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Telangana CM's Diwali Gift to 4.5 Lakh Under Cheyutha

Hyderabad: Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy launched the distribution of new social security pensions under the 'Cheyutha' scheme in his home constituency of Kodangal on the occasion of Diwali on Sunday, extending the benefit to an additional 4.50 lakh beneficiaries across Telangana. With this, the total number of Cheyutha beneficiaries in the state rose to 45 lakh. Beneficiaries receive Rs 2,016 pension every month. The Chief Minister also celebrated his birthday in Kodangal and joined Diwali festivities at the house of an Indiramma housing beneficiary.



At Hakimpet, the Chief Minister interacted with women's self-help groups and handed over Cheyutha pension sanction letters to newly selected beneficiaries. He said 3.50 lakh of the 4.50 lakh new pensioners were women, underlining the government's focus on strengthening their economic security.

Revanth Reddy said the government had sanctioned Indiramma houses in the names of women to provide them greater security. It was also providing fine rice free of cost to 3.40 crore people and free electricity up to 200 units to reduce the financial burden on families, he said.

The Chief Minister said his government had introduced several welfare programmes aimed at empowering women and claimed that no Chief Minister had implemented such schemes in the past 70 years. He criticised opposition parties for provoking autorickshaw drivers against the government's free bus travel scheme for women and said those seeking its withdrawal should be rejected by the people.

He said his life's goal was to turn one crore women in Telangana into crorepatis (millionaires). "It is because of the blessings of women that I have reached this position. They have given me more than what I asked for, and I have no more positions to seek," he said.

The Chief Minister said women had been entrusted with the management of Amma Adarsha schools, stitching of school uniforms and operation of petrol bunks. Indiramma canteens were also being allotted in the Secretariat and government offices, he said. Banks had extended loans of Rs 79,000 crore to women's self-help groups, while the government had paid Rs 1,900 crore towards interest on loans taken by SHGs.

"Women becoming entrepreneurs is essential if Telangana is to achieve the goal of becoming a $3 trillion economy by 2047," Revanth Reddy said.

He said the government would distribute Indiramma sarees to one crore women on November 19. "The education and growth of their children is the real empowerment of women. We will make women partners in every government scheme," he said.

Revanth Reddy also inaugurated the newly constructed government junior college and police station buildings at Bomraspet. He later inaugurated buildings of a Zilla Parishad school, college and primary health centre at Hakimpet.

The Chief Minister visited Parsapur and inaugurated an Indiramma house. He presented silk clothes to the beneficiaries, Sumitra and Srinivas, and had lunch at their residence as part of the Diwali celebrations.

Andhra Pradesh Ranks 2nd In Access Equality Index 2026

Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh has secured the second position among 28 states in the Access Equality Index (AEI-2026), outperforming its economic standing in providing people access to basic services, infrastructure, education, healthcare and social security, despite its relatively lower per capita income.Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday welcomed the findings of a report prepared by the Centre for New Economics Studies (CNES), saying it reflected the governance initiatives undertaken by his government over the past two-and-a-half years.

Goa topped the index with a score of 0.68, followed by Andhra Pradesh at 0.66. Sikkim secured third place with 0.63, while Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Telangana occupied the subsequent positions, it said.

The report identified Andhra Pradesh as a front-runner state and the highest-ranked among major states. The index assessed five key parameters - basic amenities, healthcare, education, socio-economic security and legal services - using 60 indicators across 23 categories.

Andhra Pradesh emerged as the top-performing state nationally in socio-economic security, scoring 0.69, ahead of Goa, which ranked second with 0.50. The state also figured among the leading performers in the other four categories.

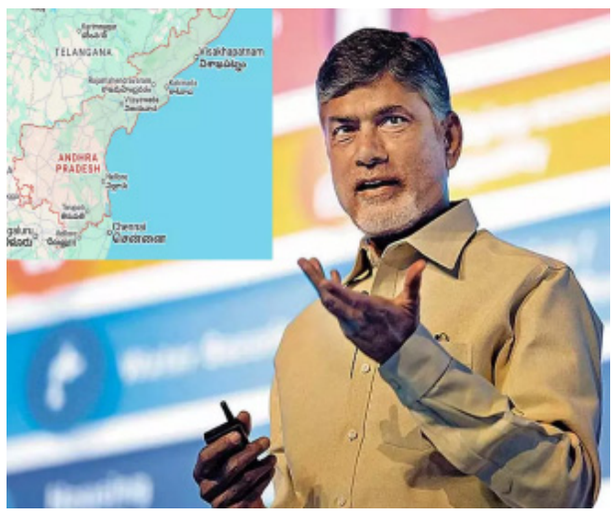
Despite ranking 13th nationally in per capita income, Andhra Pradesh stood second in providing opportunities to its people, highlighting its performance beyond its economic position, as per the report.

The southern state's access score was 0.66 against an expected score of 0.51 based on its economic status, registering a positive difference of 0.15 points - the highest among all states, it said, adding that Kerala followed with a positive difference of 0.07, while Himachal Pradesh recorded 0.06.

The report observed that economic wealth alone could not determine a state's development, emphasising that converting available resources into opportunities and essential services for citizens was equally important.

It assessed access to drinking water, sanitation, housing, clean energy, healthcare, education, employment, banking, insurance, pensions and legal services.

Naidu said his government was focusing on attracting investments to generate wealth, improving governance and expanding opportunities for people.



He said development and governance initiatives were reaching different regions and sections of society, from individual households to community assets, including efforts to improve cleanliness in villages and towns.



Khushiyon ka Eid: Congress chief Kharges Diwali remark draws BJPs ire

The BJP on Monday came down heavily on Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge for calling Diwali a 'khushiyon ka Eid', and dared him and senior opposition party leader Rahul Gandhi to call Eid a 'Diwali of joy'.

The BJP also called the Congress an anti-Sanatani party.

Extending his Diwali greetings over the weekend, Kharge had told reporters that Diwali is a major festival celebrated by everyone in India and described it as 'khushiyon ka Eid'.

Reacting to his comments, BJP's national media co-incharge and spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari said the Congress chose vote bank politics even on Diwali with the party president describing Diwali as an "Eid of Happiness".

"Recall Sonia Gandhi crying for 'Babri'. In the past when Sanatan was called 'Dengue Malaria Aid' the Congress was silent! Under Gandhi Vadra family Policy of Congress is Anti Sanatan, Anti Hindu," Bhandari said.

BJP's national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia said in a post on X, "Mr Kharge, what exactly is the problem with calling Diwali, the biggest festival of Hindus, by its own name?"

Bhatia said Eid has its own significance, and Diwali has its own sanctity, traditions and identity.

"Has changing the identity of Hindu festivals become a matter of political etiquette in Congress's so-called secularism? Rahul Gandhi and Mr Kharge, answer this: will you ever have the courage to call Eid the "Diwali of joy," he asked.

"Respect Hindus' faith; don't change the identity of their festivals. Diwali was, Diwali is, and Diwali will remain Diwali," Bhatia said.

Another BJP spokesperson Tuhin Sinha said Muslims celebrate Eid only twice a year but the Congress party wants to celebrate every Hindu festival as "Khushiyon ki Eid."

"So, Cong party effectively wants to celebrate Eid 10-12 times a year.Thats why this Cong party is MMC (Maowadi Muslim League Cong) as Prime Minister Narendra Modi calls it," he added.

In another post, Bhandari said the Congress thinks of appeasement and vote bank even on occasions like Diwali and that shows the anti-Sanatani mindset of the Congress party.

BJP MP Tarun Chugh accused the Congress of indulging in appeasement politics.

Speaking to PTI Videos, Chugh said the remark has hurt the sentiments of crores of Sanatanis and alleged that the party was hesitant to acknowledge the identity of Hindu festivals due to vote-bank politics.

"By describing Diwali as the Eid of happiness, whom is Kharge ji trying to appease? Has vote-bank politics had such an influence that the Congress is even hesitant to acknowledge the identity of Hindu festivals?" he said.

Chugh said Diwali is an Indian festival celebrated across the world and associated with the return of Lord Ram to Ayodhya. He accused the Congress of insulting Indian culture and said the sentiments of Ram devotees across the world had been hurt. "Kharge sahib, in an attempt to please your Muslim League patrons and strengthen your alliance, you are repeatedly engaging in activities that are anti-Hindu and anti-Sanatan," he said.



Rahul Gandhi repeats debate dare after PM Modis Dimagi Naxals jibe

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Monday addressed CRPF personnel, claiming their expressions showed they did not believe Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statements, and renewed his challenge to the PM for an open debate on who was anti-national and who was acting at the behest of foreign forces.

Accusing Modi of calling Opposition leaders Naxals, Rahul said his challenge to the Prime Minister remained open, adding that the debate could take place "any time, any place".

"Your faces said it all: you didn't buy the PM's lies. He called us Naxals. My challenge stands. Let him debate me on who is anti-national and who is controlled by foreign forces. Any time, any place," Rahul said in a post on X, addressing CRPF personnel.

The Congress leader also claimed that Modi would lose the courage to face even a single jawan after the proposed debate.

"My guarantee: after the debate, the PM won't have the guts to stand in front of a single jawan again," he said.

The latest message is part of Rahul's continuing challenge to Modi for a face-to-face debate over allegations of foreign interference and the BJP's charge that the Opposition is working against national interests.The exchange began after Modi, during his Gujarat visit on November 1, accused certain forces within the country of spreading lies and rumours to create instability while the country was facing external challenges.Rahul responded on November 2 by accusing the Prime Minister of depending on foreign support to come to power and remain in office. He also alleged that India's financial system was controlled and supported by foreigners and challenged Modi to an open debate.A day later, Rahul renewed the challenge, asking Modi to choose the venue, date and even the person who would judge the debate. He suggested that RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat could preside over the discussion, with the media and the country's youth present.



Amit Shah, CM Naidu To Attend Vizag CII Partnership Summit on Nov 12, 13

Amaravati: Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu will attend the 31st CII Partnership Summit in Visakhapatnam on November 12 and 13, with representatives from 58 countries expected to participate.

The summit, themed 'Navigating New World Order', will bring together international policymakers, industry leaders and technology experts to discuss trade, investments, technological partnerships and emerging opportunities in the changing global economy.

"Shah, Goyal and I will participate in the CII Partnership Summit in Visakhapatnam on November 12 and 13, which will bring together government and industry representatives from 58 countries," said Naidu,on Monday.

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi, Andhra Pradesh IT Minister Nara Lokesh and representatives of leading companies will also participate. Goyal will chair the summit while Naidu will serve as its co-chair.

As many as 16 foreign ministers and 40 international-level delegates are expected, besides ambassadors and representatives of Singapore, Nepal, Cambodia, Myanmar, UAE, Canada, Mauritius, Egypt and other countries, it said.

Representatives of the World Food Programme, Asian Development Bank and United Nations Environment Programme will also participate. More than 400 business-to-business meetings and business-to-government interactions are planned.

Discussions will cover six key areas, including trade, technology, agriculture, food security, talent development, clean energy and sustainable industrial growth, with particular focus on quantum technology and semiconductors.

The Confederation of Indian Industry is organising the summit with the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, while the Andhra Pradesh government is hosting the event.

The main sessions will take place at Andhra University's Engineering College Grounds. Preliminary industry meetings are scheduled for November 11, followed by a dinner hosted by Naidu.

The Andhra Pradesh Women and Growth Summit 2026 will also be organised alongside the event. Vice President CP Radhakrishnan is scheduled to attend the valedictory session on November 13.

The state government has constituted a committee led by Lokesh to monitor the implementation of investment agreements. So far, 272 projects worth Rs 6 lakh crore have commenced operations, while another Rs 17 lakh crore worth of projects have been approved.

According to the press release, Andhra Pradesh attracted 25.6 percent of India's foreign direct investment during 2025-26

Six preparatory regional summits generated investment proposals worth Rs 86,522 crore through 194 MoUs, expected to create employment fo around 1.4 lakh people.

Naidu said the summit aimed to connect Andhra Pradesh industries with global markets and strengthen the state's position as a destination for international investments and technological partnerships.

Bodies of two more trekkers recovered in Uttarakhand, search on for remaining two



Uttarkashi: SDRF officials carry the mortal remains of a missing trekker, to be airlifted to a hospital, in Uttarkashi, Wednesday, Nov. 4, 2026. Bodies of two more trekkers, who were part of a group of eight that went missing six days ago on the Kedartal route, were recovered on Wednesday, officials said. (PTI Photo) (PTI11_04_2026_000173B)SDRF officials carry the mortal remains of a missing trekker, to be airlifted to a hospital, in Uttarkashi, Wednesday, Nov. 4, 2026. The bodies of two more trekkers, who went missing after an avalanche struck the Kedartal trekking route in Uttarakhand's Uttarkashi district, were recovered on Thursday — taking the death toll to six. Two others, meanwhile, remain missing.According to an Action Taken Report issued by the Uttarkashi District Emergency Operations Centre, the bodies of two men were recovered from separate locations during a search operation conducted by a joint team of the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering (NIM).

The bodies have been brought to the base camp, where the rescue teams are stationed, and will be airlifted to the Matli helipad on Friday.Thursday's search operation began at around 9 am and concluded at 3.30 pm. A fresh search operation will be conducted on Friday to trace the two remaining missing trekkers.Meanwhile, the two bodies recovered were identified as that of Rintu Mandal (40), son of Sunil Chandra Mandal, and Uday Ghosh (30), son of Dinesh Ghosh. Both were residents of Salbani in West Bengal's Bankura district.The rescue operation is being conducted by the 10-member team in the Kedarkhadak area, amid difficult terrain and challenging weather conditions.The incident occurred after a 12-member expedition comprising seven trekkers, one guide, one cook and three porters set out from Gangotri for the Kedartal trek on October 27. The group had obtained permission from the Forest Department a day earlier for a three-day trek and was expected to return by October 29.However, hours after the group entered the trekking route, authorities received a weather alert warning of adverse conditions expected on October 29. Mayank Garg, Deputy Director of Gangotri National Park, had earlier told The Indian Express that the department received the alert around 10.30-11 am on October 27, by which time the group had already left. Officials could not convey the warning as they were unable to establish contact with the expedition.

On October 30, a day after the group was expected to return, authorities received information that its members had been trapped by heavy snowfall and avalanches in the Kedartal region. Information available with the Forest Department indicated that avalanches had occurred at around 10 to 12 locations along the route.Four members of the expedition — three porters and a cook — were rescued near Kachchi Dhang on October 31 after rescue personnel cleared snow and created a passage through the affected stretch. They were brought safely to Gangotri.Initial aerial reconnaissance and ground searches failed to locate the remaining missing members. During subsequent operations, rescue teams spotted tents, bags and other belongings near the Kedarkharak area. Personnel have since been manually digging through the accumulated snow to search for the missing trekkers.

Officer seeks bribe to let off employer who did not deposit his staff's PF, held in Jaipur



An enforcement officer of Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) was arrested by Rajasthan's Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) while accepting a bribe of Rs 1 lakh in Jaipur, officials said Wednesday.Acting on the instructions of the headquarters, the ACB's Jaipur Unit arrested Sonu Maurya, catching him "red-handed" while accepting the bribe.ACB's Director General of Police, Govind Gupta, said that a complaint was received by the ACB where it was alleged that in lieu of not registering an FIR against the complainant and not freezing the bank accounts for not depositing the Provident Fund of employees working in his firm, the accused, Sonu Maurya, was demanding a bribe of Rs 2 lakh.Based on the complaint, the bribery demand was verified, and the accused was found to have eventually demanded a bribe of Rs 1 lakh. On Wednesday, in the presence of the Chartered Accountant of the complainant's firm, the accused received the bribe amount, as demanded, which was recovered by the ACB team.Gupta said that the trap was laid under the supervision of ACB Deputy Inspector General Omprakash Meena by a team consisting of Additional SP Manoj Kumar Gupta, among others.Inquiries are also being conducted regarding the role of other individuals in the case, ACB said. Officials said that apart from conducting interrogations and investigations in the case, an FIR will be lodged against Maurya under the Prevention of Corruption Act.Previous case from RajasthanEarlier, in September, a senior officer of Rajasthan's premier police agency, the Special Operations Group (SOG), allegedly sought a bribe of Rs 2 crore from a man in lieu of getting his name cleared in the multi-crore Udaipur Municipal Corporation land scam case.

Mukesh Kumar Soni is an Additional Superintendent of Police with the SOG, often touted as the "pride of Rajasthan police" for its role in exposing major drug syndicates, probing digital frauds, and cracking down on gangster networks.Soni was arrested by the state's Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) after his alleged middleman, Sajjan Singh Jain alias Tatla, was caught "red-handed" while accepting a bribe of Rs 2 crore on his behalf on Saturday.

