Spy in every blink

Eye Secrets

Daily

www.eyesecretdaily.com

Rangareddy Vol No. 1 Issue 159 Date:Sunday, 8-11-2026 Price:2/- Pages: 8

CM Revanth Reddy greets Telangana people on Diwali festival

Hyderabad: On the auspicious occasion of Diwali festival on Sunday, honourable Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy extended warm greetings to Telangana people. The Chief minister wished that the radiance of the 'festival of the lights ' fills every home with happiness and prosperity.

Stating that the People's Government is committed to bring lights in the lives of every citizen of the state, the CM said that his government is working tirelessly toward the welfare of all sections of society and the holistic development of the state. "Diwali holds special significance symbolizing the victory of good over evil and knowledge over ignorance."



CM Revanth Reddy hoped that people will celebrate the festival with great joy and enthusiasm illuminating their homes and surroundings with the light of lamps. The Chief Minister also appealed to people to adopt conservation of environment during the festivities and also prevent any untoward incidents while bursting crackers. The CM called upon everyone including children and youth to celebrate Diwali in a safe and joyful environment.

Great damage done to India's fabric under Modi govt, people now recognising it: Sonia Gandhi

INew Delhi, Nov 7

Congress leader Sonia Gandhi has alleged that "great damage" has been done over the last 12 years to the fabric of India, its democracy and its institutions, asserting that people are now beginning to be restless and recognising the damage.

In an interview with The Hindu ahead of the launch of her book "Belonging: A Journey of Love", Gandhi said she is optimistic and knows that the people of India will welcome a return to proper governance.

The Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson asserted that her party never made any compromises with BJP and RSS and "we never will".

"Over the last twelve years, great damage has been done to the fabric of our country, our democracy and our institutions. Even after this government goes, it will take time to restore our systems back to health and great effort from political parties," she said.

People are now beginning to be restless and recognising the damage, the former Congress chief said.

Asked about the decline of the Congress and her assessment of its present condition and prospects, Gandhi said, "I am not so pessimistic. Consider that the Congress party and other opposition parties have not had a level playing field since this government came to power.

"Take into account the complete stranglehold they have on all institutions, especially the Election Commission, their control of mainstream media, their money power and their exploitation of religion."

"Yet, our party is fighting and making progress; in fact, it is the only party that has had the resilience to withstand this onslaught," Gandhi said.

She alleged that Congress workers and leaders "have faced persecution of all kinds".

"And yet, in every village and every district, Congressmen and women are still fighting for the values enshrined in our Constitution," she said.

"What is more, it has been amply proved in recent months that many elections have been stolen, and people are now more aware of it," she alleged.

"The Congress is working with like-minded parties, and its prospects are improving day by day," she said.



Tagging a link to her interview, son Rahul Gandhi said on X, "Sixty years in public life, and still the same person. Proud of you, Ma."

Daughter Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also shared the link to the interview and said, "From personal memories and formative influences to defining political decisions and the state of Indian democracy, CPP Chairperson Smt. @SoniaGandhi ji answers a range of questions from N. Ram of The Hindu ahead of her book launch, Belonging: A Journey of Love."

Published by HarperCollins India, "Belonging: A Journey of Love" is a personal memoir with politics providing the background or "a kind of framework", as Gandhi puts it in the book.

On Prime Minister Narendra Modi and what lessons the Congress should draw from his rise, Gandhi said, "It's true that he comes from a very different ideological world. But there are many ways that people succeed in politics within the Congress party, take for example Dr Manmohan Singh and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge. I don't think we have much to learn from RSS."

On whether she wonders how UPA policies and Congress strategy might have differed had she accepted to become prime minister in 2004, Gandhi said, "No, not at all. That has never crossed my mind. Our experience was by and large a very positive one. We worked as a team, and our roles were distinct, with him (Singh) leading the government and I leading the party."

Gandhi stressed that the values that she learnt growing up survive.

"I have tried my best to be true to them: loyalty to family and friends, sincerity and feeling for others, the idea of being dutiful and responsible. I think I can say that in these I am the same person Rajiv met sixty years ago. But I used to smile and laugh a lot more then," Gandhi said.

She recalled that when she arrived in India as a young bride, she knew nothing about the country.

"All that I am and know today, I learnt from them (Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi). Their courage, their empathy, their commitment to a secular and democratic India and most of all, the pull of duty that was greater than any other for both of them was something that inspired me and held me steadfast during times of difficulty and doubt," she said.

Talking of political compromises, Gandhi said realistically in politics compromises are at times unavoidable.

"Sometimes we were faced with difficult political choices, when we were obliged to join hands with some who did not share our political ideology.

"It never sat easy in my mind. But one thing I am perfectly clear: we never made any compromises with BJP and RSS and we never will," she said.

Apologise to saints, devotees first before visiting Ayodhya: Adityanath ahead of SP chief's visit

Ayodhya (UP), Nov 7

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on Saturday "those who had fired on Ram devotees, subjected saints to lathicharge, and ignored Ayodhya" should only visit the Ram temple after apologising to the devotees and saints.

The Chief Minister's remark came within hours of the announcement that Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav would visit the Ram temple in Ayodhya on December 12.

"Those who had neglected and insulted (Ayodhya), who had opened fire on Ram devotees and subjected saints to lathicharge, should certainly come to Ayodhya, but only after apologising. Let them apologise once to Ram devotees and once to the saints. Let them repent for their actions," Adityanath said, while addressing the 10th edition of Deepotsav in Ayodhya.



Without naming the Samajwadi Party or its president Yadav, the Chief Minister took swipe at the previous governments over the handling of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, the firing on kar sevaks and the alleged neglect of Ayodhya. He appeared to refer to Yadav's recent participation in a religious discourse in Ayodhya, questioning the conduct of certain political leaders at religious gatherings.

"Those who used to leave the streets of Ayodhya soaked in blood are today unable even to recall their own past," Adityanath said, adding that some people did not even understand the decorum of a religious discourse.

"Sometimes I am surprised at these people. When they go to a religious discourse, they do not even know the decorum of a katha (religious narration). Is it a katha or a mushaira (Urdu poetry gathering)? Even this they do not know. We have our own decorum and sacred traditions for religious discourses. But because of their unruly disposition, they disregard the dignity of Lord Ram and the sanctity of the katha, and make an ill-advised attempt to turn it into a mushaira," he said.

Adityanath said Lord Ram represented India's national consciousness, culture, values and self-respect, describing him as the very life force of the nation.

"Look at the scene that has come alive before us today. This is the strength of Lord Ram's consciousness. It is, in fact, the consciousness of India. This is India's culture and its values. Lord Ram is the life force of the Indian nation and, if you may say so, Lord Ram is India's self-respect," he said.

Referring to Ayodhya's recognition as the first among the seven sacred cities (Saptapuris) in Hindu scriptures, Adityanath said the city had faced several challenges. Still, Ram devotees, saints, Naga ascetics, Nihang Sikhs and people from every section of society had continued to resist them. Recalling the 500 years of foreign rule and the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, he said there was a time when people doubted whether Ram Lalla would ever be reinstated at his birthplace.

"Today, Ayodhya is once again regaining the glory for which kar sevaks sacrificed their lives and revered saints struggled. The long movement for the Ram Janmabhoomi, under the leadership of Ashok Singhal and the guidance of revered saints, has culminated in Ayodhya, in accordance with the aspirations of its people, under the guidance and leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he said.

"There was a time when even uttering the name of Shri Ram in Ayodhya invited lathis and bullets. Banning the very name of Ram in this city was a sin. Ayodhya was neglected and almost consigned to oblivion. Today, that very Ayodhya has come alive again, reminding us of the Treta Yuga," he added.

In an apparent dig at the Opposition, Adityanath said those who had once neglected the city were now witnessing its transformation. He also targeted the Congress without naming it, referring to the legal battle over the Ram Janmabhoomi and attempts made in courts to question the existence of Lord Ram.

"Those who had assembled an army of lawyers in courts to deny the existence of Lord Ram have at least now acquired the wisdom to accept his existence. This is our ideological victory," he said.

Explaining what he described as the "ideological victory", Adityanath said Lord Ram had embraced everyone, irrespective of their social background. "Ram accepts everyone. But if someone comes in the guise of Maricha (the demon who disguised himself as a golden deer to lure Lord Ram away from Sita), he will not be able to escape Ram's arrows," he said.

Gujarat deported 2,412 illegal foreign nationals, filed 92 pc chargesheets within 60 days: HM Shah

Ahmedabad, Nov 7 Gujarat has deported 2,412 illegal foreign nationals and filed charge sheets within 60 days in 92 per cent of cases following the implementation of the new criminal laws, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Saturday.

In a post on social media platform X after chairing a high-level review meeting on law and order and internal security in Ahmedabad, Union Minister Shah described the state's performance as "excellent".



He said that Gujarat had achieved the figures after the implementation of the new criminal laws.

"After the implementation of the new laws in the state, Gujarat has performed excellently by filing charge sheets within 60 days in 92 per cent of cases and deporting 2,412 illegal foreign nationals," Union Minister Shah added.

He also called for Central and state agencies to work together to strengthen coastal surveillance, target drug networks and realise the goal of a "drug-free Gujarat".

Union Minister Shah chaired the review meeting in the presence of Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi and senior officials.

The meeting reviewed the state's law and order situation, internal security, border and coastal security, narcotics control, cybercrime and counter-terrorism measures.

The Union Home Minister called for intensified action against narcotics networks, better coordination among enforcement agencies and wider public awareness campaigns against drug abuse.

He also directed officials to expand the '1933' control room and step up enforcement drives as part of the broader target of achieving a drug-free India by 2029.

The meeting also reviewed the presence of illegal Bangladeshi nationals in Gujarat, enforcement of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, cases under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and measures to prevent infiltration.

Other issues discussed included alleged 'love jihad', economic offences, police modernisation, cyber fraud, counter-terrorism preparedness, prison administration and the functioning of the criminal justice system.

Officials also reviewed coastal security arrangements, suspicious activities along the state's borders and the implementation of the Vibrant Villages Programme.

Disaster management, urban flood prevention in Ahmedabad, mangrove conservation and forensic infrastructure were among the other issues on the agenda.

Director General of Police (DGP) G.S. Malik briefed Union Minister Shah on border management, the quadrilateral security grid, anti-radicalisation measures, Operation Mule Hunt, the 112 Janrakshak service and Mission Prabodh, which focuses on tackling cyber fraud.

National Book Trust is 'State' as government exercises 'pervasive' control, rules SC

New Delhi, Nov 7

The National Book Trust (NBT) is a 'State' under Article 12 of the Constitution as the government exercises "deep and pervasive" control over the institution, the Supreme Court has ruled.

Article 12 defines the term "State" for the purpose of enforcing fundamental rights. This means individuals can approach the courts, including high courts and the Supreme Court, for enforcement of their fundamental rights against entities that fall within its ambit.

A Bench of Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra and Justice Augustine George Masih on Friday dismissed an appeal filed by the chairman of the National Book Trust, India and another, challenging a 2012 judgment of the Delhi High Court's full Bench which had held that the NBT was an instrumentality of the State.

The top court concluded the full Bench of the High Court was correct in placing emphasis not upon any one individual factor but upon the cumulative effect of the government's control over the Trust.

"The government's role begins with the creation of the Trust, extends to its governing composition and appointment of its principal functionary, permeates its executive and financial administration, and continues through audit, reporting and governmental approval over aspects of its governing framework. This is not the limited or general regulatory supervision which can be excluded from the ambit of Article 12 of the Constitution," the top court said.

Writing the verdict for the Bench, Justice Mishra said the NBT satisfied the test of being "financially, functionally and administratively dominated by or under the control of the Government", with that control being particular to the Trust and pervasive in character.

"We therefore uphold the conclusion of the full Bench of the high court that National Book Trust is an 'other authority' within the meaning of Article 12 of the Constitution and is consequently a 'State' for that purpose," the top court held.

The government's involvement in the Trust was not confined to ordinary regulatory supervision but extended to its creation, governing structure, executive functioning, financial administration, audit and approval of changes to its governing framework, it said.

EDITORIAL

A welcome overhaul for Agnipath scheme

The latest modification to the Agnipath scheme, a short-term contractual employment in the armed forces, is a welcome development that will bring cheer to the aspirants. By approving a two-year extension to the service tenure of Agniveers, the Union Cabinet has made a major course correction to a scheme that had drawn criticism in the past. The timing of the announcement is also significant, as it comes just before the first batch of Agniveers completes its four-year tenure. With this latest overhaul, 75% of Agniveers, who would have otherwise exited after completing their initial four-year term, will now be offered an additional two years of service, creating a pathway for permanent absorption. The remaining 25% will continue to be eligible for induction into the regular cadre under the existing selection process. The move increases the potential service period from four to six years. Apparently, the decision was driven by political considerations, as the NDA has its eyes firmly on the forthcoming Assembly elections in States such as Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand, and Himachal Pradesh, which are traditional catchment areas for military recruitment.

When the scheme was introduced in 2022, it triggered massive protests by the youth in these regions over the lack of guaranteed job security. Under the scheme, recruits are hired for a four-year term, during which they receive a monthly salary starting at Rs 30,000 and rising to Rs 40,000 by the fourth year. Of the total annual recruits, only 25% are allowed to continue for another 15 years under permanent commission.

