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Telangana sanctions Rs 88 Cr for building community centres for 38 Backward Class associations

Hyderabad, Nov 5 The Chief Minister Revanth Reddy-led Telangana government has sanctioned Rs.88.50 crore for construction of 'Atma Gaurava Bhavans' for 38 associations for Backward Classes in Hyderabad.

Government Orders, sanctioning funds for the construction of community centres called 'Atma Gaurava Bhavans (self-respect buildings)' were issued on Thursday.

Minister for Backward Classes Welfare, Ponnam Prabhakar handed over the official Government Orders documents to representatives from various caste associations.

The Congress government has launched a novel initiative for constructing buildings for all castes, aimed at their social, cultural and educational uplift.

Minister Prabhakar stated that, following the directives of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and instructions from Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Bhatti Vikramarka, the construction of 'Atma Gaurava Bhavans' for Backward Class caste associations is being accelerated.

He explained that although land had been allocated previously, construction could not proceed due to certain administrative and technical issues. These hurdles have now been resolved with the cooperation of the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA).

He noted that the allocated land has been developed with layouts following a "ready-to-construct" approach, making the sites immediately suitable for building. With the government having now sanctioned the necessary funds, he urged the caste associations to commence construction work without any further delay

He emphasised that the Congress government had a firm commitment to ensure construction of these buildings and make them accessible to the BC community. He stated that the goal was to complete the projects within one year, or within a timeframe determined by the specific requirements of each construction site.

He further assured that all necessary construction permits would be facilitated through coordination between the Engineering Department and the HMDA, utilising a "single-window" clearance system to avoid any delays. Additionally, he mentioned that the BC Welfare Department will conduct monthly reviews of the construction progress and obtain regular status reports.

The minister clarified that there was no truth in reports suggesting the government intends to reclaim plots allocated to BC caste associations. He emphasised that these plots are assets belonging to the weaker sections and that no government—including the current Congress administration—would ever reclaim them. He assured that the government remains committed to protecting these lands.

The minister noted that the respective community associations bear the responsibility of completing building construction within the stipulated timeframe using the allocated funds. He warned that if there are delays, the representatives of the concerned associations will be held accountable, and the government will take necessary measures to ensure the completion of the projects.

Ponnam Prabhakar suggested allotment of a five-acre plot in Hyderabad for the construction of a comprehensive 'BC Bhavan,' which would serve as a shared space for all BC communities to organise birth anniversary commemorations, meetings, and various social events.

Great relief to rescue all SDRF, Fire Department personnel: Telangana DGP

Hyderabad, Nov 5 Telangana Director General of Police C.V. Anand has expressed relief over the rescue of 11 SDRF and Fire department personnel trapped in Khammam district.

"It was a great relief to rescue all the SDRF and Fire department personnel who got trapped in the heavy currents in Sathupally area of Khammam district yesterday



evening. Initially 5 fishermen were noticed to have got stranded. 6 SDRF personnel in one boat and 5 Fire personnel with a guide went to rescue them. But the heavy water currents led to capsize of their boats and thereafter it was tense to locate 12 of them in the night," the DGP said in a post on 'X'.

The state police chief said that throughout the night, Collector Diwakar and the Superintendent of Police, Rohit Raju, supervised the operation of first rescuing the fishermen with the help of NDRF/ SDRF and then searching for the missing SDRF and Firemen.

"Luckily all them were wearing life jackets and know how to swim. During the night, 6 of the 12 were located and rescued. At first light, the rescue operation was started and the missing 6 were located by 6.45 am. They had spent the night hanging onto the trees downstream and experienced lot of anxiety and stress. It was very tense for all of us monitoring from Hyderabad and trying to arrange night vision drones and helicopter etc. All's well and we all are greatly relieved to get them back safely. Great work by SP- Collector and their teams and NDRF/ SDRF and all involved," he sid.

Meanwhile, Revenue Minister Pongulti Srinivas Reddy visited Bethupalli tank on Thursday. He lauded the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) personnel for their unforgettable service in risking their lives to carry out relief operations during the dangerous conditions caused by heavy rains and floods.

He prised the SDRF for their prompt response and the relief efforts they undertook when the Bethupalli tank overflowed, and several villages in the Dammapeta mandal faced the threat of flooding.

Accompanied by Sathupalli MLA Dr Matta Ragamayi, Aswaraopeta MLA Jare Adinarayana, and Bhadradri Kothagudem District Collector Ankit, he inspected the Bethupalli tank.

Subsequently, he visited areas in the Dammapeta mandal where breaches had occurred in the Mallepula stream and the Musalibandham tank to review the flood situation.

During the visit, the Minister specifically commended the SDRF personnel who participated in the relief operations in these areas and honoured them by presenting shawls. He praised their courage and dedication in saving human lives during such critical conditions.

11 missing Telangana SDRF personnel rescued after two boats overturned

Hyderabad, Nov 5 (IANS) Eleven personnel of SDRF and Fire Services, who went missing after two rescue boats overturned while saving trapped fishermen in a lake in Telangana's Khammam district, have been safely rescued, officials said on Thursday.

Five of the missing personnel were rescued late Wednesday night, while the remaining were safely brought to shore early Thursday morning.

The incident occurred in the Bethupalli tank in



Sattupalli mandal of Khammam district when State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) personnel were trying to rescue 10 fishermen trapped in the lake, which was overflowing due to heavy rain.

One of the rescued SDRF personnel said the two boats overturned after a collision, and they were all washed away for about half a kilometre due to the heavy water flow. However, they managed to catch hold of trees.

Later, SDRF teams rescued the trapped personnel and fishermen.

Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy confirmed that the SDRF personnel have been rescued.

He congratulated the rescue teams that participated in round-the-clock relief operations and saved the lives of stranded fishermen and SDRF personnel, as well as the officials, who worked in coordination, and the local public representatives.

After receiving information about the incident late at night, he rushed to the Khammam district and was continuously monitoring the situation from Narayanpur in the Kalluru division.

He had also informed Chief Minister Revanth Reddy.

On the CM's direction, the District Collector, Superintendent of Police, and the Khammam Police Commissioner coordinated the rescue efforts. Personnel from Revenue and Police also participated in the rescue efforts.

Heavy rains with gusty winds lashed the undivided Khammam district on Wednesday under the impact of cyclone 'Murasu', which crossed the Andhra Pradesh coast on Tuesday.

Road connectivity to many areas was snapped as the rains inundated low-lying areas, and crops over a large area were damaged.

According to preliminary estimates, paddy, cotton, maize and chilli crops over 15,000 acres were damaged.

24-hr deadline starts from moment of detention, not formal arrest, says SC

New Delhi, Nov 5

In an important ruling expanding the scope and ambit of civil liberties, the Supreme Court on Thursday ruled that the 24-hour constitutionally mandated deadline to produce an accused before a judicial magistrate runs from the time of his detention and not just from the time of his formal arrest by the police.

"Any attempt to draw an artificial distinction between 'arrest' and 'detention' would dilute or negate the fundamental protection guaranteed by the Constitution under clause (2) of Article 22. Such an endeavour should be avoided. We must adopt that interpretation which enhances and furthers the constitutional objective," a Bench of Justice Ujjal Bhuyan and Justice Atul S Chandurkar said.

Holding that the words "arrested" and "detained" appearing in clause (2) of Article 22 were synonymous, the Bench said, "Thus, the prescription of 24-hour time period would commence the moment a



person is detained by the arresting authority suspecting him to have committed an offence, when his liberty is effectively curtailed."

The verdict came on appeals filed by four persons challenging the Tripura High Court's April 29 judgment denying them bail in a case under the NDPS Act. The accused were detained on September 29, 2025, at 2 pm as part of a search and seizure but were formally arrested the next day.

Setting aside the high court's order, the top court held that they should have been produced before the magistrate within 24 hours from 2 pm on September 29. Noting that they were kept under detention for about 18 hours without any judicial oversight in violation of Article 22(2), the Bench ordered that they shall be produced before the jurisdictional Special Court within seven days from today and, thereafter, they shall be released on bail on such terms and conditions as may be deemed appropriate.

Writing the judgment for the Bench, Justice Bhuyan said, "Article 22(2) does not sanction exclusion of the time taken for enquiry and investigation before the arresting authority could effect arrest of the detainee. This is beyond the mandate of Article 22(2) of the Constitution. Article 22(2) does not sanction creation of any buffer zone where the liberty of an individual is curtailed for investigating purposes but not formally shown as arrested."

Justice Bhuyan said, "Creation or contemplation of such buffer zone is unconstitutional. There cannot be any suspension or keeping in abeyance of the constitutional safeguards provided under clause (2) of Article 22 save and except what is provided thereunder. Therefore, the declaration that the period of 24 hours for the purposes of Article 22(2) commences from the completion of such search and seizure and only from the time of arrest recorded by the arresting authority is not only unsustainable in law but also entirely unconstitutional."

The top court said, "The 24-hour timeline as mandated under clause (2) of Article 22 of the Constitution would commence from the date and time of detention of the person detained when his liberty stands curtailed and not from the time of his formal arrest."

In the event such detention continues beyond 24 hours before the person is produced before a magistrate, he shall be forthwith released from custody, the Bench said.

"While computing the 24-hour deadline, no other time period is permitted to be excluded therefrom except the time necessary for the journey from the place of arrest to the court of the magistrate," it said, adding the detaining authority should keep in mind not only the 24-hour deadline mandated by clause (2) of Article 22 of the Constitution but also ensure that such detention should not extend beyond a reasonable period within the 24-hour period considering the circumstances of the case in terms of Section 58 of the BNSS (Section 57, CrPC)."

APPSC Main Exam case: Incriminating documents seized during ED searches

Hyderabad, Nov 5 (IANS) The Enforcement Directorate (ED) seized incriminating documents, digital devices and other records during the search operations at seven premises in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh in the case relating to the evaluation of the Andhra Pradesh Public Service Commission (APPSC) Group-I Main Examination evaluation scam, ED officials said on Thursday.

The ED's Hyderabad Zonal Office on Wednesday conducted search operations under Section 17 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002.

The central probe agency said in statement on Thursday that during the search operations incriminating documents, digital devices and other records relating to the scam were found and seized.

The searches were conducted at the premises of retired IPS officer P. Seetharamanjaneyulu, the then APPSC Secretary; Camsign Media Pvt. Ltd., the private party to which the work of manual evaluation was entrusted, and its Managing Director P. Madhusudhana Rao; Aavasa Resort Haailand in Chinakakani village of Andhra Pradesh's Guntur district, being the premises at which the answer scripts were kept and the evaluation exercise was carried out.

The searches were also conducted at the premises of TruGrader Services, a division of Stone Media Advisory Services Pvt. Ltd., which had conducted the earlier digital evaluation for APPSC, its Managing Director Akella Peri Srinivasa Rao, and Mahamkali Raghuram, who was engaged in connection with the evaluation work.

The ED said it recorded the statements of the accused persons, including Seetharamanjaneyulu.

Property documents recovered during the search are under verification, it added.

The ED initiated an investigation on the basis of FIR registered by the Andhra Pradesh Police under Sections 320 and 120-B of the Indian Penal Code, which are scheduled offences under the PMLA.

The FIR alleges irregularities in the manual evaluation of the answer scripts of the APPSC Group-I Main Examination, in the course of which an amount of Rs 1,14,32,312 is alleged to have been paid to a private party.

It is alleged that following the orders of the High Court of Andhra Pradesh in 2021, setting aside the digital evaluation of the answer scripts and directing manual evaluation, the work of manual evaluation was entrusted to Camsign Media Pvt. Ltd. from November 27, 2021 to February 19, 2022, when there was no regular chairman of APPSC.

Victims' families question if better safety measures could have saved lives



For Bharat and his wife, Sumit Ahire was a child they had waited for five years. He was the answer to their prayers. They had promised themselves that he would have every opportunity life could offer.A black belt in karate, a gym enthusiast and a bright student preparing for the JEE, Sumit had a future his parents had carefully watched him build. He dreamed of good marks, a good college and a life beyond the limits of their expectations.

But a trip to Diveagar ended that future in the waters of the sea. Now, inside the Ahire home, the silence is heavier than words. His mother sits grieving, her tears refusing to stop, while his father is left staring at a future that no longer has his son in it."He went for the trip for the first time. He was so excited, we gave him everything we could. He had dreams, he had a future. Tell me, whom do I ask now? Who will bring my son back?" Bharat said.For the Ahires, there are only questions about whether greater care could have saved a life so deeply cherished.A group of students from Winners' Academy at Alandi had gone on a picnic to the popular Diveagar beach in Raigad. There were 25 boys and 17 girls who were accompanied by six teachers. By the evening, eight of the students, who had entered the sea, had been swept away and drowned. On Friday, their families cremated the boys on whom post mortem had been conducted during the night.Satish Wasankar stands on the steps of his house in a wide lane in Alandi. He watches emotionless as families and neighbours stream in to condole the death of his 16-year-old son, Kaivalya Wasankar. "He participated in all kinds of social activities, including Ganeshotsav celebrations in everybody's house. Even I don't know so many people, but Kaivalya was far more mature than 50-year-old men like me. He thought big, he was generous and he kept in touch with everybody," he said. It was Kaivalya who would carry out the responsibility of buying medicine for his grandmother, a Parkinson's patient, and courier these to her every month.

Kaivalya had planned to study in MIT Academy of Engineering in Alandi and, then, get a job in Pune. On Friday, his last rites were performed in Alandi as his village, Amravati, was 550 km away. "This is the first time that I have seen a sister, his cousin, bringing home her brother's ashes. Kaivalya used to say that our family was complete. Now, it is only my wife and I. Who can avoid destiny?" he says.Soham Bhandwalkar's memory is now painfully divided between two moments in the mind of his family. One is from a few weeks ago, when they had celebrated Ganeshotsav together. Then, came the night they brought Soham's body home.Soham, a Class XI student preparing for an engineering career, was known as a kind and helpful boy. He was good at academics, loved chess and readily helped those around him. When he told his parents he wanted to go on a day trip, there seemed little reason for alarm. His father simply arranged for someone to drop him at the meeting point from where the students would leave. They were expected to return the same day.