Amid festive rush, New Delhi Railway Station gets separate entry and exit gates for reserved, unreserved passengers



New Delhi Railway Station latest update: Amid the festive season rush, Northern Railway has introduced separate entry and exit gates for reserved and unreserved passengers at New Delhi Railway Station (NDLS) to manage crowds and ensure smooth passenger movement.Under the new arrangement, passengers travelling in reserved (Sleeper and AC) classes and those travelling in unreserved/general class will have to use designated gates. The move aims to reduce overcrowding at the station's main entry points, circulating areas, and platforms.Northern Railway introduces separate entry, exit gates at New Delhi Railway Station to manage crowds (Image: Northern Railway) Northern Railway introduces separate entry, exit gates at New Delhi Railway Station to manage crowds (Image: Northern Railway)

Which gates should passengers use for entry and exit at New Delhi Railway Station?

According to Himanshu Shekhar Upadhyay, Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) of Northern Railway (NR), passengers travelling in reserved classes for platforms 1 to 15 will have to use Gate No. 8 and Gate No. 11. These gates are marked in blue. Passengers travelling in unreserved/general class for platforms 1 to 16 will have to use Gate No. 12, which is marked in yellow, the official added.The CPRO further said that Northern Railway has also introduced one-way movement at the station. Passengers entering the station will not be allowed to use the same gates for exit. Similarly, designated exit gates can only be used by passengers leaving the station, he added.Northern Railway introduces separate entry, exit gates at New Delhi Railway Station to manage crowds (Image: Northern Railway) Northern Railway introduces separate entry, exit gates at New Delhi Railway Station to manage crowds (Image: Northern Railway)Other measures to manage passenger rush at New Delhi Railway StationTo reduce queues at ticket counters, railway staff are using handheld devices to issue unreserved tickets directly to passengers at the station.Northern Railway has also temporarily stopped the sale of platform tickets to restrict unnecessary entry and reduce crowding on platforms.Northern Railway introduces separate entry, exit gates at New Delhi Railway Station to manage crowds (Image: Northern Railway) Northern Railway introduces separate entry, exit gates at New Delhi Railway Station to manage crowds (Image: Northern Railway)The zonal railway has installed signboards across the station, including at foot overbridges and entry and exit points, to help passengers find their designated gates.

Odisha tried its best but 800 still crossed over to vote in Andhra. Here's why



Despite heightened surveillance by the Odisha government and its efforts to prevent Andhra Pradesh from setting up polling booths in the disputed Kotia region, over 800 voters crossed the border to exercise their franchise in the rural body polls in the neighbouring state on Thursday.A majority of those who voted in the polls said they participated in the process since they were worried the authorities in Andhra Pradesh would exclude their names from their welfare schemes.The disputed region on Odisha-Andhra Pradesh border has been witnessing confrontations between officials from the two states ever since the government in the latter announced dates to hold Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituencies (MPTC) and Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituencies (ZPTC) polls in Kotia.

Kotia border dispute Leaders from BJP, BJD and the Congress camp at Kotia late on Wednesday night. (Express photo)The Odisha government has deployed over 15 platoons of police force and deputed senior officers and executive magistrates to prevent entry of Andhra officials into Kotia to hold the polls. It had also issued prohibitory orders to maintain public order in the region. In addition, Odisha erected barricades in border villages to prevent entry of people from Andhra Pradesh into the disputed territory.Koraput district collector Manoj Satyawan said since Kotia is an integral part of Odisha, people from all walks of life, including lawyers, doctors and political parties, gathered there to sensitise people against participating in the Andhra polls. "Minimal number of voters went to Andhra Pradesh to exercise their franchise," he said.Leaders from all political parties, including Jeypore MLA Taraprasad Bahinipati and Pottangi legislator Ramachandra Kadam — both from the Congress — along with others from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) camped in the region to put up a united front over the issue.Leaders of different political parties camping in Kotia on Thursday Leaders of different political parties camping in Kotia on Thursday. (Special Arrangement)The leaders were seen opposing entry of those who crossed the Odisha border to vote in the Andhra Pradesh polls.Kotia comprises a cluster of 28 villages with a population of nearly 5,000. Since the 1960s, both Odisha and Andhra Pradesh have claimed jurisdiction over 21 of these villages. People in the region have voter IDs from both Odisha and Andhra Pradesh due to which they enjoy welfare schemes from both the states.Leaders of different political parties in Odisha raise slogans against Andhra Pradesh on Thursday Leaders of different political parties in Odisha raise slogans against Andhra Pradesh on Thursday. (Special Arrangement)The Odisha government has alleged that Andhra Pradesh's move to hold the polls violated a 2006 Supreme Court order directing both states to maintain status quo in the region."The welfare schemes launched by the Andhra Pradesh government are lucrative compared to Odisha. While Odisha is giving an old age pension of Rs 1,000 per month, beneficiaries in Andhra Pradesh receive Rs 4,000. Other schemes by Andhra Pradesh, including distribution of rice, are also more attractive compared to what Odisha is offering. This is a reason why people want to participate in voting," said a local leader.

Young IAS officer says BJP MLA threatened him during Odisha flood duty

A controversy has erupted in Odisha after a BJP MLA from Asika, Saroj Padhi, was accused by an IAS officer of misbehaving with and threatening him while he was deployed on flood management duty. The officer submitted a police complaint against the legislator on Thursday.Samir Kumar Jena, a 2022-batch IAS officer currently posted as chief development officer-cum-executive officer, zilla parishad, Ganjam, alleged in his complaint that Padhi entered his chamber on Tuesday and shouted at him over the distribution of relief materials. Jena had been assigned to oversee relief and restoration work in the Asika area.

The IAS officer did not respond to calls seeking comment on the allegations, while a senior police officer in the district said the complaint was being verified and appropriate action would be taken in due course. The MLA, on his part, said the matter had been "resolved".According to the complaint, Jena told the MLA that the relief materials had been arranged by Minister Bibhuti Jena and distributed to beneficiaries as instructed."The MLA continued to shout at me even when I tried to convince him to discuss the matter with the minister and to resolve the matter. When I tried to explain my role here as an officer, he continued to hurl abuse at me using unparliamentary language and even threatened to kill me. The MLA also shouted at me, asking me to leave the place," the complainant alleged.Jena further claimed that the alleged incident was captured on CCTV in the executive officer's (EO) chamber. "Because of this incident, I am highly demoralised and in deep mental shock," he noted in the complaint.When contacted, Ganjam SP Harisha BC said he would have to confirm whether the complaint had been registered."We have mutually discussed whatever misunderstandings we had, and the matter has already been resolved. I am aware of the police complaint, and I have already discussed the matter with the officer. All of us were busy with flood duty, and some misunderstandings happened in between. I don't have any other complaints," Padhi told reporters in Bhubaneswar.Meanwhile, the state's Housing and Urban Development Department has transferred Asika Municipality EO Rajesh Kumar Mohapatra to the department. Mohapatra was present during the incident, according to the account of the episode.In September, another controversy erupted in Ganjam after allegations that Padhi's supporters had misbehaved with a woman sarpanch during a panchayat samiti meeting in Asika.

Hardeep Singh Puri elected unopposed to Rajya Sabha from Madhya Pradesh



Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri was formally declared elected unopposed to the Rajya Sabha from Madhya Pradesh on Thursday.Puri, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate for the by-election to the vacant Rajya Sabha seat, was declared elected after the nomination papers of two other candidates were rejected during scrutiny, leaving him as the sole candidate in the contest.Returning Officer Umesh Kumar Sharma issued the certificate, under Form 24 of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, which states that Puri was elected to the Council of States by the elected members of the Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly.

With Puri not being physically present on the occasion, BJP state president Hemant Khandelwal received the certificate from the Returning Officer on the Assembly premises. Deputy Chief Minister Jagdish Devda and BJP MLAs Rameshwar Sharma and Bhagwandas Sabnani were also present.BJP state president Hemant Khandelwal received the certificate from the Returning Officer on the Assembly premises. BJP state president Hemant Khandelwal received the certificate from the Returning Officer on the Assembly premises.The by-election was necessitated by the resignation of Union Minister of State L Murugan from the Rajya Sabha on October 14. Murugan's term was scheduled to end in April 2030. The BJP, subsequently, fielded Puri for the vacant seat.Puri filed his nomination papers on October 31 in the presence of Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, Deputy Chief Ministers Rajendra Shukla and Jagdish Devda, Khandelwal and other BJP leaders.The Returning Officer rejected the nominations of independent candidates Rajkumar Lohani and Kante Sayanna during scrutiny on November 3.Lohani's nomination was rejected for failing to submit the mandatory Form 26 affidavit within the prescribed deadline. The affidavit requires candidates to disclose details including criminal cases, assets and liabilities. Sayanna's nomination was rejected for failing to meet the requirement of obtaining the prescribed number of proposers.The Congress had also raised objections to Puri's nomination, questioning aspects of the documents submitted with his papers. The Returning Officer rejected the objections after examining the documents and hearing the parties.Puri, 74, is a former Indian Foreign Service officer who served as the country's permanent representative to the United Nations from 2009 to 2013.He entered the Rajya Sabha in January 2018 and was re-elected in 2020. He was sworn in as a Union minister in September 2017 and later served as the Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Housing and Urban Affairs before taking charge of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry in 2021.

Malkajgiri police conduct midnight checks in LB Nagar Colonies; seize 43 vehicles

Hyderabad: The Malkajgiri Police Commissionerate officials conducted midnight surprise checks in Nancharamma Colony and Ekalavya Colony under LB Nagar police station limits as part of a Community Contact Programme on Thursday.

The checks were conducted from midnight to 2 am on Friday on the directions of Police Commissioner B Sumathi.

Nagas stage mass rallies in Manipur to end 'proxy war', withdraw Assam Rifles

Naga groups in Manipur on Thursday staged rallies at the district headquarters of Ukhrul and Kamjong, demanding urgent intervention by the Centre to resolve the state's ongoing political crisis, end the "proxy war" and withdraw Assam Rifles from Naga-inhabited areas.The rallies were organised by the Tangkhul Naga Long (TNL), an apex body of the Tangkhul Nagas, and other Tangkhul frontal organisations under the aegis of the United Naga Council (UNC).The protest rally came a day after suspected armed militants opened fire on passenger vehicles along the Imphal–Ukhrul highway in between TM Kasom in Ukhrul district. Though no casualties were reported, the firing incident on Wednesday evening triggered panic among commuters.Protestors also displayed banners and placards demanding an end to the alleged arming of Kuki militant groups, abrogation of the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement and declaration of the groups as terrorist organisations.The Nagas have been accusing the Manipur government of using Kuki militants against other communities and urging the state government and the Centre to bring an end to the alleged campaign of violence against indigenous people.Addressing the media, TNL president Sword Vasum criticised the state government for its failure to ensure security along the Imphal–Ukhrul highway while questioning the authorities' inability to guarantee safe movement even along a stretch of barely five kilometres."If the government cannot ensure absolute security along a stretch of hardly five kilometres, it should be a matter of shame. People should be able to travel freely, day and night," Vasum said.He expressed concern that repeated incidents of violence and killings had become normal in Manipur."What should otherwise be treated as abnormal is now being treated as normal here in Manipur. This is the most unfortunate part," he said, cautioning that the consequences of the government's indifference to address the problem would ultimately affect both the hills and the valley.The Naga body president also questioned the role of Assam Rifles, alleging that personnel stationed close to violence-affected areas had failed to intervene even when houses were being burnt, and gunfire was reported.



Post-midterms, focus now on 2028 presidential race



Washington: After the midterm elections, focus has now shifted to the 2028 US presidential polls, with allies of Indian American Congressman Ro Khanna trying to whip up support for his candidacy and reports projecting Secretary of State Marco Rubio making a bid for the top executive post.A section of the media reported on Thursday that Rubio may resign from the Trump Administration for a possible presidential bid. However, Rubio dismissed the reports, asserting that he would be part of the Trump administration until the end of his term.Working for President Trump until the end of his term has "always been my plan," he said in an interview with The New York Times.

"I don't know where these things come from, to be honest with you," Rubio said, responding to reports of his imminent exit from the Trump cabinet.For Khanna, former Congressman Jamaal Bowman and progressive strategist Nomiki Konst launched the groupÂ – "Run Ro" – which can raise money from donors and begin building support for a Khanna candidacy while he continues to weigh a 2028 bid."By launching now, we are trying to ensure that the presidential primary debate is framed from a progressive populist perspective," Konst told NBC News.The challenges facing a possible Khanna candidacy are immense. Only one person was ever elected to the presidency directly from the House: James Garfield in 1880.Khanna, a fifth-term lawmaker, has made headlines with bipartisan efforts to force the release of the Jeffrey Epstein files and to end the war in Iran."We need America's Next New Deal. Whether I run or support someone else is something I will decide with my family after the holidays," Khanna said in a statement to NBC News.Khanna was a co-chair of Bernie Sanders' 2020 campaign and is also a favourite of progressives around the country.Philadelphia-born Khanna has been travelling to early primary states for months.Khanna and his fellow party leaders, Senators Cory Booker and Chris Van Hollen, are joining a gathering of prominent Democrats in Denver next week to chart the future course of the party.The meeting will take place from November 12 to 14 and is being hosted by Majority Democrats, a group formed last year by largely moderate elected officials and other high-profile Democrats who say they are "committed to reshaping and growing the Democratic Party." Other possible presidential candidates such as former Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and Senators Raphael Warnock of Georgia, Ruben Gallego of Arizona and Chris Murphy of Connecticut are also attending the meeting.

Trump warns of further military action against Iran as Democrats seek to end war

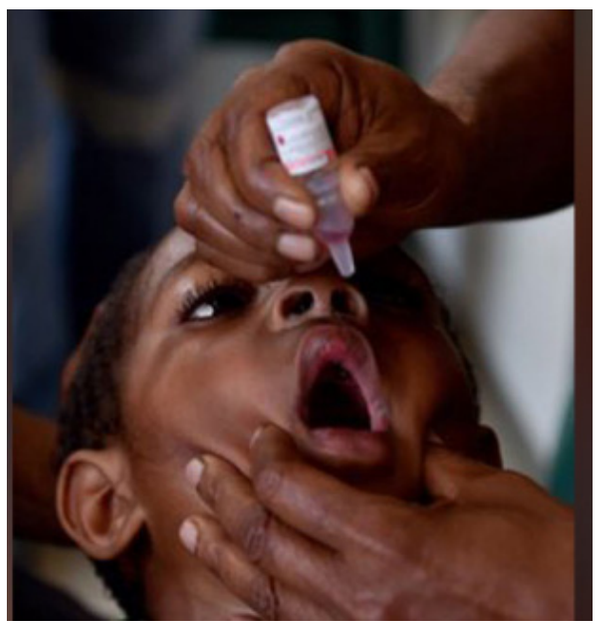


Washington: US President Donald Trump raised the prospect of further military action against Iran on Thursday (local time), even as senior House Democrats outlined plans to force votes to end the war and demand answers about its objectives and costs."I would rather not destroy the rest of the country, if possible, but maybe I'll have to. You'll know soon enough," Trump told reporters at the White House.He gave no timetable or targets for further action and did not announce that new strikes had been ordered.

The warning came as Democrats prepared their foreign-policy agenda for the next Congress, with Representative Gregory Meeks promising resolutions to terminate the conflict and Democratic Whip Katherine Clark questioning its goals and exit strategy.Their statements preceded Trump's latest remarks. They set out the congressional opposition confronting his Iran policy, rather than responses to Thursday afternoon's warning.Speaking during an Oval Office event, Trump defended the military campaign and said a decision would be made on whether to go further. He also reiterated his position that Iran must not acquire a nuclear weapon.Asked about reports of proposals concerning Tehran's nuclear programme, he said: "They're not doing anything without our approval."Trump did not confirm the substance of any proposal or describe an agreed negotiating framework. His remarks left both the scope of potential military action and the diplomatic route unspecified.Meeks, the senior Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, set out his plans in a November 4 letter seeking colleagues' support to become its chairman."On the legislative front, I intend to bring resolutions to the floor to immediately terminate the President's war with Iran and will prioritize clawing back Congress's proper role in the making of American foreign policy," he wrote.The letter also proposed demanding public testimony from senior administration officials about the Iran war, Venezuela and disputes over congressional authority on military action and trade.