The scheme was rolled out with the lofty objective of boosting youth recruitment in the armed forces but faced intense criticism from the opposition. It was widely felt that the scheme severely undermines the operational capabilities of the armed forces. A major objective of the scheme was to bring down the average age of military personnel and cut ballooning salary and pension bills.

Under the original scheme, only 25% of each batch could be absorbed into the regular armed forces after four years, while the remaining 75% had to exit. Under the revised framework, those 75% of recruits will now be offered an additional two-year term of service. On completing six years, recruits will once again be eligible for evaluation for regular absorption into military service based on merit and established selection criteria. This adjustment, it is argued, establishes a viable channel for every recruit to vie for long-term placement in the armed forces. A major point of contention among candidates was the uncertainty surrounding their abrupt termination after four years, with no assurance of permanent absorption. By extending the tenure by two years, the government effectively postpones this sudden discharge, providing recruits with a renewed opportunity to compete for long-term military service.

Missing SDRF teams, stranded fishermen rescued safely in Khammam's Sathupalli



All SDRF personnel and eight stranded fishermen were rescued safely after a major operation at Bethupalli Tank in Sathupalli, Khammam district. The rescuers had gone missing after their boats capsized during the mission and were later traced downstream and brought to safety.

Khammam: All the members of two SDRF teams, who went missing in Bethupalli tank, during a mission to rescue fishermen stranded in the tank at Sathupalli in Khammam, were safe and reached shore along with the fishermen.During the night-long rescue operation the fishermen were traced and rescued in the wee hours of Thursday; the SDRF team members, who took shelter on trees downstream, were spotted based on the location of their communication equipment and promptly rescued by the team.The District Collector Divakara TS, Sathupalli MLA Dr. Matta Ragamayi and Kothagudem Superintendent of Police B Rohith Raju monitored the rescue operation that started during late evening hours on Wednesday.

It may be recalled that on Wednesday, five fishermen went to set up nets near the weir in the tank and became stranded when the water level in the tank increased suddenly. Three fishermen who went to help them were also stranded.Following the incident, eleven SDRF personnel ventured into the tank in two boats to carry out a rescue operation, during which both the boats capsized, due to which the SDRF personnel washed away downstream over the weir.The officials then dispatched a rescue team from Bhadrachalam to carry out a search and rescue operation for the missing personnel. The rescued SDRF personnel were shifted to the Government Hospital in Sathupalli for treatment and their health condition was said to be stable.

EC announces electoral roll revision in 4 more states, 2 Union Territories



The Election Commission of India has announced a Special Summary Revision (SSR) of electoral rolls in six States and Union Territories.As per the schedule, the draft electoral rolls will be published on November 30, and the final roll on January 21 next year.The Election Commission (EC) on Wednesday ordered the Special Summary Revision (SSR) of electoral rolls in four states and two Union Territories (UTs) starting this month, with the final rolls to be published on January 21, 2027.

The SSR will be carried out in Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Odisha, Sikkim, Chandigarh, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli & Daman and Diu, where the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls has been completed.The SSR involves updating the existing electoral rolls through additions and deletions, whereas the SIR, launched in 2025 and still underway, involves preparing the rolls afresh.rWriting to the chief electoral officers of the six States/UTs, the EC said that it had, on September 29, issued instructions for a special drive to enrol left-out, young or first-time eligible voters. "Now, in order to facilitate the enrolment of eligible electors with reference to the qualifying date of 1st January, 2027 along with seeking advance applications for the three subsequent qualifying dates of 1st April, 1st July & 1st October, 2027, the Commission hereby directs that the existing electoral rolls shall be revised" by conducting an SSR, the EC said. The exercise will be conducted under Section 21 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950.As per the schedule, the rationalisation or rearrangement of polling stations should be completed by November 20, and the draft electoral rolls will be published on November 30. After that, voters will have time from November 30 to December 30 to file claims and objections to the draft rolls. The final roll is scheduled to be published on January 21 next year.

Roll revision dates for HP, J-K and Ladakh soonLast month, the EC had ordered the SSR in states and UTs where the SIR had been completed (Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Kerala, Lakshadweep, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Puducherry, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal) and Assam, where it had decided not to conduct the SIR."In States/UTs where SIR is going on or has just been completed (viz. Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Nagaland, NCT of Delhi, Tripura, and Telangana), the schedule for SSR will be announced later. Also, for the 3 States/UTs namely Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, where SIR has not been started so far, schedule for roll revision will be announced in due course of time keeping in view their weather conditions," the EC stated.

When Justice Ujjal Bhuyan holds court, outside the Supreme Court



Voting rights and peaceful dissent, to judicial appointments and discrimination – Justice Ujjal Bhuyan has been speaking his mind, in candour unusual for a sitting Supreme Court judge.Three years after he joined the apex court, Justice Bhuyan has been holding forth on these and other contentious issues at legal and academic forums, especially weekend memorial lectures, for the past few months.On Saturday October 31, addressing the 12th convocation ceremony of the University of Science and Technology Meghalaya (USTM), he said education should cultivate independent thinking, intellectual curiosity and the ability to question beliefs. "A society that fears questions becomes vulnerable to authoritarianism."

USTM and its Chancellor Mahbubul Hoque have been in the crosshairs of Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, with the BJP leader accusing the university of "flood jihad", as in deliberately causing flooding of Guwahati, among other allegations.During the USTM speech, Justice Bhuyan also remarked upon the "male-dominated" Supreme Court, with only three of the 35 Supreme Court judges being women, and said women judges should be invited to be part of the Collegium. The strength of the women in the Court "does not reflect the real proportion of women lawyers or women in the country", he said.Judges are guided by 'Restatement of Values of Judicial Life', which was adopted by the Supreme Court in May 1997. Clause 8 states that a judge should not "express views in public on political matters" or on matters that are pending or likely to come up in court. Clause 9 says a judge's judgments should speak for themselves and that a judge should not give interviews to the media.Several of Justice Bhuyan's speeches were read in the context of cases being heard in courts, making his interventions particularly notable.Justice Bhuyan is expected to retire from the Supreme Court in August 2029, and is not in line to become the Chief Justice of India (CJI).

Voting rightsOn October 4, speaking at the valedictory ceremony of the Justice Bodh Raj Sawhney Memorial moot court competition at NALSAR, Justice Bhuyan said the process of "disenfranchising millions and millions of Indian citizens, making them second-class citizens in their own country, in the sense of being citizens without voting rights, such a process is intrinsically arbitrary. No amount of whataboutery can justify it."The Supreme Court is in the process of hearing several petitions over the Election Commission of India's contentious Special Intensive Revision exercise, which has seen allegations of deliberate exclusion of eligible voters. In West Bengal in particular, the process continues a year after it started, with cases of voters hanging fire in judicial tribunals, which were set up to consider their cases, in an unprecedented measure.Justice Bhuyan's remarks drew sharp reactions regarding the limits of public commentary by judges. Former CJI B R Gavai told PTI that a sitting judge of the Supreme Court should not make statements on an issue which is pending adjudication before the same court.Speaking at the Principal G V Pandit Memorial Lecture at ILS Law College in Pune on January 24, Justice Bhuyan commented on the government's role in judicial transfers. "When the Collegium itself records that a transfer is being made at the request of the Central government, it reveals a striking intrusion," he said.This was three months after the Supreme Court Collegium changed its recommendation to transfer Justice Atul Sreedharan from the Madhya Pradesh High Court to the Chhattisgarh High Court, instead shifting him to the Allahabad High Court. The Collegium mentioned that the change was made on "reconsideration sought by the government".

Justice Bhuyan returned to the issue of judicial appointments in August, at the launch of the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy's Judicial Transparency Index Report, saying that the Collegium not giving reasons for its decisions was "a step back from the principle of transparency".In his address, Justice Bhuyan referred to remarks seen as anti-Muslim by Justice Shekhar Kumar Yadav, then a judge of the Allahabad High Court, at an event organised by the VHP legal cell in Prayagraj in December 2024.Withholding reasons for an appointment not only denied the public an opportunity to scrutinise the choice but also allowed candidates whose views ran contrary to constitutional values to be appointed, the Supreme Court judge said."By not giving reasons, the institution actually does a disservice to many judges who are genuinely outstanding and have done tremendous work… By withholding reasons, we also create space for individuals to enter the judiciary who may later describe groups of people as 'ants' and make other remarks that are wholly unconstitutional and contrary to the values of the Constitution," Justice Bhuyan said.In the speech, he also criticised the practice of former judges taking up political roles after retirement. "When a former Chief Justice of India says, 'I am going to the Rajya Sabha to bridge the gap between the Judiciary and the Executive', it is fundamentally wrong… There is a fundamental fallacy in it," Justice Bhuyan said.In 2020, former CJI Rajan Gogoi was nominated to the Rajya Sabha by the Narendra Modi government; he has since retired.The use of criminal law against people expressing unpopular views as well as restrictions imposed on peaceful protests have also featured in Justice Bhuyan's speeches.During Ramzan in March this year, 14 Muslim youths were arrested in Varanasi after they organised an iftar gathering on a boat on the Ganga. They were accused of consuming chicken biryani and throwing leftovers in the river. They spent three months in jail before securing bail in the matter.During an address at National Law Institute University, Bhopal, the next month, Justice Bhuyan said: "I am sure consuming chicken biryani is not an offence. It can't be an offence… They were arrested for that very reason and they had to remain in jail for three months."He added that restrictive bail conditions imposed by courts could discourage citizens from exercising their right to dissent.In the same address, he criticised the Bombay High Court's refusal to permit a protest in solidarity with Palestine at Mumbai's Shivaji Park. Justice Bhuyan said he found the court's observations "very amusing". The court rejected the petitioners' plea over police denial to them asking why they wanted to protest over the situation in Gaza rather than focusing on issues within India.

At the August convocation of National Law University Delhi, Justice Bhuyan remarked on the role of universities when it comes to protecting dissent. His remarks came amid the controversy at NALSAR after students opposed CJI Surya Kant from being invited to their convocation. Bar Council of India Chairman Manan Kumar Mishra then directed state bar councils to not enrol NALSAR's 2026 graduates and sought details of those behind the protest. The directive was later withdrawn. NALSAR is still to hold its convocation.On August 30, Justice Bhuyan said students should not face punitive action for expressing their views. "In a democracy, the right to question is not an act of defiance. It is an essential expression of citizenship, liberty and constitutional responsibility."

Constitutional morality and representationAt a seminar in February, Justice Bhuyan spoke about the gap between constitutional guarantees and everyday discrimination. He said his daughter's Muslim friend was denied accommodation in Delhi because of her religion and also referred to parents at an Odisha school objecting to their children being served food prepared by a Dalit woman under the midday meal scheme.The incidents were "just the tip of the iceberg revealing how deep the societal fault lines are", Justice Bhuyan said, adding that India remained far from the benchmark of constitutional morality even after seven decades of Independence.

Youths cycle 400 km to meet KCR, seek his return as Chief Minister

Hyderabad: Ten youths from Godavarikhani undertook an eight-day, 400-km cycle rally from Medigadda barrage to Kondapochamma Sagar, to highlight farmers' distress and express their desire to see BRS president K Chandrashekhar Rao return as Chief Minister.

Led by former corporator and BRS town president Boddu Ravinder, the team met Chandrashekhar Rao at his Erravelli residence and briefed him on their journey and the concerns raised by farmers along the route. They presented him with water from the Godavari River as a token of their journey.The cyclists said farmers were distressed by the lack of irrigation water and irregular power supply, which had led to borewells drying up and crops withering. They showed dried paddy saplings and explained the plight of farmers. They complained about the Congress government's neglect of agriculture.They said farmers, women and people from various occupational communities had shared their grievances during the journey, with many of them expressing disappointment with the Congress government and regretting

Vande Bharat trains record high occupancy in FY26; Thiruvananthapuram-Mangaluru tops at 189.35%

Railways introduced Vande Bharat trains in 2019 to improve the passenger travel experience. Since then, more than 160 services have become operational across the country. These semi-high-speed trains have helped reduce travel time between cities and improve connectivity. Manufactured by Chennai-based Integral Coach Factory (ICF), Vande Bharat trains feature modern coaches, advanced safety systems and several passenger-friendly amenities.

Speaking to Indianexpress.com, a senior Railway Board official said that Vande Bharat Chair Car trains recorded an overall occupancy of 99.10 per cent in FY 2025-26. The official added that the country's first Vande Bharat Sleeper service, launched in January 2026 between Howrah and Kamakhya, registered a consolidated occupancy of 114.54 per cent during the previous financial year.