Around 7 pm on October 1, the family's lives changed forever. "I received the call about Soham's condition, and we immediately left for Raigad. I never imagined that I would have to bring that child back like this," says father Vithal Narayan Shinde, a close friend of Soham's father.The Banwalkar family is now too shattered to speak. For Shinde, the pain is different but no less crushing. He watched his best friend lose his young son, a boy who had become dear to him too."Just a few weeks ago, we were celebrating Ganeshotsav together. Today, I had to bring Soham home," he said. Some losses leave a silence that even the closest of friendships cannot fill.Pranav Bansode's family had been clear that they did not want him near water because he could not swim. In fact, not one of the deceeased boys could swim. Pranav's parents say that they had not signed the consent form from the coaching centre, Winners Academy, for the outing. His father had specifically instructed the faculty to keep Pranav away from the water. The family said they were reassured that the students would be kept safe.Pranav's sister and teachers remember a shy, sincere and well-mannered boy. According to them, the picnic at Raigad was to be a routine outing. At home, there was no electricity, so the family was unaware of what had happened. They learnt through social media that some students had drowned at Diveagar. Soon after, a call from the faculty confirmed the situation, and they immediately left for the spot.His sister struggles to believe that her brother is gone. "We had told them clearly that Pranav could not swim. We trusted them to take care of him. Even now, I keep looking towards the door, thinking he will come home," she said. For the family, the hardest part is that the waiting has not yet stopped.Tanmay Vahile had never been much of a traveller. A quiet, soft-spoken and studious boy, he rarely went out on trips or picnics. So when he decided to join one, it became a small occasion for the entire family.The day before leaving, Tanmay turned to his mother with an unusual curiosity. "Mummy, have you ever been on a picnic? How is it?" he asked, eager to hear about her experiences. For a family used to seeing him stay close to home, his excitement was infectious.The next morning, his father dropped him at the departure point. He called during the trip to ask how Tanmay was doing and was relieved to hear that his son was enjoying himself. It was supposed to be a day filled with new experiences for a boy stepping out on his first picnic.By evening, his mother, who regularly watched the news, switched on the television and saw reports of the Diveagar drowning.

CNG car explodes during refuelling in Gujarat, debris rains down at pump



A car being refuelled with compressed natural gas (CNG) exploded without warning at a fuel station on National Highway-48 near Karjan in Vadodara district of Gujarat, showering a large area with debris and shattered glass, leaving two nearby vehicles badly damaged, and triggering a wave of panic among fuel station staff, customers, and bystanders.

No one was, however, injured in the explosion that took place on Thursday (October 1) afternoon. The driver of the vehicle had stepped out of it as it was being refuelled, thus averting a potentially serious accident at the station which is usually busy.Under safety rules enforced by regulatory authorities such as the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board, it is mandatory for occupants of a CNG vehicle to step out of the vehicle when it is being refuelled.

This is because CNG is typically filled into the vehicle's cylinders at a very high pressure of 200-220 bar, which is 20-40 times higher than a domestic cooking gas (LPG) cylinder, and 70-100 times the pressure of a car tyre. This enormous pressure puts great mechanical stress on the cylinder, valves, and pipes involved.The incident took place at a CNG station opposite Jindal Company in Karjan. The explosion that ripped through the vehicle destroyed its rear section and sent fragments of metal flying several metres away.

Visuals from the scene, captured on CCTV camera, show the car engulfed in a cloud of dust, smoke, and debris, and people trying to move quickly away from the vehicle.The reason for the blast is yet to be established. Two days after the incident, police were still investigating whether the explosion was linked to a failure in the vehicle's CNG system, or whether there was a problem with the vehicle itself, or perhaps an issue relating to the refuelling process."We are registering a Janva Jog (Station Diary entry) and investigating the possible cause behind this blast. We will check if the owner had followed the necessary safety measures needed for the upkeep of the vehicle. If there are any lapses in the case, we will decide the further action," Vadodara Superintendent of Police Sushilkumar Agrawal told The Indian Express.Police have also requested the help of forensics experts to examine the vehicle and submit its findings to help establish whether the blast originated in the vehicle's CNG cylinder or another component of the fuel system.SP Agrawal said, "We have called in the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) to examine the vehicle and submit a report. If required, we will also write to the manufacturer of the vehicle and issue a general advisory for the public as needed."

The owner of a CNG pump in Vadodara city told this newspaper that a vehicle's tank can burst during filling due to the extreme high-pressure stress on a cylinder if it has an unrectified damage or corrosion, or if the vehicle has been fitted with an unauthorised CNG kit.Many owners of petrol and diesel vehicles retrofit their cars to run on CNG in order to bring down operational costs, but the kit must be authorised by government authorities."CNG vehicles use high-pressure cylinders to store the gas and are subject to prescribed safety and maintenance requirements. Any failure involving the cylinder, valves, connecting components or fuel delivery system can have serious consequences, making the circumstances of the Karjan incident a matter of particular concern. If it is an unauthorised kit that fails under the bar pressure of the filling pump, it can explode. Vehicle owners must opt for company fitted pumps only," the owner of the pump said.The incident has also prompted the authorities to consider whether a broader safety advisory may be required for CNG vehicle owners, depending on the findings of the investigation.Agrawal said that the decision on whether or not to issue an advisory would be taken after investigations.

West Bengal MLA Bayron Biswas injured in house fire in Murshidabad

Sagardighi MLA Bayron Biswas, who is a member of the Democratic Trinamool Congress, sustained burn injuries in a fire at his residence on Saturday.The condition of Biswas, who sustained injuries to his arms and legs, is said to be stable, the police said.According to eyewitnesses, they saw smoke coming out of the second floor of his residence around 11 am.

Family members and local people raised an alarm, and the fire department and West Bengal police rushed to the residence, rescued the MLA, and took him to hospital.The legislator's family claimed that the fire began in the room where Biswas was staying, and it spread to other areas, said police sources.The police said they are investigating whether the fire was caused by a short circuit or whether the fire spread from the 'biri' (hand-rolled cigarettes) factory of Biswas, which operates inside the MLA's house.Reacting to the incident, Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari said, "I will enquire. I pray for a speedy recovery."Leader of the Opposition and Democratic Trinamool Congress' Ritabrata Banerjee posted on social media, "Deeply disturbed and pained by the news of my friend and colleague Bayron Biswas. Wishing for his speedy recovery. Get well soon, Brother."

Bayron Biswas had contested the by-election to



Sagardighi assembly constituency on a Congress ticket in March 2023. At that time, he defeated Trinamool candidate Debashis Banerjee by 22,980 votes and became an MLA for the first time. However, he switched to Trinamool within a few months of the results being declared, while continuing to be a Congress MLA in the Assembly records.In the 2026 Assembly elections, Biswas contested on a Trinamool ticket and became the Sagardighi MLA, defeating the BJP candidate by more than 34,000 votes.Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury told media persons, "I am very worried. He is a very nice and innocent person."

Yogendra Yadav, Neha Bora among several detained near Jantar Mantar on day 2 of anti-CEC protest



Police detained the Protesters during protest against CEC near Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on Saturday.Police detain activist Neha Bora during a protest against CEC Gyanesh Kumar near Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on SaturdaySeveral protestors, including AISA national president Neha Bora and Swaraj India member Yogendra Yadav, were detained by Delhi police on Saturday while marching towards Jantar Mantar demanding the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar.A day ago, Bora and Yadav were among around 550 protestors who were detained while making their way towards Jantar Mantar for a similar protest.On both days, police said that it had not granted permission for the protests to be held.

On Saturday, the protestors had gathered for a second consecutive day of protest against the CEC and had begun marching towards Jantar Mantar. Along with Bora, Yadav and student activists, those gathered also included Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal and advocate Prashant Bhushan. They crossed the first set of barricades before police stopped them near Jantar Mantar Road and moved them into buses.Bora and other protestors were seen raising slogans while being detained.While there have been two days of attempts to hold protests against the CEC in Jantar Mantar, security has been beefed up in Central Delhi. Prohibitory orders have been issued in the New Delhi district, around 5000 police and paramilitary personnel have been deployed and multiple layers of barricades erected.The police have registered three FIRs against unidentified people in connection with Friday's protest, for disobedience of an order issued by a public servant, obstruction of a public servant in the discharge of duty, use of criminal force against a public servant, and acts committed by several persons in furtherance of a common intention.

Himanta Sarma takes swipe at 'political tourists' over inspections of Assam schools

Guwahati: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday appeared to take a swipe at Opposition-linked activists and political visitors inspecting government schools in the state, asserting that his government's efforts to improve educational facilities in remote tea garden areas would continue despite what he described as "political tourists" coming and going.

Sharing a photograph of students at a Tea Garden Model School on X, Sarma said the state government's focus remained on providing quality educational facilities to children in some of Assam's most remote tea-growing areas. "Just a normal day in a Tea Garden Model School somewhere in one of the remote Tea gardens of Assam. Political tourists come and go but our efforts to provide the best educational facilities to our students remains firm," the Chief Minister posted.His remarks come amid the campaign by the Cockroach Janta Party, whose representatives recently visited government schools in Palasbari and Dispur constituencies as part of their 'School Thik Karo' initiative to assess infrastructure and facilities.

The organisation had alleged deficiencies, including damaged roofs, inadequate drinking water facilities and boundary walls at one of the schools inspected. Against this backdrop, the Assam government has been highlighting its initiatives to expand educational opportunities for children from tea garden communities, which have historically faced challenges in accessing quality



education.The state had initially announced plans to establish 200 Tea Garden Model Schools across 800 tea estates. According to government figures highlighted in June this year, 218 such schools had been established, with 199 already functional and around 40,734 students enrolled.The government has also introduced higher secondary education in tea garden areas. In May 2025, 25 model schools were upgraded to offer Classes XI and XII, reducing the need for students to travel long distances for further education.In another initiative, the state launched free transport and escort facilities in June 2026 for 9,714 students from Classes I to X across 198 schools in 11 districts to address connectivity barriers. The initiatives form part of the government's broader effort to improve school infrastructure, accessibility and educational opportunities in tea garden communities.

Why are Form 7 applicants facing FIRs? BJP delegation meets DGP, seeks review

A Karnataka BJP delegation met Director General and Inspector General of Police (DG&IGP) M A Saleem on Saturday, urging a review of FIRs registered in connection with Form 7 applications during the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.The delegation was led by state president B Y Vijayendra, former chief minister B S Yediyurappa and Leader of Opposition in the Assembly R Ashoka.The BJP's intervention comes amid the state chief electoral officer agreeing to initiate legal action against those responsible for allegedly filing bulk Form 7 applications to remove eligible voters. The controversy intensified after fresh instances of mass Form 7 submissions targeting alleged voter deletions surfaced a day after Chief Minister D K Shivakumar cited three FIRs registered over similar complaints.In a memorandum submitted to DG&IGP Saleem, the delegation alleged that criminal cases were being registered against BJP workers and political activists for submitting Form 7 objections and claimed that the police machinery was being subjected to political pressure. It urged the police to ensure that criminal proceedings arising from the electoral-roll exercise were based on evidence and due process.The BJP said Form 7 is a statutory mechanism provided by the Election Commission of India for an elector to object to the inclusion of a name or seek deletion of an existing entry from the electoral roll. It argued that the mere submission of multiple Form 7 applications during an electoral-roll revision exercise could not, by itself, constitute a criminal offence.How did Form 7 applications become public?: BJPThe memorandum cited provisions of the SIR guidelines and the Manual on Electoral Rolls,



2023, and claimed there was no prescribed restriction on the number of Form 7 applications that could be submitted. It also referred to the provision for bulk objections/ Form 7 applications during the revision exercise.The delegation referred to FIRs reportedly registered in Bhalki in Bidar, Belagavi and Narasimharaja in Mysuru under provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. It argued that criminal liability should be determined based on the specific role and conduct of each accused, including whether an individual knowingly furnished false information or forged a signature or document.The BJP also raised concerns over the alleged circulation on social media and political forums of Form 7 applications containing applicants' names, mobile numbers and signatures. It sought an inquiry into how the documents came into the public domain and identification of those responsible for their disclosure.

India's LNG imports fall 14 per-cent, Oman tops supplier list in September

New Delhi: Oman emerged as India's largest supplier of liquefied natural gas (LNG) in September, replacing the United States as the country continued to diversify its energy imports amid ongoing geopolitical disruptions in West Asia, according to a reportAccording to Kpler data, India imported 585,000 tonnes of LNG from Oman in September, up 11.6 per cent from August, giving the Gulf nation a 27 per cent share of total LNG imports.Nigeria became the second-largest supplier, with shipments of 351,000 tonnes, although volumes fell 35 per cent from the previous month. The US, which topped the supplier list in August with 848,000 tonnes, slipped to third place after exports to India declined 59 per cent, accounting for 16 per cent of September imports.Qatar, once India's dominant LNG supplier with a market share of around 45 per cent, fell to sixth place and supplied about 94,000 tonnes during the month. The UAE supplied 311,000 tonnes, while Angola exported 205,000 tonnes to India.The sharp decline in Qatari supplies followed disruptions caused by Iran's strike on Ras Laffan Industrial City in March, a key LNG production hub and a major source of natural gas exports to India.

Enduring 'myth' about a Pak commander's death in 1965 war



On the Amritsar-Khemkaran road, just outside Chima village in Punjab's Tarn Taran district, there is a memorial to the gallant action of the troops of 4 Grenadiers who helped blunt the Pakistani armoured offensive in the Battle of Asal Uttar in the 1965 war.Each September, well-deserved homages are paid to these brave grenadiers who laid down their lives, especially Company Quarter Master Havildar Abdul Hamid of the battalion, who was awarded the Param Vir Chakra. Special mention is also made of the battalion's action in which Pakistani artillery commander Brig A R Shami was killed. However, a mention is also made of the killing of Maj Gen Naseer Ahmad Khan, the general officer commanding (GOC) of Pakistan's 1 Armoured Division, in the same incident even though there is scant evidence of it.Various accounts written by Indian and Pakistani army officers have shed enough light on what happened on that fateful day of September 10, 1965, yet a misconception prevails about the chain of events.In his book, The Way it Was: Inside the Pakistan Army, Brig Z A Khan, a cavalry officer, writes that Brig Shami and Brig Bashir Ahmed, commander of the 5 Armoured Brigade, were tasked by the chief of the general staff of the Pakistani Army on Sept 10 to advance and reconnoitre because he was upset over the lack of progress of the 1 Armoured Division. He decided that Chima should be captured by the 24 Cavalry and 5 Frontier Force regiments.

