children have no legal right to access in the first place, specifically sexually explicit material. For most online content such as news, educational materials, general entertainment and political discussions, both adults and kids have constitutional rights to access.

Laws trying to age-gate this protected content would still likely face the strict scrutiny's standard and be struck down, but what online content and experiences underage users are constitutionally entitled to is not settled.Many advocates worry that while the "obscene for minors" standard in this case appears legally narrow, states will try to expand it or use similar reasoning to classify LGBTQ+-related educational content, health resources or community support materials as inherently seual and inappropriate for minors.The court also emphasized that even under this more permissive standard, laws still have to be reasonable. Age verification requirements that are overly burdensome, sweep too broadly or create serious privacy problems could still be ruled unconstitutional.The court's decision in this case gives state lawmakers much more room to effectively regulate how online platforms interact with children, but I believe successful laws will need to be carefully written.For parents worried about their kids' online safety, this could mean more tools and protections. For tech companies, it likely means more compliance requirements and age verification systems. And for the broader internet, it represents a significant shift toward treating online spaces more like physical ones, where people have long accepted that some doors require showing ID to enter.

What are the issues around deportation? | Explained



The story so far:At least seven West Bengal residents who were pushed to Bangladesh by the Border Security Force (BSF) on suspicion of being Bangladeshis were brought back to India after the intervention of the State government. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on June 25 that residents speaking in their native Bengali language are being branded as Bangladeshis in some Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-ruled States. Several people who were pushed from Assam to Bangladesh also returned as they were found to be Indians or that their citizenship cases were sub-judice.

Why have matters escalated?

After the regime change in Bangladesh in August 2024, the police across the country were asked by the Union Home Ministry to detect Bangladeshis who had illegally entered the country and were living here on forged documents. The drive assumed momentum after the Pahalgam terror attack in April and the subsequent 'Operation Sindoor'. The Ministry has issued instructions to States to deport undocumented migrants but in most cases pushbacks are happening. Around 2,500 suspected Bangladeshis have been pushed back so far. On May 10, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that the government has decided to implement the "pushback" mechanism to check infiltration instead of going through the legal route which is a long-drawn process. Home Minister Amit Shah has asked top intelligence officials to make an example of "infiltrators" by detecting, detaining, and deporting them. In 2022, at an Intelligence Bureau meeting, Mr. Shah had asked officials to identify around 100 illegal migrants in each State, check documents and arrest and deport them. He asked them to continue with the crackdown even if neighbouring countries do not accept the undocumented migrants.

What is the difference between deportation and pushback?

Deportation is a legal process which involves detaining and arresting a foreigner suspected to be living in India without documents or who has entered the country illegally. The case is presented before a court and after exhaustion of all legal avenues, which includes conviction by the court, the country which the foreigner belongs to is contacted and the deportation takes places once the identity is confirmed. Pushbacks are not a legal procedure and there are no stated rules. They happen when a foreigner has been caught by the border security force on the international border and, depending on the intensity of the case or the discretion of the border personnel, they are either arrested, made to face the law here or pushed back. Since citizenship and foreigners are Union List subjects, it is the Home Ministry which delegates powers to deport foreigners to State governments.In 2024, the Ministry told the Jharkhand High Court that since the "Central Government does not maintain a separate federal police force exclusively dedicated to the task of detection and deportation of illegally staying foreigners, action in this regard has been entrusted to the State police."

What is the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950?

On June 9, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the State government was likely to enforce a 1950 law to identify and evict illegal foreigners, adding that under the law, district commissioners are empowered to declare individuals as illegal immigrants and initiate eviction proceedings. The 1950 Act was passed by Parliament amid communal disturbance and violence following the Partition of India in 1947 and creation of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) bordering West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. The Act says that "it extends to the whole of India", but has Assam-specific provisions.Section 2 of the Act says that if the Union government is of the opinion that any person or class of persons, having been ordinarily resident in any place outside India are detrimental to the interests of the general public of India or any Scheduled Tribe in Assam, the Union government may by order, "direct such person or class of persons to remove himself or themselves from India or Assam within such time and by such route as may be specified in the order"; and "give such further directions in regard to his or their removal from India or Assam as it may consider necessary or expedient".

What are the laws for foreigners?

Till April this year, matters relating to foreigners and immigration were administered through "pre-Constitution period" laws enacted during the First and Second World Wars, which were the Foreigners Act, 1946, Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920, the Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939 and the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act, 2000. In April, Parliament enacted the Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025 repealing the old laws.

Unlike Pakistan and Bangladesh borders, the rules for movement of people along Nepal and Myanmar are different. Nepal has a free-border agreement with India, and a Free Movement regime (FMR), allowing movement of people residing within 10-km on either side, exists along the India-Myanmar border. Following the May 2023 ethnic violence in Manipur, the Ministry in 2024 decided to fence the entire 1,643-km Myanmar border in the next 10 years. Post the military coup in Myanmar in February 2021, over 40,000 refugees from Myanmar belonging to the Chin ethnic group who are closely related to the Mizo community crossed over to Mizoram. On March 10, 2021, the MHA sent a letter to the State governments of Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Mizoram that the refugees should be identified and deported and that the State Governments have no powers to grant "refugee" status to any foreigner as India is not a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention of 1951 and its 1967 Protocol. The refugees continue to live here.

What is behind this recent drive?

Since the April 22 terror attack at Pahalgam, the police has intensified the drive to detect undocumented migrants. Initially, they were taken by trains to border districts and then pushed to Bangladesh by the BSF. In some instances, migrants after being up picked from Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Maharashtra, were flown by planes to Agartala in Tripura and transported to the Bangladesh border by BSF personnel. The police and the BSF record biometrics and photographs of the undocumented migrants. It is to be noted that the BSF has never acknowledged any of the pushbacks. The Ministry has asked the States to verify the claims of undocumented migrants who claim Indian nationality after which District Magistrates are to send a report within 30 days, failing which the Foreigners Regional Registration Officer would deport them.In 2022, the Unique Identification Authority of India was asked to maintain a "negative list" to stop undocumented migrants from procuring identity documents in the future.

Weddings, interrupted

As men arrange themselves comfortably on a charpoy, Munnish Devi, 50, finds herself a spot on the mud floor of her three-room house at Bhureka village in Uttar Pradesh's Mathura district. Devi, whose husband passed away a few years ago, has four daughters. One of them is Kalpana, 20, who married Akash, 21, in May this year. The only memory Devi has from the wedding is a blood-stained pair of white pyjamas, which she has kept in a stainless steel trunk. It's a reminder of the day a celebration turned violent.