Vande Bharat train highest occupancy rateThe Railway Board official said that the Vande Bharat Express service operating between Thiruvananthapuram Central and Mangaluru Central recorded the highest passenger occupancy among all Vande Bharat services in FY 2025–26, at 189.35 per cent.The Thiruvananthapuram Central-Mangaluru Central Vande Bharat service recorded particularly high occupancy in FY26," the official told Indianexpress.com.The official added that train number 20631, operating from Mangaluru Central to Thiruvananthapuram Central, recorded an occupancy of 174.77 per cent. Its return service, train number 20632, from Thiruvananthapuram Central to Mangaluru Central, registered an occupancy of 189.35 per cent.Varanasi-New Delhi-Varanasi Vande Bharat trains occupancy data

Currently, two pairs of Vande Bharat Chair Car services and one pair of Vande Bharat Sleeper services operate on the Delhi-Varanasi route. The Vande Bharat Sleeper service was launched on October 31, 2026.Sharing the occupancy figures of the two pairs of Vande Bharat Chair Car services for FY 2025-26, the Railway Board official said that train number 22415, running from Varanasi to New Delhi, recorded an occupancy of 117.26 per cent, while its return service, train number 22416, from New Delhi to Varanasi, recorded 114.05 per cent.Similarly, train number 22435, operating from Varanasi to New Delhi, registered an occupancy of 117.25 per cent, while its return service, train number 22436, from New Delhi to Varanasi, recorded 115.19 per cent.

Government officials took 'protection money', need to identify: Why CBI sought custody of Mahadev app's Chandrakar



The agency told the special CBI court in Raipur that hawala route was used by Chandrakar and the other accused to pay "protection money" to government officials, including police, and politicians in Chhattisgarh.

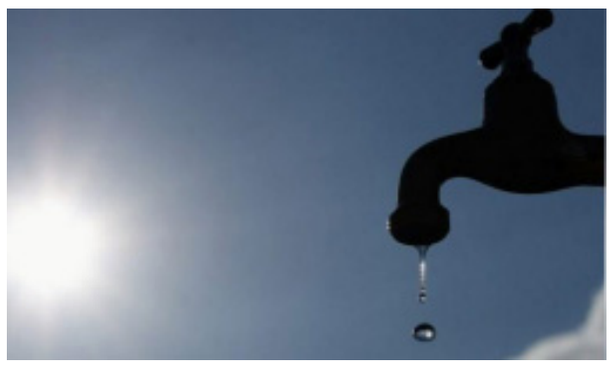
While seeking custody of Saurabh Chandrakar, the alleged kingpin of Mahadev betting app case, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) told court that they need to identify the public servants who took protection money from him and others to allow the operation of the betting app in Chhattisgarh.

The agency told the special CBI court in Raipur that hawala route was used by Chandrakar and the other accused to pay "protection money" to government officials, including police, and politicians in Chhattisgarh.Chandrakar was produced amid heavy security before the court where arguments went on for a couple of hours on Wednesday.While seeking his 10-day remand, the CBI counsel alleged that Chandrakar along with co-accused Ravi Uppal, Shubham Soni and others have been making Rs 450 crore per month through the app since 2020. While around 70 to 80% of the money is kept by them, the remaining is given to the panel operators, the counsel added.

The panel operators were provided several bank accounts fraudulently opened by using genuine documents, the counsel said. These bank accounts were used to collect the betting app money and send it across to the promoters, including Chandrakar who was based in the UAE, according to the allegations. Chandrakar also played a role in taking a large number of youngsters from Chhattisgarh to Dubai where they helped him in the syndicate, the counsel said.Saurabh Chandrakar kingpin in Mahadev Book App case extradited to India (Special Arrangement Photo) Saurabh Chandrakar kingpin in Mahadev Book App case extradited to India (Special Arrangement Photo)The central agency's counsel, during arguments, alleged that Chandrakar and others paid "protection money" to prevent legal action against their panel operators in Chhattisgarh.A panel can be described as an online shop for an illegal gambling app.

This protection money was sent through hawala channels to police officers, who further distributed it to other personnel, government officers, and politicians. Several such officials and politicians have used the money to buy properties. The CBI counsel said they need to identify the public servants from Chhattisgarh who took protection money to allow the syndicate to operate in the state.After the arguments were over,

Groundwater levels decline in 554 Telangana mandals



Hyderabad: Telangana is facing a severe groundwater crisis, with water levels declining in 554 of the State's 621 mandals and the area where groundwater is found at depths exceeding 20 metres expanding more than fourfold in a decade. The deterioration was sharp in Greater Hyderabad, where the average water table has fallen by 7.17 metres in a year, exposing the growing vulnerability of the State's drinking water and irrigation sources.The October report of the Telangana Groundwater Department puts the State's average groundwater level at 7.77 metres below ground level, a decline of 2 metres compared with October last year. The extent of areas with groundwater below 20 metres has increased from 478 sq km to 2,040 sq km compared with the October averages for 2016-2025. In all, 89 per cent of the mandals have recorded a decline against the decadal average.

The fall is closely linked to deficient rainfall during the current monsoon. Telangana received 628 mm of rainfall between June 1 and October 31, against the normal 831 mm, leaving a deficit of 24 per cent. Of the 33 districts, only 11 received normal rainfall, while 22 recorded a deficit. Jogulamba Gadwal registered the highest shortfall at 50 per cent, followed by Narayanpet at 44 per cent, and Nagarkurnool and Nalgonda at 42 per cent each.The impact was severe in the western and southern districts. Suryapet recorded the steepest year-on-year fall of 6.05 metres, followed by Vikarabad (5.39 metres), Narayanpet (5.25 metres), Mahabubnagar (5.01 metres) and Medchal-Malkajgiri (4.99 metres). The current groundwater depth stood at 12.80 metres in Medchal-Malkajgiri, 12.44 metres in Medak, 11.90 metres in Rangareddy, 11.87 metres in Vikarabad and 11.76 metres in Sangareddy.Hyderabad district recorded an average depth of 10.62 metres, compared with 6.12 metres last year, a decline of 4.50 metres. The region received 484 mm of rainfall against its normal 729 mm, a shortfall of 34 per cent.The decline was not confined to the Musi River basin or urban areas. Reports also pointed to falling groundwater levels in districts across the Krishna and Godavari river basins. Reduced reservoir storage and inadequate replenishment through tanks and irrigation networks have added to the pressure.With surface water availability constrained, farmers are increasingly dependent on borewells, accelerating extraction. The failure of existing borewells is forcing some farmers to deepen them or drill new ones, further intensifying the stress on aquifers.The situation raises concerns ahead of the summer, when demand for drinking water and irrigation is expected to increase even as groundwater reserves remain depleted. The problem is no longer confined to a few drought-prone pockets. Groundwater depletion has become a widespread challenge, requiring intervention beyond emergency drinking water supply and seasonal irrigation measures.

Delhi tracks shift in US after 18 months of rocky ties



For Delhi, the unpredictability of Donald Trump became more pronounced ever since he claimed to have brokered a ceasefire between India and Pakistan following hostilities in May 2025, his whims and diktats sending bilateral relations on a roller coaster.South Block officials, who had been tracking the elections through the night Tuesday, told The Indian Express that they were "cautiously optimistic" about the results after a year-and-half of turbulence in bilateral ties.From 50 per cent tariffs to restrictions on H1B visas, curbs on student visas to Trump's proximity to Pakistan and US re-engagement with China, all these moves had bothered Delhi in the last 19 months. And the war in West Asia had led to rising costs in energy prices and had adversely impacted the Indian economic environment.Geopolitically, Delhi will be looking at Trump's moves in the war against Iran and whether he launches a fresh round of offensive against Tehran to distract from the domestic political woes.

"Traditionally, US Presidents, when leading a lame duck administration, look at foreign policy as they are hemmed in domestically. That will be an important calculus we have to account for in the coming days and months," an Indian official said, adding that US moves on China and Russia – a meeting is being planned between Trump, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin later this month in Shenzhen – will be watched.With both the House of Representatives and the Senate in control of the Democrats, it will be a lot more difficult for the President to issue directives and will bring back the checks and balances in the American establishment.For Delhi, officials said that the tariffs have been the biggest challenge as it had impacted Indian exports to the US market as Indian products lost the competitive advantage to rivals.Trump, who had imposed 50 per cent tariffs last year, had punished India for buying Russian energy. This was done by using wartime executive powers, threatening the economic relationship and the political trust built over two-and-half decades by the political and diplomatic class.

Although Trump lifted those tariffs early this year — after Delhi reduced its Russian energy imports and agreed on an interim framework for a trade deal – he had already caused considerable damage to the strategic trust in the relationship."The US administration has damaged strategic trust between the two sides, and public opinion here has turned against the US. It will take years of work to repair the damage and restore the trust," the official said.With the US Supreme Court pushing back against the Trump tariffs, the US Congress in September empowered the President to impose tariffs on countries importing Russian energy, including India and China.Now, officials said Delhi will watch if the US Congress, dominated by the Democrats, is able to push back against the tariff imposition powers granted by the Congress led by the Republicans. After all, the issue of cost of living for average Americans and their affordability is linked directly to the tariffs imposed on imported products.This will tie into the trade deal negotiations which have been in play since March 2025 and got a boost in February 2026. Indian negotiators have been watching the playing field before concluding the negotiations.The second important issue will be the movement of Indians to the US, and a Democrat-controlled US Congress — packed with US Congressmen and women from immigrant families — will offer some amount of pushback on the ICE raids and the restrictions put on Indians and other immigrant communities.

Delhi has been reaching out to Senators and Congressmen and women in the last year or so, including those from the Democratic fold, and conveying India's concerns on the US administration's policies on H1B visa curbs and OPT restrictions.But with Republican control of the Congress and empowered immigration czars including Stephen Miller and Tom Homan, Delhi's pleas fell on deaf ears. But now, officials said, there is some hope since many Democrats are expected to have a more sympathetic approach towards immigration.Officials said the Indian government will refrain from actively intervening and lobbying with American Congress representatives, but will seek them out on issues of concern, especially racism against Indians which had led to targeted attacks on Indians in a temple last month.However, officials struck a note of caution: a Democrat-controlled Congress will also mean that US Senators and House Representatives will ask tough questions on the Indian government's handling of the internal political situation.

In fact, when US Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal raised the issue of SIR and the voter registration last month and expressed "deep concern" over the actions of the Indian government, India's Ambassador to the US, Vinay Mohan Kwatra, reacted sharply saying that the remarks by Jayapal on India's electoral and political processes were "unacceptable interference in India's internal affairs".Kwatra said India is a vibrant democracy, with robust, independent constitutional institutions and a longstanding record of free and fair elections, and extended an offer: "Always open to constructive conversation with the Congresswoman to dispel her misconceptions".With the US midterms putting the Democrats in pole position, Kwatra and his team will be reaching out to Democrats on the Hill in the coming days and building new relationships as the two-year cycle for US Presidential campaign will begin now."

Moment of reckoning for JD(U) as MLC poll results prompt soul-searching

The Janata Dal (United)'s poor showing at the Legislative Council polls appears to be driving a wedge between it and National Democratic Alliance ally Bharatiya Janata Party, with the party appearing to pass the blame for its loss to its ally days after losing three of the four council seats at the MLC polls.The Janata Dal (United) is preparing to hold a meeting on Thursday to review its loss. The meeting is expected to be attended by JD (U) national working president Sanjay Kumar Jha, JD (U) state president Umesh Kushwaha, Health Minister Nishant Kumar, deputy CMs Bijendra Prasad Yadav and Vijay Kumar Choudhary.

This comes at a particularly contentious time for the allies – just days after two newly elected independent MLCs, Bansidhar Brajwasi (Tirhut Graduates) and Rahul Raj (Saran Teachers) — both of whom defeated JD(U) nominees — joined the BJP, leading to calls for their disqualification.While JD (U) candidate from the Tirhut Graduates seat Abhishek Jha lost to Brajwasi, the party's Saran Teachers seat candidate, Pushkar Anand, lost to BJP rebel Rahul Raj. Meanwhile, JD (U) candidate from the Darbhanga Teachers seat, Ghanshyam Rai, lost to Jan Suraaj Party's S P Rai.



For the JD (U), whose only saving grace was the victory of its chief spokesperson Neeraj Kumar from the Patna Graduates seat, the loss, coupled with the developments that followed, has caused a major upset."The way the BJP showed urgency in taking Independents Bansidhar Brajwasi and Rahul Raj into its fold clearly showed that it never supported us," a senior JD (U) leader said. "Everyone knew Rahul Raj was the unofficial BJP candidate against our candidate Pushkar Anand. It is only under pressure from us that the BJP has now backtracked from calling the two Independents its members."'"Had the BJP contested as a true ally, we [the NDA] could have won at least five of eight seats. It was the non-cooperation of the BJP that also saw the Jan Suraaj Party open its account in the Council," said the leader, adding that the party needs to firmly voice its displeasure at the BJP.The JD (U) review meeting might also exhibit a nuanced power tussle between the top two JD (U) leaders after party chief Nitish Kumar: Sanjay Jha and Union Minister and senior party leader Rajiv Ranjan 'Lalan' Singh.It also comes amid another development — after winning the Patna Graduates seat in the MLC elections, Neeraj Kumar openly criticised Union Minister and senior party leader Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh, who is said to have tacitly supported expelled JD(U) leader Anant Kumar Singh for the Patna Graduates seat.Lalan Singh is expected to skip the review meeting.

"With Neeraj Kumar retaining the seat, Lalan Singh might feel uncomfortable. In any case, it's a state-level meet, giving him reason enough to skip it. Neeraj Kumar's presence in the meeting could be further embarrassing for him. Though Sanjay Jha and Lalan Singh might not speak against each other openly, a cold war is surely brewing between them," the leader said.But another leader believes that despite these differences, the party remains firm on one thing – the future party leadership of Bihar Health Minister Nishant Kumar, the son of JD(U) chief and former chief minister Nitish Kumar. Kumar is likely to attend the meeting."Both Sanjay Jha and Lalan Singh are clear that the party's politics will gravitate around Nishant Kumar," the leader said.