To put this into effect, the commander of the 5 Armoured Brigade, the divisional artillery commander, and the officer commanding the SP Field Regiment supporting the brigade moved forward on the Khem-Kharan-Bhikkiwind Road. They were ambushed, and Brigadier Shami, the divisional artillery commander, was killed. The reserve squadron of the 24 Cavalry regiment tried to clear the ambush site but, without infantry, could not do so.The news of the ambush spread and the troops started moving back, bringing the operations to a standstill. "The GOC 1 Armoured Division, while moving through Khem Karan, ordered 1 FF to clear the town and it was finally done," writes Brig Khan.From this account, it is clear that the GOC was still alive and in action on the day Brig Shami got killed. Earlier, on September 9, Lt Colonel Sahibzada Gul, commanding officer of the 6 Lancers regiment, was shot dead near Valtoha while standing on the turret of his tank and observing the Indian positions. Major I B Khan, the second-in-command, refused to assume command and none of the squadron commanders rose to the occasion. "6 Lancers became paralysed. 24 Cavalry advanced to Bhure Kuhna, there. Under Indian shelling, the commanding officer collapsed and this regiment also went out of control," says Brig Khan.The killing of Lt Colonel Gul or Brigadier Bashir could explain the radio message intercepted by Indian troops the following day, which said "Bara Imam Mara Gaya (senior officer has been killed)". Since the shoot-up of Brig Shami and Brig Bashir had happened the same day, it may have been supposed that the GOC of the 1 Armoured Division was also conducting a reconnaissance and was among those killed or fatally wounded.

There is also the eyewitness account of the reserve squadron commander of the 24 Cavalry regiment, Maj (later Colonel) Samiuddin. He had advanced close to Asal Uttar and was observing the episode of Brig Shami fetching up in a jeep on the road to Bhikhiwind in a gung-ho manner.In a podcast with Pakistani military historian Major Agha Amin, Colonel Samiuddin said that Brig Shami took Brig Bashir along with him, asking why the troops were not advancing despite there being nothing in front of them. Maj Sami says the shoot-up happened beyond his eyesight but added that Brig Bashir managed to escape with minor injuries. He said he got the brigade commander put on one of his tanks and taken to the rear at Khem Karan.Brig Z A Khan also mentions that the GOC of the I Armoured Division and the commanders of the 4 and 5 Armoured Brigades were relieved of their commands on September 11 and most of their staff officers were transferred. The Pakistani accounts, thus, state that not only was the Pakistani GOC giving fresh orders on September 11, a day after being allegedly shot dead or fatally injured in battle, but he was also dismissed from command the same day.

Major General (retd) V K Singh, who has written a history of the Corps of Signals, has mentioned the version of events of the day as narrated by Major Naresh Rastogi, officer commanding of the 7 Brigade Signal Company, on September 9 and 10. Major Rastogi says that it was learnt on September 10 that the Pakistani commanders expected the road to Delhi to be clear and were advancing in jeeps, protected by armour, to reach Harike.Major Rastogi further recounts that the same evening Radio Pakistan announced the decoration of Hilal-e-Jurrat for their GOC. He adds that Brig Shami was killed and his jeep with his body was captured along with their operations order and fully marked artillery map. "The body of another commander, perhaps the armoured brigade commander, had been taken away," he says.Here again there is conjecture about the killing of Brigadier Bashir, but Major Rastogi says nothing about the killing of GOC 1 Armoured Division in this account.Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh, the then western Army commander, wrote in his book, A Soldier Remembers, that at about 2.30 pm on September 10, one of the Indian Army's artillery observation posts picked up a wireless message from the enemy saying that Pakistan's divisional commander was coming ahead, along the road, to find out what was delaying the advance.

"Our side got ready to receive the party, and the General Officer Commanding and other Officers with him in the jeep, which was completely smashed, were either killed or wounded. The wounded General Officer Commanding Pakistan Division was taken away by the Pakistan Armour, while we picked from the area the body of the gunner officer with him, his Commander Artillery Brigade, Brigadier AR Shammi, along with his cap and personal diary. The next day when I was present in the area, and at my instance, his dead body was given a military funeral in the field," wrote Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh.In his excellent book 1965: A Western Sunrise, Shiv Kunal Verma also describes the ambush by the 4 Grenadiers who shot Brig Shami dead. However, he mentions that the second brigadier escaped. "A shocked and dazed Bashir, miraculously unhurt, had crawled out of the jeep and disappeared into the nearby sugarcane field," writes Verma.Verma goes on to mention that later the same day, a Pakistani radio message was intercepted—'Barra imam mara gaya' (the seniormost officer has been killed). This was interpreted as the killing of the GOC of the 1 Armoured Division, Major General Naseer Ahmed.In the words of Maj Agha Amin, Brigadier Shami was killed because he was disoriented in the confusion of battle and travelled too far forward under the assumption that he was in territory held by his own troops.The above accounts make it clear that many assumptions made in the heat of the battle have proven incorrect, as subsequent records show. However, there have been no tears shed for the disgraced Maj Gen Naseer since he was not a much-liked man in his division.Brig Z A Khan states that in 1965 Maj Gen Naseer had already commanded the division for about three years but had failed to get the cooperation and respect from the division.According to Khan, Maj Gen Naseer came to be known as the general who relied on informers. Under his leadership, equipment maintenance declined, and hundreds of vehicles broke down on the roads as the division moved to its wartime positions. Many others were left in garages because they were no longer roadworthy.

BEST electric bus catches fire in Mumbai's Chembur; driver spots smoke in time



A Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST) electric bus caught fire near Chembur Camp in Mumbai, close to the monorail station, around 8 am on Sunday. No injuries were reported.The wet-lease bus, operated by Shree Maruti Travels (Daga Group) out of the Deonar depot, was travelling from Mahul Gaon to Trombay on route A-365 when the driver noticed smoke emerging from beneath the cabin. An inspection revealed a spark in the battery box, causing a short circuit that ignited the fire.

Staff used all three onboard fire extinguishers to put out the blaze within 15 minutes. After the fire was controlled, the Mumbai Fire Brigade (MFB) arrived, disconnected the battery, and removed it as a precaution. Local police, BEST Undertaking personnel, and municipal ward staff also responded to the site.This incident follows several recent fires involving the BEST fleet. In May, an empty electric double-decker bus operated by Switch Mobility caught fire at the Kurla depot after being removed from service due to a technical fault. Later that month, two CNG-powered BEST buses caught fire at the Sion-Pratiksha Nagar depot within an hour of each other.Following those incidents, BEST ordered fleet-wide safety inspections and mandated strict verification before releasing any vehicle into service.

'Unemployment state's prime concern': Bombay HC asks Maharashtra to end long-term contractual hiring



The Bombay High Court on Friday asked the Maharashtra government to ensure 'ad-hocism in public employment is consigned to history' and issue a 'directive to all the municipal corporations to do away with long-term contractual appointments and grant regularisation as per past Supreme Court judgements'.In doing so, the Court ordered the Vasai Virar Municipal Corporation (VVMC) to absorb over 450 medical officers and paramedical staff working on a contractual basis for years and regularise them.

A division bench of Justices Girish S Kulkarni and Aarti A Sathe on Friday quashed January 2026 communications by the Urban Development Department and VVMC requiring contractual staff to take a fresh written examination and directed the civic body to grant regularisation within two weeks.Advocates Abhijeet Desai and Mohini Rephade for Maharashtra-domiciled petitioners including MBBS/BAMS doctors, specialists, nurses, and technicians, contended that despite serving 8–11 years continuous service on contract basis after fulfilling eligibility criteria for a selection process, including interviews and reservation, they were required to sign periodic renewal contracts.The bench observed that 'the creation of posts and filling up of vacancies in the manner contemplated by the applicable rules ought to be the rule, while contractual appointments for very short durations needs to be an exception'.However, it added, "We find that what has infected the system is the cultivation of such ad-hocism, rather than the creation and maintenance of a robust and permanent cadre of employees appointed as soon as vacancies arise."The bench said such ad-hocism was 'counterproductive to the smooth discharge of the vital functions in achieving the welfare of the public at large' and created 'tremendous uncertainty for such contractual employees'."We also cannot be oblivious to the fact that, in a large country like ours, unemployment is one of the prime concerns of the State. No fault can be found with citizens grabbing every possible opportunity of public employment, including contractual, temporary and all kinds of public employment," Justice Kulkarni, for the bench, observed.The bench flagged 'red-tape or bureaucratic lethargy' and questioned why sanctioned posts for regular appointments were not created when a qualified workforce was available.The HC observed the employees ought not to be made to 'knock doors of the court' and a 'robust and comprehensive policy, as a one-time measure' by government was required for their regularisation.

Heavy downpour, thunderstorms set to hit parts of Maharashtra; Yellow alert in Mumbai

Mumbai and its adjoining districts are under a yellow alert, following an intense spell of rain. According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), thunderstorm accompanied with lightning, heavy rainfall & gusty winds (40-50) at isolated places.The IMD has issued a five-day weather forecast for Maharashtra, forecasting intense heavy rainfall, active thunderstorms, and high-speed winds across several key districts.According to the bulletin issued on September 13, severe weather conditions will trigger localised inundation, disrupted transport networks, and agricultural stress across parts of Konkan, North Maharashtra, and Central Maharashtra.Heavy rain alert: High risk in Dhule, Nandurbar, and Nasik GhatsThe IMD has highlighted severe rainfall warnings for Day 1 in the following regions.Dhule & Nandurbar: Heavy to very heavy rainfall accompanied by lightning and gusty winds reaching is very likely at isolated places.Ghat Areas of Nasik: Expect heavy to very heavy precipitation alongside thunderstorms and gusty winds. Heavy rainfall is expected to persist in this area into Day 2.Mumbai, Thane, Palghar, and Jalgaon: Very likely to witness thunderstorms accompanied by lightning, heavy rainfall, and gusty winds at isolated locations.

Coastal districts, including Raigad, Ratnagiri, and Sindhudurg will observe moderate to light rainfall along with thunderstorms and gusty winds. Weather conditions across Vidarbha-including **Akola, Amravati, Buldhana, Chandrapur, and Gadchiroli — will also involve isolated heavy rain and thunderstorms during the initial 24-hour period before conditions ease significantly from Day 2 onward.Yellow, orange Alerts in MaharashtraThe IMD has forecast Orange and Yellow alerts for several districts for Sunday and MondayThe districts under a Yellow Alert for thunderstorms, lightning, heavy rainfall, or gusty winds include Konkan Region: Palghar, Thane, Mumbai, Raigad, Ratnagiri North / Central Maharashtra: Jalgaon, Nasik (Plain areas), Ahilyanagar, Pune (Plain areas), Ghats of Pune, Satara (Plain areas), Ghats of Satara, Ghats of Kolhapur Marathwada Region: Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, Jalna, Parbhani, Beed, Hingoli Vidarbha



Region: Akola, Amravati, Buldhana, Chandrapur, Gadchiroli, Bhandara, Gondia, Nagpur, Wardha, Washim, YavatmalParts of Dhule, Nandurbar, and the Ghats of Nasik are under an Orange Alert on Sunday.On Monday, a yellow alert will remain enforced in:The meteorological office warned of multiple impacts stemming from intense precipitation and lightning. Localised flooding of low-lying urban areas, potential flash floods, disruption to road, rail, air, and ferry transport, and temporary outage of utility services like water and electricity are likely.Squally weather and rough sea conditions are likely along the Konkan coast.The IMD has also warned of the risk of landslides, mudslides, and rockfalls in hilly or vulnerable terrains, along with tree uprooting and damage to unmaintained structures.To mitigate safety risks and crop damage, the IMD has issued clear guidelines:The IMD has advised people to check traffic updates and advisories before stepping out. Avoid sheltering under tall trees or residing in unsafe structures during severe weather.The weather department has also urged people in the affected areas to unplug electronics, stay out of open water bodies, and avoid working in open fields during active lightning.Farmers have been advised to harvest matured crops immediately and secure stored grains in dry facilities. "Ensure proper drainage channels in fields to clear excess water, pause chemical spraying or irrigation, and keep livestock protected indoors," the latest IMD bulletin read.

IIT Mandi caste poster probe clears students of intent, rules out SC/ST act provisions

The controversy erupted after a photograph and a video purportedly showing the poster displayed during a student-organised Janmashtami programme at IIT Mandi on September 4 were circulated on social media, triggering outrage and criticism of the institute administration.The controversy erupted after a photograph and a video purportedly showing the poster displayed during a student-organised Janmashtami programme at IIT Mandi on September 4 were circulated on social media, triggering outrage and criticism of the institute administration.A three-member inquiry committee, constituted by the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Mandi to examine an alleged controversial casteist poster displayed during a Janmashtami programme on the campus, has found "no evidence of any intention to target, insult or hurt any individual or community", The Indian Express has learnt.

The committee, assisted by six members of the institute's Reservation Cell throughout its proceedings, also concluded that "the case does not attract provisions of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989".IIT Registrar Dr Kumar Sambhav Pandey told that the committee on Saturday submitted its report to Director Laxmikant Behera, who had on September 6 constituted the committee to probe the alleged poster incident."The committee recommended that the students concerned be counselled and sensitised, rather than subjected to disciplinary proceedings. It also identified the absence of a clearly defined procedure for organising such events on the campus, as an institutional gap requiring priority attention," a senior faculty member said.The faculty member said the probe committee drew five principal findings. "These findings include that the event was not organised by the institute, and no officially recognised student body was involved in it. No institute funds were used. The expenses were met through voluntary contributions. The poster was not reviewed, approved or endorsed by any authority of the institute. Its content reflects an individual student's own interpretation and does not represent the position or views of the institute. The committee found no evidence of any intention to target, insult or hurt any individual or community. The committee observed that the provisions of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 are not found to be attracted in the instant case.""Indeed, the student who displayed the poster was identified," he added.The controversy erupted after a photograph and a video purportedly showing the poster displayed during a student-organised Janmashtami programme at IIT Mandi on September 4 were circulated on social media, triggering outrage and criticism of the institute administration.