Akash, a member of the Dalit community, was dragged off the chariot he was riding joyously to his bride's house. Many wedding guests were allegedly assaulted by a group of men from the Jat community because members of the Dalit community had organised a wedding procession.In Uttar Pradesh, numerous cases have been reported where Dalit families have faced violence from upper caste communities for organising wedding ceremonies in smaller towns and villages. As many as 15,368 cases of atrocities against Scheduled Castes and five against Scheduled Tribes were registered in the State in 2022, as per the National Crime Records Bureau data. There is no separate data on atrocities against Dalits during celebrations.Every month though, there are incidents of Dalit wedding processions being attacked in the State. On June 21, Arti Kumari, 19, and Vikas Singh, 21, were getting married in Etah district's Dhakpura village. When their baraat reached a Rajput-dominant settlement, they allegedly faced threats and stones were pelted. The wedding ultimately took place under police protection.In Bhureka, where mud houses dot green fields, people primarily engage in farming. Despite being located just off the Yamuna Expressway — the 165-km, high-speed road that connects Noida with Agra — people in the village have a slow life.

Inside Devi's barely constructed house, open from all sides, men discuss the heatwave. Kalpana's cousin, Anil Kumar, 25, shows videos of the wedding day. He explains how, on May 22, a group of people allegedly from the Jat community in the neighbouring village disrupted the wedding procession. They were upset with the DJ playing music and Akash riding a chariot, he says. "They hurled casteist abuses and attacked our baraatis (members of the bridegroom's procession). It was shameful. We were all so excited about the wedding. Akash's family had come from Aligarh. When the men started threatening our baraatis, we called the police," Anil says.After the police arrived at the marriage hall, barely a few kilometres away, the couple completed their pheras (seven rounds around the fire) at midnight.The next day at 8 a.m., Anil says, the same group, and 20-25 others, returned to the house, holding weapons. They tore the baraatis' clothes, hit them, and damaged the tent and everything in the vicinity. They hurled casteist abuses and insulted the women and children, he says."We couldn't sit there and see our guests being insulted, so we retaliated, and many of us, including the elderly, got hurt. Look at our stained pyjamas," he says, pointing to a video of the incident. "These were brand new, and now, this is the only memory we hold." Anil looks away as other family members show their wounds.An FIR has been registered at the Naujheel police station against 20-25 people for rioting, house trespassing, and criminal intimidation under sections of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.

Circle Officer (Mant) Gunjan Singh says six persons from the village have been arrested in connection with the incident. "The allegation that the baraat was stopped is false. Our investigation did not reveal it. The argument took place only because the DJ played loud music at night," he says, adding that only three persons asked for the volume to be turned down.During the 'bidai (giving away of the bride)', Kalpana's family was at the police station, waiting to give their statements. "The last thing I could have given my daughter was a peaceful goodbye; even that wasn't allowed," Devi adds.

Kalpana studied till Class 8; Akash works as a carpenter. The family felt that their daughter would have a better life in a city. Many young women in the village marry in that hope. Not many have access to higher education. A marriage that will take women to a city is seen as a way out of both poverty and suppression.Soon after the incident, which was reported across newspapers, Ram Khiladi, 60, a resident of Bhureka village, says his daughter's 'rishta (match)' from Palwal in Rajasthan seems to have fallen through. "The family has stopped responding. They said they wouldn't send their baraat to our village because they would get attacked. This is what the attack has done to our people," he says.While the 'pradhan (village head)' is usually the first to respond to local matters, villagers say it depends a lot on which community they are from and which community is at the receiving end. In Bhureka, the pradhan, Bhuvnesh Sharma, hails from the Brahmin community, and he did not offer any support, they say.Sharma says he did. "I even met the family," he says, though he does not give details of what they spoke about.Sushil Gautam, a Dalit rights activist, who has been working on ground for more than 20 years, believes that even though times are changing, "issues still persist". He talks about how the traditional system of marriage has evolved in the Dalit community over the past few years. "With access to social media and education, people from the Dalit community have understood what the term 'resistance' means. It is about creating a safe space for ourselves and accessing rights, be it marriage, education, or something as small as keeping a moustache," he explains.Gautam says even during wedding ceremonies, photographs of Dalit icons such as Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Ravidas, and Jyotibha Phule take centre stage.

Where does India lag in gender metrics? | Explained



The legislation for 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and in State legislatures was passed after a long wait in 2023, but as it is tied to a new Census and delimitation exercise, it can only be implemented from the 2029 general election at the earliest. Women's representation in the Lok Sabha has ranged from 3.4% in 1977 to 14% in 2019.

The story so far:India dropped two places in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index for 2025, slipping to the 131st rank out of 148 countries. While the gender gap has narrowed or remained stable in the case of three categories — economic participation and opportunity; educational attainment; health and survival — it has worsened in the case of political empowerment. At a time when rising numbers of women are voting in elections, the number of women in the highest halls of power remain stubbornly low. This is set to change in 2029, when mandatory 33% reservation for women in State and national legislatures is set to kick in, but steps need to be taken to ensure the benefits of this law extend to the long term.

What led to the drop?

The Index uses three indicators to assess political empowerment, with India falling in two — the percentage of women in Parliament, which dropped from 14.7% (78 MPs) in 2024 to 13.79% (74 MPs) in 2025 after the general election for the 18th Lok Sabha; and the percentage of women in ministerial positions, which dropped from an already abysmal 6.45% in 2024 to just 5.56% in 2025.

What will change after women's reservation?

The legislation for 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and in State legislatures was passed after a long wait in 2023, but as it is tied to a new Census and delimitation exercise, it can only be implemented from the 2029 general election at the earliest. Women's representation in the Lok Sabha has ranged from 3.4% in 1977 to 14% in 2019. At the time of the passage of the women's reservation legislation in 2023, women accounted for only 9% of MLAs in State Assemblies, with Chhattisgarh having the highest representation (18% women MLAs), while Himachal Pradesh had just one woman MLA and Mizoram had none. Jacking these figures up to at least 33% will give a significant boost to India's political empowerment scores.The catch is that reservation is only valid for 15 years from the time the law passes, meaning that it is likely to be implemented in only two general election cycles, 2029 and 2034, raising concerns about the sustainability of gains women would make in this period. Also, while more women may become MPs, it remains to be seen if ruling parties also appoint them to ministerial roles in higher numbers, increasing their representation in actual governance. Despite the three-decade old 33% reservation for women at the panchayat and municipality level, which has been increased to 50% in most States, there is no clear pipeline to draw such local leaders into State-level politics.