Meeks was describing an intended legislative and oversight agenda. The letter did not establish a date for a vote or identify a newly introduced resolution implementing that pledge.Earlier, Clark told CNN that Democrats would press the administration about continued funding for the conflict and how it intended to bring American troops home safely.Her office circulated excerpts of the interview before Trump's afternoon remarks.Clark accused the president of taking the country into "a reckless war that had no exit strategy, had no clear goals", and blamed the conflict for increasing pressure on household fuel costs.She said Democrats would seek discussions about the administration's objectives and how to end the war while protecting Americans and US troops.The two Democrats emphasised different avenues for challenging the administration: Meeks proposed floor resolutions and testimony, while Clark focused on funding, public costs and an exit strategy. Neither statement amounted to a new restriction already imposed on the president.The Gulf conflict also concerns major Asian energy importers, including India. The International Energy Agency identifies the Strait of Hormuz as a critical oil transit route and lists India, China and Japan among the principal destinations for oil leaving the waterway.

Pakistan reports ninth polio case from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

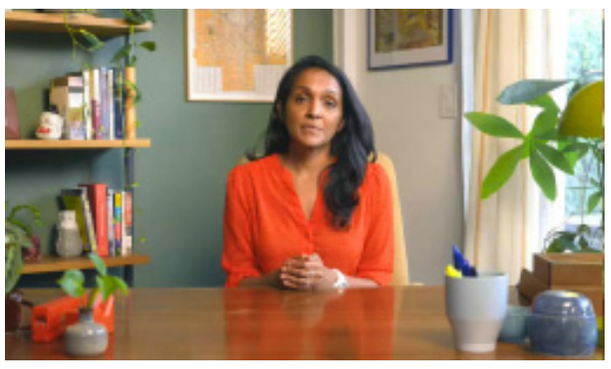


Islamabad: Pakistan has reported its ninth polio case from Khyber district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, local media reported, citing the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC). The affected child is a seven-month-old boy from Bara tehsil in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The latest case is the third case from Khyber and the seventh from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.The NOEC said poliovirus detected in three cases from Khyber district has genetic links to Afghanistan, which is facing an outbreak with 50 cases in 2026, signalling cross-border circulation of the virus, Pakistan-based daily Dawn reported.

Pakistan and Afghanistan are the only two nations in the world where wild poliovirus remains endemic. Polio workers in Pakistan have been frequently targetted in attacks, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. A polio campaign team supervisor was kidnapped by unidentified assailants from Jamrud in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Wednesday during the ongoing vaccination campaign.District Police Officer (DPO) Waqar Ahmad said that armed assailants kidnapped the polio campaign team supervisor, identified as Jalil Khan, and took him to an undisclosed place on Wednesday, another Pakistani daily 'The Express Tribune' reported. Following the incident, a heavy contingent of police was deployed in the area, and blockades were set up to find Khan.Two police personnel were killed, and another was injured earlier on Tuesday after unidentified assailants opened fire on them when they were heading to join a polio team for security duty during the vaccination campaign in Mohmand district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Headquarters Deputy Superintendent of Police Liaquat Ali said that the attack took place near the Hashim Kor police checkpost in Pindiali tehsil of Mohmand, Dawn reported.Earlier on Monday, four polio workers were kidnapped by unidentified assailants after being subjected to gunfire in the Tank district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. As per the details, four polio workers were kidnapped by unidentified gunmen in Tank and taken to an undisclosed place.Police have launched a probe into the incident, The Express Tribune reported. In a separate incident, two polio workers were abducted by gunmen in the Azam Warsak area in Lower South Waziristan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and subsequently released.Gunmen linked to the proscribed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) were allegedly responsible for the kidnapping of two members of a polio vaccination team. However, both of them were later released.

Indian-origin Nithya Raman set to win Los Angeles mayoral race



New York: India-born democratic socialist Nithya Raman is projected to win the Los Angeles mayoral election, defeating incumbent Karen Bass and becoming the first mayor of South Asian descent in the US city's history.CNN projected Raman, a Los Angeles City Council member, to defeat Bass in the race to lead the country's second-largest city.With her projected victory, New York and Los Angeles, two of America's largest cities, will be led by Indian-origin politicians, following Zohran Mamdani's election as New York mayor.

"Raman, a city council member, overtook Republican Spencer Pratt in June's nonpartisan primary to set up what was arguably a tougher race for Bass, a Democratic former congresswoman," CNN said, adding that she has vowed to cut street homelessness in half before Los Angeles hosts the 2028 Olympics.According to the latest vote data reported by The New York Times, Raman had secured 51.7 per cent of the 784,262 votes counted, polling 405,193 ballots against Bass's 379,069 votes, or 48.3 per cent, with 72 per cent of the votes reported.Raman, a Kerala-born Los Angeles City Council member representing District 4, is an urban planner by training. She holds a bachelor's degree from Harvard University and a graduate degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).With Raman nearing the finish line, she could join New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani, who is also of South Asian descent, as the first South Asian mayors of two of the largest cities in the US.She is also among the several Indian-American candidates in the race for public office in the US midterm elections that concluded Tuesday and delivered a significant rebuke to President Donald Trump and the Republicans, with Democrats gaining control of the House and Senate, flipping seats and traditional party strongholds in a massive blue wave across America.From Florida's Pia Dandiya to the first Indian-American to represent Arizona in Congress, Amish Shah, several Indian-origin candidates have registered historic wins in the midterms.

Trump questions US ban on Russian oil imports amid controversy over diesel authorisation



Washington: President Donald Trump questioned the US law banning Russian petroleum imports and said he would examine it, but announced no policy change amid a dispute over his administration's authorisation of Russian diesel transactions."That probably makes it a pretty bad law. I'll take a look at it, sure," Trump said after a reporter told him Congress had passed the legislation and President Joe Biden had signed it in 2022.

During an Oval Office appearance, the reporter asked about a tanker carrying Russian diesel across the Atlantic, supposedly bound for the United States, and the legal restriction on unloading its cargo.Trump first asked whether the restriction fell under the Jones Act. The reporter clarified that the question concerned legislation enacted in 2022.His response offered no timetable, proposed amendment or explanation of how the administration would reconcile its diesel authorisation with the statutory import prohibition. He did not announce that the ban had been lifted.

The distinction is significant because Treasury had already issued a separate authorisation nearly a month earlier.On October 9, the Office of Foreign Assets Control issued General License 135. It authorises transactions otherwise prohibited by two sets of Russia-related sanctions regulations when they concern the sale, delivery, offloading or importation of Russian-origin diesel.The text expressly includes importation into the United States. The authorisation runs through 12.01 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time on April 7, 2027.It excludes debits to accounts held at US financial institutions by Russia's central bank, National Wealth Fund or Finance Ministry. The licence concerns diesel and does not announce a general reopening of trade in all Russian petroleum products.However, the Ending Importation of Russian Oil Act, signed on April 8, 2022, separately prohibits imports of Russian products classified under Chapter 27 of the US tariff schedule.The law provides a procedure for terminating that prohibition. It requires a presidential certification concerning a Ukraine-accepted agreement for Russian withdrawal and cessation of hostilities, the absence of an immediate Russian military threat to NATO members, and recognition of Ukrainians' right to choose their government.It also requires prior consultation with congressional committees and provides a 90-day period after certification before termination takes effect, unless Congress enacts a resolution of disapproval.The Treasury licence does not itself document completion of that statutory process.New Jersey Governor Mikie Sherrill challenged the authorisation in a November 2 letter to port and terminal operators, three days before Trump's latest remarks.The Trump Administration's authorization of Russian fuel imports directly conflicts with federal law," she wrote.Sherrill argued that the statute did not give the executive branch blanket authority to waive the ban through licences. She warned businesses against accepting the fuel and said New Jersey would use available legal and regulatory powers to oppose such imports.

AR constable allegedly kills wife, dumps body in Godavari at Bhadrachalam

Kothagudem: An incident of an armed reserve (AR) constable allegedly killing his wife and dumping the body in river Godavari at Bhadrachalam in the district came to light in the district on Friday.According to sources, the accused constable, Narender of Tekulapalli in the district was said to have murdered his 30-year-old wife Bhavani, packed her body in a sack and subsequently dumped it into Godavari three days ago.The accused constable reportedly surrendered to the three-town police before the incident came to light and also confessed to police that he disposed of the body at the 22 pillar of Godavari bridge at Bhadrachalam.It was learnt that Narender, a few days ago, also lodged a complaint with the three-town police stating that his wife was missing. According to family members Narender and Bhavani came in contact with each other on social media; fell in love and got married some time back.Kothagudem three-town police and Bhadrachalam police are engaged in the case investigation and to trace out the body of the deceased woman. The police are yet to make an official statement about the case.

Russia has seized dozens of Ukrainian hotels. One owner is fighting back

A Ukrainian hotelier lost his life's work when Russia took control of tourist resorts along the Sea of Azov. After the Russian influencers and tourists began arriving, he sued the Kremlin to get his money back.Denys Katyukha ran the Admiral hotel resort on the Sea Of Avov in southeastern Ukraine before Russian forces invaded and occupied his home. REUTERS/Thomas PeterIn a sparsely furnished court room in western Ukraine, a clerk called up the defendant.No one stepped up to face the charges. No one entered a plea. In fact, there was no sign at all of the defendant: Russia.

The plaintiff, Denys Katyukha, was embarking on an 11-month battle to prove Russia had seized his life's work. He alleged Moscow had stolen his hotel on the Sea of Azov and his apartment in nearby Melitopol, both within Russian-occupied southeastern Ukraine.The 49-year-old's fight would play out in a Ukrainian civil court Russia doesn't recognize, culminating in a $5.1 million judgment Russia will likely never pay. Still, the businessman was determined to pursue justice, no matter how illusory."For now, I am the victim – a Don Quixote fighting windmills," Katyukha said.The Admiral is among hundreds of hotels and resorts Russia has seized or identified for seizure on the inland Sea of Azov since its 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, according to a Reuters examination of Russian and Ukrainian property records. The review provides the most comprehensive picture yet of Moscow's property seizures in the coastal region.Russian authorities have identified more than 7,000 commercial and residential properties in the occupied Zaporizhzhia region, where the Admiral is located, as "ownerless," according to notices published by the Moscow-installed government. They include 521 hotels and resorts, Reuters found.At least 77 of the hotels and resorts are now controlled by Russian businesses, including 20 by Russian state entities, tourism and corporate records show. Reuters couldn't establish what happened to all of the businesses.The commercial transformation of the Azov coast reflects one of Russian President Vladimir Putin's top stated priorities: remaking Ukrainian lands as Russian. The Kremlin makes a historical claim to Ukraine – which Ukraine rejects – and aims to absorb its occupied regions with what it calls the Russian motherland. For now, I am the victim. A Don Quixote fighting windmills.The property seizures enable Russia to consolidate control over the areas and generate money for the war effort, said Karolina Hird, a national-security fellow at the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War.Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Russia has introduced rigid new property laws in occupied areas to create "a legal smokescreen" for what it calls state-sponsored theft. The legislation strips Ukrainians of ownership rights unless they become Russian citizens.How Russia is seizing resorts along the Sea of Azov in occupied UkraineAsked about the seizures, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said: "Everyone who wished to do so was given the opportunity to re-register their property under Russian jurisdiction. Property that was not re-registered became ownerless."The Russian-backed Zaporizhzhia occupation authorities didn't respond to queries.In September 2022, Katyukha, who'd fled Ukraine to Germany, heard from his father that unidentified armed men had entered his hotel, declaring it "ownerless." If Katyukha wanted to stake a claim, he needed to prove ownership within three days.His father, who'd stayed behind after the invasion, dropped off the proper paperwork, Katyukha said. Reuters couldn't independently verify all elements of his account.But there was one problem: The state didn't recognize Ukrainian passports or property deeds.Katyukha said occupation authorities told his father: "These are documents from a nonexistent country."Katyukha, interviewed in the German city of Cologne where he fled after war erupted, recalls happy memories at his hotel in the Ukrainian village of Kyrylivka. REUTERS/Thomas PeterThough Katyukha's life was based in the nearby city of Melitopol, his fondest memories were of the seaside village. As a boy, he suffered respiratory issues that Ukraine's industrial interior exacerbated. He spent summers with his grandfather in Kyrylivka.The air felt clean, salted. The sea was warm and blue. Beaches teemed with families. Katyukha resolved to build his own hotel and spent years seeking the perfect spot. Finally, in August 2014, he broke ground on a few bungalows. The modest start grew into a sprawling complex with 100 rooms, three bars, a restaurant, shop, swimming pool and children's water-play area. Come wintertime, Katyukha pitched a Christmas tree on the snowy beach.Kyrylivka welcomed 2 million tourists in 2021, according to Ukrainian authorities, the last season before Russian forces occupied most of Zaporizhzhia.That year, local officials recognized the Admiral with the "Hospitality of the Year" award. It still holds a 4.7-star Google rating."We'll be back!" reads one recent review.A Ukrainian flag is flown at the Admiral before Russia's full-scale invasion of 2022. Handout via REUTERS

NEW MANAGERS AT THE ADMIRALOn September 28, 2022 – nine days after armed men seized the Admiral – a Russian-controlled commission appointed new ownership for the hotel, along with more than 100 other businesses, including medical centers, farms, postal facilities and a cannery, according to the commission's meeting minutes. The Zaporizhzhia commission has met regularly to name new owners for dozens of properties at a time, the minutes show.The Admiral's new owner was named as "Resorts of Zaporizhzhia Region", which is a Russian state entity, according to corporate records. It reported a net revenue of 65.7 million roubles, or about $800,000, in 2023, the Russian records show. It hasn't publicly reported any financial figures for the years since, for reasons Reuters couldn't determine.The entity, which was renamed the "Zaporizhzhia Region Investment Development Agency" in April, didn't respond to a request for comment.

EDITORIAL

Char Dham Yatra exposes air safety loopholes

The recent helicopter crash near Joshimath in Uttarakhand, which killed six people, is yet another grim reminder of poor safety standards in India. The ecologically fragile region has seen a mushrooming of private helicopter services over the last few decades. As the Char Dham pilgrimage has become highly commercialised, concerns have grown over the blatant disregard for safety protocols, causing ecological damage to the Himalayan region. While India's commercial airline sector has generally maintained a strong international safety record, the helicopter sector, particularly pilgrimage-related operations in Uttarakhand, has come under increasing scrutiny. The Char Dham routes and terrain are extremely tricky. According to data from the Ministry of Civil Aviation, of the 12 helicopter crashes reported across the country between 2020 and 2025, seven occurred in Uttarakhand, home to several holy sites, claiming 21 lives. Importantly, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture, in its report last year, highlighted the absence of terrain-specific mountain-flying training and certification facilities for helicopter pilots. Such facilities should have been a basic requirement for flying in the Himalayan region, where weather, wind and visibility are highly unpredictable. There is also a need for stronger safety oversight for chopper operations in a region where these services have become highly commercialised, often with scant regard for passenger safety. Rotary-wing aviation poses a unique set of difficulties, largely owing to the environment in which these flights operate. Many helicopters used for pilgrimage operations are single-engine aircraft without onboard weather radars.

The Char Dham Yatra has led to a sharp increase in helicopter traffic. Experts note that the concentration of flights, coupled with difficult terrain and unpredictable Himalayan weather, creates exceptional operational risks. Growing pressure on pilots from helicopter operators, VIPs and pilgrims alike, combined with violations of Standard Operating Protocols, has made helicopter services dangerous. Though only about 2,000 pilgrims can be flown in a day, and that too only when the weather is clear, demand often exceeds 10,000 owing to VIP requests and public pressure. In 2025 alone, four helicopter accidents were reported during the Char Dham Yatra season. Strict enforcement of SOPs can significantly reduce the risk of accidents, but it would also substantially reduce the number of flights, something that goes against commercial interests and public demand. There are also growing concerns about the likely impact of pilgrimage on the ecology of the region. Experts have also pointed out the possibility of earthquakes in the Himalayan region. The massive influx of pilgrims has placed enormous pressure on Kedarnath's fragile Himalayan ecosystem and its carrying capacity. Managing such large numbers has become increasingly difficult, especially since the subject is deeply emotional and religious, making regulatory enforcement sensitive. Installing autopilots, weather radars, enhanced vision systems, mandatory mountain-flying certification, regular operator audits, continuous monitoring and rigorous safety management systems are among the measures needed to improve safety standards.

In first bilateral trip, Nepal PM Balendra Shah to visit India from November 22



In his first bilateral visit since assuming office in March, Nepal's PM Balendra Shah will embark on a three-day official visit to India from November 22, officials said.This was the key takeaway from a meeting between Shah and visiting Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri on Thursday in Kathmandu. The decision is a turnaround for the Nepalese PM, who had earlier decided to not travel overseas for the first year in office.