The poster, titled "Bhagavad Gita — The Timeless Wisdom", was displayed outside the institute auditorium. It divided society into Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras, describing their respective roles as "spread God's message", "protect society and spirituality", "drive economy, support others" and "serve higher classes". It also carried a verse stating that the four divisions of human society were created according to the "three modes of material nature and the work associated with them".The poster also triggered strong objections from members of the community, with concerns being raised over its content and its perceived casteist implications.The matter led to protests and expressions of concern over caste discrimination and the need to ensure dignity and equality for students, and the institute faced criticism and demands for action against those responsible for displaying the poster.On September 6, Behera constituted the inquiry committee to establish the circumstances under which the poster was displayed. The institute's Reservation Cell was associated with the inquiry.

Telangana farmers protest power disruptions, low voltage and crop losses

Hyderabad: Farmers are staging protests across the State, including in Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's home district of Palamuru, over disruption in power supply and the impact on their crops due to inadequate water availability.For the past few days, farmers from several districts have been taking to the streets and staging protests at power substations. The protests come amid repeated claims by the Congress government of ensuring continuous power supply to the farming community.In Jogulamba Gadwal district, farmers from Nandine and neighbouring villages staged a protest at a substation in the village. Raising slogans against the State government, they alleged that electricity department officials were not addressing their grievances despite repeated appeals.

The farmers complained of frequent power disruptions and said there was no fixed schedule for power cuts. They said the situation had become more serious amid deficit rainfall, forcing many farmers to depend on borewells to provide water to their crops.However, frequent power disruptions were damaging agriculture pump sets and affecting water supply to the fields, they said. If the situation continued, the crops would wither, resulting in huge losses to farmers.The problem was not confined to one particular region or district. Farmers from Nizampet in Sangareddy district squatted on the road in protest against inadequate power supply and low voltage. The protest affected traffic movement in the area.

EDITORIAL

Credible progress, but a long way to go

The drastic reduction in poverty levels in India over the last decade is a heartening development, but one should not lose sight of the multiple public policy challenges that lie ahead. According to the World Bank's Poverty and Equity Brief 2026, India has recorded one of the fastest rates of poverty reduction globally, lifting an estimated 496 million people out of extreme poverty between 2011 and 2023. This is certainly a milestone worth celebrating. However, jubilation must not overshadow the problems that persist. The government must focus on job creation, social security, and greater female participation in the workforce. India's rank in the 2026 Global Hunger Index — 100th among 122 countries — is a sobering reminder that economic growth does not automatically translate into adequate nutrition and better health outcomes. Child stunting—29.3% among kids under five—and wasting (19%) demand urgent attention. These indicators highlight the gap between rising household consumption and the nutritional well-being of vulnerable sections. The share of India's population living in extreme poverty fell sharply from 27.1% in 2011 to 2.6% in 2023, marking a significant improvement in the country's poverty indicators. The decline was also visible at the lower-middle-income poverty threshold of $4.20 per day, measured at 2021 purchasing power parity (PPP). The proportion of people living below this threshold dropped from 57.7% to 16.1% during the same period. However, there are many unresolved issues. The World Bank report itself points to persistent inequalities. Wage disparities remain stark: median earnings among the top 10% of workers were about 13 times those of the bottom 10% in 2023.Moreover, rising youth unemployment and stagnant real earnings underline the need for better-quality jobs. Increasing inequality, jobless growth, and the agrarian debt cycle are among the challenges. Only 23% of non-farm paid work is formal, while youth unemployment of 13.3% climbs to 29% among graduates. Just 31% of women are in paid work, an enormous untapped engine of growth. The World Inequality Lab 2024 highlights that India's top 1% controls over 40% of national wealth, indicating a systemic failure to fulfil Article 39(c) of the Constitution, which mandates the state to prevent the concentration of wealth. It is also true that rising consumption and expanded social welfare measures, including food subsidies, have contributed to poverty reduction. The World Bank's projections suggest that poverty at the $4.20-a-day threshold could fall from 14.2% in 2026 to 12.1% by 2028. The findings underline India's considerable progress while highlighting the need to address regional inequalities, improve employment quality and raise real earnings to sustain these gains. The World Bank defines poverty as a pronounced deprivation in well-being, in which individuals lack sufficient income or consumption to meet a minimum standard of living. The concept extends beyond income deprivation to include inadequate access to food, healthcare, education, housing, and other necessities.

'900 farm fires in Punjab in a week': Delhi minister slams AAP govt for bad air



Delhi Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa Tuesday accused the Aam Aadmi Party-led Punjab government of deliberately facilitating stubble burning, contributing to pollution in Delhi-NCR. He also alleged that Punjab Police personnel were themselves present at several locations and helping set crop residue on fire.On Monday, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) invoked Stage II of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) after the air quality in the Capital deteriorated sharply to enter the 'Very Poor' category.

The watchdog attributed the deterioration to unfavourable meteorological conditions. Farm fires across the border, in Pakistan's Punjab, are also adding to the pollution load in the Capital, data analysed by The Indian Express showed.'900 fire cases since October 26'Addressing a press conference, Sirsa cited 271 FIRs registered in the state while alleging that more than 1,000 stubble-burning incidents had come to the authorities' notice.Citing official data, he claimed that 103 farm fires were reported in Punjab on October 26, 33 on October 27, 98 on October 28, 194 on October 29, 292 on October 30 and 31 combined, and 175 on November 1."During the same period, Haryana reported only 18 stubble-burning incidents and Uttar Pradesh 59 while Punjab recorded more than 900 incidents," he said.Delhi, he added, reported only one such incident.He alleged that farmers were not responsible for several of the fires. "Farmers did not set the fields on fire. Punjab Police personnel did," Sirsa said while playing videos purportedly showing burning cases.Flags Punjab Pollution board chief appointmentTargeting the AAP government, Sirsa also questioned the appointment of Reena Gupta, whom he described as a close relative of AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal, as chairperson of the Punjab Pollution Control Board (PPCB).He alleged that Gupta, who was earlier an AAP spokesperson in Delhi, had been brought to Punjab and that attempts were now being made to manipulate pollution data."In the history of Punjab, this has happened for the first time that a non-technical person has been appointed chairperson of the PPCB. She will fudge the data. The Punjab government has spent Rs 20-25 crore on advertisements to claim that no stubble burning is taking place in the state. On the other hand, it is registering FIRs against farmers," he alleged, adding that the Centre had provided Rs 5,000 crore to address the problem.Contrasting Delhi's air-quality figures with those of Punjab, the minister claimed that the Capital had recorded 220 days of clean air this year and that its average AQI in 2026 — 180 — was the lowest in the current decade.Questioning the AAP, Sirsa asked, "How can 220 clean-air days in Delhi suit the Aam Aadmi Party? I appeal to (Arvind) Kejriwal not to make life difficult for Delhi residents. The previous AAP government had already lost 10 years."

As Hinjewadi Metro opens tomorrow, Pune turns focus to last-mile connectivity

With the metro line to Hinjewadi set to open on Wednesday, the Pune district administration has turned its attention to improving last-mile connectivity to metro stations and accelerating road projects in the Hinjewadi-Maan-Marunji area.Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually inaugurated the 23-km-long Pune Metro Line 3 connecting Maan-Hinjewadi to Shivajinagar on Tuesday. Passenger operations will begin at 6 am on Wednesday.District Collector Jitendra Dudi directed officials on Monday to expedite land acquisition for six development-plan roads and complete the transferable development rights (TDR) process within a month, with plans to begin road development works by December 2026.Dudi held a review meeting at his office, where he assessed infrastructure-related issues in the Hinjewadi-Maan-Marunji area, including traffic congestion, road conditions, water supply, electricity, and civic amenities. Officials also discussed improving access to stations for employees working in the Hinjewadi industrial zone and local residents, particularly in Baner, Balewadi, and Hinjewadi Phase 2 and Phase 3.

Land acquisition for six roadsFor the six proposed roads, Dudi directed officials to obtain consent letters from landowners to expedite the acquisition process. For two of these roads, farmers have already expressed willingness to part with land through the floor space index (FSI) mechanism. The collector instructed officials to prioritise these two roads in the first phase and hold individual meetings with landowners for the remaining four roads to secure their consent.The chief engineer and the land acquisition officer concerned have been asked to complete the TDR process within a month and prepare a time-bound schedule for acquiring land for all six roads. They have also been directed to present a plan for commencing construction at the next review meeting.Officials have also been directed to fill potholes on major roads in Hinjewadi and repair road shoulders within a stipulated timeframe. The collector also called for the removal of encroachments, regulation of heavy-vehicle movement, and better coordination among the various agencies responsible for road maintenance.Representatives of the Pune Metropolitan Region Development Authority (PMRDA), Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC), Public Works Department (PWD), police, Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC), and other departments attended the meeting.



Land for substationAddressing the region's growing electricity requirements, Dudi directed officials to initiate administrative procedures for transferring six acres of land to the Maharashtra State Electricity Transmission Company Limited (MSETCL) for the construction of an electrical substation. The proposed facility is expected to cater to the region's existing power requirements as well as future demand.With the population and industrial activity in the area increasing, the Maharashtra Jeevan Pradhikaran has been asked to prepare a detailed presentation on a proposed two TMC water supply plan, covering the current supply situation, available resources, and future requirements.The Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation has been directed to enter into agreements with surrounding gram panchayats to collect and dispose of waste generated in these villages in accordance with prescribed regulations.Dudi further instructed officials to survey unauthorised waste-dumping sites, issue notices to those responsible, and initiate punitive action.All departments have been asked to submit updated progress reports at the next review meeting. These will include the status of road repairs and land acquisition, electricity infrastructure, shifting of utilities, sports facilities, the proposed water supply plan, and solid waste management, including the installation of waste-processing plants.Officials have also been asked to present details of traffic management measures, deployment of security personnel, and expansion of bus services.

'Glowing skin' lands Amazon, Tata 1mg on FSSAI radar; marine collagen powder under scanner



The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) issued show-cause notices to Tata 1mg Healthcare Solutions, the manufacturer of its Marine Collagen Powder, and e-commerce platforms Amazon and Flipkart over alleged violations in the product's labelling and advertisements.The show-cause notices have been served to Tata 1mg Healthcare Solutions Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, the marketer; ACFO Pharmaceuticals (India) Ltd, Noida, the manufacturer; Amazon Seller Services Pvt Ltd and Flipkart India Pvt Ltd, both based in Bengaluru.The regulator has flagged several alleged violations in the product, marketed as "TATA 1mg Marine collagen powder fortified with grape seed extract for enhanced results". These include the mandatory statement "not for medicinal use" not being printed in bold and the category word "nutraceutical" not appearing in the prescribed size and position alongside the product name.The FSSAI has also questioned the claim "supports glowing and radiant skin" and claims of 15 per cent, 23 per cent and 14 per cent changes in 12 weeks, saying these were made without evidence establishing their credibility or connection with the product.Other objections include describing the product as "pure collagen" despite it containing several ingredients, making comparative claims against competing products, and inconsistent flavour declarations — "orange flavour" in one place and "flavourless/unflavoured" in another. Claims of benefits for skin, hair, nails and joints have also been flagged as unsupported.The alleged violations are prima facie in contravention of the Food Safety and Standards (Advertising and Claims) Regulations, 2018, and the regulations governing health supplements and nutraceuticals, among other food categories, introduced in 2022, reiterated in a press note by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on Monday, November 2.It also added that Amazon, Flipkart and Tata 1mg have been instructed to submit their explanations within 30 days of receiving the notices. The concerned Central Licensing Authorities have also been informed for further action.

Bombay HC 'disturbed' over Mumbai civic body pulling down Dia Mirza's pollution-free Diwali video



The High court suggested that it would be 'ideal' to re-upload the Dia Mirza anti-pollution Diwali video to 'restore confidence of people in constitution' as city of Mumbai survives on feeling of 'togetherness' and 'the balance ought not to be disturbed by any loose comments.'

Day after the Mumbai civic body, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), pulled down a crackers-free Diwali campaign video featuring actor Dia Mirza after city Mayor Ritu Tawde and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) chief Ameet Satam objected to her inclusion, the Bombay High Court expressed displeasure, saying it was "disturbed" by the incident, which it said was "unfortunate" and had been given a "different colour".

The High Court suggested it would be "ideal" to re-upload the Dia Mirza pollution-free Diwali video to "restore confidence of people in constitution" as Mumbai, the bench said, survives on the feeling of "togetherness" and "the balance ought not to be disturbed by any loose comments.""We are disturbed with the comments made by certain persons in regard to celebrities who had participated and assisted in public cause being taken up by BMC of creating awareness of ill effects of bursting firecrackers by the noise and air pollution. In our opinion, BMC took very effective steps, and each one of them [celebrities] have given this message to nurture togetherness. We certainly believe when with such solemnity such task was undertaken, there was no room for factionalism," the HC noted in its order."We, therefore observe incident taken place yesterday, which in our opinion was unfortunate and it was without taking into consideration the solemnity of court orders and whole intention of what was to be achieved by the campaign. There is no scope for knee-jerk reaction of few people at the cost of society at large," the court said.

A bench of Justices Girish S Kulkarni and Neela K Gokhale was hearing a suo motu PIL and related pleas on festival noise and air pollution due to firecrackers. It had, on October 26, asked the BMC to involve celebrities for anti-pollution campaigns, after which the civic body roped in Ajinkya Rahane, Madhuri Dixit, and Dia Mirza."We are deeply pained with whatever has happened, and when it concerns orders passed by this court" and "there was no requirement to bring in any other issues, as any person from any caste or creed could canvass for the campaign," the HC orally remarked."Once it emanates from court orders, everyone is expected to respect it and ought not to give different angle. They [celebrities) are coming for public health, what is wrong? Issue of environment should not be hijacked by any other angle. Everyone in the country is breathing same air

Metro ridership jumps 11.5%, nears record high

While Sunday was the first day of the implementation of the restrictions, Monday was the first working day when commuters were expected to feel their impact on regular travel patterns.While Sunday was the first day of the implementation of the restrictions, Monday was the first working day when commuters were expected to feel their impact on regular travel patterns.

With Delhi barring older, non-BS-VI vehicles registered outside the capital from entering the city, Delhi Metro passenger boardings surged to 80.54 lakh on Monday — the first working day under the restrictions. This was an increase of 8.3 lakh over the previous Monday, when the figure was 72.24 lakh.The number also came close to the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation's highest-ever single-day ridership of 82.44 lakh, which was witnessed in September this year during a strike by Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) bus drivers.While Sunday was the first day of the implementation of the restrictions, Monday was the first working day when commuters were expected to feel their impact on regular travel patterns.