Does the rise in women voters matter?

Back in 1952, 28 lakh women were excluded from voting in the general election as they were listed on the electoral rolls only as someone's mother or wife, with their own names missing. The gender gap among voters has narrowed speedily since then, from 17 percentage points in 1962 to less than two percentage points in 2014. In fact, in the last two general elections, women voters have actually overtaken men, though this can also be partially attributed to rising male migration for employment, leaving men unable to vote in their home States. The rising numbers of women voting has led to political parties wooing women as a votebank, with a slew of welfare schemes aimed at women, ranging from free bicycles for girls to a monthly allowance for poorer women.

How to increase women candidates?The trend with respect to women voters, however, has not translated into an increase in women's representation. "Political parties continue to give lower representation to women candidates in so-called 'good seats', often citing a lack of winnability," says Rahul Verma, a political scientist at the Centre for Policy Research, noting that many parties field women in seats reserved for Scheduled Caste/Tribe candidates, in a bid to offset that quota."Women voters do not automatically vote for women candidates. Gender is not like caste, where voters may vote on the basis of identity. Women are much more practical, looking for actual programmatic delivery," says Tara Krishnaswamy of Political Shakti, a non-partisan group working to improve women's representation in politics.

Ada Lovelace: the Enchantress of Numbers



Women in STEM is a popular term you would have heard, and it is well-celebrated in the modern age. However, what about the women who laid the stepping stones for the term? Women who not only broke gender barriers but also played an important role in laying the foundation in several modern fields. One such icon was Ada Lovelace.Augusta Ada King, Countess of Lovelace, more commonly known as Ada Lovelace, was the daughter of the poet Lord Byron and his wife, Anne Isabella Milbanke. She did something most women deemed impossible then. She became the world's first computer programmer. Even though recognised much later, her visionary notes on Charles Babbage's Analytical Engine included what is recognised as the first computer algorithm, earning her that title.

Being a single mother, Lady Byron was sceptical of several skills thought to be irrational — specifically subjects like the arts — which she associated with Lord Byron. In order to prevent Ada from having any poetic tendencies, Lady Byron made sure that her daughter received a rigorous education in science and mathematics, which were very uncommon for girls in her era. Ada had a natural aptitude for numbers and reasoning from a young age. Among her tutors were renowned mathematicians like Augustus De Morgan, a well-known logician, and Mary Somerville, one of the first female members of the Royal Astronomical Society.Ada's life changed dramatically when she met Charles Babbage, the inventor and mathematician who is frequently referred to as the "father of the computer", when she was just 17 years old. Babbage was then developing the Difference Engine, a mechanical device used to perform mathematical calculations. Ada was fascinated by his ideas and demonstrated a thorough understanding of his work.

They developed a strong intellectual bond, and Babbage was impressed by her perceptions and critical abilities. He affectionately referred to her as "The Enchantress of Numbers". Babbage and Lovelace's friendship and collaboration would become one of the most significant intellectual partnerships of the 19th Century.Babbage later started working on the Analytical Engine, a general-purpose computing machine. It contained many features that we see and use in modern computers, including an arithmetic logic unit and integrated memory.In 1842, based on a lecture Babbage gave in Turin, Italian engineer Luigi Federico Menabrea wrote a paper in French about the Analytical Engine. Lovelace was commissioned to translate this paper into English. But she went far beyond a mere translation.

Her notes were three times longer than the original text and offered profound insights into the potential of the machine. She described how the engine could be programmed to perform tasks beyond pure number-crunching—such as composing music—highlighting her prescient understanding of computing as a universal machine.Lovelace most famously included a technique for using the Analytical Engine to calculate a series of Bernoulli numbers. This is widely regarded as the first algorithm ever intended to be executed by a machine, making her the first computer programmer in history.Ada Lovelace Day, celebrated annually in October, promotes the achievements of women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The U.S. Department of Defence named a programming language "Ada" in her honour in the 1980s.She was also aware of machines' limitations and emphasised the difference between human creativity and machine processing, which is still relevant in discussions about automation and artificial intelligence today.But in the late 1840s, her health began to decline, and in 1852, she passed away from uterine cancer. She was buried next to her father, Lord Byron, in Nottinghamshire's Church of St Mary Magdalene, as she requested. For many years after her death, Ada Lovelace's contributions were largely forgotten. It wasn't until the mid-20th Century, with the rise of computer science as a discipline, that her work was rediscovered and properly recognised. In a field where women have been traditionally discriminated against and not taken seriously, Ada Lovelace shines bright as a pioneer in not just STEM but also feminism!

Endocrine disruptors in plastic waste: a new public health threat



Plastics have revolutionised modern living with their convenience and affordability, but this same ubiquity is spawning an invisible, long-term health crisis. Beyond choking oceans and clogging landfills, plastics are now infiltrating our bodies through microplastic particles and a cocktail of endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs).The evidence is clear and deeply concerning: these substances are interfering with our hormonal systems, damaging reproductive health and increasing our susceptibility to chronic diseases, including cancer. India, now the world's largest generator of plastic waste, stands at the epicenter of this escalating public health emergency.Microplastics in the human body: from the environment to the bloodstreamOnce considered inert pollutants, microplastics—plastic particles smaller than 5 mm—are now recognised as biologically active. A 2022 study by Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam detected microplastics in the blood of 80% of human participants. Further, a 2024 study published in Nature Scientific Reports reported the presence of microplastics in nearly 89% of blood samples in India, with an average concentration of 4.2 particles per milliliter. These particles have also been found in human lungs, hearts, placentas, breast milk, ovarian follicular fluid, and semen. Alarmingly, testicular tissue in Indian men was found to contain three times more microplastics than that in dogs.