According to officials, Shah responded positively—that he is looking for a "result-oriented" visit—when Foreign Secretary Misri paid him a courtesy call, and conveyed PM Narendra Modi's invitation to him.Shah thanked India and Prime Minister Modi for being the first respondent when Nepal was hit by destructive flash floods in August.India-Nepal step up engagement ahead of Balen's maiden visit Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri meets Nepal Foreign Minister Shisir Khanal in Kathmandu on Wednesday. (ANI)According to the Prime Minister's Office in Nepal, Misri apprised Shah of regular meetings between the two sides on water resources, energy, trade, transit and aviation."The Foreign Secretary of India highlighted the wide-ranging engagement and overall progress in diverse areas of bilateral cooperation, and discussed possible outcomes and initiatives in the context of the upcoming visit of the Prime Minister of Nepal to India," according to a joint statement issued at the end of Misri's two-day visit.During his visit, Misri also called on Finance Minister Swarnim Wagle, Foreign Affairs Minister Shisir Khanal, Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation Minister Biraj Bhakta Shrestha and Infrastructure Development Minister Sunil Lamsal.

On Wednesday, Misri held delegation-level talks with his Nepalese counterpart Amrit Bahadur Rai during which they "reviewed on-going cooperation across diverse sectors and discussed ways to further strengthen the mutually-beneficial partnership between India and Nepal," the statement said.

Terrorists down to single digits in Kashmir, IG Sujit Kumar says giving exact figure tough



The number of local terrorists in the Valley has dropped to single digits, Inspector General (Kashmir) J&K Police, Sujit Kumar said on Thursday. However, he said that there cannot be a certain figure since they remain in transit. "There is one local terrorist and he has orchestrated attacks in Anantnag and Kulgam. He is being supported by some foreign terrorists. There are some footprints," he said in Srinagar.Asked about the number of terrorists active in the Kashmir Valley, the IGP said the police are tracing them "though (giving) any fixed figure will be an exaggeration".According to J&K Police records, 22-year-old Mohammad Lateef Bhat killed a policeman and two non-local workers in two separate attacks in South Kashmir this year.He had no prior criminal antecedents before he went missing in November last year from his home.The IG said militancy and illicit narcotics trade are deeply intertwined. "A significant portion of the narcotics trade directly fuels or supports terrorism. So this is not unfamiliar territory for us, though it is a substantial challenge.""The kingpins, whether operating locally or across the border, distribute illicit earnings through their networks of Over Ground Workers (OGWs) under various pretexts," he said.He said that in its crackdown on drugs-related activities in the Valley, the J&K Police has arrested over 1,900 people in 1,651 cases this year. He also said over 1,700 kgs of contraband has been seized while one crore in cash has also been recovered.

Additionally, 567 bank accounts have also been frozen in connection with drug related activities, he said.On questions about frequent traffic stoppages along the National Highway in Jammu and Kashmir, the IGP said national highway security protocols have been prepared based on "previous terror incidents on the highway".The highway remains under regular threats, he said. "IEDs are recovered around the national highway as well:, therefore, he said, the issue remains sensitive. "But it will be discussed and considered with other security forces."

Kerala court upholds bail granted to judge's son in Mercedes hit-and-run: 'Public sentiment cannot…'

Public sentiment cannot authorise the investigating agency to adopt a procedure contrary to law, a court in Ernakulam has said as it upheld the bail granted to the minor accused in the October Mercedes-Benz hit-and-run case.Meanwhile, the Kerala High Court on Thursday granted pre-arrest bail to the minor's father, an additional district court judge, noting that the prosecution had not attributed "any direct criminal act on him".On the same day, the additional district court criticised the police action in proceeding against the child in conflict with law (CCL) through an FIR, stating that apprehending him was contrary to Rule 8 of the Juvenile Justice (JJ) Model Rules.The court said a CCL is entitled to bail under Section 12 of the JJ Act, irrespective of whether the alleged offence is bailable or non-bailable, or classified as petty, serious or heinous.

"Public sentiment, agitation, media attention or any demand for a particular outcome cannot authorise the investigating agency to adopt a procedure contrary to law. There is no material to show that the child was exposed to an immediate danger from which apprehension was required to protect him, or that his welfare necessitated taking him into police custody," Judge Kavitha Gangadharan said on Thursday.The family of the deceased person as well as the state government had moved the district court seeking cancellation of the bail granted to the CCL by the JJ Board.The court observed that the victim's family is entitled to raise their grievances and pursue appropriate remedies. However, their grievance cannot be a ground to curtail the child's statutory entitlement to bail. The court cautioned the investigating agency against diluting or disregarding the safeguards available to children under the



JJ Act, even in cases that trigger public agitation or outrage.A 57-year-old two-wheeler rider was killed on October 25 after the luxury car, allegedly being driven by the minor son of the additional district judge, rammed into his vehicle.The judge has been named as an accused in the case under Section 199A of the Motor Vehicle (MV) Act, which deals with offences by juveniles and the responsibility of vehicle owners. The judge had argued that he was not privy to the son leaving home in the luxury car.Granting him pre-arrest bail, the HC bench of Justice Kauser Edappagath said, "At any rate, the prosecution does not attribute any direct criminal act or mens rea on the applicant (judge). The only allegation is that the applicant allowed the CCL to drive the vehicle, knowing well that he did not possess a valid licence. The said disputed fact is a matter to be proved during trial.'

Prisons in J&K are getting an upgrade. The focus: getting more intel



Top brass from police, prisons, intelligence agencies and the civil administration here on Thursday held discussions on the formation of dedicated prison intelligence units (PIUs) and introduction of biometric systems across all the jails in Jammu and Kashmir.Officials said this would help the authorities in tackling terrorists and other hardened criminals who have allegedly been carrying out their operations despite being lodged inside jails.The meeting was chaired by the Union Territory's Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha at Lok Bhavan, officials said.Emphasising on robust jail administration, the L-G called for a unified coordination mechanism between the police, prisons department and intelligence agencies.He also issued instructions for regular review meetings and intelligence sharing between all these agencies to combat terror networks, radicalisation, and law and order threats.He also ordered the holding of surprise checks of prison premises and the surrounding areas, as well as forensic analysis of any seized electronic device inside the jail.The discussion, in addition, focussed on expansion of tele-medicine facilities for inmates and strengthening of human resources in the prisons department.The meeting was attended by DGP Nalin Prabhat; DGP, Prisons, J&K, Deepak Kumar; Additional Chief Secretary, Home Department, Chandraker Bharti; Special DG, Coordination, PHQ, SJM Gillani; ADG, CID, MK Sinha; Principal Secretary to L-G, Govind Jaiswal; Additional Director, IB, J&K and Ladakh, Pankaj Kumar Thakur; and other senior officials.While none of the prisons in J&K has its own dedicated intelligence unit, the central jail at Srinagar and at Kot Bhalwal in Jammu got integrated layered-security systems, including biometric verification, 24×7 CCTV surveillance, and full body scanners after the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) took over the inner ring and perimeter security of key prisons in the Union Territory.The formation of PIUs and introduction of biometric systems in all jails across J&K will help officials in gathering information and monitoring threats which may emerge from inside the prisons where dreaded Pakistani militants and hardcore criminals are lodged, said officers.A number of states, including Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Jharkhand, besides Delhi, have already introduced these systems as part of modernisation of prison administration.

These systems, which include AI-monitored CCTV cameras, RFID tracking and video conference, help in sharing of information on a real-time basis to prison authorities, police, intelligence and security agencies.Prison officials, local police and intelligence agencies in J&K have, from time to time in the past, neutralised illegal communication networks, terror-financing modules and radicalisation efforts by militants and hardened criminals lodged inside jails.In this context, officials referred to raids conducted by Counter Intelligence Kashmir (CIK) and intelligence agencies uncovering jailed militants allegedly using mobile phones and social media apps to maintain contact with their accomplices in Kashmir and handlers in Pakistan.Only last month, the J&K Police had busted a terror-funding network in Shopian district that was allegedly raising funds for Lashkar-e-Taiba and its proxy group, The Resistance Front. During subsequent investigations, investigators discovered an intra-UT network with connections to militants lodged inside jails, tracking suspicious online financial transactions, and digital money trails. Nearly a dozen people were arrested in the matter.The same month, J&K Police busted a radicalisation module associated with banned Ittihad-ul-Muslimeen in Bandipora district, whose activities to spread separatism targeting women were allegedly coordinated by jailed separatist leaders.Last year, the security agencies had uncovered a major inter-state "white-collar'' terror network involving radicalised students and professionals, with jailed militants using encrypted messaging tools from behind bars on smuggled mobile devices to manage movement of funds, facilitate logistics, and oversee recruitment drives across J&K, UP and Haryana.

Rainfall eases, water levels stabilise across AP

Amaravati: Rainfall associated with Cyclone Murasu weakened considerably across Andhra Pradesh on Thursday, officials said.Although the cyclone's impact has largely subsided, people in low-lying areas and those living near drains, canals and reservoirs have been advised to remain cautious and follow the instructions of the district administration.People have also been advised against crossing overflowing streams or causeways.By Thursday morning, rainfall had largely stopped in most parts of the State, with only very light rain reported in a few places along the southern coastal belt.According to the State Emergency Operations Centre of the Real Time Governance Society (RTGS), heavy rainfall on Wednesday was mainly concentrated in the Godavari belt, covering West Godavari, East Godavari, Kakinada, Eluru and Polavaram districts, where a few weather stations recorded very heavy rainfall.On Thursday morning, rainfall activity shifted to Nellore district, but remained light to moderate. Most other districts, including those in the Rayalaseema region, recorded little or no rainfall.Rainfall in urban areas has also eased, with no town reporting heavy rain or fresh waterlogging on Thursday morning.The highest cumulative rainfall over the past two days was recorded in the Godavari region, particularly

Home Ministry relaxes passport, visa rules for foreign nationals in India



The Centre has relaxed passport and visa rules for several categories of foreign nationals residing in the country, including certain Pakistani citizens, minority refugees, Sri Lankan Tamils, and Tibetans, according to the The Immigration and Foreigners (Exemption) (Amendment) Order, 2026, published on Thursday.Under the amended rules released by the Union Home Ministry, Pakistani nationals who entered India on or before December 31, 2009, with the intention to reside permanently, are exempt from standard passport renewal requirements if they cannot renew their travel documents due to the non-possession of a Computerised National Identity Card (CNIC) issued by Pakistan.

"To qualify, they must not have married while in Pakistan or acquired any immovable property there, must have left behind family members who are Indian citizens when going to Pakistan, and must undertake not to return to that country. They must also have no adverse reports from police or security agencies," the notification said.The rules also exempt members of Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan who entered India on or before December 31, 2024, after being compelled to seek shelter because of religious persecution or fear of religious persecution.The latest amendment also streamlines travel and identification protocols for citizens of Nepal, Bhutan, and India travelling between these neighbouring nations.

Nearly 3-fold jump in serious adverse events caused by medical devices: New data

The Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC) has, for the first time, disclosed the number of Serious Adverse Events (SAEs) caused by the use of medical devices in the country since 2020: 9,373, with a nearly three-fold jump across six years, from 808 to 2,176 in 2025.SAEs are medical events that may result in life-threatening conditions or prolonged hospitalisation for patients. The Indian Express accessed the data on October 27 following a part-compliance order issued under the RTI Act by a bench of the Central Information Commission (CIC) on September 10. The data (see chart) relates to the volume of SAEs "received and reviewed" by the IPC, which is an autonomous Central body that publishes official standards for drugs.

The IPC has been providing the number of Medical Device Adverse Events (MDAEs) logged in 775 monitoring centres located across the country in its annual reports, while keeping the figures for SAEs as restricted information.The reports for the last three years, for instance, provide the broad figures for MDAEs but with "serious" events not categorised separately. The items flagged under "suspected devices" in these reports include relatively minor articles, too, such as surgical gloves, syringes, urine bags — and, in the 2022-2023 report, even a male condom that was listed as a "counterfeit device".Nearly 3-fold jump in serious adverse events caused by medical devices: New data ?In the 11-page order for data on SAEs, following an appeal by this newspaper, Information Commissioner Jaya Varma Sinha cited the plea by the IPC that public disclosure of the category of medical device involved and its manufacturer would be a violation of "commercial confidence".The order stated that brand details and a description of every medical device for which an MDAE has been logged could not be disclosed since "it is not conclusively established whether they arose due to a procedural lapse or due to the medical device itself".The IPC's plea before the CIC stated that "the information sought regarding the name of the manufacturer of the medical device is exempted from disclosure under Section 8(1)(d) of the RTI Act, 2005, as it relates to commercial confidence and third-party information, the disclosure of which may harm the competitive position of the concerned entity".In 2018, as part of Implant Files, the investigative series on the medical devices industry and its nexus with doctors and hospitals, The Indian Express first reported on the categorisation of MDAEs, which showed that coronary stents manufactured by the pharma major Abbott accounted for over 50 per cent of the entries. In all, 566 MDAEs had been logged that year, 290 of them for the coronary stents of the global major. Abbott had said at the time that its stents were recognised as "among the world's most used and studied" with "an unparalleled safety record".The Indian Express subsequently filed several RTI requests for an update of the 2018 dataset, but the information was denied, citing provisions of the Act. The six-year dataset was released following a final appeal filed by this newspaper before the CIC in 2025.The IPC contended before the CIC bench that details such as category and manufacturer of each and every MDAE were "too voluminous" and that their dissemination "requires collection and collation which would divert the time and resources of the public authority".According to the IPC's annual reports, it logged 14,584 MDAEs for the financial year 2024-2025, with only 22 cases forwarded to the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) for "necessary action". The list of 22 "suspected devices" mainly comprised items such as surgical gloves, syringes and urine bags along with one instance each of a mechanical ventilator and blood transfusion set.Similarly, for 2023-2024, the IPC listed 10,269 MDAEs, forwarding a list of only 16 cases to the CDSCO. This list contains "suspected" faulty medical devices, such as pregnancy test kits, catheters and BP monitors, and one instance of a drug-eluting stent.A total of 3,868 MDAEs were listed for 2022-2023, when 12 cases were forwarded to CDSCO, along with one case of a "suspect" inhaler, an incubator and a coronary stent. The 12 "suspect" medical devices that required "further action", the IPC committee said, included a male condom

Rules for body-worn cameras by cops: Court asks Centre to decide in 6 months



The Delhi High Court Wednesday refused to issue directions on a public interest litigation (PIL) seeking a standard operating procedure (SOP) for use of body-worn cameras by police personnel. It, instead, directed the government to consider the plea as a representation and take a decision on it within six months.A bench of Acting Chief Justice Nitin Wasudeo Sambre and Justice Arun Bhardwaj was hearing the PIL by advocate Chahat Raghav. The lawyer sought an SOP on use of body-worn cameras by the Delhi Police, its operation, and the memory and storage of data collected through such cameras.

Senior advocate Akhil Sibal, representing the petitioner, argued, "There has to be an SOP, until there is some sort of law… it is different from facial recognition technology which has concerns about surveillance, profiling, privacy… if we have a mechanism or defined way of using it, then it will go a long way in addressing some of these concerns.""Time and again, we are left with allegations and counter allegations… The question is ultimately of accountability… body-worn cameras are used, but it is all sporadic, no SOP, no chain of custody, preservation or access… Purpose is to rather than having this chaos… there has to be some way for accountability…There has to be some procedure that needs to be laid down, it will benefit the whole process," Sibal added.

He also referred to media reports stating that amid allegations of police excesses during the SIR protests, Delhi Police and Rapid Action Force (RAF) deployed at the protest site have been issued directions to wear body cameras.Meanwhile, Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Chetan Sharma, representing the Centre, suggested to the court that the PIL can be treated as a representation.Sibal resisted the proposition, urging that it is not the government's case that they are unaware of the use of body-worn cameras. He urged, "Let them place some reply (before the court)… representation will serve no purpose, it's not something that they are not aware of."The court recorded in its order, "The use of body-worn cameras by police can be inferred from not only tender issued but also use of the same by the traffic police. The SOP is informed to not be in existence. In such an event, there might not be any provision in the police manual. However, since the statement is made from ASG, we deem it appropriate to take the same on record. We direct the respondents to communicate the decision on framing of SOP regarding use of body-worn cameras within six months."

Rajpal Yadav offers Rs 2 crore payment; SC expresses displeasure over conduct



New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed actor and comedian Rajpal Yadav to deposit Rs 1.15 crore with the apex court registry after his counsel submitted that the amount was ready to be deposited immediately, while another Rs 85 lakh would be arranged through a prospective buyer of his ancestral property, as part of arrangements to pay Rs 2 crore in connection with multiple cheque dishonour cases.

A Bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana was hearing Yadav and his wife Radha Yadav's pleas challenging the Delhi High Court judgment upholding their conviction in seven cheque dishonour cases under the Negotiable Instruments Act.During the hearing, the CJI Kant-led Bench was informed that Yadav had arranged Rs 1.15 crore through demand drafts, while a prospective buyer of his ancestral property, who was present in court, was willing to pay another Rs 85 lakh as an advance.