What are the curbs?Under the vehicle restrictions which kicked in from November 1, petrol and diesel vehicles registered outside Delhi that do not meet BS-VI emission standards have been barred from entering the capital.The restrictions form part of the government's winter pollution-control measures, alongside the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) framework.Approximately 3.02 crore BS-I to IV vehicles are registered in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Rajasthan. Forty-eight lakh of these vehicles are registered in National Capital Region (NCR) districts adjoining Delhi. All these vehicles used to frequently enter and exit Delhi, and their owners will now have to depend on other modes of transport, like the metro.

What measures has the Delhi Metro taken?

To accommodate the additional footfall, the Delhi Metro has been operating 40 additional train trips across its network. It started operating 20 additional train trips from October 22, when GRAP-I measures were implemented, and added 20 more from Monday when GRAP-II kicked in.The spokesperson claimed DMRC has also made additional passenger facilitation arrangements at stations, as and when required, to manage the increased movement of commuters.The Delhi Metro has an average daily ridership of around 64 lakh passengers.A passenger journey, however, is not the number of people who ride the Metro on that day. It is the number of metro lines used by a passenger to complete his or her journey

As Hinjewadi Metro opens tomorrow, Pune turns focus to last-mile connectivity



With the metro line to Hinjewadi set to open on Wednesday, the Pune district administration has turned its attention to improving last-mile connectivity to metro stations and accelerating road projects in the Hinjewadi-Maan-Marunji area.Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually inaugurated the 23-km-long Pune Metro Line 3 connecting Maan-Hinjewadi to Shivajinagar on Tuesday. Passenger operations will begin at 6 am on Wednesday.District Collector Jitendra Dudi directed officials on Monday to expedite land acquisition for six development-plan roads and complete the transferable development rights (TDR) process within a month, with plans to begin road development works by December 2026.Dudi held a review meeting at his office, where he assessed infrastructure-related issues in the Hinjewadi-Maan-Marunji area, including traffic congestion, road conditions, water supply, electricity, and civic amenities. Officials also discussed improving access to stations for employees working in the Hinjewadi industrial zone and local residents, particularly in Baner, Balewadi, and Hinjewadi Phase 2 and Phase 3.Land acquisition for six roadsFor the six proposed roads, Dudi directed officials to obtain consent letters from landowners to expedite the acquisition process. For two of these roads, farmers have already expressed willingness to part with land through the floor space index (FSI) mechanism. The collector instructed officials to prioritise these two roads in the first phase and hold individual meetings with landowners for the remaining four roads to secure their consent.The chief engineer and the land acquisition officer concerned have been asked to complete the TDR process within a month and prepare a time-bound schedule for acquiring land for all six roads. They have also been directed to present a plan for commencing construction at the next review meeting.Officials have also been directed to fill potholes on major roads in Hinjewadi and repair road shoulders within a stipulated timeframe. The collector also called for the removal of encroachments, regulation of heavy-vehicle movement, and better coordination among the various agencies responsible for road maintenance.Representatives of the Pune Metropolitan Region Development Authority (PMRDA), Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC), Public Works Department (PWD), police, Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC), and other departments attended the meeting.Land for substationAddressing the region's growing electricity requirements, Dudi directed officials to initiate administrative procedures for transferring six acres of land to the Maharashtra State Electricity Transmission Company Limited (MSETCL) for the construction of an electrical substation. The proposed facility is expected to cater to the region's existing power requirements as well as future demand.With the population and industrial activity in the area increasing, the Maharashtra Jeevan Pradhikaran has been asked to prepare a detailed presentation on a proposed two TMC water supply plan, covering the current supply situation, available resources, and future requirements.The Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation has been directed to enter into agreements with surrounding gram panchayats to collect and dispose of waste generated in these villages in accordance with prescribed regulations.Dudi further instructed officials to survey unauthorised waste-dumping sites, issue notices to those responsible, and initiate punitive action

Iraq says Saudi pipeline attack originated from its territory



Baghdad: Iraq said attacks on a key Saudi oil pipeline were launched from its territory, as US President Donald Trump appeared to blame Iran.Meanwhile, the number of displaced people in Yemen is rising quickly after a swift advance by Iran-backed Houthi rebels threatens a key alternative to the Strait of Hormuz, the Bab el-Mandeb. And Lebanon and Israel will hold new direct talks next month.Here's a look at the latest news in the Middle East.Iraq dismisses commander over Saudi pipeline attacksPrime Minister Ali al-Zaidi ordered an investigation into the operations command in Maysan province, which borders Iran, and dismissed its commander after authorities determined that the attacks on the Saudi pipeline were launched from the province, the government said.

The Saudi Foreign Ministry blamed the attacks on drones that came from Iraq and said the kingdom would not retaliate to give the Iraqi government "an opportunity to take the necessary measures."The East-West pipeline has been vital to Saudi Arabia's oil exports since the Iran war disrupted shipping in the Strait of Hormuz. According to the International Energy Agency, Saudi oil exports through the Red Sea port at the pipeline's end have more than doubled.Regional officials have told The AP that the Houthis and the Iraqi militias recently coordinated attacks on Saudi oil facilities.Trump says Iran is 'probably' behind Saudi pipeline attack

Asked if he thought Iran was behind the attack that closed the East-West pipeline, Trump told reporters: "Well, I think they are. Probably they are."Trump said his administration has "had discussions" with the Houthis, though he did not say when. "The Houthis called us, and they don't want to fight with us," he said. "They would much prefer not having us involved, and they're letting most ships go through."The Houthis have said they are only targeting neighbouring Saudi Arabia's shipping.Asked about a recent call with Saudi's crown prince, Trump said: "He's a good friend of mine, and I can just say everything's going to work out fine and dandy. It's going to be very good."People fleeing in Yemen describe a hysterical panic

Thousands of people have fled the Houthis' advance. In Aden, held by Yemen's Saudi-backed internationally recognised government, residents have opened their homes. In one, dozens of men lay on a floor carpeted with thin mattresses and sheets."We set out in hysterical panic on a motorcycle, not knowing where we were heading," said Alaa Ali Salem, who fled from al-Khawkha district. "The roads suddenly became extremely congested, and while I was driving, the motorcycle overturned. My wife, my children and I were all injured."The International Organisation for Migration said at least 76,000 people have fled since July as fighting escalates between the Houthis and government forces, up from 46,000 just days earlier. Some fear a return to the civil war that killed 1,50,000 before a 2022 ceasefire."I saw the soldiers as they were withdrawing. They told us we must escape," said a tearful Durrah Ali Hassan, who took shelter in a relative's house. She said she was worried about the toll of the chaos on her pregnant daughter, who had been bleeding and was now in a coma at a hospital.Lebanon, Israel to hold new talks next month

Lebanese and Israeli negotiators are scheduled to meet in Rome in October for US-brokered talks. A planned round this month was postponed without explanation.The US State Department said Lebanese and Israeli ambassadors to the US will meet at its headquarters in Washington next week to discuss ongoing developments and the continued implementation of the framework agreement reached in June.Lebanon and Israel have held seven rounds of talks in Washington and Rome over the past months in search of a way to calm the latest fighting between Israeli forces and the Lebanon-based Hezbollah militant group.Lebanon's president made a rare visit to a southern city Saturday, close to where Israel captured a strategic hill.Iran's president meets with Abu Dhabi crown princeIranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan held talks on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in New Delhi, according to a UAE government statement, signalling efforts to maintain engagement despite growing instability across the region.Iran has sharply criticised the security partnerships some Gulf states maintain with Western powers, while the UAE has backed efforts aimed at containing Iran's military influence.Oil spill in Gulf of Oman doubled: environmental groupA large-scale oil spill, believed to be from a tanker struck by the US military, doubled in size between Wednesday and Thursday, endangering two protected areas off Oman and Iran, said Nina Noelle of Greenpeace Germany.The tanker RIESCO was one of four attacked Tuesday in the Gulf of Oman. A fifth was destroyed in the Strait of Hormuz off Iran's Kharg island.The visible area of pollution measured about 400 square kilometres on Thursday, Noelle said. Satellite images reviewed by The AP showed the spill stretching almost 70 kilometres.The spill is located between the Musandam protected area on the Omani side, which includes one of the region's most important seabird breeding islands. On the Iranian side is the Hara-e Roud-e Gaz Protected Area in Hormozgan province that includes mangrove forests.

Video shows Israeli troops firing on Palestinians in West BankIsraeli troops opened fire at a group of Palestinians who did not appear to be posing a threat in the occupied West Bank, wounding one man, according to video obtained by The AP.The video, shot by a witness, showed the man falling near the Palestinian village of Faqqua. At least 14 shots were fired and continued as men rushed to move the man to safety before tying a tourniquet around his leg.Mahmoud Shahin, a resident, said the Palestinians had rushed to the area after receiving reports that Israeli settlers had arrived with sheep. He said Israeli soldiers then came and began firing in the air and toward the Palestinians.He said the man was undergoing surgery in Jenin.Israel's military said the video was authentic and confirmed its forces had fired toward the Palestinians, wounding one man, and said commanders would review the incident.

Congo says Ebola outbreak 'under control' despite persistent risks



Kinshasa: The government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) said that its ongoing Ebola outbreak is "under control" and has passed its peak, although local flare-ups, continued transmission and the spread of the disease to a seventh province point to persistent risks."The 17th Ebola outbreak is under control, and the peak was reached at the beginning of the third week of August 2026," government spokesperson Patrick Muyaya said while reading a report from a cabinet meeting on Friday, citing Health Minister Roger Kamba.

According to the government, all major indicators point to a decline in cases, with 10 health zones affected before the latest expansion of the outbreak reporting no new cases for at least 21 days, while transmission has slowed in several regions in the eastern province of Ituri, the epicenter of the outbreak, reports Xinhua news agency.The authorities nevertheless called for continued vigilance and strict contact tracing, saying close surveillance remains necessary in regions where recent flare-ups have been reported. Former Congolese Health Minister Jean-Jacques Mbungani Mbanda, now a member of parliament, urged caution over the assessment, saying on Saturday that the downward trend in some areas should not be taken to mean that transmission has been brought under control everywhere.

In an outbreak involving multiple transmission foci, different areas may reach their peaks at different times, he said, adding that the epidemic curve reflects detected cases and could be affected by infections that remain unidentified in communities. In its latest weekly report on Tuesday, the World Health Organization said the outbreak "remains uncontrolled and increasingly heterogeneous," with transmission easing in some areas while intensifying or spreading geographically elsewhere."The outbreak is increasingly geographically heterogeneous rather than showing a uniform decline," it said. The DRC government has also confirmed Thursday the first Ebola case in the northwestern province of Sud-Ubangi, making it the seventh province affected. Sud-Ubangi does not border any of the six provinces where confirmed Ebola cases had previously been reported.According to Mbanda, the patient, a 23-year-old man who later died, had traveled extensively before arriving in Sud-Ubangi, with an itinerary spanning several provinces, neighboring Rwanda and Uganda, as well as both road and river routes. As of September 10, the DRC had recorded 7,022 confirmed Ebola cases, including 3,398 deaths, with a case fatality rate of 48.4 percent.The outbreak has now affected 62 health zones across seven provinces. The current outbreak, declared in May, has become the largest and deadliest Ebola epidemic in the DRC's history and the second-largest globally, behind the 2014-2016 epidemic in West Africa.

Iran, Oman agree on details of Hormuz Strait's new entry, exit routes

Tehran/Doha: Iran and Oman have agreed on the details of new entry and exit routes for the Strait of Hormuz and will brief Gulf countries on the outcome of their consultations at a regional meeting in Muscat on Monday, Iranian officials said. Citing a source close to Iran's negotiating team, the semi-official Tasnim news agency said that the understanding was reached after "intensive technical and diplomatic talks between Iran and Oman, which culminated in a final agreement in late August."Under the understanding, the Gulf's entry route "lies entirely within Iran's territorial waters," and a portion of the exit route also falls "within Iranian territorial waters," the source said.

The source stressed that the route would operate under Iranian arrangements and the waterway's southern route will be closed once the new system becomes operational, noting that the United States had insisted that the southern route must be opened. "The understanding in no way means that the Strait of Hormuz will be opened," the source said, adding that Iran has seven conditions for reopening the waterway and has conveyed them to the United States.

The source underlined that the waterway will remain closed unless those conditions are implemented, with reopening depending entirely on the US behavior, Xinhua news agency reported. Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei announced on Friday that Gulf littoral states' foreign ministers are scheduled to meet in Oman on Monday to exchange views on regional issues, including the Iran-Oman talks on designating safe routes in the Strait of Hormuz.Speaking to media on Saturday, Baghaei said the gathering would "hopefully" be



attended by foreign ministers from Gulf states as well as Iran and Iraq. "As part of the agenda, we are going to brief the delegations about the results of the Iran and Oman consultations regarding the safe passage of ships through the Strait of Hormuz," he said, adding that the two countries had conducted the consultations as "the two coastal states of the Strait of Hormuz."Late last month, Iran and Oman said in a joint statement that they had exchanged views on a proposed phased framework that includes establishing a temporary joint shipping corridor in the strait.Following US-Israeli strikes on Iran on Feb. 28, Tehran restricted passage through the strategic waterway, while US forces imposed a naval blockade targeting vessels traveling to or from Iranian ports.The Strait of Hormuz, linking the Gulf with the Arabian Sea, is one of the world's most important routes for oil and gas shipments. Oman and Iran sit on opposite sides of the strait and have maintained consultations over maritime security and navigation in the strategic waterway.

Iran, Iraq, Turkey call for preventing escalation of tensions in West Asia

Tehran: Iran, Iraq and Turkey have stressed the need to prevent an escalation of tensions in the West Asia region. The issue was highlighted in separate phone calls between Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi and his Turkish and Iraqi counterparts on Saturday, according to statements released by the Iranian Foreign Ministry early Sunday.During a phone conversation between Araghchi and Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, the two sides discussed the latest regional developments and underscored the need to prevent further escalation of tensions and the expansion of regional conflicts, Xinhua news agency reported.