Who controls Kotia's 28 villages? Panchayat polls today, Andhra and Odisha in bitter feud

Tension prevailed in the disputed Kotia panchayat a day ahead of local body polls planned by Andhra Pradesh, with the region being put under strict surveillance by the Odisha government.Odisha revenue minister said the state government has prepared a plan to prevent Andhra Pradesh officials from entering the region.This comes a day after police personnel and administrative staff of both the states engaged in a heated exchange. A senior administrative officer alleged that a campaign vehicle and a police vehicle from Andhra Pradesh forcibly tried to enter the region and remove the barricades put up by the Odisha administration.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.

The Odisha government has alleged that Andhra Pradesh's move violated a 2006 Supreme Court order directing both states to maintain the status quo in the region.Odisha-Andhra Pradesh clash over polls in disputed Kotia villages Leaders from BJP, BJD and the Congress camp at Kotia late on Wednesday night. (Express Photo)

"Andhra Pradesh officials are trying to enter into the disputed region to conducts polls, violating Supreme Court order. They are also trying to lure the voters there. We have prepared a plan to prevent them. Besides officials, leaders from all parties as well as civil society members are with us," said Pujari.The Andhra Pradesh administration has scheduled to hold Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituencies (MPTC) and Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituencies (ZPTC) polls in Kotia on Thursday.Koraput district administration officials said as many as 15 platoons (around 400-500 personnel) have been deployed in the Kotia region and barricades have been set up in different places to prevent entry of Andhra Pradesh officials.Special security arrangements have been made in Neridibalsa, Phagun Sineri and Phatu Sineri and other villages close to the Andhra Pradesh border.The move came a day after police and administrative staff from Odisha and Andhra Pradesh engaged in heated exchange of words at the disputed region while asserting their jurisdictional claims over Kotia.Odisha-Andhra Pradesh clash over polls in disputed Kotia villages Odisha-Andhra officials & police confrontationThe Koraput district administration, meanwhile, has issued prohibitory orders in 21 villages in Kotia.Officials from Andhra Pradesh and Odisha also held discussions at Kotia.The administration in Odisha has deputed 16 magistrates in the region to keep a tab on the situation. It has also deputed senior officials, including Koraput sub-collector Fabi Rashid, to camp there."When we opposed entry of a campaign vehicle in Kotia on Tuesday, a police vehicle from Andhra Pradesh came and forcibly tried to enter. When we told them that Kotia is under Koraput administration and the Supreme Court has ordered status quo in the region, they were not willing to listen. They tried to forcibly enter and to remove the barricades which led to tensions," said Rashid.She said the Andhra Pradesh administration cannot set up any polling station for MPTC and ZPTC polls in Kotia.

Leaders of all political parties also seem to be on the same page over the issue even as they accuse each other of not doing enough to resolve it.Odisha-Andhra Pradesh clash over polls in disputed Kotia villages Odisha-Andhra officials & police confrontationLast week, the Odisha government moved the Supreme Court, seeking contempt petition against Andhra Pradesh over its notification to hold local body polls.Odisha's Leader of



the Opposition Naveen Patnaik on Wednesday urged Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi to take up the matter with the Union government and the government of Andhra Pradesh at the highest level, citing the recent development and tension in the region."Since both Odisha and Andhra Pradesh are governed by parties belonging to the NDA, led by the BJP, urgent steps must be taken to protect Odisha's territorial integrity, as promised in the BJP's 2024 election manifesto," the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) president wrote in a letter – his second in past one week.Patnaik said it is the moral responsibility of the Odisha CM to ensure that the state's legitimate interests are firmly protected and the situation on the ground is not allowed to escalate any further. "I hope the BJP leadership will honour its commitment to the people of Odisha and walk the talk on the Kotia issue, as guaranteed in its 2024 election manifesto," he added.

Will Democrats roll back Trump's H-1B fee and tariffs on India?



Washington: Democrats' capture of both chambers of the US Congress hands them the committees that oversee immigration, visas and tariffs, but the $100,000 fee on new H-1B petitions and the tariffs on Indian goods were imposed by President Donald Trump's executive actions, which a Democratic Congress cannot simply reverse without overcoming his veto.As per projections, by Wednesday evening (local time), Democrats had won at least 242 House seats to Republicans' 151, with 42 races uncalled, a net gain of 34. NBC's model estimates Democrats will finish with about 259 seats. In the Senate, Democrats are likely to get 54 seats to 44, a net gain of seven, with Mississippi and Alaska uncalled.The election also removed one of the Senate's leading H-1B restrictionists. Ohio Senator Jon Husted, who lost to Democrat Sherrod Brown, sponsored S.5638, a bill that would raise the wage threshold for H-1B exemptions to about $140,000. In Texas, Ken Paxton, who, as state attorney general, opened investigations into H-1B use at "nearly 30 North Texas businesses", lost the Senate race to Democrat James Talarico.Beneficiaries born in India accounted for about 70 per cent of approved H-1B petitions in fiscal 2025, with China a distant second at about 12 per cent, according to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) report to Congress. Democrats have already put on record proposals to roll back two Trump policies that hit Indian interests. On visas, members of the New Democrat Coalition wrote to Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem urging exemptions for health care workers from the H-1B fee imposed by Trump's September 2025 proclamation."The Proclamation issued September 19, 2025, titled 'Restriction on Entry of Certain Nonimmigrant Workers,' poses a serious threat to the healthcare workforce in our districts," the letter said. On trade, Representatives Deborah Ross, Marc Veasey and Raja Krishnamoorthi introduced H.J.Res.134 in December 2025 to end the national emergency Trump used to impose tariffs of up to 50 per cent on Indian goods.The resolution was referred to the House Foreign Affairs Committee and has had no vote. "President Trump's irresponsible tariff strategy toward India is a counterproductive approach that weakens a critical partnership," Krishnamoorthi said at the time. He will not return to Congress in January after losing his Senate primary. Control of the House gives Democrats the gavels of the committees that oversee these issues.The House Judiciary Committee lists "immigration policy and non-border enforcement" among its areas of jurisdiction, and its immigration subcommittee covers "immigration and naturalisation, border security and drug interdiction." The House Homeland Security Committee's Border Security and Enforcement Subcommittee "maintains oversight of US Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)".The Ways and Means Committee says it has jurisdiction over "tariffs, reciprocal trade agreements, and the bonded debt of the United States". That means subpoena power, hearings, and control over appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security, rather than a direct way to cancel the fee. A bill or resolution overturning the proclamation or the tariff emergency would need Trump's signature, or two-thirds majorities in both chambers to override a veto.Democrats' projected margins fall short of that. The six Indian American House members expected in the new Congress, if Amish Shah holds his lead in Arizona's 1st District, will all sit in the majority. They include Pramila Jayapal, a former H-1B visa holder, and Ro Khanna, co-chair of the India Caucus.Ahead of Tuesday's vote, the Trump administration also proposed rules affecting H-1B

ED raids seven locations in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh

Hyderabad: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday conducted searches at the premises of IPS officer P Sitarama Anjaneyulu and others as part of a money laundering probe linked to alleged irregularities in the evaluation of answer scripts for an examination conducted by the Andhra Pradesh Public Service Commission (APPSC), officials said.A total of seven premises in Hyderabad and Secunderabad in Telangana and Guntur in Andhra Pradesh were covered by the central agency officials.The ED case, registered under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), stems from a 2025 FIR filed by the Andhra Pradesh Police over alleged irregularities between 2018 and 2021, when the APPSC issued a notification to fill 169 posts.The police alleged irregularities in the manual evaluation of answer scripts for the APPSC Group-I Main Examination, during which Rs 1.14 crore was reportedly paid to a private party.Anjaneyulu, a 1992-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer, was the Secretary of the APPSC at the time, while Camsign Media was assigned the work of manual evaluation, according to the ED.The officer served as the head of police intelligence, in the rank of Director General of Police (DGP), during the tenure of former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy. The State police arrested him in this case.The senior police officer was also arrested by the State police's Crime Investigation Department (CID) in 2025 in a case related to the alleged harassment and wrongful arrest of a Mumbai-based female actor.

Hong Kong activist Joshua Wong sentenced to 10 more years in prison



Hong Kong: Prominent Hong Kong activist Joshua Wong was sentenced to 10 more years in prison Thursday under a Beijing-imposed national security law, in a case that critics say reflects the crackdown on the city's once-thriving pro-democracy movement.Wong was charged in 2025 with conspiracy to collude with foreign forces to endanger national security and he pleaded guilty to the offense earlier this year.

The 30-year-old is already serving a four-year, eight-month prison term for the city's biggest national security case linked to an unofficial primary. Before being prosecuted in the latest case, Wong had been expected to be freed in January 2027.Judge William Tam ruled that Wong's offense was of a grave nature and that he was a mastermind of the conspiracy. Tam said Wong and fellow activist Nathan Law continued to conspire together to have direct contact and collude with senior officials or institutions of foreign governments, or other external elements, and to call for their adverse interference against China and Hong Kong.Tam pointed to the U.S. revocation of the city's different treatment as a special administrative region and the sanctions against Chinese and Hong Kong officials, saying these were the kind of sanctions or hostile measures Wong and Law had called for."The punishment must fit the gravity of the crime committed," he wrote. "It is also necessary for this court to express the community's abhorrence of the defendant's scheme and acts together with others to collude with foreign forces…and to serve the imperative of general deterrence." Tam said he considered a 13-year prison sentence as a starting point but reduced it because of Wong's guilty plea and mitigation.Tam said Wong would serve the remaining two months of the sentence for his first national security conviction concurrently with the new sentence.

Wong looked calm during the sentencingWong looked calm and thanked his supporters before leaving the court. His supporters waved to him, and Tiffany Chin, a former member of the now-disbanded Scholarism, once led by Wong, was in tears.In a statement obtained by The Associated Press, Wong wrote in prison that his political participation was never driven by hatred and he bears no resentment toward the Chinese or Hong Kong governments, adding that he never advocated Hong Kong independence.He said he thought he was acting within the law, but only later realized his judgment was wrong.He said during his nearly six years in prison, he enrolled in university courses and read hundreds of books. He said he devoted himself to becoming a more responsible and compassionate person, and he hoped he'd be able to look back on this period as a trial that strengthened him.Wong's convictions seen as discouraging dissent

Hong Kong once had a freewheeling civil society marked by its vibrant protest and media scenes. But after an anti-government movement rocked the city in 2019, authorities reduced public choice in elections and arrested many leading activists. Some news outlets known for their reports critical of the government shut down, and dozens of civil society groups dissolved.Observers say Wong's sentencing shows the authorities' determination to keep prominent activists in prison for as long as possible, further chilling civic activism."NSL charges can be repeatedly weaponized to keep a specific political prisoner in jail, if the government deems necessary," said Eric Lai, a research fellow at Georgetown Center for Asian Law, referring to the national security law.But Beijing views Wong as an anti-China figure supporting Hong Kong independence, a stance that crosses its red line. Hong Kong authorities also said the security law is crucial for the city's stability following the 2019 protests, maintaining that the city's law enforcement actions were evidence-based.

Prosecution highlights Wong's lobbying and advocacy effortsThe prosecution alleged that Wong and Law had agreed in or around 2016 to lobby internationally to achieve their goal of democratic self-determination.After the security law was enacted, Law and others advanced their work abroad by meeting foreign politicians and launching petition drives, it said. Wong supported the effort from Hong Kong through foreign media outlets and social media to draw foreign countries' attention and bolster the request for sanctions, blockade or other hostile measures against China and Hong Kong, it said.His lawyer Derek Chan earlier urged the court to impose a sentence that would give his client some hope, adding that Wong wishes to take care of his parents after his release.After the hearing, Wong's friend Louis Lee, also a former Scholarism member, told reporters they need time to digest the matter but thanked everyone for their concern and support for Wong.Police welcome the ruling, but supporters say he should not even serve one day in prisonSteve Li, chief superintendent of the police's national security department, said his department welcomed the court's ruling. Li said he hoped Wong would reflect on his wrongdoings and seize the opportunity to cultivate a law-abiding spirit and come to properly understand his country.To his supporters, Wong is a political star representing a younger generation born in the final years of Hong Kong's British colonial rule before the city's return to China in 1997.Despite being held behind bars, Wong's influence appears to have remained a concern, at least for the pro-Beijing camp.In September, a pro-Beijing newspaper report criticized a 2017 documentary about Wong on Netflix for "beautifying" his crimes. The city's security bureau told local media the government was taking follow-up action.But the documentary then shot to the top of Netflix's popular chart in Hong Kong.

Arab Joint List open to backing anti-Netanyahu government, says Ahmad Tibi



Tayibe(Israel): A veteran Arab lawmaker in Israel says his bloc is willing to break with decades of precedent and join forces with Jewish-led parties in a shared bid to end Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's long rule."We want to do things that we did not do in the past in order to remove this criminal government," Ahmad Tibi, a senior member of the Arab Joint List, told The Associated Press.