Yadav's counsel told the top court that the buyer was not presently willing to register the sale documents due to Pitru Paksha and wanted to proceed with the registration after the commencement of Navratri.The counsel further submitted that the buyer was willing to deposit the Rs 85 lakh by way of a demand draft on Monday. However, the Supreme Court questioned the overall value of the transaction, remarking that the liability was substantially higher than Rs 2 crore."What will be the total sale consideration? Because the liability is much more than Rs 2 crore," the CJI Kant-led Bench asked. The counsel said the property was valued at more than Rs 30 crore and confirmed that the prospective buyer had the capacity to make the proposed payment.

The complainant's counsel agreed to the proposal and submitted that if Rs 2 crore was paid immediately, Yadav could be granted additional time to pay the remaining amount.The CJI Kant-led Bench suggested that Rs 1.15 crore be deposited immediately, with the remaining Rs 85 lakh to be transferred on Monday, after which the top court would lay down a schedule for payment of the balance amount.During the hearing, the Supreme Court expressed displeasure over Yadav's conduct in complying with its earlier directions and indicated that it was inclined to enhance his three-month imprisonment sentence to two years.Justice Bagchi observed that the apex court was not satisfied with Yadav's conduct and said the accommodation being extended to him was aimed at ensuring that the complainant recovered the money.The top court's latest order came after it had, on October 5, found that its September 15 direction had not been complied with.On that occasion, the CJI Kant-led Bench had observed that a photocopy of a purported Rs 50 lakh demand draft was produced with a claim that the draft would reach Delhi the following day.The Supreme Court had then granted a final opportunity to Yadav to pay a total of Rs 2 crore and posted the matter for October 7.On September 15, the apex court had granted Yadav two weeks as a last opportunity to deposit at least Rs 2 crore, after recording that its earlier direction to deposit Rs 5 crore had not been complied with. The Supreme Court is hearing Yadav and his wife Radha Rajpal Yadav's petitions challenging the Delhi High Court judgment upholding their conviction in seven cheque dishonour cases under the Negotiable Instruments Act.The Delhi High Court had on July 10 upheld Yadav's conviction while reducing his sentence from six months to three months' simple imprisonment in each of the seven cases. It had also reduced the fine from Rs 1.60 crore to Rs 1.05 crore in each case, with the substantive sentences directed to run concurrently.The High Court had taken into account payments already made by Yadav to the complainant, M/s Murli Projects Pvt Ltd., during the pendency of the proceedings. Yadav and his wife have challenged the judgment before the Supreme Court, contending that a subsequent consent agreement between the parties was not properly considered by the courts below.The petitioners have relied on the Supreme Court's judgment in M/s Gimpex Private Limited vs Manoj Goel, arguing that the subsequent agreement between the parties ought to have brought an end to the original complaint proceedings.

Thai woman accuses Kanpur 'husband' of Rs 60 lakh fraud, hiding another marriage

Travelling 3,000 km from Thailand to Kanpur, a 35-year-old woman went looking for the man she said she married — and the Rs 60 lakh she had lent him.The man, a tannery businessman named Mohammad Irfan, had stopped answering her calls and cut off contact. When she went to his Kanpur home, she allegedly discovered that he was already married and had children.The woman approached Kanpur Police on Tuesday, alleging that Irfan and his family members assaulted and threatened her when she confronted him and pressured her to convert to Islam.Based on her complaint, Kanpur Police arrested Irfan and registered an FIR against him at Anwarganj police station under charges including assault. Police also invoked provisions of the anti-conversion law against him.

"We have arrested Irfan in connection with the case. The woman's allegations are being examined, and necessary verification is being carried out," said Assistant Commissioner of Police, Kanpur, Manjay Singh.He added that Irfan has admitted to marrying the woman and is being produced before the court. The woman has been sent for medical examination and the report is awaited.'Married two years ago'According to police, the woman, who runs a restaurant and a canteen in Thailand, met Irfan through social media around four years ago.She told police he introduced himself as a prominent Kanpur businessman involved in the tannery business who frequently travelled abroad for work.The woman said Irfan would stay at her house whenever he travelled to Thailand and that they subsequently entered into a relationship. Around two years ago, he proposed to her and the two later married in Thailand, she claimed.She said Irfan continued visiting her every two months. During this period, he allegedly took around Rs 60 lakh from her in several installments, saying he needed the money to expand his business.She



told police that she arranged the money by borrowing from relatives and friends.When she later asked Irfan to return the money, he allegedly gave her different excuses. She also said she asked him to stay with her in Thailand, but he refused.She alleged that Irfan returned to India this year and stopped responding to her calls and messages.With her businesses in Thailand facing financial difficulties and her struggling to repay the loans she had taken to provide money to Irfan, she decided to travel to India to recover the money.She came to Kanpur with an acquaintance on a tourist visa on October 5 and visited Irfan's house as she knew his address. It was there that she allegedly learned for the first time that he was already married and had children.She alleged that when she confronted Irfan, he and his family members abused and insulted her, and Irfan told her that she would first have to convert to Islam if she wanted to stay with him.

Airtel to hike postpaid plan prices by up to 10 pc with new plans



New Delhi: Leading telecom firm Bharti Airtel on Wednesday launched new postpaid plans for customers with increasing tariffs by around 3-10 per cent, effective from Thursday.Moreover, it added a free international roaming benefit to the plans. However, the complimentary International Roaming pack offers 5GB of data, 60 minutes of calls, 25 outgoing SMS and free incoming SMS, all valid for 5 days, the telecom said in an exchange filing. The revised plans range from Rs 499 a month for an individual connection to Rs 1,799 for a family plan covering up to five SIMs.

Moreover, customers will get one free international roaming trip per SIM each year under the new plans along with unlimited data and calling.Amit Tripathi, Director – Market Operations, Bharti Airtel, said that postpaid for us is about delivering the best-in-class experience in the Indian market. "We have the best network experience in the country, on which we offer our postpaid customers Fast Lane technology on 5G, and constant Spam and frauds protection. What is more, we offer the customers the best value – through access to entertainment and services that enrich their everyday lives; and now Free International Roaming for them. We are determined to constantly raising the game for customers and give them more and more reasons to choose Airtel Postpaid," according to Tripathi.

The company has increased the price of Rs 449 to Rs 499 for the individual plan. Rs 749 family plan — which was Rs 699 earlier — will offer two SIMs. Apart from that, the Rs 999 plan will be available at a cost of Rs 1,049 for three SIMs. Similarly, for 4 SIMs the prices are Rs 1,249 and Rs 1,449. For five SIMs, the company will charge Rs 1,799 for a a plan subscription that includes Netflix Standard.Additionally, these plans also include Airtel's spam and fraud prevention features. Apart from that, the company said that effective Thursday, these postpaid plans are available for all customers opting for Airtel Postpaid.Meanwhile, existing Airtel customers, including old postpaid plans or on prepaid can easily upgrade to these plans.

In own state, 'upset' Fadnavis cites 'pathetic' school, hostel infra for protests



Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has expressed displeasure over the 'pathetic' infrastructure of schools and hostels, pointing to it as the reason for protests across the state. Visibly angry during the meeting, Fadnavis directed the concerned department to take immediate steps and make necessary changes to improve infrastructure."If the school/hostel condition is so pathetic, why will there be no agitation?" How can the department overlook the basic amenities," Fadnavis, it is learnt, asked at the infrastructure review meeting held this week.

Directing questions at the officials, Fadnavis made his displeasure known at the meeting and said, "If schools and hostels are in such poor condition, agitation will happen."Following the chief minister's remarks on 'pathetic' infrastructure, the ministries of social justice, tribal department and OBC department decided to work out a plan to make necessary corrections.The three ministries have decided to conduct an audit and address the problems.Generally, a sub-committee for infrastructure would focus on mega projects. However, this week's review meeting saw the government focusing on school and hostel infrastructure.The government's decision to review school/ hostel infrastructure also comes in the wake of the Cockroach Janta Party's (CJP) protest in Maharashtra against poor school and hostel conditions in several districts of the state.Sources said, "The social justice, school and tribal department was trying to push positive images during the meetings. But the skill department, during the presentation, showed images of dilapidated hostel structures and inadequate facilities."We cannot continue like this. Things will have to change," sources quoted Fadnavis as saying during the meeting.He directed the Departments to allocate funds for infrastructure upgradation from the District Planning Development Committee (DPDC) immediately.Earlier, CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke had launched a 'school thik karo' agitation in Maharashtra. He visited several government-aided schools in the Marathwada region.

Mathura gurukul students went inside water tank after foul smell, 4 dead

Four students died after inhaling suspected poisonous gas inside an unused underground water tank at a gurukul in Mathura's Vrindavan late Tuesday night, when a group of students went into the tank to investigate a foul smell, police said.Two owners of Maharishi Panini Sanskrit Gurkulam have been taken into custody.The incident came to light after 11.30 pm. Mathura Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Shlok Kumar, told The Indian Express that preliminary investigation so far has revealed that a group of students were cooking food on the ground floor of the ashram when a foul smell wafted out of the water tank nearby.The water tank, about 15 ft deep, was unused and was covered with a concrete lid.The SSP said the students initially tried to get rid of the smell by removing the small amount of water inside the tank wth a bucket.One of the students then volunteered to go inside. He climbed down the stairs built into the tank but did not return or respond when the other students called out to him. Four others went down one after another in an attempt to bring him out.All of them fell unconscious, causing panic among other students waiting outside. Staff members and local residents then pulled all five students out of the tank, the SSP said.A police team had rushed to the gurukul by then. Policemen tried performing CPR and gave first aid to the students, but it did not help; they were



Delhi students tell cops what's wrong with their PGs

Tushar wants to leave his paying guest accommodation in East Delhi's Laxmi Nagar after seven months of living there and move in with a friend. But the second-year Delhi University student is worried he will have to forgo the Rs 20,000 security deposit he paid when he moved in."My warden says that if I leave the PG before the lapse of 11 months, my Rs 20,000 security deposit will not be returned. I'm not sure how to deal with this," said Tushar, a B.Com student from Uttar Pradesh.His concern was among several issues raised during a Delhi Police drive to meet students living in PGs and rented accommodation in the Capital's major student hubs — Mukherjee Nagar in North Delhi, Laxmi Nagar in East Delhi, Rajinder Nagar, Karol Bagh and Patel Nagar in Central Delhi.The drive, undertaken by police teams from every police station, followed the September 6 collapse of a building housing a private hostel in Satya Niketan, which claimed seven lives, including those of five students.Waterlogging, wires and poor maintenance

Thousands of students who flock to Delhi to study in colleges and coaching institutes live in PGs because of the acute shortage of on-campus accommodation.Kuldeep, who studies at a coaching institute in Karol Bagh and stays in a nearby PG, said, "For most students, security deposit is the most common problem because people sometimes have to leave or change their PGs," he said.Cramped spaces in many private hostels have also been worrying, Kuldeep said. But the Satya Niketan incident has made students more worried about safety and accountability."It's cramped inside the PGs. But what is bothering us most after this incident is the question of who is accountable to us," he said.Muskan, who has been living at a PG in Old Rajinder Nagar for over a year, said her concerns revolved around basic standards of living: poor hygiene, inadequate water supply and electricity maintenance, sagging electrical wires and waterlogging her PG.After meeting students at PGs, reading rooms and libraries in these student hubs, police compiled the issues raised by students and prepared an



Action Taken Report (ATR), which was submitted to the Delhi Police Headquarters, according to the officials sources.

Officers said the most frequent grievance aired by students in these interactions was over security deposits. Apart from these, students also flagged waterlogging, seepage, cleanliness in kitchens, maintenance of the buildings, and dark or poorly lit stretches around PGs.Rohit Rajbir Singh, DCP Central, said police were briefing PG owners and property dealers about the issue of security deposits, which he said was a major concern for students who spend considerable amounts on accommodation."Letters were sent to civic agencies seeking structural audits of properties for the safety and security of students. The Delhi Fire Services was approached for fire-safety surveys. Libraries were directed to follow safety norms, obtain fire no-objection certificates and install CCTV cameras," Singh added.Police also began regular engagement with Residents' Welfare Associations to improve CCTV coverage and ensure that PGs and rented accommodation followed safety guidelines, he said.Steve, a B.Com student living in Mukherjee Nagar, said that police had also shared contact numbers with them during their interaction at his PG. "The police officers had come to my PG a few days ago and told us about precautionary measures in case an emergency situation arises.

Trump Effect : Opportunities for internationalisation of Indian universities



As per the Government of India, the number of Indian students pursuing higher education in foreign universities has gone up steeply by 47% in the last two years, from about 907,000 in 2022 to 1,330,000 in 2024. In the last three months, however, policy measures taken by the U.S. President Trump administration are discouraging students to go to the U.S. for higher studies.Governments at destinations like the U.K., Australia, and Canada placing restrictions on student visas and caps on admission of foreign students presents an excellent opportunity for India to attract more foreign students, besides retaining some Indian students back home. This article analyses the factors affecting international students' mobility and opportunities for internationalisation and suggests strategies to tap the emerging market by Indian universities.

U.S. and Canada, attractive destinations for higher studies for Indian students

According to Government of India statistics on Indian students studying abroad in 2024, Canada comes on top, with 427,000 Indian students, followed by the U.S. with 337,630, the U.K. with 185,000, Australia with 122,202, and Germany with 42,997. The U.S. and Canada have been the hot spots for higher studies because of the quality of education, fee waivers offered, availability of career opportunities, post studies and exposure to global work environment.Canada's popularity surged due to easier Permanent Residency (PR) pathways and work permits. The students that go to the U.S. on student visa (F1) are allowed to work full-time or part-time in the U.S. for a limited period of time as a part of the Optional Practical Training (OPT) scheme. In study fields like Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), needed by IT industry, OPT could be extended for an additional 24 months, from one year. This enables the students to pay back the loans availed for the studies during this period. Subsequently, they could secure regular jobs, after obtaining H1B Visa and build a lucrative career there. U.K. saw good growth in foreign student enrolments, after reintroducing the Post-Study Work Visa (Graduate Route) in 2021.

About 40% of the students who go to the developed countries for higher education pursue post-graduation in Engineering, followed by 25% in Management. It is estimated that over 75,000 Indians study MBBS in East and Central Asian countries like China, Russia, Georgia, Uzbekistan, the Philippines, Kyrgyzstan, and Ukraine (before the war with Russia), as it is recognised worldwide, more affordable and easier to get admission .Radical policy shift in the U.S. higher education

After the re-election of Donald Trump as the President of the United States, in January 2025, things have changed. Trump's administration introduced significant policy changes in higher education, particularly in the realms of immigration, visa issuance, and revoking student visas. Federal funding support was drastically cut to major U.S. universities for research and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives, thereby reducing the scholarships and hiking the program fees steeply.The 24-month extension for STEM OPT is likely to be removed. It is proposed to set a cap on international student visas at top public universities to prioritise domestic students. With more U.S. employers preferring to recruit locals, job opportunities for international students are expected to come down steeply. Recent visa withdrawals and suspension of international students in some of the U.S. universities have created uncertainty on security and safety of the students. On May 12, 2025, the U.K. Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, announced measures to cut migration, including restrictions on skilled worker visas and tightening citizenship rules. Canada, Australia, and some European nations are also in the process of tightening visa restrictions and setting enrolment caps for international students, including Indian students, citing concerns on immigration growth, housing shortages, and other social and economic factors. These changes will limit the influx of international students, seeking to study abroad in these countries. Diplomatic standoff between Canada and India, coupled with new student visa regulations introduced in 2024, witnessed a 41% drop in students going to Canada in the last year. The decline was about 27% for the U.K. and 12-13% for the U.S. and Australia, as per the Bureau of Immigration data.

This presents a good opportunity for Indian Universities to scale up international admissions. Several Indians who wanted to pursue higher education abroad earlier are now keen to stay back. Considering the huge global demand for IT professionals, India, with its large IT industry, coupled with the capacity for quality engineering education, is well placed to attract foreign students in IT and allied disciplines.Besides, areas like Indian Traditional Knowledge Systems, like Yoga, Ayurveda, Vedic Literature, and Buddhist studies, are of interest to some of the international students. Indian HEIs can offer quality education at 25% of the cost of comparable institutions in the west, with home comforts and good industry exposure. Salary levels in India are comparable to the ones abroad, when compared on Purchasing Power Parity (PPP). As per the OECD study on international students' mobility (March 2025), affordability, university reputation, language, cultural ties, research excellence, and employment prospects are key factors in attracting international students. A survey, conducted in April 2025 of 27,400 prospective students, representing over 195 countries, revealed that for the first time, China has emerged among the top 10 global destinations for international students and is ranked overall eighth, third for university rankings, and twelfth in the world for achieving career goals.It is estimated that currently, over 450,000 foreign students are studying in China, including over 50,000 from South Korea, 23,000 from India, and 21,000 from the US. Programs preferred in China include Medicine, AI, Data Sciences, FinTech, Luxury Management, International Business, China studies (Chinese Law, Chinese Culture, China Global affairs etc).