They also called for continued consultations and diplomatic efforts to help ensure regional stability and peace. In a separate phone call, Araghchi and Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein reviewed bilateral issues, regional developments and ongoing processes, stressing the importance of maintaining stability and security along their common border and continuing coordination.They also underscored the need for responsible approaches to regional developments and called for efforts to prevent the escalation and spread of conflicts in the region.Meanwhile, Iran and Oman have agreed on the details of new entry and exit routes for the Strait of Hormuz and will brief Gulf countries on the outcome of their consultations at a regional meeting in Muscat on Monday, Iranian officials said on Saturday.Citing a



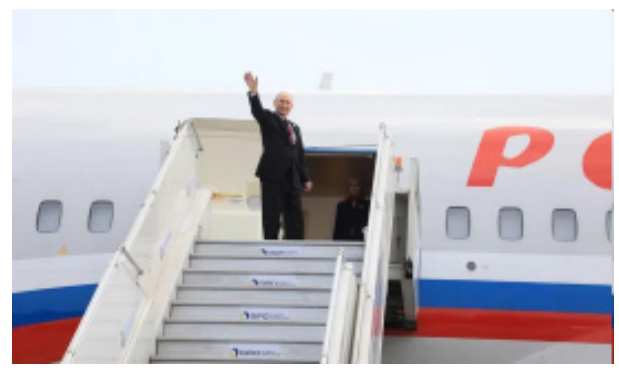
source close to Iran's negotiating team, the semi-official Tasnim news agency said that the understanding was reached after "intensive technical and diplomatic talks between Iran and Oman, which culminated in a final agreement in late August." Under the understanding, the Gulf's entry route "lies entirely within Iran's territorial waters," and a portion of the exit route also falls "within Iranian territorial waters," the source said.The source stressed that the route would operate under Iranian arrangements and the waterway's southern route will be closed once the new system becomes operational, noting that the United States had insisted that the southern route must be opened.

Putin departs New Delhi after attending BRICS Summit, meeting PM Modi

New Delhi: Russian President Vladimir Putin departed from New Delhi on Sunday after attending the 18th BRICS Summit hosted by India.Union Minister of State (MoS) for External Affairs, Kirti Vardhan Singh, saw off President Putin."Honoured to see off H.E. President Vladimir Putin at Delhi airport following his visit to India for the BRICS Summit. India deeply values its Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership with Russia and remains committed to further advancing our multifaceted cooperation," Singh posted on X.Putin participated in the two-day BRICS Summit at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi, which brought together leaders from BRICS member and partner countries, along with outreach invitees.

Addressing the 18th BRICS Summit session on Saturday, Putin said that the partnership within BRICS is invariably built on the principles of equality, good neighbourliness and mutual consideration of interests, while respecting the cultural and civilisational diversity, history, traditions and values of its members. He said it was therefore quite logical that the authority and influence of BRICS in the world continue to grow steadily."The Association has rightfully established itself among the key centres of global governance, and the prospects for developments in international politics and security, economics, and humanitarian cooperation largely depend on our collective decisions and actions," said Putin.

The Russian President further said that the BRICS session on 'Inclusive Global Governance and Strengthening Multilateralism' is highly relevant in this regard."Indeed, in the conditions of an emerging multipolar world, it is more important than ever to work together to strengthen the true world order multilateralism, involve more countries in global mechanisms management, in the activities of key international political and economic structures, in search of answers to acute challenges and threats, in support of international peace and stability for the sake of achieving shared prosperity and well-being," Putin noted.Putin arrived in New Delhi on Friday to attend the 18th BRICS Summit and also held bilateral talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.During the meeting, both leaders discussed bilateral cooperation in key sectors and also the ongoing conflicts in West Asia and the Black Sea region.PM Modi also gifted Putin the Russian translation of the Thirukkural, written by the great Indian Tamil poet and philosopher Thiruvalluvar, which contains extensive writings on agriculture and farmers.According to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), the two leaders reviewed progress in bilateral cooperation in political, economic, defence, energy, space, skill mobility and people-to- people domains."They welcomed Russia's International Industrial Exhibition 'INNOPROM India', which was held for the first time in India from 9-11



September 2026 and underscored its importance in further expanding trade and industrial ties. The two leaders also visited the INNOPROM India exhibition and interacted with the participants," the MEA stated.

Indian-origin woman shot dead by stalker in US

A 38-year-old Indian-origin woman, Shalini Thakur, was fatally shot outside a Sacramento restaurant by Rohit, a 22-year-old undocumented immigrant from India who had allegedly stalked her for months.Washington: A 38-year-old Indian-origin woman has been shot dead outside a restaurant in the US state of California by a 22-year-old man from India who had allegedly stalked her for months, the US Department of Homeland Security said.The incident took place on September 8 at a shopping centre in Sacramento.Rohit, an undocumented immigrant from India, approached Shalini Thakur at her car. When she tried to run away, Rohit chased her down, pulled out a gun, and shot her multiple times, the DHS said on Friday.After she had fallen to the ground, he shot her again in the head at close range before fleeing in his vehicle, it said.Authorities tried to call the driver out of the car before discovering that he had died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound, the Sacramento County Coroner's Office was quoted as saying by Fox40.com.A spokesperson for DHS said Thakur's killer, Rohit, was from India and entered the United States through Arizona in 2023.He was arrested by the US Border Patrol and released by



the Biden administration, according to the spokesperson.The exact details around his immigration status were not immediately clear as of Friday.Further investigation determined that Rohit had been harassing and stalking Thakur since at least January, after she discovered an Apple AirTag under the hood of her car. Rohit had also reportedly deflated the air in her car and followed her to work so he could offer

Search underway for Indonesian passenger ship carrying 240 people after it loses contact

Jakarta: Indonesian rescuers launched a search operation on Sunday after a passenger ship carrying 240 people lost contact in the Java Sea while travelling from East Java to South Kalimantan on Borneo island, officials said.

The Search and Rescue Office in Banjarmasin, the capital city of South Kalimantan province, said they received a report the Virgo Transport 8 had experienced a communication failure while en route to the city from Surabaya, Indonesia's second largest city in East Java province.Initial information indicated the vessel's last known position was in the Java Sea, about 148 kilometres from a pier in Banjarmasin.There were no immediate reports of casualties.



The need is for domain experts, but within the civil service



In August 2024, the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) initiated the recruitment process through the lateral entry scheme by issuing a notification for the recruitment of 45 Joint Secretaries, Directors, and Deputy Secretaries as specialists in government departments. The initiative faced significant opposition from various groups, particularly political parties, which argued that the scheme compromised the reservation rights of Other Backward Classes (OBCs), Scheduled Castes (SCs), and Scheduled Tribes (STs). The strong opposition compelled the government to shelve the plan. This was not the first time that the Union Government has recruited specialists through the lateral entry scheme. In 2018, 63 specialists were appointed through lateral entry in various ministries. Currently, around 57 specialists are working with the government. Even then, recruitment through the lateral entry scheme was excluded from the reservation system. The decision to withdraw the notification has reignited the debate on the need for domain experts within the civil service and highlights the necessity of developing an appropriate approach to civil service reform.

Need for domain expertsIt has long been recognised that specialised skills are much needed in the civil service. In fact, the Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2005) recommended the need for lateral entry into the higher echelons of the government to bring in specialised knowledge and skills, though it did not specify a method of recruitment. The ongoing representation issues of SCs and STs within the civil service further complicate the narrative. Despite existing reservations, the number of SC and ST officers in higher positions remains low. SCs and STs constitute only around 4% and 4.9% of top bureaucratic positions in the Union government at the level of Deputy Secretaries, Directors, Joint Secretaries, and beyond. One reason is that the entry age of officers during the recruitment process is often higher than that of general category candidates, and these officers frequently retire before reaching the top positions.

The lateral entry scheme is likely to further limit the representation of these marginalised communities, as the scheme is unlikely to attract domain experts from these communities due to their limited access to such positions in the private sector. For better or worse, the lateral entry debate has been politicised. With caste-based reservations being significant factors in elections, the government is unlikely to reignite this debate, as doing so could have substantial political repercussions. For now, the discussion around lateral entry appears to have reached an impasse.But there is no denying the reality that there is a need for domain experts in the public sector, as each sector is becoming specialised, requiring close collaboration with technical experts. Civil servants are generally generalists, not specialists. Lateral entry, with or without reservation as it existed, was essentially a short-term solution. The need is for domain experts within the civil service itself. It is these domain experts who would cultivate a resilient and effective civil service. To realise this objective, there is a need to develop long-term strategies that prioritise academic-industry-civil service collaboration, capacity building, and institutional development.Integrated model for domain expertise

In order to effectively develop domain expertise within the civil service in India and address the ever more complex needs of governance, a collaborative framework that brings together civil service, academia, and industry is needed. This collaboration would facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practices, allowing civil servants to engage with the latest developments in their respective fields and develop much-needed domain expertise. Civil servants with public sector experience and decision-making capabilities would imbibe insights from academia and industry about emerging trends, skills, and technologies. But this collaboration must differ from the current refresher and mid-career training offered to civil servants. These training programmes for civil servants often act as temporary fixes. Even though such programmes inculcate valuable skills, they fail to create a robust framework for domain expertise. Domain expertise, unlike training programmes, is not an isolated event but must be an integral part of a civil servant's career trajectory. For domain expertise, an integrated model that aligns with individual career paths and areas of interest is essential.The critical components of an integrated model for developing domain expertise among civil servants include strategic planning, memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with institutions, a rigorous selection process, and specialised postings with fixed tenures.

Strategic planningDomain expertise starts with the drafting of a strategic plan to create efficient public policy analysts within the civil service, with locus in the public sector and focus on skills and knowledge from the private sector/industry, facilitated by academia. The objective is to enhance the capacity of civil servants in terms of technical expertise and strategic vision to formulate and implement policies efficiently and effectively in specific sectors, contributing to good governance and improved public service delivery.Strategic planning represents a long-term vision for the civil service and requires identifying the number of sector-specific domain experts needed for better alignment of resources and priorities. Academic institutions must be involved in the strategic planning at the initial stages only. This integrated model has significant advantages for academic institutions as well, as they would receive fresh impetus and motivation to contribute richly to public service delivery. One critical aspect of domain expertise is staying focused on ever-changing innovations and technologies in industry and incorporating these into the public sector. Strategic planning would include an element of circular response planning, with feedback and adjustments continuously incorporated. This element promotes flexibility and adaptability in the face of changing circumstances.

MoUs with institutionsThe second component of the integrated model for developing domain expertise is the framing of MoUs with institutions. The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) of the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances, and Pensions, along with other cadre-controlling ministries, will establish MoUs with premier institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Management, Indian Institutes of Technology, National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Indian Institute of Public Administration, and the top central universities based on the National Institutional Ranking Framework. This collaboration's primary objective is to formulate tailored courses and training programmes laced with industry experience for transforming current mid-level and top-level officers into domain experts. To start with, each ministry of the Government of India could target developing around four to five domain experts in sector-specific areas over the next few years and ensure the smooth and steady infusion of specialised knowledge and skills into the civil service. The MoUs must ensure that these courses are not usual academic courses, but, specifically, domain expert skill courses. The institutions involved must necessarily engage industry experts for the long term and have their own collaboration with them.

Selection process, specialised postingThe third but critical component of developing domain experts within the civil service is the establishment of rigorous selection processes for specialised training programmes. This should be jointly done by the ministries concerned and the institutions concerned. Herein, consideration can be given for adequate representation of SCs, STs and OBCs for domain expertise. The selection process should involve submission of a Statement of Purpose (SoP) detailing their motivations for domain expertise and past experiences and interview process to assess a civil servant's alignment and potential for a domain expertise programme. Through this selection process, and subsequent training, a pool of civil servants would be developed who are not only domain experts but also deeply invested in making a meaningful impact.The last component of the integrated model for domain expertise is specialised posting in their respective areas of expertise, much like the existing lateral entry framework, which appoints personnel based on ministry needs. There should be no transfer of the trained domain experts outside their specialised sector. This targeted approach would address the long-standing issue of "the right minds aren't in the right places" by ensuring that individuals with the most relevant knowledge and skills are assigned to roles where they can make the greatest impact. Further, irrespective of their years left in the service, a fixed tenure system post training should be set up that allows all domain expert officers equal chances to reach senior roles and contribute richly.Transforming the civil service in India through the integrated model for domain expertise is necessary to strengthen governance and improve public service delivery by developing a resilient and responsive civil service. In today's market-based economy, the role of government has shifted from being a service provider to that of a facilitator and regulator. Through a cadre of domain experts, the government can build institutional capacity, enabling civil servants to serve effectively as regulators, facilitators, and even service providers. The model also allows civil servants to step away from the daily grind of government machinery to focus on skill development and specialisation. From a psychological perspective, this break from the routine can significantly reduce monotony, re-energising civil servants and enhancing their motivation.

Will Trump change US policy towards global conflicts?



The history of geopolitical rivalries involving the United States (US) and Russia (also the former Soviet Union) teaches us that tensions and conflicts tend to become protracted. West Asia and eastern Europe have been the theatres of power rivalries during the Cold War and post-Cold War eras. Due to multiple power centres in the post-Cold War, wars and conflicts have become more complicated on at least two fronts: global leadership and "free-raider" countries. The global leadership is contested by countries outside the 'US-Russia' hyphenation. Emerging economies like those in BRICS are strengthening their collaboration on international peace and security matters. Nonetheless, the BRICS countries themselves are unclear about what alternative form of international peace and security structure suits the current global conflict scenarios.The US positions on the Ukraine-Russia war and the Israel-Palestinian conflict are ambiguous in terms of its commitment to international laws. The US policy towards Ukraine supports the United Nations (UN) Charter and international law to the cause of Ukraine's sovereignty and international peace. It voted in favour of the UN General Assembly resolutions, for example, ES-11/1 of March 2, 2022, which condemned Russia's invasion and stood firm, which has been maintained throughout the ongoing conflict, that Russia should withdraw its troops from Ukraine. The Global South has not been on the same footing with the US's policy of isolating Ukraine diplomatically. Some of these countries have maintained special exemptions, like India's oil import from Russia at a discount, from the US sanctions against Russia.

The US policy towards the Ukraine-Russia war has shown consistency and unambiguity in support of Ukraine. The victory of Donald Trump as President in the recent election, who will take charge January 20 next year, might change the policy. He will assume power after the war, which marks the completion of 1,000 days. Trump's focus is on diplomacy and a rapid resolution to the conflict. He showed his confidence to end the war "within 24 hours," talking directly to Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. He strongly felt that the US aid to Ukraine was at the cost of US interests, and bringing back America First is his priority. Moreover, his explicit criticism of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (Nato)'s dependency on US funding cannot go unnoticed in the current war efforts in Ukraine.Thus, it departs from President Biden's strong support for Ukraine. It remains to be seen if his transactional diplomacy will be able to "end" the war, although he has not laid down a concrete strategy yet. Geopolitical experts are observing which direction the US policy might swing under his reign, either towards diplomacy or sanctions to resolve the long-drawn-out war. Experts consider that his Ukraine policy might concede to Russia in favourable terms regarding territorial concessions primarily.