But any such partnership could be politically fraught for both sides. For the Joint List, it would mean backing a government unlikely to end Israel's wars or curb settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank. For Netanyahu's opponents, it would mean aligning with parties that not only criticise Israeli policies, but reject its identity as a Jewish state.After historic voter turnout delivered Arab-led parties a record share in Israel's parliament, Tibi said the Joint List is willing to support an anti-Netanyahu government without joining it. That could reassure Jewish-led factions that view them with suspicion and satisfy their own constituents. It would still give the Joint List major influence.Only one Arab party has ever served in an Israeli government, in 2021. But that party, Ra'am, is much more conciliatory than the Joint List and held fewer seats. Ra'am is willing to join another anti-Netanyahu government as a partner, but any such arrangement would still need the support of the Joint List.If the Jewish-led parties reject such a partnership, then it would prove Israel is "an ethnocracy, not an absolute democracy for all citizens," Tibi said.The Joint List's positions put it at odds with most Israelis.

Most of the Palestinian population in what is now Israel fled or were expelled during the 1948 war surrounding its creation. Those who remained were granted citizenship, including the right to vote, and today they and their descendants make up some 20 per cent of the population.Many Jewish Israelis have historically viewed Arab-led political parties with suspicion. That distrust has been reinforced by lawmakers who have defended or praised Israel's enemies.The Joint List, a coalition of three left-wing and nationalist parties, rejects what it refers to as the "racist Zionist consensus" in Israel. It calls for partnering with Jewish Israelis who support a Palestinian state in the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem, territories occupied in the 1967 Mideast war. It rejects Israel's identity as a Jewish state, calling for equal rights for all its citizens.Many Jewish Israelis see that as support for the country's enemies at a time of war. Netanyahu has encouraged such sentiments, lodging unproven accusations of electoral fraud against the Arab-led parties and portraying them as a threat to national security.A dilemma for Netanyahu's opponentsThat creates a dilemma for Netanyahu's main opponents, led by former general Gadi Eisenkot.

In the campaign, they portrayed Netanyahu as a corrupt leader who failed to prevent the October 7, 2023, attack and then blocked a public inquiry into it. They cast the election in existential terms, saying Netanyahu's far-right government threatened Israel's democratic institutions.They won 48 seats in the 120-member Knesset, compared to 53 for Netanyahu's coalition. The Joint List won 11 seats and Ra'am won 8, making them crucial to forming an anti-Netanyahu majority.

The Joint List could help an anti-Netanyahu bloc take power by voting for it or by abstaining to lower the threshold needed for a majority. Either arrangement could allow opposition parties to form a government without requiring the Joint List to become part of their administration. Joining could put its lawmakers in the uncomfortable position of being part of a government waging wars in Gaza and Lebanon that they oppose.Some of Eisenkot's allies welcome Arab support while others are opposed, pointing to past statements by Joint List leaders they argue deny Israel's legitimacy or support its enemies.Tibi said he was under no illusions that a partnership with Netanyahu's opponents would end the wars or bring about a Palestinian state. But he said a "repair government" would improve the lives of Palestinian citizens, by ending Netanyahu's rule and also potentially addressing local issues like a wave of violent crime in Arab communities.It's unclear what conditions would be requiredEisenkot has said Arab-led parties must meet certain conditions in any partnership, including calling Hamas a terrorist group that needs to be destroyed.

Tibi said the conditions do not apply to parties like the Joint List that want to provide outside support.The Joint List and Ra'am have denounced Hamas' October 7, 2023, attack and any violence against civilians. But they have refused to brand Hamas a terrorist group or call for its destruction, saying that doing so would justify Israel's devastating military campaign in Gaza.Tibi said both the October 7 attack and Israel's response to it were immoral.The veteran lawmaker has long been a lightning rod for right-wing attacks on Arab parties. During Israel's 2019 elections, Netanyahu, popularly known as Bibi, campaigned on the slogan "Bibi or Tibi?" to warn voters that opposing him meant relying on Arab-led parties to form a government

Trump's lawyers to appear before appeals court as he fights hush money conviction

New York: President Donald Trump 's lawyers will try to persuade a New York appeals court Thursday to throw out his hush money conviction, two years after it made history.The conviction, on 34 felony counts of falsifying business records to obscure a $130,000 payment to adult film performer Stormy Daniels, continues to nettle Trump enough that he denounced it on social media as recently as September. The president denies any wrongdoing, and he has turned to state and federal courts in hopes of unwinding the verdict.He is not expected to attend Thursday's court session.

The appeal turns on complex legal disputes, but political overtones aren't hard to find. The very first paragraph of one of the Trump team's court filings contends the case was the flimsy product of "immense political pressure" on a Democratic prosecutor to go after Trump – rhetoric that echoes the Republican president's own oft-repeated claims in the court of public opinion.In court papers, Trump's attorneys have assailed prosecutors' legal theory as "a house of cards" built on a shaky combination of alleged state and federal offenses, with "clearly insufficient" evidence and problematic jury instructions.

The appeal also concerns whether jurors should have been allowed to hear testimony about supposed White House conversations, workflow and even Trump social media posts during his first term. His lawyers cite presidential immunity for official acts, and they argue his official conduct included responding to the Daniels drama once it became public in 2018."When a president addresses the nation to defend himself from allegations of personal misconduct (as all presidents do), or discusses such communications with his aides, he is carrying out his constitutional duties and is protected by immunity," lawyer Robert Giuffra Jr. wrote in a filing this October.Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg's office counters that the legal theory and jury instructions were legitimate and that the White House-related evidence was fair game. Some was public record, some was a general description of office practices, and the conversations were "unofficial conduct," prosecutors say."A president's discussions about a purely private matter, even with a White House advisor, do not constitute official acts for which the president is immune,'" Bragg's appeals chief, Steven Wu, wrote in a filing in July. Besides, he said, there was "a mountain" of other evidence against Trump.The May 2024 verdict made Trump the first former – and now current – U.S. president with a criminal conviction. While historic, it didn't impede his return to the White House or subject him to any punishment.The trial involved $130,000 that Daniels got from Trump's then-fixer and lawyer, Michael Cohen, weeks before the 2016 election. The money bought, for a time, her silence about an alleged sexual encounter with the married Trump a decade earlier. He says that nothing sexual happened between them.Trump's company reimbursed Cohen in 2017, logging those payments as legal expenses.

Saying the transactions all were meant to keep unflattering information about Trump away from the electorate, prosecutors argue that he "orchestrated a conspiracy" that violated federal campaign finance laws, among others.Trump's lawyers argue there's only "weak" evidence that he even knew about Cohen's dealings at the time. His trial attorneys also said that payments to Cohen



were indeed legal expenses, and that any hush money expended on Trump's behalf wasn't hidden campaign spending, just an effort to avoid embarrassing his family.The distinction matters because, under New York law, falsifying business records isn't a felony unless it's done with an intent to commit or conceal a separate crime.While pursuing his state appeal, Trump also has been trying to shift the case to federal court and have it dismissed on immunity grounds. A federal judge said no – for the third time – in August. Trump's attorneys are appealing that decision, and arguments on that appeal are set for Nov. 16.

CERT-In warns financial firms as AI-driven 'Crafty Falcon' cyberattacks escalate

New Delhi: The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) has issued a fresh warning to banks, non-banking finance companies (NBFCs), fintech firms and other financial institutions following a rise in cyber attacks linked to unauthorised fund transfers. CERT-In said it had observed a significant escalation in an ongoing cyber campaign, dubbed 'Crafty Falcon', which uses artificial intelligence-powered tools to automate attacks and rapidly exploit vulnerabilities in financial systems.The advisory follows an earlier alert issued in October regarding the misuse of payment and disbursement application programming interfaces (APIs) to facilitate fraudulent fund transfers.According to CERT-In, reports of successful intrusions continue to be received from banks, NBFCs and fintech companies, including some organisations that had already undertaken corrective measures after previous warnings. In several cases, attackers returned to target entities where identified weaknesses had not been fully addressed.Attackers have increasingly timed their operations to coincide with weekends, holidays and other periods of reduced security oversight, making detection and response more difficult, the watchdog said.CERT-In's investigation found that threat actors are leveraging publicly available AI-driven offensive security platforms capable of generating customised attack scripts, adapting malware based on system responses and carrying out large parts of the attack process with minimal human intervention.

Iranian college students face pressure as authorities crack down on dissent

Cairo: After participating in an anti-government protest on campus, the social sciences student was called into a disciplinary hearing at his university and faced an intimidating panel: It included a cleric representing Iran's supreme leader and an official who refused to identify himself.The questioning they gave him underscored Iranian officials' seriousness in rooting out dissenters at universities after crushing massive demonstrations in January and after the eruption of war with the United States.

The cleric and the official asked: When former Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei was killed in airstrikes at the beginning of the war on February 28, "what did you feel?" Scores of university students around Iran are facing similar hearings for joining protests, according to Iranian student unions and outside rights monitors. It's another side of authorities' campaign to silence dissent as the war and a monthslong US naval blockade worsen Iran's economic crisis. With Iranian leaders and US President Donald Trump both threatening a possible return to escalated fighting, many students fear the heat on them will only increase.The Associated Press spoke by phone and messaging apps with half a dozen student protesters in Iran facing disciplinary procedures, all of whom spoke on condition of anonymity out of fear of retribution.Students brought before panels face potential expulsion or even a ban from further study at any university. The repercussions can extend beyond campus walls. Some have been fired from their jobs or have faced death threats or other harassment when details of their cases become public."It puts an extraordinary psychological pressure on people. I mean for me, it's unspeakable," said the social sciences student.The disciplinary measures followed college protests that sprouted up parallel to the wave of demonstrations that began in late December, triggered by a currency crash. Those demonstrations quickly grew into the largest nationwide protests since the 1979 Iranian revolution. Security forces crushed them by opening fire, killing thousands and arresting thousands of others.

Even after that, smaller campus protests persisted, up to the eve of the Feb. 28 US-Israeli attack on Iran that triggered the war.In February, Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei, Iran's hard-line judiciary chief, said judicial authorities would get involved in prosecuting crimes on campuses if educational authorities were unable to control them.The weeks of heavy US and Israeli bombardment of Iran put university measures against students on hold. But since the summer, students began being called into hearings.As universities reopened last month, a top cleric warned that campus dissent was a threat to Iran's rulers that must be ended."The enemy wants to start internal pressure from the university environment and follow it throughout the country," said Ahmad Alamolhoda, who is the Friday prayer leader in the eastern shrine city of Mashhad and the supreme leader's representative in the province.He called on universities to "track down any offending element in the university and prepare the ground for dealing with them." Iranian authorities are still arresting and prosecuting protesters tied to the January protests, with some facing the death penalty.

The number of expulsions and suspensions remains unclear. But the "severity of action" has risen compared with past crackdowns, explained Ali Taghipour, an exiled Iranian activist who tracks student protests. The process can take several months, with several levels of hearings before the ministry overseeing universities signs off on any punishments.Shargh, a reformist newspaper, reported last month a growing tally of expulsions at half a dozen universities in the capital. At least 10 students have been expelled at the University of Tehran, another 10 at Amir Kabir University, and others have been handed suspensions. AP has been unable to independently verify these particular cases.The procedures appear geared toward intimidating students into silence.

The social sciences student and another student both said administrators forced them to write out their defences even before being told the charges against them – leaving them guessing about what to put down.The social sciences student's charges included participating in an "illegal gathering." His personal contact details were also published on pro-government social media channels, and he now fears being attacked by government supporters.Students describe pressure from university officials to recant anti-government stances in order to avoid punishment."The main emphasis in all the universities is that students admit they've done something wrong, and they've used all their efforts to make it into a psychological war," said a humanities student in Tehran who has also faced disciplinary action.He shared screenshots with the AP of phone messages calling him a "traitor" and threatening violence against him and his family. The messages came after pro-government social media channels published his identity and contact information.Members of the feared Basij sit on some panelsAt Sharif University, one of Iran's most elite schools, administrators have reviewed action against some 250 students, its student union president Farzad Rahmani told the reformist media outlet Ensaf.At least 40 of those students have faced hearings so far, and 10 have been expelled, he said.Disciplinary hearings usually involve university administrators, faculty members, a representative of the supreme leader and the campus security agency, known as Harasat, which operates under the Intelligence Ministry and monitors political loyalty to Iran's theocracy.Members of the feared Basij volunteer militia, which maintains a presence on university campuses, also often participate.