How did China make it happen?

Over a period of time, China was able to ramp up foreign students studying in its institutions through a combination of policy interventions, enhancement of quality of education, branding, industry linkages, and post-studies employment. Over 50,000 students are admitted through fully funded seats annually by way of Belt and Road scholarships.Besides, universities are paid an incentive of $3,000 per foreign student enrolled. Digital platforms like Alibaba are used to recruit students. Over 500 global centers of Confucius Institutes are used as feeder systems. Companies like Huawei Tech offer guaranteed internships for top students. Automatic work permits are given in Free Trade Zones like Shanghai to foreign students that graduate in China.Foreign students in India – current status

In the last two years, the number of foreign students in India grew by 35% from about 48,000 in 2022 to about 65,000 in 2024. Out of them, 40% are from Nepal, with the balance being from Afghanistan, Africa and Middle East. Over 32% of the students are studying Engineering (including Computer Sciences), 31% Medicine and 14% Business Management. There is an immense potential to double the number of foreign students in the next three years.Policy initiatives by Government of India to attract foreign students

The New Education Policy 2020 advocates for the internationalisation of education in India through various measures. During May 2022, the UGC formulated regulations for academic collaboration between Indian and foreign Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) to offer Twinning, Joint Degree and Dual Degree Programmes.Twinning is an arrangement whereby students enrolled with an Indian HEI may undertake their studies partly in India and partly, typically a semester, abroad. In a joint degree programme, the degree is awarded jointly by the Indian university and the foreign university. In a dual degree programme, the degrees is conferred by the two universities, separately and simultaneously, upon completion of requirements of both the institutions. HEIs are allowed to create up to 25% additional seats for international students, over and above of their sanctioned seats.

What is being done by Indian HEIs?

As of now, 13 Indian universities (Three public – IIT Madras, IIT Delhi, and IIM Ahmedabad, and 10 private) have set up campuses abroad, 11 of them in the Middle East and two in Africa. It is expected that 20 more HEIs will join them in the next 12 months. Three foreign universities (Two from Australia - Deakin and University of Wollongong and one from the U.K. University of Southampton) already set up campuses in India.Two more from the U.K. (Queen's University Belfast and University of Surrey) are planning to set up their Indian campuses by January 2026. It is significant to note that four of the above five universities preferred GIFT City in Gujarat, which is emerging as India's first international education hub, with world-class facilities, favourable legislation, and tax breaks.A number of Indian HEIs, which include IITs as well as private universities like Ashoka University, ISB, Manipal, Shiv Nadar University, Chitkara, OP Jindal, and more, signed joint ventures for academic collaboration with foreign universities in Australia and U.S. and have been offering joint programs, with semesters abroad.Four Indian business schools, IIM Calcutta, IIM Indore, ISB Hyderabad, and SPJIMR hold the distinction of "Triple Crown" of international accreditations from AACSB, AMBA, and EQUIS, whereas over 25 B-Schools have at least one of the three accreditations.Challenges to attract international students

Regulations, though liberalised to some extent in the recent past, continue to be a constraining factor for signing up with foreign universities and introducing joint programs. International students look for physical infrastructure befitting their lifestyles so that they feel at home. Besides quality education, the students expect post studies work opportunities.

What more can be done?

India signed cross-border education agreements with Australia and the U.K. for mutual recognition of qualifications and promotion of mobility of students. There is a need to sign more such agreements with countries in South Asia. Going by the success of GIFT City, more such education Special Economic Zones may be set up.The student visa regime needs to be simplified and extended to provide post-studies work opportunities in IT companies and GCCs. Besides IT related programs, interdisciplinary programs in emerging areas like Sustainability, Indian traditional Knowledge Systems may be offered. Digital Universities may be set up to offer online programs as well as blended delivery programs for international students.As per the UNESCO, there are over seven million internationally mobile students. India is well-positioned to be the Asian hub for education

Why laws fall short in combating the surge in cyber-bullying cases



In the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack, Himanshi Narwal, the wife of slain Navy Lieutenant Vinay Narwal, issued a heartfelt appeal for peace and firmly rejected the vilification of Muslims and Kashmiris. Soon after, the grieving newlywed became the target of a vicious trolling campaign on X (formerly Twitter). Anonymous accounts hurled slurs at her, questioned her loyalty to her late husband, and even called for the cancellation of her pension.

However, Ms. Narwal was not alone in facing such online vitriol. Following Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri's announcement on May 10 that India and Pakistan had reached an understanding to halt military hostilities, his account on Xwas inundated with abusive comments, some of which targeted even his daughter. Mr. Misri was eventually compelled to lock his account, as several diplomats and politicians condemned the toxic trolling culture in unequivocal terms.Emboldened by the anonymity of the internet, faceless trolls have turned into virtual vigilantes, punishing those who dare to question dominant narratives. What regulatory reforms, then, are necessary to ensure that such depravity is no longer met with impunity?

A range of terms has emerged to describe contemporary forms of cybercrime, including cyberbullying, stalking, hate speech, and doxxing. Doxxing, short for "dropping dox" (documents), involves the unauthorised online disclosure of private information, often with malicious intent. This may include home addresses, phone numbers, or sensitive images, leaving victims vulnerable to harassment and tangible real-world threats.Studies show that such abuse disproportionately targets women and minorities, suggesting that these attacks are often driven by organised political motives. The consequences can be severe, frequently escalating to rape and death threats.India lacks a dedicated law specifically aimed at tackling online hate speech and trolling. Instead, a limited number of provisions under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2003, and the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000, cover certain aspects of cyberbullying. The BNS contains provisions applicable to electronic communications, such as Section 74 (assault or criminal force against a woman with intent to outrage her modesty), Section 75 (sexual harassment), Section 351 (criminal intimidation), Section 356 (defamation), and Section 196 (promoting enmity between groups). The IT Act supplements these offences with provisions like Section 66C (identity theft), Section 66D (impersonation fraud) and Section 67 (publishing or transmitting obscene material electronically).

"The existing regulatory framework is functional but far from complete. No provision squarely criminalises sustained online abuse that does not qualify as 'obscene,' 'threatening,' or 'fraudulent.' Stalking under the BNS is gender-specific—limited to men targeting women—and hinges on intent to engage personally, failing to capture the collective harassment that defines much of online trolling. While cyberbullying may sometimes be shoehorned into offences like criminal intimidation or defamation, these require proof of threat or reputational harm and are ill-suited to counter the rapid, anonymous abuse unleashed by online mobs," Apar Gupta, advocate and founder-director of the Internet Freedom Foundation, t

Moderation or censorship?

Mounting domestic and international pressure to curb disinformation and hate speech has compelled social media giants to moderate and remove harmful content. While many advocate for "self-regulation," where platforms enforce their own community guidelines, this model has largely failed and faces growing scrutiny. Last year, Telegram founder and CEO Pavel Durov was arrested by French authorities for allegedly failing to moderate criminal activity on the platform, including the circulation of child sexual abuse material and fraudulent content. Telegram later amended its privacy policy to permit the disclosure of users' IP addresses and phone numbers to law enforcement upon receipt of "valid legal requests."The challenge is further exacerbated by the gradual erosion of content moderation policies in favour of monetisation. In a damning report released earlier this month, the Centre for the Study of Organized Hate found that X had become a "high-velocity distribution channel" for hate speech and conspiracy theories, particularly targeting British-Pakistani men as well as other South Asian and immigrant communities. An analysis of 1,365 posts generating more than 1.5 billion engagements revealed that the platform played a central role in weaponising the "grooming gang" discourse to scapegoat Muslims in the U.K., despite police data showing that most offenders were white men.In India, Section 69A of the IT Act empowers the government to issue blocking orders on grounds aligned with constitutionally permissible restrictions on speech, such as national sovereignty, friendly relations with foreign States, and public order. Platforms that fail to comply risk losing safe harbour protection under Section 79, which ordinarily shields intermediaries from liability for user-generated content. However, experts have warned that these provisions are increasingly being used as tools for online censorship. In recent years, the Union Government has frequently taken down content without notifying affected users — a practice that contravenes the Supreme Court's 2015 ruling in Shreya Singhal v. Union of India. While the court upheld the constitutionality of Section 69A, it underscored that blocking orders must be accompanied by cogent reasons to enable judicial scrutiny.Following the Pahalgam attack, X disclosed that it had been directed to block more than 8,000 accounts in India, but said the government had not specified which posts violated the law in most cases. In March, the company filed a lawsuit in the Karnataka High Court challenging the government's reliance on Section 79(3)(b) to issue takedown orders, arguing that it bypasses the procedural safeguards under Section 69A. Unlike Section 69A, Section 79(3)(b) neither defines what constitutes an "unlawful act" nor provides for any review mechanism.Meanwhile, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting recently informed a Parliamentary Committee that it is reconsidering safe harbour protections for social media platforms in a bid to combat "fake news." X has received executive orders from the Indian government requiring X to block over 8,000 accounts in India, subject to potential penalties including significant fines and imprisonment of the company's local employees. The orders include demands to block access in India to…In February last year, the Delhi High Court directed X to remove tweets revealing the personal and professional details of a woman who had reportedly posted a critical comment about Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. The post triggered a wave of online harassment, with details of her workplace, residence, and photographs being widely circulated. Although these disclosures raised privacy concerns, Justice Prathiba Singh ruled that the incident did not constitute doxxing, as the information was already publicly available.

However, the judge acknowledged that while doxxing is not yet a statutory offence in India, it poses a serious threat. She observed that it infringes upon the right to privacy and that courts could invoke tort law to offer redress. Accordingly, X was directed to disclose subscriber information associated with the offending posts.This case highlights the contested nature of what qualifies as public information. The Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023, exempts from its ambit personal data that is made "publicly available", either through voluntary disclosure by the individual or by entities under a legal obligation. However, this exemption is riddled with ambiguity, as the law offers no clear definition for what qualifies as "publicly available data."This lack of clarity may inadvertently enable cybercrimes such as doxxing, especially given the ease with which fragmented data from multiple platforms can be easily aggregated and used for harassment or intimidation.Experts underscored that enforcement, or rather the lack of it, often determines whether victims can access remedies."All laws are only as effective as their enforcement. While posts and accounts are promptly removed when government directives are issued, the same urgency is rarely extended to ordinary users reporting harassment or abusive content," Mishi Choudhary, technology lawyer and digital rights advocate, told The Hindu.She pointed out that for victims of gendered online abuse, legal recourse is typically a last resort. "Survivors are often disbelieved or, worse, blamed for the abuse they face. The lack of awareness and institutional support has a profoundly detrimental impact, forcing many to navigate an uphill battle in their quest for justice," she said.

Is your blood pressure out of control? Understanding resistant hypertension and what can help

High blood pressure is a common concern in India. But what happens when standard treatments don't work? This is the reality of resistant hypertension, a condition requiring specialised care. According to the World Health Organisation, approximately only 1 in 5 adults (21%) with hypertension have it under control.A secondary analysis of the National Family Health Survey-5 data found that almost 36.8% of Indian women and 49.5% of men with hypertension in India don't have the condition under control despite being on medication. This isn't just high blood pressure—it's a resistant form that remains uncontrolled despite standard treatment and requires a more specialized approach.What is resistant hypertension?Resistant hypertension is defined as blood pressure that remains above 140/90 mmHg despite adherence to a regimen of three or more antihypertensive medications, including a diuretic, all at optimal doses. Unlike standard hypertension, which usually responds to medications and lifestyle modifications, in resistant hypertension, the BP remains elevated despite adherence to recommended treatment. Resistant hypertension may affect more people than you think. Despite the growing burden of this condition however, hypertensive disorders are still not looked at with the urgency they deserve. Many people view high blood pressure as a manageable part of life, unlike conditions such as cancer, which evoke far greater concern. This lack of awareness means that many patients continue to live with uncontrolled hypertension for years, risking severe complications such as heart failure, stroke, and kidney damage. The emotional toll can also be significant, with patients feeling frustrated, anxious, or disheartened by their inability to bring their blood pressure under control.For those dealing with resistant hypertension, a diagnosis involves ruling out factors that can mimic resistance, such as inaccurate blood pressure readings or interactions with other medications. Once confirmed, identifying the underlying cause is key. Resistant hypertension is driven by one or more underlying causes. According to the American Heart Association, these can include hormonal imbalances that affect blood pressure, plaque buildup in the arteries supplying the kidneys, and sleep-related disorders such as sleep apnea. Ambulatory BP monitoring, hormonal testing, imaging of the kidneys, sleep studies, and a detailed review of the patient's medication and medical history can all help uncover the root cause of the problem.In recent years, treatment options for resistant hypertension have expanded beyond medication alone. One of the most promising advances is a minimally invasive procedure known as renal denervation (RDN). This technique uses radiofrequency energy to disrupt the overactive sympathetic nerves around the renal arteries. By targeting these nerves, RDN helps reduce and regulate the sympathetic drive that keeps blood pressure elevated in many patients with resistant forms of the condition.While the idea of undergoing a procedure for hypertension may initially seem excessive, especially given how the condition is perceived, this mindset is beginning to shift. RDN is gaining recognition for its potential to provide sustained blood pressure control and reduce the long-term risk of organ damage. For patients who have exhausted conventional treatment options, RDN offers renewed hope, particularly when combined with ongoing lifestyle support and medical care. According to a study in TheLancet study, it complements both medication and lifestyle changes, but unlike medications, RDN maintains blood pressure reductions consistently over a 24-hour period.Resistant hypertension is not just a more stubborn version of high blood pressure—it is a distinct medical condition that requires deeper investigation, targeted treatment, and a shift in how both patients and clinicians approach it. With greater awareness, timely diagnosis, and innovative therapies like RDN, it is possible to bring even the most unrelenting cases of high blood pressure back under control—and protect long-term health in the process.

MG Motors launch 'Windows EV Pro' with 52.9 kWh battery pack, ADAS

Hyderabad: With the increasing demand for electric vehicles, MG Motor India launches the 'Windows EV Pro,' an upgraded variant of its popular electric MPV that offers enhanced features and improved designs.The newly unveiled Windows EV pro is equipped with a 52.9 kWh battery pack, delivering a claimed range of 449 km on a single charge. This is a significant improvement over the previous 38 kWh battery which offered a range of approximately 331 km.

The Pro Variant which is launched in three new colours Celadon Blue, Glaze Red, and Aurora Silver, retains its signature AeroGlide design but introduces new dual-tone 18-inch alloy wheels. The car's interior enhancements include providing more space with a lighter Ivory leatherette upholstery.



The car is equipped with an Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS)suite which features blind spot detection, traffic sign recognition mechanism, driver attention alert, and 360-degree camera system with parking sensors among others.

Iran's wartime hunt for protesters ushers in a new era of repression

Weeks into the war in Iran, at the height of the US and Israeli strikes on the country, a 21-year-old engineering student was summoned for interrogation. The student, Pouriya, had already spent days in jail for filming recent street protests in his hometown. Now, in March, investigators accused him of taking part in the killing of a local official.In Istanbul, Zahra, an Iranian with a modest social media following, was fielding panicked calls from home after intelligence officers threatened to arrest her mother over her Instagram posts. Many visits to the family home would follow, as officers passed messages to the 23-year-old through her family in Iran, accusing Zahra of working with Iran's enemies to stir up trouble at home.

And in northeast Iran, security forces dragged a 15-year-old out of bed, arresting him for participating in the protests. The next time he was seen, Abbas Nio Bajizahi wore a blindfold in a blurred forced confession video.In January, tens of thousands of Iranians protested against an economic collapse they blamed on the government. Nine months later, the country is witnessing its fiercest repression in decades, according to interviews with more than 75 human rights experts, lawyers and ordinary Iranians.The United States and Israel have claimed they struck at least 17 police stations, military bases and intelligence offices responsible for crushing the January protests. Yet Iran's security apparatus appears entrenched and stronger than ever.US President Donald Trump encouraged Iranian citizens to "keep protesting" and promised on January 13 that help was on its way. Scores of Iranians who took to the streets have since been charged with treason for allegedly cooperating with Iran's enemies. At least 34 people have been executed for taking part in the January protests. Thousands have been jailed.A Reuters examination of cases involving protesters since January points to a coordinated campaign by Iran's security apparatus, judiciary and state broadcaster to instill a climate of fear, especially among the families of the accused. Inside Iran, the campaign is carried out by fast-track executions that are announced online and in broadcasts, closed-door proceedings, and mass prosecutions. "The courts, which were created to deliver justice, are now being used as instruments of repression. The institutions of power have all come together and joined hands to do this."Iran's security apparatus is also reaching across borders to target Iranians who protested from exile. Interviews with dozens of Iranians in Armenia, Turkey and Georgia reveal how Iran is curbing opposition abroad by threatening family members in Iran, cancelling passports and withholding consular services.