The plastics in our lives are not chemically neutral. They often contain EDCs such as: Bisphenol A (BPA) and BPS: Used in water bottles, food containers, and thermal paper. - Phthalates (e.g., DEHP, DBP): Used to soften plastics and found in cosmetics, toys and IV tubing. - PFAS (Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances): Found in food packaging and non-stick cookware.These chemicals mimic or block natural hormones such as estrogen, testosterone, thyroid hormones, and cortisol. They interfere with receptor binding, disrupt gene expression in reproductive organs, and induce oxidative stress, inflammation, and apoptosis (cell death).Animal studies published in Food and Chemical Toxicology (2023) showed that even low doses of polystyrene microplastics (20 µg/L) disrupted testosterone levels, impaired sperm production, and damaged the blood-testis barrier. Similar effects were observed in ovaries, where microplastics reduced anti-Müllerian hormone levels, triggered oxidative stress pathways, and induced cell death.Recent clinical studies from China and India have linked the presence of microplastics in semen to reduced sperm count, concentration and motility. Exposure to BPA and phthalates has been associated with lower testosterone levels and elevated luteinizing hormone (LH) levels—both indicators of endocrine disruption. A global review published in Science of the Total Environment further supports the connection between microplastics and male subfertility. Notably, a 2023 study in Environmental Science & Technology Letters reported a strong correlation between microplastic levels in semen and decreased sperm count, motility, and abnormal morphology in Chinese men. In India, studies have documented a 30% decline in average sperm count over the past two decades.

A study published in Ecotoxicology and Environmental Safety (2025) found microplastics in 14 out of 18 follicular fluid samples collected from women undergoing fertility treatment in Italy. These particles, along with their associated endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs), were found to compromise egg quality and were linked to menstrual irregularities, reduced estradiol levels, and an increased risk of miscarriage. Epidemiological studies have also linked exposure to phthalates and BPA with conditions such as polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), endometriosis, and spontaneous abortions. These associations have been further supported by findings published in Advances in Pharmacology (2021) and Frontiers in Cell and Developmental Biology (2023).The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) now classifies several plastic additives as probable human carcinogens. Case-control studies from India have shown that women with elevated levels of DEHP in their urine face nearly a threefold increased risk of breast cancer (odds ratio = 2.97). Exposure to BPA and phthalates has also been linked to higher incidences of prostate, uterine, and testicular cancers.

In addition to their carcinogenic potential, these endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs) have been implicated in metabolic disorders. By mimicking cortisol, altering insulin sensitivity, and promoting fat storage, EDCs contribute to the development of obesity and type 2 diabetes. Moreover, PFAS exposure has been associated with metabolic syndrome, cardiovascular disease, and thyroid dysfunction, as reported in a 2024 study published in Frontiers in Public Health.India generates over 9.3 million tonnes of plastic waste each year. Of this, approximately 5.8 million tonnes are incinerated, releasing toxic gases, while 3.5 million tonnes end up polluting the environment. Studies have shown that residents in cities like Mumbai are exposed to between 382 and 2,012 microplastic particles daily through air, food, and water. In Nagpur, doctors are reporting an increase in cases of early puberty, respiratory problems, obesity, and learning disorders in children—conditions increasingly linked to plastic pollution. Recent testing by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) detected phthalate concentrations in drinking water samples from Delhi, Jabalpur, and Chennai that exceeded European Union safety limits.Despite progressive policies like the Plastic Waste Management Rules (2016, updated in 2022 and 2024), enforcement remains inconsistent. Current regulations do not account for low-dose effects or the complex interactions of EDCs, nor do they address the specific vulnerabilities of children and pregnant women.

The health burden associated with EDCs in India is staggering, costing over ?25,000 crore annually due to increased healthcare spending and lost productivity. The poorest populations, often living near waste dumps or working in the informal recycling sector, bear the brunt of this crisis. Globally, the U.S. reports healthcare costs of $250 billion annually linked to plastic-related chemicals, according to the Endocrine Society.Biomonitoring and surveillance are crucial for establishing national programmess that measure endocrine-disrupting chemical (EDC) levels in blood, urine, and breast milk. Longitudinal studies must be funded to assess the health impacts of EDC exposure on fertility, neurodevelopment, and chronic diseases. In addition, public awareness needs to be improved, and behaviour changes should be encouraged, such as educating people on the risks of microwaving food in plastic containers and promoting the use of glass, stainless steel, and EDC-free alternatives. It is also important to advocate for antioxidant-rich diets to help counteract oxidative stress.

Further actions should include enforcing plastic segregation, recycling, and safe disposal, while investing in microplastic filtration systems for water treatment plants. Additionally, incentivising the development of biodegradable, non-toxic materials is essential to reduce EDC exposure.Plastic pollution is no longer a distant environmental concern; it is a biological invasion with profound implications for human health. The infiltration of microplastics and plastic-derived EDCs into our bodies is triggering hormonal disruption, reproductive dysfunction and chronic diseases. The science is undeniable, and the time for action is now.

'Disclose PEDs to insurers'

For now, hiding a pre-existing disease (PED) from an insurer before buying a health policy might seem to be an advantage with a lower cost premium. However, the reality is that it can lead to rejection of the claim or even policy cancellation. In both cases, the policyholder must pay exorbitant medical bills from his/her pocket.When one buys cover, he/she is entering into a contract with the insurer. All the medical insurance policies are developed on a legally- binding principle – 'utmost good faith' so the insurer and the policyholder must be transparent and honest. While buying the policy, the policyholder has an obligation to disclose all relevant details regarding his/her health conditions, including PEDs. If even a small piece of information on PEDs is not disclosed, it means the policyholder has violated the fundamental legal principle, thereby forcing the insurer to reject claim or even cancel the policy itself. The premium the policyholder has paid till then will go down the drain.

What are PEDs?

A PED is a disease/medical condition existing in an individual even before buying a policy. Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) guidelines say illness/disease is treated as a PED if it was diagnosed within three years (36 months) prior to the purchase of the policy by a recognised doctor. (Previously it was 48 months but IRDAI brought it down to 36 months, effective from April 1, 2024.) In common insurance parlance, if an individual knows he has a health issue before buying the policy, it is considered a PED and must be disclosed.V. Mangala, senior subject-matter executive, Aionion Insurance Marketing Pvt. Ltd., says, "It must be noted not every visit to a doctor is treated as a PED. For instance, if you consult a doctor for normal fever, cold, cough, etc. you need not reveal these details. PEDs are those ailments that have a major impact on your general health in the long run. Say, for instance, BP, cholesterol, thyroid, asthma, piles, diabetes, lumbar issues, previous surgery or heart attacks, epilepsy etc., these must necessarily be divulged



to the insurer."Waiting periodAnother concept while buying health insurance policy is the waiting period. Most insurers in India cover pre-existing diseases but only after the waiting period gets over. If any medical emergency occurs during the waiting period, especially related to the PED, then in almost all cases, the claim would naturally be rejected by the insurer. Though the concept of wait period is there in all insurers, the wait time might differ across insurers. Generally, majority of the insurance companies provide coverage to PEDs after a waiting period of two to three years.