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The need is for domain experts, but within the civil service



In August 2024, the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) initiated the recruitment process through the lateral entry scheme by issuing a notification for the recruitment of 45 Joint Secretaries, Directors, and Deputy Secretaries as specialists in government departments. The initiative faced significant opposition from various groups, particularly political parties, which argued that the scheme compromised the reservation rights of Other Backward Classes (OBCs), Scheduled Castes (SCs), and Scheduled Tribes (STs). The strong opposition compelled the government to shelve the plan. This was not the first time that the Union Government has recruited specialists through the lateral entry scheme. In 2018, 63 specialists were appointed through lateral entry in various ministries. Currently, around 57 specialists are working with the government. Even then, recruitment through the lateral entry scheme was excluded from the reservation system. The decision to withdraw the notification has reignited the debate on the need for domain experts within the civil service and highlights the necessity of developing an appropriate approach to civil service reform.

Need for domain expertsIt has long been recognised that specialised skills are much needed in the civil service. In fact, the Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2005) recommended the need for lateral entry into the higher echelons of the government to bring in specialised knowledge and skills, though it did not specify a method of recruitment. The ongoing representation issues of SCs and STs within the civil service further complicate the narrative. Despite existing reservations, the number of SC and ST officers in higher positions remains low. SCs and STs constitute only around 4% and 4.9% of top bureaucratic positions in the Union government at the level of Deputy Secretaries, Directors, Joint Secretaries, and beyond. One reason is that the entry age of officers during the recruitment process is often higher than that of general category candidates, and these officers frequently retire before reaching the top positions.

The lateral entry scheme is likely to further limit the representation of these marginalised communities, as the scheme is unlikely to attract domain experts from these communities due to their limited access to such positions in the private sector. For better or worse, the lateral entry debate has been politicised. With caste-based reservations being significant factors in elections, the government is unlikely to reignite this debate, as doing so could have substantial political repercussions. For now, the discussion around lateral entry appears to have reached an impasse.But there is no denying the reality that there is a need for domain experts in the public sector, as each sector is becoming specialised, requiring close collaboration with technical experts. Civil servants are generally generalists, not specialists. Lateral entry, with or without reservation as it existed, was essentially a short-term solution. The need is for domain experts within the civil service itself. It is these domain experts who would cultivate a resilient and effective civil service. To realise this objective, there is a need to develop long-term strategies that prioritise academic-industry-civil service collaboration, capacity building, and institutional development.Integrated model for domain expertise

In order to effectively develop domain expertise within the civil service in India and address the ever more complex needs of governance, a collaborative framework that brings together civil service, academia, and industry is needed. This collaboration would facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practices, allowing civil servants to engage with the latest developments in their respective fields and develop much-needed domain expertise. Civil servants with public sector experience and decision-making capabilities would imbibe insights from academia and industry about emerging trends, skills, and technologies. But this collaboration must differ from the current refresher and mid-career training offered to civil servants. These training programmes for civil servants often act as temporary fixes. Even though such programmes inculcate valuable skills, they fail to create a robust framework for domain expertise. Domain expertise, unlike training programmes, is not an isolated event but must be an integral part of a civil servant's career trajectory. For domain expertise, an integrated model that aligns with individual career paths and areas of interest is essential.The critical components of an integrated model for developing domain expertise among civil servants include strategic planning, memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with institutions, a rigorous selection process, and specialised postings with fixed tenures.

Strategic planningDomain expertise starts with the drafting of a strategic plan to create efficient public policy analysts within the civil service, with locus in the public sector and focus on skills and knowledge from the private sector/industry, facilitated by academia. The objective is to enhance the capacity of civil servants in terms of technical expertise and strategic vision to formulate and implement policies efficiently and effectively in specific sectors, contributing to good governance and improved public service delivery.Strategic planning represents a long-term vision for the civil service and requires identifying the number of sector-specific domain experts needed for better alignment of resources and priorities. Academic institutions must be involved in the strategic planning at the initial stages only. This integrated model has significant advantages for academic institutions as well, as they would receive fresh impetus and motivation to contribute richly to public service delivery. One critical aspect of domain expertise is staying focused on ever-changing innovations and technologies in industry and incorporating these into the public sector. Strategic planning would include an element of circular response planning, with feedback and adjustments continuously incorporated. This element promotes flexibility and adaptability in the face of changing circumstances.

MoUs with institutionsThe second component of the integrated model for developing domain expertise is the framing of MoUs with institutions. The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) of the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances, and Pensions, along with other cadre-controlling ministries, will establish MoUs with premier institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Management, Indian Institutes of Technology, National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Indian Institute of Public Administration, and the top central universities based on the National Institutional Ranking Framework. This collaboration's primary objective is to formulate tailored courses and training programmes laced with industry experience for transforming current mid-level and top-level officers into domain experts. To start with, each ministry of the Government of India could target developing around four to five domain experts in sector-specific areas over the next few years and ensure the smooth and steady infusion of specialised knowledge and skills into the civil service. The MoUs must ensure that these courses are not usual academic courses, but, specifically, domain expert skill courses. The institutions involved must necessarily engage industry experts for the long term and have their own collaboration with them.

Selection process, specialised postingThe third but critical component of developing domain experts within the civil service is the establishment of rigorous selection processes for specialised training programmes. This should be jointly done by the ministries concerned and the institutions concerned. Herein, consideration can be given for adequate representation of SCs, STs and OBCs for domain expertise. The selection process should involve submission of a Statement of Purpose (SoP) detailing their motivations for domain expertise and past experiences and interview process to assess a civil servant's alignment and potential for a domain expertise programme. Through this selection process, and subsequent training, a pool of civil servants would be developed who are not only domain experts but also deeply invested in making a meaningful impact.The last component of the integrated model for domain expertise is specialised posting in their respective areas of expertise, much like the existing lateral entry framework, which appoints personnel based on ministry needs. There should be no transfer of the trained domain experts outside their specialised sector. This targeted approach would address the long-standing issue of "the right minds aren't in the right places" by ensuring that individuals with the most relevant knowledge and skills are assigned to roles where they can make the greatest impact. Further, irrespective of their years left in the service, a fixed tenure system post training should be set up that allows all domain expert officers equal chances to reach senior roles and contribute richly.Transforming the civil service in India through the integrated model for domain expertise is necessary to strengthen governance and improve public service delivery by developing a resilient and responsive civil service. In today's market-based economy, the role of government has shifted from being a service provider to that of a facilitator and regulator. Through a cadre of domain experts, the government can build institutional capacity, enabling civil servants to serve effectively as regulators, facilitators, and even service providers. The model also allows civil servants to step away from the daily grind of government machinery to focus on skill development and specialisation. From a psychological perspective, this break from the routine can significantly reduce monotony, re-energising civil servants and enhancing their motivation. By engaging in capacity-building programmes, civil servants can rejuvenate their professional drive

Will Trump change US policy towards global conflicts?



The history of geopolitical rivalries involving the United States (US) and Russia (also the former Soviet Union) teaches us that tensions and conflicts tend to become protracted. West Asia and eastern Europe have been the theatres of power rivalries during the Cold War and post-Cold War eras. Due to multiple power centres in the post-Cold War, wars and conflicts have become more complicated on at least two fronts: global leadership and "free-raider" countries. The global leadership is contested by countries outside the 'US-Russia' hyphenation. Emerging economies like those in BRICS are strengthening their collaboration on international peace and security matters. Nonetheless, the BRICS countries themselves are unclear about what alternative form of international peace and security structure suits the current global conflict scenarios.The US positions on the Ukraine-Russia war and the Israel-Palestinian conflict are ambiguous in terms of its commitment to international laws. The US policy towards Ukraine supports the United Nations (UN) Charter and international law to the cause of Ukraine's sovereignty and international peace. It voted in favour of the UN General Assembly resolutions, for example, ES-11/1 of March 2, 2022, which condemned Russia's invasion and stood firm, which has been maintained throughout the ongoing conflict, that Russia should withdraw its troops from Ukraine. The Global South has not been on the same footing with the US's policy of isolating Ukraine diplomatically. Some of these countries have maintained special exemptions, like India's oil import from Russia at a discount, from the US sanctions against Russia.

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Military biographies: a matter of heroes and overlapping history



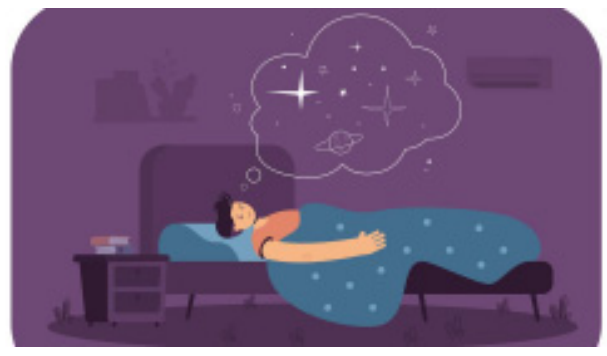
V.K. Krishna Menon, India's defence minister before and during the 1962 Sino-Indian war, was not a popular figure with the service chiefs, who nicknamed him 'God Almighty' for his overbearing ways. Not particularly fond of Gen. Thimayya (Timmy), Menon sought the opinion of Major General Sam Manekshaw on Thimayya. Sam, outspoken and articulate, replied, "Sir, as a junior officer, we are not permitted to express an opinion on a superior officer. We respect our seniors and we have no two opinions on it." In his book on Thimayya, An Amazing Life (KW Publishers), Brigadier C.B. Khanduri writes about this innocuous but pivotal conversation that kickstarted a political storm leading to Thimayya's resignation, which he later retracted.Biographies on Indian military leaders from different eras reveal overlapping spaces in history. For instance, Khanduri's book mentions how Timmy's recommendations on China were ignored by Menon, leading to India's debacle in 1962. On the other hand, Arjun Subramanian's book Shooting Straight (HarperCollins) begins the career story of Lt. Gen. Rostum (Rusty) Nanavatty after the 1962 conflict. Nanavatty was commissioned at the end of the war, a few years after Timmy's career ended and at a time when a demoralised national leadership was undergoing a catharsis. Subramaniam highlights a letter written by the young Lieutenant Nanavatty who is remarkably unsparing in his criticism of the leadership for its foibles in the war.

The author deftly uses the letter to bring out the fearlessness in the young officer's thinking. In a way, Subramaniam's narrative in Shooting Straight is a consequential document about the war's impact on young Indians. The stories of Timmy and Rusty are from different Indias — separated by the war of 1962 as the inflection point. Wedged between the two eras is the post-war decade after 1971.On one hand, the wars of the 1960s were over and on the other, the insurgencies of Punjab and Kashmir of the 1980s hadn't yet arrived. Air Chief Marshal Idris Latif was an Air Force Chief during this period in the late 1970s. His wife, Bilkees Latif, in her book on her husband The Ladder of His Life (KW Publishers), reminisces about an important dimension of the question of choice during Partition in 1947. Soon after the Partition was announced, Latif, then a young air force officer, was goaded by another Muslim officer leaving for Pakistan to join him. To the officer's opinion that Pakistan was a land for Muslims, Latif replied, "You must be joking; what has religion got to do with nationality? I'm an Indian, born in Hyderabad, you know — and not the Hyderabad in Pakistan!" He even advised the departing officer to stay, insisting that the Indian Air Force would be a better choice. Latif followed in the footsteps of Brigadier Mohd Usman who chose India over Pakistan. The story of Latif, who rose to become India's first Muslim Air Chief, is emblematic of the secular culture of India's military.Typically, biographies provide a framework to situate events in the context of a nation's journey. Military biographies assign signposts on the time-trajectory in a country's history, especially in India, where the journey post-independence has been a progression from early existential struggles to assertions of identity. By exploring the paths of these protagonists, the biographies seek to capture the cultural impressions, personalities, choices, and help contextualise judgements on these characters. In the case of Nanavatty, peeling away his personality helps reveal his versatility. Like the tenure in Sri Lanka in the 1980s, when para commando units were sceptical of Nanavatty's role as a commander but grew to respect his initiative, wholeheartedness and an ability to lead from the front.

Subramaniam's writing, lucid and accessible, aided by the protagonist's painstaking notes, brings out the clarity in Nanavatty's thinking, which underpinned his career philosophy.Khanduri writes about Timmy as a committed and vocal personality who commanded a larger than life presence. He carried the legacy and impressions of a colonial army, and oversaw the transition during post-independence nation-building, before the era of wars in the 1960s. Nanavatty, on the other hand, was the archetypal infantryman who believed that victory is measured by the proverbial 'foot', and whose spartan measures set a high bar in tackling 'dirty' insurgencies of the 1990s.

Complex journeysThe biographies of Timmy, Latif and Nanavatty help us understand the personalities and the road taken by each. While Timmy's life is set in a time of tussles within the government, Latif played a key role in the modernisation following the 1971 war, including the replacement of old Canberra aircraft and the induction of Jaguars, all the while working with two different Prime Ministers of different political parties. Subramaniam's work on Nanavatty reveals the general's approach in more complex security challenges than the other two — which involved the Indian Peace Keeping Force in Sri Lanka and the insurgency in Kashmir. The three narratives collectively depict how the Indian armed forces have evolved since independence to the nineties.The three books delve into the nuances of military leadership, particularly with the stakeholders — political or military. All three were straight shooters in their approach, but differed on their styles. While Timmy could be vocal and confrontational, Latif managed the political leadership adroitly, while Nanavatty, by the 1990s, had adopted a pragmatic approach.Despite these three eminently readable books and a recently republished biography of Gen. Srinagesh (Commanded by Destiny/Penguin Books), military biographies are rare in India. Many belong to an era of World Wars, when accounts were documented and information was archived better. Sadly, within this thin historiography, several books suffer from abysmal writing or hagiographical accounts. One wishes to see more critique of the protagonist in accounts. In his book, Subramaniam reminds us that objective biographies of military leaders, especially those whose careers reached a pinnacle in the 1980s and 1990s, are rare, which makes Lt. Gen. Nanavatty's book both relevant and unusual. At the level of perceptions, military biographies in India run the risk of being mistakenly assumed to be technical accounts of a closed community. In a country where the military has had a major role to play in its history, a diminished understanding robs readers of an essential part of history defined by its characters

The science of sleep and the role of sleep aids



Some people seem to fall asleep the moment their head touches the pillow, while others toss and turn, counting imaginary sheep or scrolling endlessly on their phone. For the latter group, a growing market of sleep aids exists from white noise machines and rain sound playlists to herbal teas, melatonin pills and age-old practices like drinking warm turmeric milk before bed. Do these sleep aids help? And what makes falling asleep so effortless for some, yet such a challenge for others?Experts point to a complex mix of biology, lifestyle and environment.