"This is one of the darkest periods in contemporary Iranian history," said Sina Yousefi, a human rights lawyer now based in Germany. He was arrested in 2022 after he formed a defense council for protesters during the "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement, sparked by the death of a Kurdish woman detained by the morality police for violating Iran's female dress code."The courts, which were created to deliver justice, are now being used as instruments of repression," said Yousefi, who has been repeatedly sentenced in Iran for his activism, most recently for "agitation" and anti-government statements. "The institutions of power have all come together and joined hands to do this."Iran's mission to the United Nations in Geneva, which is responsible for international media inquiries, did not respond to a detailed request for comment about its deadly crackdown.

Since the protests erupted in January, Reuters has examined how Iran's leadership has survived months of bombardment by the world's most powerful military and years of punishing sanctions through a combination of repression and a network of shadowy financial structures. Investigations have revealed how Iran exploits crypto exchanges and illegal gambling networks to tap illicit revenues and circumvent sanctions, how its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps consolidated control of the Strait of Hormuz, and how it fuelled the Myanmar junta's bombing campaign against civilian targets.Reuters is withholding the full names of most people who spoke about the crackdown from inside Iran because they risk arrest for talking with international media. Not all the details described by Pouriya, Zahra and others could be confirmed, but their accounts, provided in separate interviews, are consistent with broader reporting by Reuters about the government's campaign to silence dissent.For 47 years, American Presidents and countless other world leaders talked about the threat posed by Iran, but no one had the courage to address it," White House spokeswoman Anna Kelly wrote in response to detailed questions about the Iranian crackdown. "President Trump took decisive action to ensure that Iran could never harm our homeland, our troops, or our allies again."Israel's military declined to comment on the Reuters findings.The latest protests in Iran started on December 28, 2025, after the currency plummeted to a then-historic low. Plagued by years of sanctions and economic mismanagement, this devaluation pushed shopkeepers in Tehran's Grand Bazaar to strike. Thousands of citizens around the country joined, calling for regime change.Demonstrations reached Pouriya's town within days. He was first detained on December 31 after a plainclothes officer grabbed him as he was filming the protests. He was released after signing a pledge to not film anymore. But two days later, Pouriya was detained again while filming with his cellphone.Pouriya, who appears younger than his 21 years with his dark mop of unruly hair, spent six nights in jail. There, he was beaten during interrogations and accused of spying. He said he shared a cell with injured protesters – two with broken ribs and another with a leg badly burned by a tear gas canister fired into a crowd. None of the injured were taken to the hospital, Pouriya said. Reuters could not confirm his account but it was consistent with how former prisoners describe conditions.

Once Pouriya was released, he described a dazed walk alone through his hometown.Pouriya, a 21-year-old who was sentenced to six years in prison after filming the protests in Iran last winter, has fled the country. But Iran's security services have reached abroad to track down dissidents.While he was in jail, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the force known as IRGC that is charged with maintaining the Islamic Republic in both internal and external security operations, unleashed a nationwide crackdown. Police and local militias known as Basij opened fire on the crowds.On the night of January 8, the government cut off the internet and mobile phone networks. That night and the next saw thousands of deaths. In all, the US-based Human Rights Activist News Agency documented 6,488 protester deaths and 25,846 injured across more than 200 cities. Reuters could not independently confirm the figures, which have been broadly reflected in the tallies of other human rights organizations.As Pouriya roamed his neighborhood, he saw scars of clashes from the days before – broken windows, buildings marked with bullet holes. And on the concrete walls of shops and homes were memorial posters of young Iranians killed on the streets, put up by their grieving families. Pouriya recognized some faces – a gifted classmate in one photo, a childhood friend in another.The endless news bulletins of arrests and executions reminded Pouriya of the stories he grew up hearing about the violent summer of 1988, when the nascent Islamic Republic killed thousands of political dissidents. Each morning, Iranians awoke to the names of the dead filling their newspapers and television broadcasts.On the morning of January 8, Zahra, an Iranian student at a college in Istanbul, opened her phone to see dozens of missed calls and unread messages from her family and friends in Iran. She tried responding but could not get through. Her stomach dropped.Zahra, brushing her long dark hair out of her face, recounted how she watched, zombie-like, at news reports of security forces shooting young protesters in the streets. Young neighbors and friends back in Iran had been so excited about their first street demonstrations. She had no idea if they were dead or alive.

Zahra marched in the 2022 protests but left her home in central Iran in 2024. She rarely discussed politics after moving to Turkey. On Instagram, she mostly posted videos of herself lipsyncing and dancing to music.All that changed last November, when strangers in Iran began sending her messages, describing their financial hardships. Zahra shared their stories online and posted her support for the last shah of Iran, whose rule was overthrown in 1979 during the Islamic Revolution. "I had no feelings left. No sadness, no happiness."In December, Zahra posted Instagram reels venting her frustration at the Iranian government. Young people from her hometown saw her posts and messaged her, asking for advice on where to gather. Zahra gave tips on meeting points and advised them to hide their faces.For many Iranians living abroad, the weeks leading up to the nationwide protests in January offered hope. In Turkey, Armenia and Georgia, all countries with significant Iranian diaspora populations, people like Zahra with little experience in political activism posted support for the protesters on social media and tried to organise their own gatherings abroad. These early international protests were widely covered. Unlike Iranians back home, most participants did not cover their faces.One day after the protests were violently suppressed, local intelligence officers visited Zahra's father at his house in central Iran."They told him, 'You have to tell her, she has to stop posting,'" she said."It was really bizarre because even though I'm a nobody, the security officers told my dad, 'Your daughter's like a ringleader, she's brainwashing young people,'" she said. The officers told her father the local protest would never have happened if it were not for her social media posts.Zahra, who is focused on her studies and devoted to her family, says she's no opposition mastermind."I'm a nobody," she repeated. She no longer posts about politics.A Springtime of ExecutionsIran briefly restored internet access at the end of January. But after Israel and the US launched the war on February 28, the Islamic Republic plunged its people into darkness again. This information blackout would last until late May.Pouriya, the engineering student, was summoned to an interrogation in mid-March. Intelligence officers accused him of causing the death of an official who was killed in the protests during the six days Pouriya was jailed. Three weeks later, Pouriya learned his sentence."They gave me six years: one year for propaganda against the system and five years for disturbing the peace and causing a commotion," said Pouriya. But he left Iran after he was released on bail while appealing the sentence.Several young men from his town were a part of a group trial in the death of the same government official. These men face the death penalty and their cases are pending, according to Iranian human rights organizations. Reuters reviewed documents related to Pouriya's conviction but could not confirm the cases involving the other young men and could not reach officials in Iran.

Since March, at least 34 protesters have been executed in connection with the most recent uprising, according to the United Nations and human rights groups. By contrast, 15 people were executed relating to the 2022



protests over a four-year period. Of more than 560 executions announced by mid-September, more than 10% have involved political prisoners, according to Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam of Iran Human Rights, which has been documenting the death penalty since 2007. In previous decades, he said, executions for political crimes accounted for 3% to 5% of the total number of people put to death. Reuters could not independently confirm his analysis.We have never had such a high number of political prisoners being executed in such a short time," he said.Five men have been executed in the past 10 days, indicating an accelerating pace.Yousefi, the lawyer, said legal proceedings are faster than before, and the appeal window has been cut in half. That's largely because of a new espionage law passed after US and Israeli airstrikes on Iran in June 2025 that killed many of Iran's military leaders, said Hamidreza Azizi, a senior Iran analyst at the International Crisis Group, a Brussels-based research institute. And hardline elements of the Islamic Republic now view the current conflict as a "hybrid war" that requires both foreign and domestic operations.

"We have never had such a high number of political prisoners being executed in such a short time.""They really believe that this is a war just being fought on different fronts, and wartime measures have to be applied on all these different fronts as well," Azizi said.Since January, Iranian state officials have emphasized the deaths of its security forces during the demonstrations, branding protesters as collaborators with the US and Israel."Does this look like a 'protest' for FREEDOM? Or the exact kind of scenes that the US Administration would NEVER tolerate within its own borders?" Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Aragchi wrote on X in January, days after the crackdown.As the war continued through spring, group trials of young men charged with murdering officials or committing arson began in the cities of Tehran, Esfarayen and Mashhad.Two mass trials opened in Isfahan, one of Iran's largest cities, which saw mass demonstrations in January. Videos showed crowds of people marching in the streets. They chanted "Iranians, get loud! Shout for your rights," while storeowners shuttered their shops in solidarity.About 60 people were arrested in connection with protests in Isfahan's Alikhani Square. According to Mizan, the judiciary's official media outlet, the men are accused of killing four security force members, destruction of property and being leaders of protests on January 8.The state quickly produced and promoted propaganda around the Alikhani Square case. On January 23, state television released a documentary called "Shock: Fire Starter.Iran's state broadcaster released a documentary called "Shock: Fire Starter" about the Alikhani Square protests in Isfahan. Published two weeks after the demonstrations, the video is dramatized in the style of a true-crime documentary, as seen in this short excerpt.The show included confessions of three detainees alongside CCTV footage and eyewitness accounts that claimed to provide evidence of their crimes.

US proposes $70,000 fee for international students seeking OPT work programme



Washington: The US Department of Homeland Security has proposed charging $70,000 for international students seeking initial participation in the Optional Practical Training programme, a sweeping change that could sharply increase the cost of obtaining post-study work experience in the United States.The proposed rule would also impose a $30,000 fee for any subsequent OPT participation, DHS said Wednesday.The fees are proposed and are not currently in effect. DHS will accept public comments from Oct. 8 through Nov. 9 before considering a final rule.OPT allows eligible international students in F-1 status to obtain temporary employment authorisation for work directly related to their field of study. It is widely used by foreign graduates of US colleges and universities, including students in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.Under the proposal, the fees would be paid by SEVP-certified schools before their designated school officials recommend students for OPT in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System, known as SEVIS.US Citizenship and Immigration Services would not grant employment authorisation if the school had not paid the required fee, according to DHS.

The fee would not be linked to a particular employer. It would apply when a school recommends an F-1 student for any form of OPT.DHS said the money collected would be deposited in the US Treasury.The department said it was proposing the changes to combat fraud and abuse, strengthen immigration-system integrity and protect US workers."Optional Practical Training was never meant to be a back door into the American workforce, a subsidy for cheap labour, or a prize for those who game the system," a DHS spokesperson said."DHS is upskilling OPT to require foreign students to justify their worth to employers. American workers should not have to compete against a program that has been turned into a pipeline for cheap foreign labour," the spokesperson said.

DHS said the Student and Exchange Visitor Program had encountered schools, designated school officials, employers and F-1 students involved in schemes exploiting existing regulations, including problematic worksites and what it described as "pay-to-stay" visa schemes.The department said the proposed fees could encourage schools to exercise greater oversight and selectivity before recommending students for OPT.Under current regulations, eligible F-1 students can seek OPT before completing their academic programme or after graduation, provided the work is directly related to their major field of study.Students can receive up to 12 months of OPT at each educational level.Graduates with qualifying degrees in science, technology, engineering or mathematics can be eligible for an additional 24-month STEM OPT extension, making the programme particularly important to international graduates seeking professional experience in US technology and other high-skilled industries.To participate, students must receive a recommendation from a designated school official and separately apply to USCIS for employment authorisation.The proposal comes amid a broader push by the US administration to tighten employment-based immigration programmes, with officials arguing that stronger enforcement is needed to combat fraud and protect domestic workers.DHS said that after the public-comment period closes, it will review properly submitted comments and supporting materials and could revise the proposal before issuing any final rule.

Civilians in Yemen continue to flee homes amid insecurity: UN



United Nations: Civilians in Yemen continue to flee their homes amid the ongoing conflict, as the humanitarian crisis worsens by the day, UN humanitarians said. Since August 1, more than 184,000 people have been displaced nationwide, including over 21,000 people in the past week alone, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said on Wednesday (local time), citing the International Organization for Migration.According to OCHA, the United Nations and its humanitarian partners have reached more than 126,000 people with life-saving assistance. Nevertheless, it warned that needs continue to outpace the resources available.The World Health Organization warned of major funding shortfalls as rising displacement, disease outbreaks and conflict put more pressure on an already fragile health system, OCHA said. "Cholera cases have tripled in recent weeks — including in displacement camps — while measles, dengue and malaria continue to spread."Key roads connecting Taiz governorate with major surrounding cities, including Hodeidah, Aden and Sanaa, remain blocked, the office said, adding that the closure severely restricts the movement of civilians and commercial supplies, as well as humanitarian access.Shortages of essential commodities and medical supplies are being reported, with sharp increases in food and fuel prices, and growing concerns over the availability of flour, cooking gas and medicines, OCHA said.The office said it was alarmed by reports of civilian casualties, damage to civilian property and heightened risks from explosive hazards, which are further constraining

Pentagon prepares for possible major combat operations against Iran



The Pentagon has reportedly directed US Central Command to prepare for possible major combat operations against Iran, with potential strikes targeting energy, infrastructure and nuclear facilities ahead of US and Israeli elections. Iran, meanwhile, has warned it may carry out preemptive military action and says it has shifted from a defensive to an offensive military doctrine

Washington: The Pentagon instructed US Central Command several days ago to complete preparations for resuming major combat operations in Iran, according to a report citing US officials.US and Israeli sources said the strikes could take place before the US midterm elections, which will be held on November 3, and possibly before the Israeli elections a week earlier, reports Xinhua, quoting news website Axios.Potential combat operations include massive bombing campaigns targeting Iranian energy, infrastructure and nuclear facilities, according to the sources.Less than a month before the US midterms, affordability is the biggest issue for voters, who are blaming Republicans, the party in power. The war in Iran has caused gas prices to surge, driving up costs across industries including shipping, trucking, air travel and food.

A Reuters/Ipsos poll released Monday showed that US President Donald Trump's approval rating remained at a record low of 32 per cent, unchanged from a September poll that marked the lowest rating of his political career.Cost of living is the top issue on Americans' minds as they decide how to vote next month, the Reuters/Ipsos poll found.Meanwhile, Iranian Army spokesman Mohammad Akraminia has said that, if necessary, the country will carry out preemptive military operations to prevent any "aggression by the enemy."He made the remarks in an interview with the semi-official Fars news agency, which was published on Wednesday, while stressing that Iranian armed forces had previously launched such operations against the "enemy".Akraminia said the country has changed its military doctrine from being defensive to offensive and has followed it in the war with the United States and Israel.He noted among the operations carried out by the Iranian armed forces based on the new doctrine were a missile strike against a US base in Jordan in late July, as well as several missile and drone attacks over the past months against the bases of the "counter-revolutionary and separatist" groups stationed in Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region.He added the strike against the US base, which was preemptive, "wrested the initiative from them and left them unable to take any action."Akraminia stressed that carrying out preemptive operations while adhering to principles, such as necessity, urgency, and proportionality, is considered "legitimate."Commenting on the possibility of a ground invasion by the United States against Iran, he said, "My assessment is that the Americans will not dare launch a ground invasion."Akraminia said Iran's

The Art and Science of Fitness | Reclaiming your fitness goals after pregnancy



Nothing makes you admire the human body quite like the amazing feat of pregnancy and childbirth. The ability to create life (with a bit of celestial help), while old as time, is also among the most magical things in life. Obviously, in all of this, men play a supportive role. Women carry the weight, quite literally. And once the baby is there, your life has changed quite significantly and nothing is like it was before. Including your body.

Eva, one of the co-authors, can talk from her own experience. She noted that it is hard not to feel like a vessel during pregnancy. If one is breastfeeding and catering to the baby's needs, you are no longer the sole dependent on your body.Exercise can help. Of course, only once it is safe to do so, light stretching and yoga can start pretty soon postpartum, gradually building it up over weeks, but for more vigorous exercises you should wait at least six weeks.