The role of the Basij and the Harasat is very strong," Taghipour said, explaining that they typically identify suspect students and gather cases against them.Some students have remained defiant despite growing pressures. A student union at one Tehran university said last week that administrators and campus Basij had threatened students who staged a gathering."Threatening a student with expulsion or suspension – solely for participating in a gathering or protesting against issued rulings – is not a sign of strength, but rather a sign of fear regarding the resurgence of student protests," said a statement on the union's Telegram channel.Students say the war is making the pressure worseIran's college students have frequently propelled anti-government protests. Campus unrest played a key role in sustaining protests against the mandatory headscarf in 2022-23 that also turned into calls for the theocracy's overthrow.Hundreds of students were expelled or suspended over those protests, though some were later allowed to resume studies by President Masoud Pezeshkian's government.Since then, authorities severely curtailed campus associations, seeing them as a source of unrest, a graduate student and media worker said.The 2022 protests forced authorities to relax headscarf enforcement, but hard-liners have been calling for a renewed clampdown. The University of Tehran said it will refer female students who persist in violating headscarf rules to disciplinary hearings, its president told a semiofficial student news agency, ISNA, on Oct. 19.An undergraduate student in his early 20s in Tehran said campus security was stopping his female classmates more often over their dress, "putting them under pressure." Widespread disciplinary action by universities leaves students afraid that anyone could be expelled,

‘What could be more dishonest?’: Retired Delhi judge scammed of life savings in Noida realty fraud



Sixteen years ago, Justice M L Varma was going through his morning ritual of reading the newspaper when his eyes fell on an advertisement in a corner.The advertisement carried striking pictures of an upcoming project in Noida Sector 15, said the 84-year-old, who retired in 1991 from the Delhi High Court.“It promised a high rental commercial unit. The pictures were so attractive and appealing, it looked like it was absolutely out of the world. They showed a metro station nearby, a very good sector,” he added.

Interested, he quickly dialled the contact number mentioned in the advertisement. He also nudged a relative to book another unit in the same project.The papers were signed at his office in Delhi’s Neeti Bagh, and he and his brother-in-law, Naveen Sawhney, paid Rs 3 crore.It is now 2026 and not a single brick has been laid, he said.

“We have been cheated out of the money. Thirteen, fourteen, fifteen years, and not a brick has been laid there,” Justice Varma said.Last month, he filed a complaint at the Hauz Khas police station in Delhi and police lodged an FIR under sections of criminal conspiracy and criminal intent against Aims Sanya Developers Private Limited, and its directors Roop Kishore Madan, Sanjay Thukral and other unknown persons.Varma initially had no plans to take the legal route, hoping instead that the builders would honour their commitments.“It seemed like a good investment to make, to be able to earn some money later…,” said Varma. who enrolled as a lawyer in 1964 and is quasi-retired — he still practises and does arbitrations.“The location was good and they had shown such a good picture, the brochure had made it very attractive. It would also have fetched rent, so that would have been a source of income.”According to the complaint, the commercial project was to be completed within 36 months, with a grace period of six months, and was to yield high returns on investment for the investors and purchasers.“As per the assurances and public advertisements, the construction of the commercial project was to commence in September 2010 and conclude by March 2014,” the complaint stated, alleging that the complainants have been cheated of over Rs 3,22,34,640.After the deadline passed, Varma said he made multiple trips to the builder’s office in Defence Colony. He would be made to wait for hours, he said, while the builder did not show up.A few years ago, they eventually entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).“If there was a delay, he was supposed to give assured returns based on what the property would have fetched if it had been rented. He did not. Eventually, some years ago, we entered into an MoU. He gave advance cheques, but the cheques would bounce. That went on for five years,” Varma claimed, adding that the accused paid the monthly assured returns intermittently.Eventually, when the builder stopped picking up calls in October 2025, the family decided to approach the police.“He [the builder] induced and tricked us into buying a property which he had no intention, from day zero, of building,” claimed Varma’s son Satvik, a senior advocate in the Delhi High Court.‘Property not even demarcated’“If he had dug up the land, there could have been reasons such as a National Green Tribunal order or a ban on construction. But… the property is not even demarcated. We don’t even know if it has a name now. Earlier, it was called Landmark Towers, then they changed it to Tempian Towers,” he said.Varma and his wife, Nita, had persuaded Naveen to invest in the project. Naveen died two years ago after suffering from cancer for a year and a half.“We could have used those resources. My father always felt that because of his mistake, my uncle lost his money as well. There was guilt and a moral dilemma,” said Satvik.Varma still has the brochure of the property, which runs into multiple pages and contains elaborate maps.He asked in disbelief: “What could be more dishonest than this? If it can happen to someone who has been a part of the legal system for over 50 years, then what is likely to be the plight of the common man about whose misery one reads every day, who is deprived of their life savings?”

Maharashtra police told CJP volunteers to skip Delhi protest, asked who’s paying: Dipke



Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke on Tuesday accused the Maharashtra Police of trying to intimidate protesters, after police in Chandrapur issued notices to volunteers planning to join a protest at Delhi’s Jantar Mantar on October 10. He called the action “dictatorship”.A notice issued by Chandrapur’s Ballarpur Police on October 5 under Section 168 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) to a CJP supporter, which Dipke shared on X, states that police had learnt he was planning to travel to New Delhi to support Dipke in the proposed march.

The notice asks why he was joining the CJP agitation, who was funding his participation and what his objective was. It directs him not to take part in the Delhi protest or any agitation without permission, not to associate with violent protesters, not to post “violent” content on social media and not to make provocative speeches.It also directs him to follow police instructions and not obstruct public peace or law and order, and warns of preventive or criminal action if a violation leads to, or could lead to, a cognisable offence. The notice further states that Section 37(1)(3) of the Maharashtra Police Act is in force in Chandrapur district by order of the district collector to maintain law and order, and warns of legal action if he violates it and a law-and-order situation arises from his actions.At a press conference, Dipke said several volunteers had received similar notices, asking them not to join the protest and seeking details of their travel to Delhi, including who was paying for it.Somewhere or the other, the Maharashtra Police have broken our hearts. Yesterday, some of our volunteers received notices from the Chandrapur Police. They have been told not to go to the protest at Jantar Mantar. They have also been asked where the funds for their travel to Delhi are coming from,” he said.“If a person from Maharashtra wants to go to Delhi for a protest, what business is it of the Chandrapur Police to ask where his travel expenses are coming from? Can’t a person himself buy a railway ticket worth Rs 1,000 or Rs 1,500?” he asked.Chandrapur Superintendent of Police Ayush Nopany said the notices were routine. “Issuing such notices before any protest or event is a routine activity. This is a prohibitory provision, and the police noticed that some people from Chandrapur were likely to travel to Delhi for the protest. We wanted to caution them against violence and provocative speeches, and remind them that they need to obtain permission from the concerned police station — in this case, the police station in Delhi and not Chandrapur,” he told The Indian Express. He stressed that the notices were a preventive measure and not aimed specifically at the protesters.Dipke questioned the police’s suggestion that the protest could turn violent. “The notice says the protesters could become violent. How does the Chandrapur Police already know that the protest will turn violent? Has it already been planned that it will become violent?”On the warning against social media posts, he said, “I want to ask the Maharashtra Police to show me one video where anyone from our side has said anything that could lead to violence. I keep speaking about Gandhi and Ambedkar. Does that appear violent?”“Why is the Maharashtra Police behaving like the Delhi Police? When did Jantar Mantar come under the Chandrapur Police? Who are the Chandrapur Police to tell people not to participate in a protest at Jantar Mantar?” he asked. “Who told these officials to issue these notices? No police officer would send such notices on his own. One or two police officers should not end up bringing disrepute to the Maharashtra Police.” Dipke also criticised the Mumbai Police over action against tribal students marching in Mumbai. He alleged that some students in the agitation, which he said was led by tribal activist Rahul Pawra, were detained and beaten. “Criminals have reduced so much that you have started laying hands on students?” he asked, questioning whether police would treat the children of influential politicians and businessmen the same way.

He accused the BJP of assuming that protesters are paid to take part, and repeated his demand for Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar’s resignation, citing allegations of voter deletions and the Supreme Court’s observations on Form 6 applications. “Every Indian should demand Gyanesh Kumar’s resignation because our right to vote is being taken away,” he said.The Form 6 row follows The Indian Express investigation that revealed objections by Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi to a declaration added to the online version of Form 6, the form used to enrol new voters. The ECI has said the Supreme Court upheld the declaration, a claim legal experts have disputed, arguing the court never directly examined its validity.He said he was ready to face arrest. “If you want to arrest me, arrest me. I am sitting here. Impose NSA, impose UAPA if you think that threatening us with arrest will make us remain silent. That will not happen. If you want to put me in jail, put me there. We will continue to fight to save democracy.”

Gujarat doctor caught accepting bribe for ‘not harassing’ students

BriberyThe incident came to light after one of the students who refused to pay the bribe approached the Gandhinagar ACB, said officials who set a trap to nab him.A government medical superintendent in Gujarat was arrested on Monday by the state Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) for seeking and receiving a bribe from medical students who were deputed to his hospital for rural service.

The ACB, on Monday, booked and arrested Dr Rahim Ibrahim Memon, 59, Medical Superintendent (Class-1) of the J S Chauhan Civil Hospital in Devgadh Baria, Dahod, for allegedly seeking the bribe under the pretext of “not harassing” the medical students during their time at the institution headed by him.A statement from the ACB on Tuesday stated, “A total of eight students were appointed to J S Chauhan Government Civil Hospital, Devgadh Baria, Dahod, under the District Residency Programme (DRP). The accused demanded a bribe of Rs 40,000 in total, calculated at Rs 5,000 per student, from the eight students in exchange for assigning favourable duties and ensuring they would not be harassed during their service.”The incident came to light after one of the students who refused to pay the bribe approached the Gandhinagar ACB, said officials who set a trap to nab him.A team of the anti-corruption agency set a trap at the government staff quarters of the officer, who was caught red-handed while accepting a bribe of Rs 40,000 from the complainant, said the ACB.He was placed under arrest, and further investigation is underway.



Kid in arms, man dangling from window: Tribals students say forcibly being sent home

Hundreds of tribal students marched into Mumbai from Nashik to press for their demands. On Day 1, they were allegedly detained by the Mumbai Police and on Day 2, they were thrown into the police bus – some with infants in their arms, some dangling from the bus windows, and some with their legs upside down with their clothes torn in the scuffle. Pushing them inside the bus, the cops stood there, smiling.These were the visuals The Indian Express witnessed outside the Tilak Bhavan in Mumbai today on October 6.

Tribal students bring put into police buses outside Tilak Bhavan (Express Photo by Akash Patil) Tribal students bring put into police buses outside Tilak Bhavan (Express Photo by Akash Patil)The tribal students have refused to leave Mumbai without meeting Governor Jishnu Dev Varma.The students have alleged that since they refused to leave Mumbai, the police officials tried to push them into the buses and take them to their homes, prompting an altercation between students and police.Adivasi students protest at tilak bhavan Mumbai The police have denied detaining anyone. (Express Photo by Akash Patil)“We have been protesting for so long in Nashik. And we began our journey to Mumbai on September 29. After walking for so many days, we are denied to meet the governor with our demands,” one of the protesting students said.The police have denied detaining anyone.“A bus was arranged, and the students have been taken back to their hometown. No one was detained,” a senior official said.The students had earlier planned to march to the Lok Bhavan, but permission was denied. On Tuesday, there was a heavy police deployment outside the Tilak Bhavan, which is headquarters of the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee. The students were not allowed to move out of the Tilak Bhavan.On Sunday, October 4, the Congress had alleged that the Mumbai Police entered the Congress headquarters and detained some tribal students, including women. The cops have rejected the allegations.Now the students are planning a protest at a later date.“The plan is now to come back to Mumbai for a protest on October 25. All students will go back to their respective home districts in buses arranged by the Congress. Each bus will have a Congress member to ensure safety of all students,” said Dhananjay Shinde from Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee.



Shiv Sena fields candidate against BJP for Pune MLC seat

Disagreements within Maharashtra’s ruling Mahayuti alliance surfaced on the final day of nomination filings for the Legislative Council elections, as Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena Tuesday fielded Mangesh Chivate from the Pune Teachers’ constituency, a seat where ally BJP has already nominated its own candidate.The move raises the prospect of an internal contest within the alliance ahead of the Maharashtra Legislative Council elections scheduled for October 23. Elections are being held across five seats falling vacant as sitting members’ terms end on December 6. These include three Graduates’ constituencies: Aurangabad, Pune, and Nagpur divisions, and two Teachers’ constituencies: Amravati and Pune divisions.

Following the nomination deadline, scrutiny of papers will take place on October 7, with the final date for withdrawal of candidature set for October 9. Votes will be counted on October 27.Chivate filed his nomination papers a day after Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde returned from New Delhi, where he met Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Party sources indicated that Shinde discussed Chivate’s candidature during the visit, particularly after the BJP fielded Kaustubh Gawade for the Pune Teachers’ seat.‘A lot can happen’While expressing confidence that the BJP would agree to a resolution on candidate withdrawals, Shinde said his party remains firm on Chivate’s nomination.

“The process of filing nomination papers for the Legislative Council elections is underway, and there is still time for withdrawal. During this period, discussions will take place among leaders of Mahayuti, and a decision will be made following those talks,” Shinde said.“Mangesh Chivate is contesting the Pune Teachers’ constituency seat. After the nomination deadline ends, the withdrawal process will begin. A lot can happen during this time,” he added.After receiving his official form from the party, Chivate thanked Eknath Shinde and MP Shrikant Shinde. Shiv Sena workers celebrated his nomination outside the office, lifting him on their shoulders as he held the form.“I am thankful to them for picking me for the MLC seat,” Chivate said, adding that he remains confident of securing a victory in the Pune Teachers’ constituency based on his work.Reacting to Shiv Sena’s move, BJP Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis acknowledged the ongoing rift over the seat. “We could not reach a consensus for the Pune seat. There is still time for withdrawal. We will discuss it,” Fadnavis said.