Ms. Mangala says, "In some insurance companies, riders are sold separately at an additional premium. These riders reduce the waiting period, and some insurance companies also cover PEDs from Day 1 with or without a rider, of course, the premium will be high. Therefore, before buying a policy, whether an individual health insurance policy or a family floater policy, the policyholder must choose a policy that has no/lower waiting period."Co-payment clauseSome insurers might offer PED coverage with a 'co-payment' clause. Based on the co-payment agreement, the policyholder must pay an agreed portion of the total claim amount; only then will the insurance company settle the remaining claim amount.

Global warming changing cloud patterns. That means more global warming

Melbourne: At any given time, about two-thirds of Earth's surface is covered by clouds. Overall, they make the planet much cooler than it would be without them. But as Earth gets warmer, mostly due to the rise in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere from humans burning fossil fuels, clouds are changing too.

And that might already be causing more warming – adding to the greenhouse heat boost, and changing clouds even more. Over the past few years, the world's average temperature has increased more than climate scientists were expecting.In our latest research, led by NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies, we show that changes in clouds have made a significant contribution to turning up the thermostat. Clouds and climate Clouds help to keep Earth cool by reflecting sunlight back out to space before it can reach the ground. But not all clouds are equal. Shiny, white clouds reflect away more sunlight – especially when they are closer to the equator, in the parts of Earth that receive the most sun. Grey, broken clouds reflect less sunlight, as do clouds closer to the poles where less light falls.

Research published last year showed that Earth has been absorbing more sunlight than the greenhouse effect alone can explain. Clouds were involved, but it wasn't clear exactly how. Bright cloud zones are shrinking, A new study shows what is happening. The areas covered by highly reflective clouds are shrinking. At the same time, the areas containing broken, less reflective clouds are growing. The net effect is that additional energy from sunlight is reaching Earth's surface.Here it is absorbed, leading to extra heating. The effect of changes in the properties of the highly reflective clouds, caused by things such as changes in the amount of aerosol pollution in the atmosphere. were found much smaller than the effect of the change in area.



In the big picture, Earth's wind patterns are driven by hot air rising near the equator and the rotation of the planet. This creates huge, looping currents of atmospheric circulation around the globe. Local weather systems – the kind that determine the location and type of clouds – depend on these major, large-scale wind systems.The major circulation patterns in the atmosphere are changing as a result of global warming. We found much of the cloud action is taking place at the edges of these major wind systems. Highly reflective clouds are on the decline in a region near the equator called the intertropical convergence zone, and also two other bands called the storm tracks, which lie between 30 and 40 degrees of latitude.

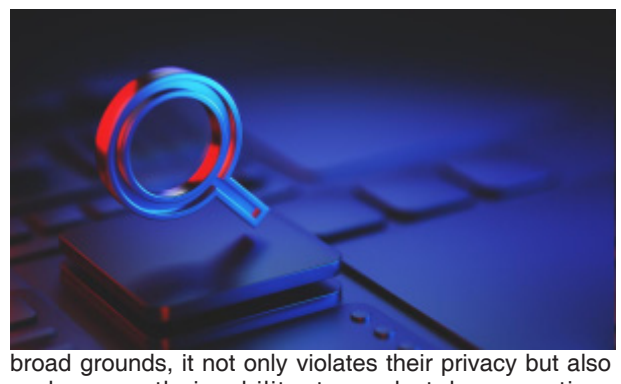
Revisit digital search powers under the I-T Bill 2025

The Finance Minister recently introduced a proposal in Parliament to allow tax authorities to access, under the Income-Tax Bill, 2025, an individual's "virtual digital space" during search and seizure operations. The justification is straightforward: as financial activity moves online, so must enforcement. However, this glosses over the far-reaching implications of such a shift, which raises significant concerns about privacy, overreach, and surveillance.

A blurring, open-endedCurrently, India's tax law already provides for search and seizure under Section 132 of the Income-Tax Act, 1961. But those powers are limited to physical space such as a house, office, and locker. Since such operations are based on suspicion of undisclosed income or assets, there is a connection between the objective, which is finding undisclosed income and getting access to physical assets.

The new Bill, however, blurs this link by including an individual's digital presence which is not only vast but often contains much more than what is relevant to a tax investigation. Without clear limits, such access can lead to disproportionate intrusion. For example, under the existing regime, what could be searched was what concerned only the individual under investigation. In contrast, digital spaces involve multiple stakeholders. Accessing a social media account also exposes friends, family, and professional contacts, through photographs and posts.

The proposed definition of 'virtual digital space' includes access to emails, personal cloud drives, social media accounts, digital application platforms, and more. Crucially, the phrase "any other space of similar nature" makes the list open-ended, potentially covering a wide range of digital platforms. Additionally, the proposed provision empowers tax authorities to override access codes to gain entry into electronic devices or virtual digital spaces. It still remains unclear though how this power will be operationalised in practice particularly in cases involving encrypted messaging apps such as WhatsApp, as explicitly cited by the Finance Minister in Parliament.The problem becomes even more of a concern when the individual involved is a professional whose work requires confidentiality. For instance, journalists whose devices and emails hold sensitive information, including confidential sources, unpublished material, and protected communications. If a search is conducted on flimsy or overly



broad grounds, it not only violates their privacy but also endangers their ability to undertake reporting. Recognising the risks, the Supreme Court of India, in 2023, circulated interim guidelines on the seizure of digital devices and directed the Union Government to contemplate formulating necessary protocols. Moreover, the judicial interpretation of "reason to believe" emphasises the need for tangible material beyond mere suspicion. Even under existing law, courts have construed that the provision ought to be exercised strictly, acknowledging that search and seizure is a serious invasion of privacy.A violation of transparency, accountabilityYet, the proposed provision goes against these principles and is devoid of guardrails, judicial oversight, and has a lack of understanding of the stakes. It fails to acknowledge, let alone address, the sheer breadth and layered sensitivity of information stored on electronic devices. In line with the current law, the proposed provision prohibits disclosure of the "reason to believe" clearly violating principles of transparency and accountability.Globally, privacy and transparency standards in search and seizure, especially where digital devices are involved, are grounded in statutory protections and procedural safeguards. In Canada, Section 8 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the right to be secure against "unreasonable search or seizure". It is designed to prevent unjustified searches and sets a three-part default standard: prior authorisation; approval by a neutral and impartial judicial authority; and reasonable and probable grounds. In the United States, the Taxpayer Bill of Rights, adopted by the Internal Revenue Service, affirms that taxpayers have the right to expect that any inquiry or enforcement action will be legally compliant and will not be more intrusive than necessary following due process rights