What is sleep?

According to Sridhar R., senior consultant, Interventional Pulmonology, MGM Hospital, Chennai, sleep is broadly divided into two categories : Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep and Non-REM (NREM) sleep. NREM has three stages, from light sleep (N1) to deep, restorative slow-wave sleep (N3). REM, where vivid dreaming occurs, is vital for memory and emotional processing.A typical night involves four to six sleep cycles, each lasting 70–120 minutes, moving fluidly between NREM and REM stages. While adults require 7 to 8 hours of sleep, Indu Khosla, senior consultant, Paediatric Pulmonology, Narayana Health SRCC, Mumbai, notes that newborns may sleep up to 22 hours a day, children need 9 to 12 hours, teenagers 8 to 10 hours and older adults 6 to 8 hours. Interestingly, she adds, "Indians and Asians generally take less sleep than their Western counterparts."Experts explain that those who nod off quickly may simply have a robust circadian rhythm the body's internal clock and lower pre-sleep arousal. Others may benefit from optimal "sleep hygiene": regular sleep times, low stress before bed and minimal light exposure. On the other hand, for people who lie awake, causes can range from excessive evening caffeine and screen use to underlying sleep disorders like insomnia or obstructive sleep apnea (OSA).Sounds and habitsAuditory aids -- white noise, pink noise, rain sounds, whale calls, Indian classical ragas, even traditional conch blowing can help by masking sudden, disruptive sounds. M.S. Panduranga, senior consultant , Neurology, Dharamshila Narayana Superspeciality Hospital, explains,"The brain processes sounds even during sleep. A continuous, uniform sound acts like an acoustic blanket, reducing the chance of arousals from irregular noises."Pink noise, such as steady rainfall, can even synchronise brain waves and consolidate sleep. Indian classical music, says Dr. Sridhar, offers a "structured broadband quality" that relaxes without the jarring impact of random noise. For babies, rhythmic sounds may mimic the mother's heartbeat in the womb, aiding sleep but Dr. Khosla cautions against creating long-term dependence on such aids.Sindhu V., consultant, pulmonology, SRM Global Hospitals, Chennai explains, "India's mix of traditional and modern habits has a clear impact on sleep". Late-night chai -- rich in caffeine -- and prolonged screen exposure suppress melatonin, delaying sleep onset. Blue light from devices signals the brain to "stay awake," a problem most pronounced in urban areas.

In rural regions, sleep tends to follow the natural light cycle -- early to bed, early to rise, whereas city dwellers often push bedtimes later due to artificial lighting, socialising or work. "Practices such as yoga, meditation and warm milk before bed, rooted in Indian tradition, can help counteract these modern disruptions,"Dr. Sindhu said.Sleep associated health risksInsomnia -- sleep disorder where people struggle to fall asleep, stay asleep, or both, even when they have the opportunity for a full night's rest, Obstructive sleep apnea(OSA)-- another sleep disorder where your upper airway repeatedly becomes blocked during sleep, causing pauses in breathing (apnea) or shallow breathing (hypopnea) , restless leg syndrome -- a neurological disorder that causes an irresistible urge to move the legs, often accompanied by uncomfortable sensations and narcolepsy -- a chronic neurological disorder that disrupts the brain's ability to regulate sleep-wake cycles, leading to excessive daytime sleepiness and other sleep disturbances are among India's most prevalent sleep disorders.

OSA, often linked to obesity, enlarged tonsils, craniofacial structure-- the intricate framework of the head and face, encompassing the skull, facial bones, muscles, nerves, and teeth, which develops from complex embryonic processes like neural crest cell migration disrupts deep sleep and can cause hypertension, heart disease, and memory impairment. Dr. Khosla stresses that even children especially those living with obesity, Down syndrome, or neuromuscular disorders can suffer from OSA, making timely diagnosis through sleep studies crucial.While there is some evidence that herbal remedies including chamomile tea, ashwagandha, brahmi, and turmeric milk promote relaxation, self medicating with over-the-counter sleep medications can be risky. Dr. Sridhar advises professional consultation, particularly for chronic insomnia (trouble sleeping three or more nights a week for over three months) or when sleep issues are linked to other health conditions.

Quality matters as much as quantity. "A regular sleep schedule, reduced evening caffeine, limited screen time, a calm sleep environment and moderate daytime activity can make falling asleep and staying asleep much easier", says Dr. Panduranga. For those still struggling despite good habits, doctors recommend seeking evaluation rather than relying indefinitely on home remedies or sound machines.While International health bodies such as World Health Organization supports research and guidelines on sleep disorders and includes certain prescription medicines for short-term use in specific cases, their primary advice too is to build lasting,

Ration at your doorstep

On August 12, 2025, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin launched Thayumanavar Thittam, a scheme to provide ration products at the doorsteps of senior citizens and persons with disabilities. This scheme, which when translated means 'one who shows motherly affection', is not new for Tamil Nadu, conceptually or in practice. But what makes it different from similar schemes implemented in the past is its reach. Thayumanavar Thittam, at a cost of cost of ?30.16 crore, is set to benefit about 20.4 lakh senior citizens and 1.3 lakh persons with disabilities across the State. In early July, the authorities conducted a trial run of the scheme in 10 districts, including Chennai.Tamil Nadu is perhaps the only State to follow a universal public distribution system (PDS) instead of a targeted PDS. Unlike in many other States, where licences are issued to private dealers to run fair price shops, cooperative societies in Tamil Nadu manage the affairs of nearly 95% of the shops (as against the national average of over 20%). Of about 37,330 shops in the southern State, more than 35,000 shops are handled by cooperative societies.

Tamil Nadu has also established 2,495 mobile fair price shops to ensure access to essential commodities for people in remote, hilly, and geographically challenging areas. Five years ago, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the then AIADMK regime also opened seven such shops and named them after former Chief Minister Jayalalithaa.Other States have been implementing schemes similar to Thayumanavar Thittam for some time. Under the Oppom scheme in Kerala, auto rickshaw drivers deliver essential commodities at the doorsteps of people who cannot visit PDS shops to collect their supplies due to old age, illnesses, or other issues. In Karnataka, the Anna Suvidha scheme benefits those aged over 75. Punjab is also implementing its own variant of the concept.In Delhi and Andhra Pradesh, the execution of similar schemes ran into problems. The scheme in Delhi never took off when the Aam Aadmi Party was in power. In Andhra Pradesh, regime change proved to be the obstacle: the Telugu Desam Party-led government reversed the previous YSR Congress Party government's practice of supplying essential commodities through mobile dispensing units for all beneficiaries. In the revised scheme, door delivery of commodities has been restricted to about 16 lakh PDS beneficiaries who are aged above 65 years or are physically challenged.Nevertheless, the idea has clearly been gaining currency. This is why it is strange that the Union government told the Lok Sabha early this month that "there is no provision under the [National Food Security] Act for delivery of foodgrains at the doorstep of beneficiaries." What should have been stated is that Section 32 (1) of the Act says that the law does "not preclude the Central government or the State government from continuing or formulating other food-based welfare schemes."

The DMK regime's initiative was appreciated by Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam (DMDK) general secretary Premalatha Vijayakant, who is not an ally of the ruling party. Describing the launch of the scheme as a



"victory" for DMDK founder Vijayakant and the party, she recalled how Vijayakant had promised electors during the 2006 Assembly polls that his party would deliver commodities to beneficiaries if brought to power. His idea had been ridiculed then, she said. The DMDK general secretary was, however, guarded about her party's position on forming an alliance with the DMK for the 2026 Assembly elections and clarified that the decision would be taken at the party's meet in Cuddalore in January.Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK) general secretary T.T.V. Dhinakaran criticised the scheme, contending that it had been implemented keeping the Assembly elections in mind. He also reminded the government that it had not implemented the DMK's electoral promise of increasing the quantity of sugar and including urad dal once again under the PDS.Notwithstanding the criticism, Mr. Stalin seems to be conscious of the fact that it is officials in charge who determine the success of any scheme. This was evident when he pointedly sought their cooperation. Without the right approach from them, schemes such as this may fail to ensure food security to lakhs of beneficiaries.

LG launches 115-inch QNED evo AI Mini LED TV in India

Hyderabad: LG Electronics India has introduced its 292 cm (115-inch) QNED evo AI Mini LED TV, the largest model in its 2026 QNED evo lineup. The television combines ultra-large-screen viewing with AI-powered picture and sound technologies, gaming features and personalised smart entertainment.

Powered by the Alpha 8 AI Processor Gen3, the 115-inch television features Precision Dimming Ultra and Dynamic QNED Color Pro, which has received Intertek certification for 100 per cent colour volume. AI Super Upscaling and Dynamic Tone Mapping Pro are designed to enhance picture detail, brightness and contrast.

For sports enthusiasts, AI Sound Pro delivers virtual 11.1.2-channel surround sound through the built-in speakers.

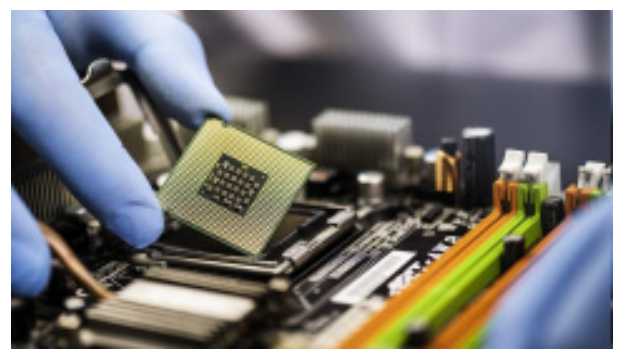
To survive AI and global geopolitics, India should become a hub of knowledge creation, not just knowledge processing

Earlier this month, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), India's largest IT services firm, confirmed it will lay off 12,000 employees. For decades, companies such as TCS symbolised India's prowess in IT-enabled services — a low-cost, high-scale model that rode the wave of globalisation. But that model is now under existential strain. The era of labour arbitrage is drawing to a close, and the age of artificial intelligence (AI) is rewriting the rules of economic competitiveness.

Generative AI, machine learning, and automation are fast replacing the very tasks that once gave India its edge: coding, data entry, support services, and even parts of analytics. The decline in headcount is not a blip; India's core export, white-collar digital labour, is being disrupted. And the country does not seem prepared as we see problems in absorbing science and engineering talent newly entering the job market.Simultaneously, the manufacturing-led catch-up route is narrowing. For years, economists argued India could do what China did in the 1990s — turn industrial policy and export-led manufacturing into mass employment and structural transformation. But that ship has largely sailed. Countries such as Vietnam and Bangladesh have already captured the low-cost manufacturing space. Add to that rising automation and India's own infrastructure bottlenecks, the feasibility of China-style manufacturing resurgence diminishes rapidly.

What, then, is India's pathway to sustained economic relevance?

The answer lies upstream — in innovation, discovery science, and a smart, coordinated science, technology, and innovation (STI) policy. If India wants to be a rule-maker rather than a rule-taker in the AI-driven global economy, it must invest urgently in becoming a hub of knowledge creation, not just knowledge processing.This will only be achievable with a new national compact that starts from STEM but goes above and beyond embracing STEPS — an integration of STEM with policy and society. This means building a generation of technologists who understand not just how to build systems, but how those systems affect entrepreneurship, business model and scaling, ethics, governance, and inclusion. It also means reforming curricula to include data governance, AI ethics, climate-tech, innovation economics, and intellectual property policy. Finally, it also means urgent, mission mode requirement of an integrated, State-agnostic approach where we will see not just southern India having a head start in STEM and STEPS.The New Education Policy (NEP), 2020 provides some groundwork, but implementation must go further and deeper. From IITs to State universities, India will need a deliberate shift toward interdisciplinary innovation and doctoral-level research capacity. India's innovation-to-education pipeline is currently too weak to sustain a 21st century knowledge economy.



And sadly in this, as noted above, manufacturing likely will not save India any more. The dream of becoming the "next China" in manufacturing is now largely unrealistic. India's manufacturing sector contributes just 14-16% of the GDP — a figure that has barely budged in a decade. More worryingly, global manufacturing is undergoing its own AI-led transformation: smart factories, predictive maintenance, and robotic assembly lines are shrinking the need for cheap labour. Competing on cost is now a losing battle.Moreover, global supply chains are also realigning around strategic resilience and digital integration, not just wage arbitrage. India's challenge is not to attract the next garment factory but to build the next quantum computing lab or climate-resilient agri-tech platform.Which brings us to the question of how a Triple Helix approach might be India's best shot at future-readiness. To get there, India will need a clear National Science and Innovation Strategy underpinned by deep collaboration between government, industry, and academia. No single actor can deliver the transformation needed and increasingly the need of the hour will be science-based entrepreneurship and scientist entrepreneurs. It has been done before like by Vijay Chandru, inventor of Simputer and founder of Strand Genomics, also a former IISc Professor, but one Vijay Chandru is hardly enough for a country of 1.3 billion.Government also must invest in blue-sky science, reform its R&D funding structures, and design enabling regulatory frameworks for frontier tech (AI, biotech, semiconductors, and so on). Universities must evolve into innovation hubs, not just exam factories. They must work closely with industry, build tech transfer offices, and reward risk-taking. Industry also must move beyond short-term returns and co-invest in long-horizon research, from chip design to synthetic biology refusing to accept modest productivity gains with a middling equilibrium mindset.Global lessons abound. The U.S.'s DARPA ecosystem, Germany's Fraunhofer Institutes, and Israel's Start-Up Nation playbook all demonstrate how strategic state support and institutional coordination can turn ideas into global advantage. India can build from their lessons, leverage on the current global geopolitical headwinds and create a national consciousness around science and innovation.

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