Meerut trader’s family came to bury him after ‘heart attack’, then they saw his neck



The 30-year-old trader’s family had been told he died of a heart attack at his Meerut home on September 28. When they arrived, they found his body covered with a bedsheet, with only his face visible, said police.They took him to his ancestral home in Muzaffarnagar for burial. There, as the cloth around his neck slipped, someone took a photograph.Police said the picture was later circulated in the family WhatsApp group. Relatives noticed a dark mark around Talib’s neck and began questioning the circumstances of his death.

They also learned about his wife Ilma’s alleged friendship with a local youth, Aman. Police said the family now suspects the two had a role in Talib’s death.Based on a complaint by Talib’s cousin Akram Ali, police registered an FIR against Ilma, who works at a beauty parlour, and Aman at Lohiyanagar police station on charges of murder.“The case has been registered. We will exhume the body to get a post-mortem done. We are in correspondence with Muzaffarnagar authorities,” said Lohiya Nagar SHO Sumit Tomar.Talib had been living with Ilma and their two-year-old son in rented accommodation in Meerut’s Zakir Colony. He had moved to the city around eight years ago following a dispute within his family.Akram said relatives and friends began arriving at Talib’s house after being told of his death. Ilma told them he had suffered a heart attack in his sleep.“But Ilma did not allow anyone visiting the house to remove the cloth below his face. She also initially refused to let us take the body to Muzaffarnagar for burial. It was only when everyone insisted that he be taken to his hometown that she finally agreed,” alleged Akram, adding that she accompanied them.It was at the burial ground that the cloth covering Talib’s neck slipped off, exposing the mark that caught the family’s attention. After the photograph was shared, relatives began asking neighbours in Meerut about Ilma, said Akram.The family also asked Ilma about Talib’s cellphone. According to Akram, she denied having it.Relatives also noticed Ilma’s “unusual behaviour”, finding her busy packing up household belongings.

KTR sends legal notice to media house over passport report

Hyderabad: BRS working president KT Rama Rao issued a legal notice to Telugu vernacular newspaper “Eenadu,” objecting to a news report published on September 29, stating that a special court had ordered temporary seizure of his passport. He demanded the withdrawal of the report within 48 hours, the publication of a correction with the same prominence and tendering of an unconditional apology.

The notice also sought corrections across the newspaper’s digital platforms and archives, failing which the newspaper was warned of civil and criminal defamation proceedings and action before approaching the Press Council of India.

In the notices served to the newspaper’s editor, publisher, printer, resident editor and reporter, Rama Rao’s counsel, N Lalitha Reddy said the report was contrary to facts and could mislead readers.

Cygni Energy, Indus Towers sign MoU to explore energy storage solutions

Hyderabad: Cygni Energy Private Limited and Indus Towers Limited have signed an MoU outlining the intent to explore collaboration on sourcing energy storage solutions for telecom infrastructure in India.Under the MoU, the proposed collaboration includes plans to establish Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) manufacturing capacity of up to 1.5 GWh to address the evolving energy requirements of telecom infrastructure in India.

The collaboration is also expected to evaluate advanced battery technologies for telecom applications, aimed at enhancing reliability, improving energy efficiency and enabling more sustainable telecom operations.Venkat Rajaraman, Founder & CEO, Cygni



Jaishankar, Ghana foreign minister discuss strengthening bilateral partnership



Accra: External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar met with Ghana's Foreign Minister, Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa, to discuss key strategies for advancing the comprehensive partnership between the two nations.Highlighting their historic solidarity and shared development aspirations as Global South partners, the two leaders focused on strengthening bilateral cooperation across trade, investments, development assistance, pharmaceuticals, capacity building, defence, and technology.

"Held wide ranging discussions with Foreign Minister @S_OkudzetoAblak of Ghana. As Global South partners, both India and Ghana share common development aspirations and historic solidarity. Discussed advancing our Comprehensive Partnership in trade, investments, development, pharmaceuticals, capacity building, defence, technology and people to people domains. Also spoke about advancing our multilateral cooperation and deepening India's engagement with the African Union and ECOWAS," EAM Jaishankar posted on X.EAM Jaishankar arrived in Ghana earlier on Tuesday as India looks forward to productive engagements to advance partnership between New Delhi and Accra."Delighted to arrive in Accra, Ghana today. Appreciate the warm welcome by FM Sam Okudzeto Ablakwa. Look forward to productive engagements to advance our Comprehensive Partnership," EAM Jaishankar stated on X.

Earlier on Monday, the Foreign Ministry of Ghana stated that EAM Jaishankar's visit will provide an opportunity for the two countries to renew their bond of solidarity and shared values."The Minister of External Affairs of India, His Excellency Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, will pay an Official visit to Ghana from 6th to 7th October 2026 at the invitation of Ghana's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa. Ghana looks forward to hosting His Excellency Dr. S. Jaishankar on this historic visit, which will afford the two countries the opportunity to renew their inseparable bond of solidarity and shared values," the ministry stated."During the visit, Ghana and India will hold discussions that will advance their relations in pharmaceutical development within the framework of President (John Dramani) Mahama's Accra Reset philosophy; deepening agricultural cooperation in mechanisation and value addition; support for President Mahama's industrialisation and job creation agenda; and expanding scholarships and IT partnerships," it added.After Ghana, EAM Jaishankar will travel to Cote d'Ivoire and Ethiopia during his five-day official visit aimed at deepening India's bilateral partnership with the three African nations.

As reservoirs shrink, this Maharashtra district moves to guard remaining water



As water levels in reservoirs in Maharashtra's Beed have sunk to 16.38 per cent and groundwater levels are falling sharply, the district administration has ordered inspections of waterbodies and stepped up action to protect drinking water sources.Speaking to The Indian Express, District Collector Vivek Johnson said dedicated teams comprising officials from the revenue department, Maharashtra State Electricity Board (MSEB), and the police have been formed to check water theft from reservoir backwaters and monitor the situation. The inspections will be conducted three times a day.

"There are 164 reservoirs across the district, including small, medium, and large projects. We have been facing water theft from certain locations in the backwaters of reservoirs. To check these thefts, we have ordered joint inspections," Johnson said.According to Johnson, the officials have been checking illegal water theft for the last three months. However, it was found that some farmers were reconnecting pump connections even after action was taken against them.As part of the intensified action, the administration has started dismantling electricity distribution points at select locations from where water is being stolen. These transformers are being removed and stored in the MSEB godown, while transformers supplying power to regular connections will remain operational, the collector said.Johnson also directed talathis and gram sevaks to maintain a strict vigil over water theft from small and medium water supply projects."At larger reservoirs, including Majalgaon and Manjara, dedicated teams have been deployed to monitor illegal water lifting," he said.The intensified monitoring comes at a time when Beed is facing a significant rain shortfall and declining water availability.

Data from the district information office shows that against the expected average rainfall of 566.1 mm till September 30, the district received only 356.6 mm, or about 63 per cent.The rainfall deficit has also translated into a sharp decline in groundwater levels. The average water level recorded in observation wells has fallen to 7.36 metres, which is 4.55 metres deeper than the average level recorded in September over the past five years. A decline in groundwater levels was recorded in all 126 wells surveyed, with Georai tehsil recording the steepest fall of 6.64 metres.Reservoir storage also remains low. Of the 164 projects in the district, usable water storage is at 16.38 per cent. The Majalgaon project has 28.53 per cent storage, while medium projects have 12.49 per cent and minor projects only 5.49 per cent. As many as 32 projects have completely dried up."Currently, the average capacity of all 164 large, medium, and small reservoirs is roughly 16 per cent. Apart from these, there are several minor sources such as open wells, borewells, jackwells and small lakes. Their water availability in the coming months depends on the groundwater table," Johnson said.The administration is therefore already relying on tankers to meet drinking water requirements. "As many as 150 tankers are currently supplying water twice a day across the district," Johnson said.As of September 29, wells or borewells had been requisitioned in 28 villages and at 32 other locations. "We have acquired 40 per cent of water sources," he said.The pressure on drinking water supplies is particularly evident in Parli Vaijnath, where the municipal council has begun planning for the coming months."We have a population of roughly 1.2 lakh. Considering the current reservoir capacity and evaporation rate, we have planned to supply water once every eight to 10 days to ensure water availability till June 2027. The implementation will start on October 8," Trimbak Kamble, Chief Officer of the Parli Vaijnath Municipal Council, told The water shortage is also affecting livestock. Available fodder stocks are expected to last for an average of only 37 days. The situation is particularly critical in Patoda, where stocks are estimated to last 21 days, and Ashti, where they are expected to last 27 days. Parli has the highest availability, with fodder stocks estimated to last around 70 days.The impact of the rainfall deficit has also been felt during the Kharif season. Sowing was completed on 7,87,218 hectares, or 97.31 per cent of the expected 8,08,946 hectares. Soybean sowing exceeded the target at 137.90 per cent, while cotton sowing stood at 78.36 per cent.Preliminary assessments have indicated crop damage of more than 75 per cent across all 11 talukas, with the affected area estimated at around 5.14 lakh hectares.Amid the water and agricultural stress, the district has also received funds for irrigation-related works. A total of Rs 2,341.33 lakh has been sanctioned for three projects in Ashti, Beed, and Georai under the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana 2.0. The projects are expected to cover 10,642 hectares.For the administration, however, the immediate challenge remains protecting the limited water available in reservoirs and groundwater sources."We are now making a drought management plan for all villages in

Indian Embassy provides assistance to rescued seafarers in Romania

Bucharest: A representative of the Indian Embassy in Romania has met three Indian nationals rescued from the commercial vessel MV Royad Mammadov, which was attacked in the Black Sea on Monday.The official assured the Indian nationals of all necessary assistance and support for their safe and early departure from Romania. Essential items, including mobile phones, were also facilitated through the shipping company's local agent.

"The Embassy representative today visited the three Indian nationals rescued yesterday from MV Royad Mammadov in the Black Sea. Two are presently accommodated at a hotel, while the third person is undergoing treatment at the County Hospital in Constan?a. All three are in stable condition," the Indian Embassy in Romania posted on X in the early hours of Wednesday, India time."The Embassy assured them of all necessary assistance and support for their safe and early departure from Romania. Essential items, including mobile phones, were facilitated through the shipping company's local agent, while Indian food was arranged through a local Indian restaurant," it added.

The Embassy representative also met local police authorities, the shipping company's agent and treating medical doctors to coordinate further assistance for the Indian nationals. The Embassy said that it remains in close contact with the concerned authorities and continues to extend all necessary support.On Tuesday, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) condemned the attack on MV Royad Mammadov in the Black Sea, in which two foreign seafarers were killed and three Indian nationals were injured."We condemn the attack on MV Royad Mammadov in the Black Sea, in which two foreign seafarers were killed and some members of the crew, including Indian nationals, injured. The injured have been rescued by Romanian authorities and are receiving medical attention. The three Indian nationals, who were part of the crew of the ship, are safe. We thank Romanian authorities for their swift action in this incident," read a statement released by the MEA."India views these attacks on commercial shipping and seafarers with grave concern. The targeting of traffic in international waterways is severely undermining global commerce and the welfare of people across the world. We continue to call for dialogue and diplomacy to bring an end to the ongoing conflicts," it added.



Tesla is browbeating the EU to approve its 'Full Self-Driving' tech. The pressure is working.



As Tesla chases an elusive prize – government approval of its "Full Self-Driving" technology across Europe – the US automaker is waging a pressure campaign casting safety regulators as feckless bureaucrats blocking its life-saving technology.Elon Musk's company has pushed regulators directly to reduce the rigor of safety reviews, submitted its own research making bold crash-reduction claims, and used social media to mobilize Tesla enthusiasts to demand speedy approvals.The strategy has worked so far, winning a critical first approval in the Netherlands that cleared the way for a Europe-wide vote expected soon by regulators from 27 European Union countries. Seven other EU countries, including the Czech Republic, Belgium and Denmark, have granted Tesla national approvals for the driver-assistance technology, which is not fully autonomous.But Tesla's campaign is built on faulty company safety research that can't support the company's claims to officials or the public, according to seven traffic-safety researchers who examined its methodology for Reuters.

The automaker sent the flawed studies broadly to European regulators seeking their support after it secured approval in the Netherlands. The Dutch evaluation had outsized importance because the EU's process required first getting signoff from one member country that agrees to endorse the technology for EU-wide approval. Other countries' regulators are now relying heavily on the Dutch research to decide their own votes.During that Netherlands review, Tesla repeatedly sought to scale back the intensity of the regulator's examination, and it pushed – with some success – to set the terms and methods of its evaluation and testing, according to a Reuters review of correspondence between the automaker and the regulator, which has not been previously reported.Dutch staffers often responded with conciliatory notes emphasizing the regulator's desire to collaborate with Tesla on "shared" or "mutual" objectives, raising concerns about its impartiality among five autonomous-vehicle regulation experts who reviewed the exchanges for Reuters.Tesla did not respond to detailed questions from Reuters on its safety research and interactions with European regulators. RDW, the regulator responsible for vehicle safety in the Netherlands, didn't comment on its correspondence with Tesla or the company's European data. In a statement, RDW said it "assesses driver assistance systems from all manufacturers objectively and independently." It added that engagement with a manufacturer "is a routine part of the assessment process and does not compromise the independence or thoroughness of our assessment."