Justice delayed yet again

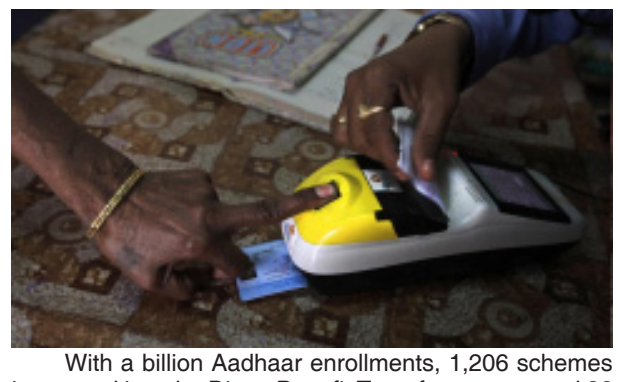


Last week, a special National Investigation Agency (NIA) court acquitted all the seven accused, including BJP MP Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur, in the 2008 Malegaon blasts case. Six people were killed and 95 injured in the bombing that had struck the Muslim-majority town in Maharashtra.The case, which was investigated by two different agencies, triggered accusations of 'saffron terror'. All the accused were charged by the Maharashtra Anti Terrorism Squad (ATS) in 2008 of being 'Hindutva extremists'. The trial was controversial as Rohini Salian, the former special public prosecutor, had alleged in 2015 that the government had put pressure on her, through the NIA, to "go soft" on the accused.The case was initially probed by ATS chief Hemant Karkare, who was gunned down by terrorists during the November 26, 2008, terror attack on Mumbai. Eventually, it was handed over to the NIA.

While acquitting the seven accused, the court pointed out several lapses in the investigation and criticised the NIA for presenting 'inconclusive', 'unreliable', and 'legally inadmissible' evidence. It said that there were procedural lapses in the invocation of stringent laws such as the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act, 1999, and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. It added that the investigators had failed to link the motorcycle, allegedly used in the crime, to Ms. Thakur; that there were problems with witness statements; and that there was no proof that Lt Col Prasad Purohit (retired) or the right-wing outfit, Abhinav Bharat, was linked to the blast.

In the order, Special Judge A.K. Lahoti observed, "The testimony of prosecution witnesses is riddled with material inconsistencies and contradictions. Such discrepancies undermine the credibility of the prosecution's case and fall short of establishing the guilt of the accused beyond reasonable doubt." While he said that terrorism has no religion, the Special Judge also added that a court cannot convict someone based on mere perception.Civil society members were critical of the verdict given the allegations that it was politically driven; and also since it came on the back of another verdict acquitting all the accused in another blast case.On July 21, the Bombay High Court acquitted all the 12 accused in the 2006 serial bomb blasts case. Seven explosions had ripped through Mumbai's local trains on the evening of July 11, 2006, killing 189 people and seriously injuring 824. The coordinated blasts had scarred the estimated 70 lakh people of Mumbai who use the local trains, often dubbed the city's lifeline, every day. Many victims feared taking the local train again.This case too was riddled with controversies. While the Maharashtra ATS, which had conducted the probe from the beginning, claimed that the attacks were the handiwork of the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Students' Islamic Movement of India, several other investigating agencies, including the NIA, claimed that the Indian Mujahideen had carried out the terror attacks.While acquitting the 12 accused, the High Court laid bare the inconsistencies, loopholes, and lapses in the probe by the Maharashtra ATS. It asked how key witness statements were recorded after an unexplained delay of 100 days. It questioned the trustworthiness and credibility of witnesses, highlighted deep flaws in both the investigation as well as prosecution, and demanded to know why the circumstantial evidence, such as call detail records, which the investigators had relied on so much, was inconclusive. It pointed out that the witness statements were delayed and inconsistent; that there were procedural lapses and coercion allegations about the confessions retrieved; that there was no proof of actual explosives used; and that the chain of custody of the recoveries was broken. The High Court also rapped the trial court for the conviction order.The judgments on two terror cases in India have left the victims, who have had to wait for nearly two decades for verdicts, without a sense of justice. The investigations raise serious questions about India's criminal justice system and specifically about the accountability of investigating agencies. Who are the agencies answerable to, for their contradictory claims and shoddy procedures, which have allowed extremist organisations to get away with such terrible crimes in Maharashtra? And when — if at all they do — will the victims of these blasts get a sense of closure?

The technocratic calculus of India's welfare state



With a billion Aadhaar enrollments, 1,206 schemes integrated into the Direct Benefit Transfer system, and 36 grievance portals across States/Union Territories, India's welfare orientation is transitioning into a technocratic calculus. The promise to deliver social welfare at scale, bypassing leaky pipelines and eliminating ghost beneficiaries, might have led to a 're-casting' that delivers 'efficiency' and 'coverage' at the cost of 'democratic norms' and 'political accountability'.An offloadingAre we witnessing the emergence of a post-rights based welfare regime? Is the Indian digital welfare state headed towards a systemic impasse? What is the technocratic calculus behind all this? Recent game-theoretic work shows that technocratic rule thrives where parties are polarised. Evidently, our questions have changed. We have shifted from "who deserves support and why?" to "how do we minimise leakage and maximise coverage?" Our politicians across party lines have rationally offloaded hard-choices onto data-driven algorithms without questioning the complexities of constitutional values.

Contextualising Habermas's 'technocratic consciousness' and Foucault's 'governmentality', India's welfare architecture is increasingly shaped by measurable, auditable, and depoliticised rationality. Schemes such as E-SHRAM and PM KISAN embody a uni-directional, innovation-led logic that is streamlined, measurable, and intolerant of ambiguity or error. Conversely, we have deliberative calls for participatory planning and local feedback embodying the long forgotten core of democratic thinking resonating Giorgio Agamben's notion of homo sacer — a life stripped of political agency.Seemingly, welfare, in the contemporary context, has ceased to exist as a site of democratic deliberations. On a microscopic level, a rights-bearing citizen has been replaced by the auditable beneficiary. Thus, it calls for an urgent need for the state to revisit (in a Rancierean sense) whether it is curating who is visible, who can complain, and whose suffering is computable. Despite claims of a 'socialistic state', we observe a decade-low decline in India's social sector spending that has dwindled to 17% in 2024-25 from the 2014-24 average of 21%. Further, there are some interesting observations beyond plain statistics. Key social sector schemes have borne the brunt of such decline where minorities, labour, employment, nutrition and social security welfare saw a significant decline from 11% (in the pre-COVID-19 phase) to 3% (in post-COVID-19 phase).Parallely, social commentators often comment the Right to Information (RTI) regime to be in 'existential crisis' and further uncovering the cloak on RTI exposes a critical issue within the institution of dysfunctional information commissions. As of June 30, 2024, the number of pending cases crossed the four lakh tally across 29 Information Commission's (ICs), and eight CIC posts were vacant (annual report of CIC, 2023-24).