Postpartum exercise can serve two functions: It is good for getting back to fitness. But it also means that you, as a new mother, need to set aside time to prioritise yourself. Which is hard to do with a newborn. It is all too easy to lose the sense of self and instead feel a sense of servitude to the newborn.Even though becoming physically active soon after the delivery of the child is important, it is worthwhile mentioning that any woman planning a pregnancy should prepare for it. This should include both physical and mental health. Becoming a parent is one of the most fundamental shifts of our lives and nothing can prepare us for it, but ourselves. We literally need to get moving.Physical journey during and after the pregnancy

Here we'll focus on the physical aspect. Most get worried and don't get started on the fitness journey worrying that they can't, without realising that they definitely won't be able to stay fit if they don't get started.Expectant mothers, who are on their physical fitness journey, tend to have a smoother pregnancy. It also prepares them for the delivery and the post-pregnancy phase. The only caveat is that there should be no rush. They need to gradually build up physical activity, and not try to do everything suddenly because that is when injuries happen. Cardiovascular exercises like walking, jogging, running, cycling, swimming and rowing have an important role. The same is the case for strength training exercises, whether floor, free weights or machine-based. Both of these help in improving bone strength. Weak bones are a big concern in women post-pregnancy. The overall objective of postpartum fitness should simply be to become better than the day before.

Like the whole body, the pregnant woman's heart is also working overtime. During pregnancy, the heart rate (number of times the heart beats) and the stroke volume (volume of blood pumped per heartbeat) increase to nourish the growing baby. Fascinatingly, this change is similar to what happens after training in an endurance exercise. So, mothers who had already been running during pregnancy, and/or start with their training after delivery, have an edge over their non-pregnant counterparts.There will be some women who, post pregnancy, will experience pelvic floor muscle dysfunction during exercises, symptoms of which will be heaviness and pain in the pelvic area and incontinence. They should undergo supervised rehabilitation to address the same.The best way to get rid of the excess weight post-pregnancy is to make good food choices, i.e. cutting down on sugars, carbohydrates and deep-fried food. For six months after delivery, breastfeeding increases energy expenditure, protein requirements and fluid needs, hence, there is a need to increase energy intake, rather than cutting down on it. Also, there is a need to adequately hydrate, particularly before exercising. Pregnant and breastfeeding mothers should have a sufficient amount of vitamins B, C, E, D and A, iron, folic acid, selenium, copper, zinc, manganese, iodine and choline. However, always take these supplements after your doctor's advice.Addressing postpartum mental health is crucialWe would be remiss not to mention that postpartum physical bodily changes, returning to training and/or going back to work will all influence mental health. When we talk about postpartum fitness and parenting, it is crucial not to overlook this. After all, whether it is about putting on your shoes for a run or to the gym, first you need to be motivated enough to do that, and that's all psychological. The same applies when your newborn baby cries and you lose your cool because that's what babies tend to do.

You need to dig in and stay calmer. This is often easier said than done, and roughly 15% of women experience some degree of postpartum depression (PPD). Coupled with anxiety, psychosis and eating disorders, this can be debilitating and they should be encouraged to ask for help.The body-mind connection is real in more ways than we can imagine. Postpartum depression is associated with urge urinary incontinence, and it further increases the risk of depression. Eating disorders, whether it be because of the impression of body image or because of hormonal changes, in turn, increase the risk of postpartum depression and also lead to an energy deficit, which further physically makes you feel fatigued all the time. The vicious cycle carries on unless help is sought.And one way to regain that sense of control is through exercise. It doesn't have to be much. Once a week is great. Twice is fantastic. Or incorporate 3 minutes of strength training exercises into your day. A little goes a long way.A positive thing that came out of the Covid pandemic was the increased acceptance of the importance of mental health and the removal of the stigma surrounding seeking help for it. Following delivery, early mental health screenings by a mental health professional are highly recommended, followed – if needed – by treatment, whether it be therapy, lifestyle changes including exercises, reducing screen time, better sleeping times, improved eating habits or in a few cases, medication.Being aware of all of this and taking action by getting moving will help you to get back to your pre-pregnancy fitness levels, or even better. And if you need an excuse to prioritise your exercise and health, keep in mind that you are helping your children as well. When they observe their parents leading an active healthy life, especially their mother, children tend to pick up a better lifestyle for good. Which — besides life — is the biggest gift you could have given them.Dr Rajat Chauhan (drrajatchauhan.com) Sports Medicine & Musculoskeletal Medicine Physician,

India's fraying garment industry needs a stitch in time under Modi 3.0



Until then, China dominated garment exports to western markets, commanding a 40% market share in both the EU and the US. However, according to the chief purchasing managers, there were growing headwinds: labour shortage in China's coastal industrial hubs, rising wages and diversion of production capacity toward national consumption. About 54% of purchasing managers said that they would diversify up to 10% of sourcing away from China while 32% said they would diversify more than 10% of sourcing, McKinsey reported. A clear winner emerged—Bangladesh, which McKinsey deemed the "next China" in garment-making and exports.

Looking back at the survey, which was conducted 13 years ago at a time when global supply chains were getting further embedded in Asia, one statistic is revealing. When asked about the new sourcing hotspots in the next five years, 89% said Bangladesh, followed by Vietnam, Indonesia and Cambodia. India did not have the confidence of global purchasing managers; in hindsight, they were prescient.Early this year, the New Delhi-based research group Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) reported that India's global market share in garment trade has declined between 2015 and 2023: share of knitted apparel dropped from 3.85% to 3.10%, and the share of non-knitted apparel dropped from 4.6% to 3.7%.

In 2023, China exported $114 billion worth of garments, the EU $94.4 billion, Vietnam $81.6 billion, Bangladesh $43.8 billion, and India just $14.5 billion, according to GTRI. Consider the trend in growth. Between 2013 and 2023, while China's garment exports declined by 23.5%, Bangladesh's grew by 69.6%, Vietnam's grew by 81.6%, and India's grew by a marginal 4.6%.Ajay Shrivastava, a former bureaucrat and the founder of GTRI, stressed how important the entire sector is to the Indian economy and its dream of becoming a manufacturing nation. "The sector [including both textiles and garments] provides jobs to [an estimated] 50 million people," Shrivastava said. "Textiles and garments are not technology-intensive industries; these are labour-intensive. If we are losing to countries like Bangladesh then it is a sad reality and we have to do something about it."

Shrivastava lays out the entire value chain of the sector. "Cotton is grown in the fields, then cotton fibre is converted into yarns, then yarn into fabric, then fabric into garments. It's sad that we have to export cotton yarns. Ideally, we should convert it into fabrics, but after yarns, our value chain breaks, mostly because of quality issues," he said.Another bottleneck plaguing exports is the industry failing to catch up with shifting trends in the fast fashion industry, according to Shrivastava. "We are a historically cotton-growing country. But about 70% of clothing bought by developed countries is made of mixed synthetics— it has overtaken cotton and become a favourite of the fashion industry. Their share in Indian exports is less than 40%."Hence, Indian factories produce cotton apparel for the spring and summer seasons in the West, leading to low utilisation during autumn and winter when synthetics and blended fabrics dominate demand. "A factory that runs only six months a year still has to pay the full year's fixed costs. This makes anything made in the factory expensive. With weak synthetics, India's apparel industry is a horse running with one leg tied. The results are low exports, low wages, and low investments in the sector," Shrivastava said."Entry into synthetics would make factories run full year and increase wages manifold."Fast fashion is a low-margin industry with a complex production process, and one indicator could determine manufacturing success. It is called the Standard Allowed Minute (SAM), which measures the time taken by a worker at a factory unit to make one garment. SAM is a function of skilled workforce, assembly line efficiency and the man-to-machine ratio. According to GTRI, about 80% of Indian exporters fail to meet SAM or other [industry] requirements, thereby limiting their ability to secure orders."

Kumar Duraiswamy, joint secretary at the Tirupur Exporters' Association in Tamil Nadu, said that while the man-to-machine ratio in India is about 2:1, it is close to 1.15:1 for China and Bangladesh. "The efficiency of machines is about 80-85% in Bangladesh, China and Vietnam whereas the average for us is about 40%. Now imagine a 10,000 sq.ft factory with the standard expenses producing 5000 pieces in India [compared to] 9000 pieces there—what we get is cheaper products offered by these countries," he said. "A crucial part of the garment industry is the thousands of weaving and processing units, most of which are informal and small- and medium-sized enterprises. Shrivastava said that these units lack expertise, scale, and technology and remain racked with issues such as power outages and underutilization, which, in turn, increase weaving costs in India to levels comparable with those in the EU or US. Consider this statistic: Chinese fabric processing units process about 1 million metres of cloth per day compared to less than 20,000 metres in India, according to GTRI's analysis.Duraiswamy inveighed against successive governments' apathy toward the garment industry. "The thing is you cannot transform the MSME sector all of a sudden. The availability of orders, and the trust of the customers, is a big process. And with the policies that we have, people are tired; they do not want to run a garment business," he said.

In 2021, the government announced that it will build seven Mega Integrated Textile?Region?and?Apparel (PM MITRA) parks, as part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "5F vision: Farm to Fibre to Factory to Fashion to Foreign." The parks aim to create an integrated value chain: spinning, weaving, processing, dyeing and printing at one location."Tirupur - India's largest garment-making hub - is a cluster-based model. About 2000 exporters are supported by 20,000 MSMEs that are part of the different processes in the value chain from yarn to fabric to knitting to dyeing to finishing to sewing, printing, embroidery and packaging. The future is an integrated model but we have to scale up taking the traditional model along because orders by buyers are a function of the manufacturing model, and the transition will take time," Duraiswamy said.To boost the sector, the government included it in its flagship production-linked incentives scheme, which was launched in 2021. However, under the scheme, fibre manufacturers were prioritised over garment makers and the threshold for investments was between rupees 100 crore to 300 crore, which, according to Duraiswamy, is high for the industry, cutting off most small and medium-sized manufacturers."The government has to go to the grassroots and find out about the nature of transformation that is required in this industry. High employment potential is only possible in the garment industry. You are promoting cotton and yarn exports. But exporting one unit of garment generates more jobs than one unit of cotton or yarn," Duraiswamy said.On June 25, 2024, the newly installed textiles minister Giriraj Singh said that his challenge is to beat China - not Bangladesh - in garment exports, and promised to make small clusters for smaller players in India and revive the making of integrated textile parks. "Who knows how much time it will take to make it happen? This is the time to talk to leading manufacturers and ask them about the problems they face. There are decisions that need to be made now and not in the future," Shrivastava said.

"In Bangladesh, executives from companies such as Zara and H&M planned and designed policies for the garment sector, and the government fully supported them in whatever policy changes and trade facilitation measures they wanted," he said, noting that India should negotiate both tariff and non-tariff barriers in its ongoing free trade agreement discussions with the United Kingdom and EU."The EU levies tariffs anywhere between 10-18% on India-made garments while the tariffs for Bangladesh and Vietnam remain zero. However, we have to remember that the EU levies full duty on China-made garments and yet China is their top garment supplier," Shrivastava said."Tariff is only one of the factors [that determine success in exports]," Duraiswamy says that an appreciating dollar has made machines expensive - most of which are imported - at a time when small -and medium-sized factories are finding it difficult to get access to credit owing to the adoption of Basel III capital norms by India. "When credit growth stops, these factories go out of business."According to Duraiswamy, the global buying capacity has not increased but the manufacturing capacities [in Asia] have increased in the last few years with Pakistan, Vietnam, Cambodia and Myanmar joining the global supply chain.

Curating a product market fit for your crypto startup

So, cryptocurrencies, like Bitcoin, seem to have their highs and lows. These cryptocurrencies are built on the decentralised technology Blockchain and one may understand the motivations of the West for adopting such technology. After all, it seemed like fundamental confidence in the traditional financial system had been a bit shattered, pretty much forming the genesis of something like cryptocurrency. The notion may have been to have something decentralised with limited circulation without a central entity controlling fortunes.



And among those thinking of being part of the crypto space, how much of it is about seeing it as a monetary system or a means of exchange or a barter system based on which the future economy would be built, as opposed to a way to exchange goods and services? Is cryptocurrency being seen as a foundational economic tool for the future or just another method for transactions?Being a crypto entrepreneur in India could have Herculean challenges, because, from a regulatory perspective, it's a rocky relationship with crypto without much legitimacy. And if someone puts their hard-earned salary into crypto and something goes wrong, they may not be able to knock on the doors of regulators either, because policymakers may see cryptocurrency akin to gambling.In an interview, Vikram Subburaj, CEO & co-founder of Giottus, a crypto assets trading portal, answered a range of questions on crypto entrepreneurship in India.

So, what does the crypto landscape look like for entrepreneurs in India?

Crypto is a parallel technology, like the Internet, where more than one industry is redefined and transformed and where even new industries get created. It's, also, a horizontal technology that is able to create a network in a decentralised manner. Traditionally, the benefits and value of a network lie only with the entity or corporate that creates it and that's where cryptocurrency comes in to spread that value across to everyone. Think of those old dial-up connections where the network was really slow, but it could still do certain things; the promise of what it could do was what ought to be kept in mind. We're at that stage right now where there is a limitation of transactions per second, but it's being solved.

But, what could that mean from the consumer perspective?

One may not want a centralised corporate entity to dictate the terms of digital media that people are using. People should have a say in defining the rules of technology, which proves the need for a decentralized system... Say there are people investing or having ownership of a particular cryptocurrency project. They have a say on what the rules of the project should be, how the network should work, what the punishment could be, like a deduction of a certain percentage or being banned from the network and more.So, they're defining the rules by having ownership in the network. And if this network grows really big, it becomes like a decentralized nation with people sitting around different parts of the world. But, imagine that on a smaller scale, where rules, habits and characteristics get defined and a culture gets formed if the network survives.

But, what could the use cases of cryptocurrency tangibly look like?

The use cases of cryptocurrency are already seen as being better than existing systems, such as payments in the remittance market. One area or challenge where adoption hasn't grown drastically yet is because of regulations. So, there are industries, where regulation is the hurdle, not the product. And the amount of monetary gain that this is going to give people who would adopt it is much higher than that of existing systems and processes...Parallelly, when there's no headache from a regulatory perspective and where adoption would be more cemented is the gaming industry, which has an imminent need in the form of NFTs, which are going to be really big in that sector. 10 years from now, I foresee most of the infrastructure behind one's payments and remittance markets being handled through cryptocurrency networks.

And how does one curate a product-market fit in the crypto realm?

Out of the 8-10 players out there, we're the only ones bootstrapped and we're said to be in the top 4 based on volumes. And we didn't spend money to acquire customers, it was just our product and the referral programme we had, which has led to a customer base of about 1 million to 1.5 million…At one point, an RBI circular restricted crypto entities from having a banking exchange. At that point, there were about 50 exchanges and that came down to about 10, which made our job much clearer. And then, a Supreme Court verdict lifted this ban a couple of years later...

Insects and death intersect in art, poetry, forensics

The origin point: The first case of insects being used to point to a killer dates to the 13th century, and the murder of a farmer in rural China.Investigators of the time could tell that the man had been murdered with a sickle, but in a village full of rice farmers and sickles, it was proving impossible to tell which one, the Chinese physician and death investigator Sung Tzhu writes, in his 1247 book Hsi Yüan Chi Lu (The Washing Away of Wrongs).Since searches and questioning had failed, the local judge decided to try a different tack. He called upon all the rice field workers to lay their sickles on the ground. One began to attract flies. Hordes of them.Confronted, the owner of the sickle confessed. This case is said to mark the earliest point in the history of forensic entomology.Art: By the time of the Renaissance, with its growing fascination with anatomical studies of the human body, elements of forensic entomology were showing up on canvas.Take the woodcut series The Dance of Death by the 16th century German artist Hans Holbein the Younger. The macabre visuals depict Death as a skeletonised individual paying surprise visits to all kinds of people — a pope, a physician, a ploughman, a knight, a sailor.

In one revelry-filled depiction, skeletons dance and play a drum around a corpse, as tiny snake-like creatures dangle around their heads, necks and limbs. "Such artwork accurately depicts the insect-mediated pattern of body mass reduction, particularly the early skeletonization of the skull and the reduction of internal organs, with large parts of the skin left intact… Close observation of decomposition of human corpses built the basis for these figures," writes German forensic biologist Mark Benecke, in a paper on the history of the field, published in Forensic



Science International in 2001.Poetry: Bugs feasting on the dead and decaying inspired the French poet Charles Baudelaire's Une Charogne (A Carcass; first published in 1857). Amid a growing Romantic movement in which the arts focused on Nature, the self, and the lives of everyday individuals, the poem offers a raw and graphic exploration of death as a natural force, as a man describes a decaying body to his lover:And the sky was watching that superb cadaver /Blossom like a flower…True crime: Around this time, the French physician Dr Louis François Étienne Bergeret used the life cycle of bugs to crack a case wide open, in the first such case on record.The insect samples had been collected from the mummified remains of an infant, found stashed behind the chimney of a home in Paris, in the 1850s. Dr Bergeret's analysis of the insect remains led him to ascertain time of death at approximately seven years before the tiny body was found.

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