The Indian welfare regime must recover its capacity for reflexivity and situated knowledge, elements that are very peculiar to gram sabhas and frontline bureaucratic discretions. To draw Rancière's critique on democracy, we highlight one major impending concern, that "democracy depends on whose suffering is rendered visible and contestable, not merely computable". This concern is further highlighted in Justice D.Y Chandrachud's Aadhaar dissent (2018), that warned precisely against such decontextualisation of identity which served as a caution against reducing citizens to disembedded, machinic data who are devoid of care, context, or even constitutional assurance in some cases.

Another instance of algorithmic insulationAnother worrisome trend is the Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System's flattening of the federal hierarchies into ticket-tracking systems. Although it is a novel initiative resolving tickets and routing complaints across state agencies, empirical data show that lakhs of grievances were disposed of between 2022-24. But on a closer examination it might just be centralising the visibility but not the responsibility — a form of algorithmic insulation that renders political accountability increasingly elusive.

These observations are not to dismiss the value of such initiatives. Rather, they invite a deeper conversation on how welfare governance can evolve for a more resilient and responsive state. The government should now think along the lines of 'democratic antifragility' so that our systems built on perfect data and flawless infrastructure do not fail catastrophically under stress (consider Taleb's 'hyper-integrated systems').

We need to empower States to design context-sensitive regimes where federalism and welfare push for pluralism as a feature. Institutionalising community-driven impact audits (as reiterated by the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty), by looping in the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan and Gram Panchayat Development Plans should be the core target. All States must be made capable to build platform cooperatives where self-help groups act as intermediaries; functionally, lessons can be learnt from Kerala's Kudumbashree. Civil society must be incentivised to invest in grass-roots political education and legal aid clinics in order to strengthen the community accountability mechanisms. Lastly, it is time we strengthen and codify our offline fall-back mechanisms, human feedback safeguards, and statutory bias audits by embedding the "right to explanation and appeal" — as proposed by the UN Human Rights for digital governance systems.Focus on the citizenWe, as citizens of India, must realise that a welfare state stripped of democratic deliberations is a machine that works efficiently for everyone except those it is meant to help. For a Viksit Bharat we will have to reorient digitisation with democratic and anti-fragile principles so that citizens become partners in governance, and not mere entries in a ledger.Anmol Rattan Singh and Agastya Shukla

What the 1871 educational census shows about the divide in the pyall schools of Madras Presidency



The report on the 'Results of the Educational Census of Madras November 1871' throws some interesting light on the sharp divide in the pyall schools in the Madras Presidency. The Educational Census was meant to ascertain the exact state of education in Madras as shown by the number of schools, their standards of instruction and the number of their pupils.In that era, the pyall school was an important aspect not only in education but also in the social and religious life of people.

The author of the Education Census report tried to highlight the difference in payment for teachers in a school for the well-to-do and those in a school for the poor."We will suppose the son of a respectable, good-caste writer to be sent for the first time to the nearest pyall school, the teacher of which will almost certainly be a Brahmin," the author writes.For this, a lucky day must first be chosen, and then the teacher comes to the new pupil's house together with all his scholars."Before the boy is handed over to the master, pooja to Ganapati or Ganesa is performed by the family purohit, and then to Sarasvati, the goddess of learning, in the presence of the lad's father and male relations. Then presents are distributed to Brahmins, and fruits, sugar, etc to everybody present. The schoolmaster is placed sitting in a conspicuous part of the room, and is presented with flowers, sandal (chandanum), fruits, and a pair of cloths; one of which is twelve cubits long, and the other six cubits, the cost of both being about one-and-a-quarter rupees," notes the report.

The teacher then puts the cloths on, sits himself by the side of the proposed scholar, causes him to repeat a prayer to Ganesa, asking for wisdom and that his course of study may be fortunate and successful, and makes him repeat the whole of the alphabet three times."Next, a flat vessel containing dry rice is brought in, and the teacher guides the finger of the pupil, so that he may write in the loose rice the names of the deity they serve, whether Vishnu or Siva. Then the ceremony concludes."All the school boys are presented with beaten rice, Bengal gram and sugar mixed together, a handful each; the monitor or senior boy, who acts as the teacher's assistant, receives also a few pice. "Now the boy proceeds in procession to the school, where he is again made to repeat the alphabet three times.The procession then returns to his home, and they disperse for the day. With the next day commences the ordinary school career of the boy," says the report adding, the monthly school fee is decided between the teacher and the father. This sum varies with the means of the parent, "but never exceeds eight annas a month."In contrast, things were different in a pyall school for the children of the poor. "Here no entrance fee is offered, nor any monthly payment until the alphabet is fully mastered. Nor is the customary present made on commencement of a new book or chapter. A small payment is made each month of, say, one or two annas, and a tiny present every fourteenth day," according to the report."

The same ritual is performed at Dassera as in the more respectable school, but the gains of the master are smaller in proportion, and similarly for each festival throughout the year," it adds."Combining all sources of income, the teacher of a respectable pyall school with about twenty-five pupils will receive from ?5 to ?25 per mensem, while his colleague labouring in a poor locality will not receive more than from ?5 to ?10," the report says.In Mussulman schools, no monthly fee was charged, and the teacher was entirely dependent on presents. Thus, whenever a new chapter of the Koran was commenced, the pupils were required to give from four annas to as many rupees, according to the wealth of the family."At the commencement of every festival, as the Muharam, Shub-i-burat, Ramzan, Bukreed, etc the teacher also receives presents - not more than four annas or less than one fanam," it says.

Meet the woman behind one of India's most exclusive ikat sari brands

"A special sari for a special day," says Hyderabad-based Gajam Narmada, gently unfolding a handloom ikat silk sari in a striking cream, offset by a red border. Narmada, who runs Narmada Handlooms in Kothapet , has chosen this piece to wear on August 7, when she will receive the prestigious Sant Kabir National Handloom Award from President Droupadi Murmu in New Delhi. Recognised in the category for marketing handloom products, she also becomes the first woman from Telangana to be honoured with this distinction.

The Gajam family hails from the weaving community of Puttapaka in Telangana's Nalgonda district — a well-known hub for ikat. Narmada, who had only completed her intermediate education and had no prior experience in business, began her journey as a homemaker supporting her husband, Narendra. He had moved to Hyderabad in 1998 to set up a handloom sari business, and while he travelled for marketing, Narmada quietly managed the small venture from their home.It was her father-in-law, Chandraiah, a seasoned weaver, whose words helped her find her purpose and gradually grow into a businesswoman. "He once told me, 'Weaving will help us meet our daily needs, but if we build something of our own and work hard at it, we can create a future not just for ourselves, but for others too.'"Some of their popular designs are: Elephant, tree and bird in Narikunj design, paan patola, teliya rumal, peacock, forest and gollabhama.

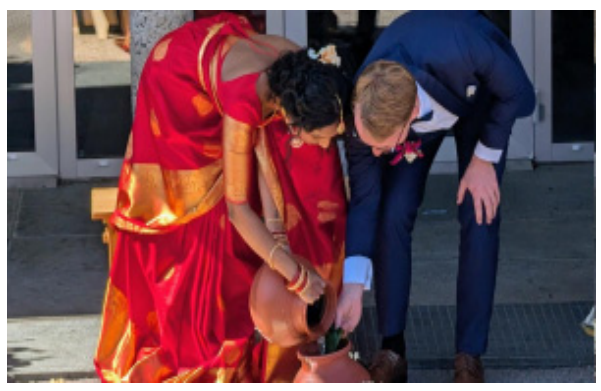
Ikat fabrics for men, dupattas, lehengas and blouse pieces for women.In 2013, Narender established Narmada Handlooms, naming Narmada as the proprietor. While he travelled across Hyderabad and beyond to secure orders, she oversaw operations at home — liaising with weavers, managing stock, and nurturing the growing business."Designers usually hand over patterns to weavers," Narmada, now 46, explains. "But we offered ideas based on what customers actually wanted and what was changing on the ground."Today, the enterprise supports a collective of 300 weavers from ten villages, including Puttapaka, Chandur, Ghattuppal, Munugodu,



Balemla, Narayanapuram, and Choutuppal. This strong network, built over two decades, is a testament to the Gajam family's long-standing relationship with their weaving community. Supporting livelihoods has been central to that trust.COVID was difficult for everyone," Narmada recalls. "But we stayed in touch with our weavers, reassuring them not to lose hope. We'd say, 'Weave and keep the sari ready, someone will surely buy it later.' If a weaver doesn't have work, how will their family survive?" She also encourages them to evolve with changing times, while maintaining consistent quality.The Gajams live in a two-storey complex in Kothapet, which houses both their residence and wholesale store. "I simply move between floors to switch roles," she laughs, on juggling life as both homemaker and entrepreneur.Around 60 saris are delivered to their unit daily by weavers, and nearly 100 go out to stores across India. "Our strength lies in exclusivity," Narmada says. They don't sell online, preferring instead to supply to premium retailers such as Singhania's, Kalanjali, Neeru's, Second Skin, Gaurang Shah, Radha Krishna, and Kankatala in Hyderabad. Their saris also find shelves in stores across nearly 15 cities nationwide.As she lives out her dream, Narmada's next goal is to take their collection to an international audience.

Ancient Tamil literature inspires new wedding format

On Tuesday evening, the Roja Muthiah Research Library, known for facilitating interesting discussions, hosted one by lawyer Supanki Kalanadan. The topic: a new wedding format involving Tamil indigenous practices.When you think of a quintessential Tamil wedding, what comes to mind? Does it involve a male priest and a trial by the fire? Supanki, an Eelam Tamil refugee whose family fled to Canada, said that she looked into some Tamil texts and attempted to re-conceptualise a format that involves practices from the Sangam literature and Tolkappiyam. In her style, there will be no sacrificial fire. They will also involve the use of the parai and conch, two instruments that are not traditionally used in weddings because they are often associated with the Scheduled Caste community and are played during death rituals.She added that Nature will be the central focus of worship with the five thinais or Tamil landscapes placed in the form of pictures on a stage including kurinji (mountains), mullai (forests), marutham (farmlands), neithal (coastal regions), and palai (dry lands). "One of the couples that got married were diasporic Eelam Tamil refugees who picked pictures from our land," she said.The wedding oath would be taken on the Thirukkural, one of the foremost classic Tamil language texts. "Besides pledging equality and taking care of one another, the oath is also one that commits to taking care of the environment and society," she said.



Supanki said that when she was younger, her Tamil identity was a central point of conversation at her household as her mother always believed they would go back to their hometown. However, she hated wearing a bindi to school and carrying Tamil meals to lunch as she was bullied. It was through the arts — dance and drama — that she found her way back to this identity. She would like many other diasporic people to engage with their identities in a manner similar to hers. The wedding is one such way to connect with the roots, she feels.Uma Kasturi, an assistant professor at a private college in Chennai who attended the talk, asked

Hyderabad's new organic store champions sustainable living

Chennai-based social enterprise Tula India is making its way to Hyderabad with a new venture, The Conscious Living Store (TCLS). Opening on August 1 in Kukatpally, the 350 sq. ft. store brings together organic groceries and handmade clothing, all in line with Tula's philosophy of sustainability — from farm to fabric, and with absolutely no plastic packaging.Run by engineer-turned-ecopreneurs Jahnavi and Rakesh Regella, the newly-wed couple say they are not the founders, but are simply "replicating what's already been beautifully done by Tula, with a little mentoring from Ananthoo sir," referring to Tula's co-founder.

Rakesh, who specialises in organic food, and Jahnavi, a designer with Tula, wanted to combine their interests but were not sure what kind of eco-friendly business to start. It was Ananthoo who suggested bringing the Tula concept to Hyderabad. "One of the biggest issues with organic stores is the plastic packaging. Even if the product is organic, we end up consuming microplastics from the packaging itself," says Jahnavi. That is why customers at TCLS are expected to bring their own cloth bags and containers.

The store is split into two sections — organic groceries on one side and handspun, handmade clothing on the other.

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