For this report on Tesla's European pressure campaign, Reuters obtained hundreds of pages of email correspondence between Tesla and regulators in the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Estonia, Italy and Switzerland; reviewed safety studies Tesla distributed to regulators across Europe; and interviewed seven traffic-safety researchers who examined Tesla's crash-reduction claims. Together, the documents and interviews provide the first detailed account of how Tesla sought to influence the Dutch review of FSD and used flawed claims about the technology's life-saving potential to press regulators across Europe.Tesla produced an "evidence dashboard" on Full Self-Driving (FSD) safety that it said it shared with EU member-state regulators in April. The company's Europe-specific research compares FSD-equipped Tesla cars driven by its own professional engineering drivers to all Tesla cars driven by ordinary owners across Europe. But it couldn't determine relative crash rates because its sample of miles driven in FSD-piloted vehicles was too small – in the tens or hundreds of thousands – to meaningfully compare to the hundreds of millions of miles covered by manually driven Teslas in Europe, according to the seven traffic-safety researchers' review of company research.

Instead, Tesla used a set of driving behaviors as "surrogates" for measuring crashes – horn honking, low blinker-usage frequency, rapid acceleration or deceleration, automatic emergency braking and hard cornering. The company says it can track such maneuvers through its in-car technology, but it hasn't sought outside peer review of its data or its methodology for analyzing it. The traffic safety researchers told Reuters that some of these driving behaviors, such as honking and blinker usage, are poor indicators of crash danger. Others, like hard braking, can be better proxies. But they have their own limitations, the researchers said, and their relation to crash rates isn't well-established.All of the researchers said Tesla's study provides no evidence of the central claim in the company's European lobbying campaign – that FSD prevents fatal crashes.

The researchers also questioned Tesla's use of professional engineering drivers as a comparison. Trained drivers are more familiar with how FSD works and when and how they might need to intervene to prevent crashes or avoid the specific driving behaviors Tesla tracked. Tesla calls the system "Full Self-Driving" but adds "(Supervised)" because it requires a human driver's full attention. The automaker warns drivers to pay strict attention and stay ready to take over if FSD fails – transitions that autonomous-driving experts say can be difficult and dangerous.In its Europe study, Tesla says the professional drivers' intimate familiarity with FSD makes its data collection more accurate because they rarely turn the system off.In the Europe study's fine print, Tesla warns that its comparisons of FSD driving and human driving behaviors can't be interpreted as "causal estimates," an acknowledgment that FSD's performance on those measures won't necessarily translate to lower crash rates.But Tesla and Musk don't disclose the research's limitations in their social-media posts blaming European regulators for traffic deaths. When French transportation minister Philippe Tabarot said in July that his country couldn't support EU-wide expansion of FSD due to safety concerns, Musk posted on his social media platform X that "delaying the approval of FSD in France will cost lives."Musk responded to a video featuring French Transportation Minister Philippe Tabarot by claiming Paris' stance would endanger public safety.Such claims go far beyond what Tesla's research can support, said Marco Benedetti, an assistant research scientist at the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute and a former statistician at the US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).Tesla's inflated safety claims to European regulators are the latest in a long history of company exaggerations involving FSD's safety and readiness for fully autonomous driving. The automaker has for years faced US federal investigations and lawsuits over crashes and deaths blamed on its FSD or Autopilot driver-assistance systems.Every year for a decade, chief executive Musk has asserted Tesla would deliver fully autonomous vehicles no later than the following year. After launching a small robotaxi service in Austin, Texas, in June 2025, Musk promised "hyperexponential" growth of a technology Tesla says can work anywhere on earth. Instead, Tesla has expanded robotaxis slowly in Austin and a handful of areas in Texas and Florida.The bulk of Tesla's $1.5 trillion stock-market value is tied to investors' belief that it will dominate self-driving technology globally.A Reuters investigation found the automaker is nowhere close to deploying self-driving cars safely at scale and that it used unsound statistical methodology to claim FSD is already up to 10 times safer than a human driver. The automaker, for instance, relied on an apples-and-oranges comparison of crashes in FSD-piloted Teslas with all crashes nationally. For Teslas using FSD, the company counted only crashes with airbag deployments; it then compared that rate with all crashes in federal data where a tow truck removed a vehicle – a criterion that includes a far higher number of less serious crashes.Tesla submitted the same misleading US research to European regulators, along with its more recent Europe-specific study. When you start getting into 'lives saved,' that's where it gets nonsensical.Marco Benedetti, an assistant research scientist at the University of Michigan Transportation Research InstituteSome of the traffic-safety researchers interviewed by Reuters said Tesla's European study marked an improvement over its US research and included more disclosures acknowledging shortcomings of its methodology. Further, they said, making safety comparisons of a system like FSD to a human driver are inherently difficult. That's in part because human drivers still play a critical role in operating FSD safely, making it difficult to attribute any perceived benefit solely to FSD. Human drivers can also turn the system on and off, and tend to avoid using it in complex driving situations they perceive to be dangerous, the researchers said.

The main problem, all of the researchers said, is that Tesla makes exaggerated public safety claims that go far beyond what its research proves in both the US and Europe. Daniel McGehee, an engineering professor and director of the University of Iowa's Driving Safety Research Institute, said Tesla's European study presents "potentially useful evidence of system performance" but stops well short of showing FSD saves lives.Tesla enthusiast Kees Roelandschap drove around Amsterdam hands-free with his electric car in April, several days after Dutch regulators approved the use of Tesla's driver-assistance software. REUTERS/Bart Biesemans

FSD approval is critical to Tesla's ambitions in Europe, where the company is only now regaining market share after steep sales declines stemming from rising electric-vehicle competition and consumer backlash over Musk's backing of US President Donald Trump and far-right European politicians.Tesla now competes with dozens of new EVs from European brands and from surging Chinese EV makers, many of which offer FSD-like driver-assistance technology in their home market.FSD is currently available in the United States, where it didn't need regulatory approval, along with the European countries that recently approved it and a handful of others, including Canada, Mexico, Australia and South Korea. The automaker has struggled for years to secure approval in China, its second-biggest market behind the US.Tesla would be the first automaker to win EU approval for an advanced driver-assistance system allowing hands-free operation on any road. Currently, regulations only allow hands-free systems on highways. In the EU-wide vote, Tesla needs support from regulators in 55% of EU-member countries constituting 65% of the region's population.

REGULATOR'S 'SHARED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES' WITH TESLAStaffers of the Dutch regulator, RDW, eased aspects of its FSD safety evaluation in response to repeated complaints from Tesla as it reviewed the system starting in 2024, correspondence between the company and the regulator shows. RDW ultimately found FSD could improve safety if used correctly and recommended EU-wide approval.The exchanges, which have not been previously reported, raise concerns over whether Tesla exerted undue influence over the safety review of its own technology, according to autonomous-vehicle regulation experts who reviewed the correspondence for Reuters. Throughout the process, Tesla representatives asserted the company should have shared decision-making power in how the review would be conducted. Staffers for the regulator, in turn, often assured Tesla of their desire to work collaboratively toward mutual goals.In this email to Tesla, obtained by Reuters, Dutch regulator RDW said it was willing to 'adjust or reduce' the intensity of a regulatory review.In November 2024, early in Tesla's discussions with RDW, the company pushed the regulator to start testing vehicles by month's end. When a regulator responded with a commitment to deliver Tesla a project plan by then, a responding Tesla staffer reiterated the demand for immediate testing."Keep in mind that this is mission critical for our leadership," the Tesla representative wrote. "Our leadership will measure the goodwill to do this project with RDW by this 'test start' milestone."The start of testing took longer. But Tesla won concessions from Dutch regulators after complaining about the costs, methods and time needed for other aspects of the review, according to the exchanges between the company and RDW.Unlike in the US, automakers in Europe must pay regulators' expenses for evaluation of new-vehicle models, systems or parts. The costs disputed by Tesla ranged from tens to hundreds of thousands of euros, small sums relative to the $95 billion in revenue posted last year by the world's most valuable automaker.Tesla objected, for instance, to paying for five RDW staffers to travel to a May 2025 meeting at Tesla's Gigafactory in Berlin. The company said it expected only two to three staffers and argued most conversations should be held remotely. RDW responded that only two staff members' expenses would be billed to Tesla and others might not attend.In an April 2025 email to RDW, a Tesla employee balked at RDW's breakdown of •365,000 in costs for testing permits, technical work and other services RDW conducted over a five-month period ending in March 2025. The automaker complained of the "extremely high cost" and said it would withhold payment until it received a "granular" accounting of RDW's operations, including credentials, hours worked and hourly cost of every RDW.

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. The protestors are referred to as "terrorists" throughout the film.

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 humanitarian access and the safe movement of civilians, Xinhua news agency reported."

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

India's burden of malnutrition and obesity: where diet makes or breaks



For the past eight years or so Sobha, who is in her 50s and works as a domestic help, has been diabetic. Apart from religiously taking her metformin tablets, she did not think too much about her condition. Recently, however, constant fatigue, swollen ankles, and vision problems made her go back to her doctor. She was shocked when she was told that her blood sugar levels were too high, her haemoglobin and vitamin D levels were dangerously low, and that she was borderline obese."But I eat a normal diet and I do not indulge in sweets often. I do not know why my sugar is high or why I seem to be putting on weight, despite not eating much. The doctor wants me to eat more vegetables and fruits and switch from rice to ragi. But I work as a domestic help and mostly eat the food provided by my employers. Also, I cannot afford to buy fruits and vegetables on my income. Even fish has become so expensive. We also do not get pulses or legumes at subsidised rates from ration shops anymore," she says.Sobha's story is being played out across the country. People like her are among the millions of malnourished, obese, persons with diabetes in the country, who will, over time, develop serious complications of diabetes such as renal failure because basic lifestyle changes-- especially dietary changes -- that are required to keep non-communicable diseases (NCDs) under control are beyond their means.

"In a bid to ensure that people do not go hungry, the nation opted for food security, and for this calorie-dense grains and cereals are supplied at subsidised rates to people through the public distribution system. But it is the poor in the country who are now paying the price for the lack of nutritional content and dietary diversity in their food with their health. Healthy foods are expensive, and in the absence of any policy-level effort to make these accessible to the poor, the cycle of malnutrition, obesity, and NCDs will continue," says T.S. Anish, Associate Professor of Community Medicine, Government Medical College, Manjeri.The Global Food Policy Report 2024, 'Food systems for healthy diets and nutrition', released by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) last year, reported that 16.6 % of Indians suffered from malnutrition because of poor dietary habits. It said that at least 38 % of the Indian population ate unhealthy foods, while only 28 % ate all five recommended food groups, which included at least one starchy staple food, one vegetable, one fruit, one pulse, nut or seed, and one animal-source food.Yet another report, the United Nations' State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World report published in July last year said that 55.6% of Indians cannot afford a healthy, balanced, and diverse diet because eating healthy is a costly affair. This is however lower than the 2017 data, when the figure was 69.5 %. The report, published by five UN agencies, described a 'healthy diet' as comprising four key aspects: diversity (within and across food groups), adequacy (sufficiency of all essential nutrients compared to requirements), moderation (foods and nutrients that are related to poor health outcomes) and balance (energy and macronutrient intake).

Socio-economic and gender disparities have been fuelling India's double burden of malnutrition -- a paradox wherein malnutrition co-exists with obesity. According to the WHO, "the double burden of malnutrition is characterised by the coexistence of undernutrition along with overweight and obesity, or diet-related noncommunicable diseases, within individuals, households, and populations, and across the life course."Urbanisation seems to be one of the driving factors of this double burden, as the urban lifestyle encourages the easy availability of high-fat and ultra-processed food and beverages. The situation is exacerbated by additional factors such as low levels of physical activity and sedentary lifestyles.Maternal undernutrition compromises foetal growth and increases the risk of children who may be underweight, stunted, and micronutrient deficient. On the other hand, maternal obesity or overnutrition could lead to gestational weight gain (possibly complicated by gestational diabetes) and babies who run the risk of insulin resistance in later life.As per National Family Health Survey - 5 data, under-nutrition in children is rampant -- 36% stunted, 19% wasted, 32% underweight -- while among adults, 31.7% of women and 28.6% of men in urban areas and 19% of women and 18.8% men in rural areas were obese.The Dietary Guidelines for Indians (DGIs) developed by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)-National Institute of Nutrition (ICMR-NIN), Hyderabad, and released last year, said that 56.4% of total disease burden in India could be attributed to unhealthy diets.

The report recommended that no more than 45% of calories in the daily diet should come from cereals and millets; 15% from pulses, and beans (protein sources), and the rest should come from nuts, vegetables, fruits, and milk. But the reality of the Indian diet is that it is highly deficient in protein, with nearly 70% of the caloric requirement met through carbohydrates and the intake of micronutrient-rich vegetables, and fruits much below recommended levels.In 2019, the EAT-Lancet Commission published recommendations about healthy diet patterns that can sustain 10 billion people in an environmentally friendly manner by 2050. In 2020, the International Food Policy Research Institute published a paper on how well the Indian dietary pattern fitted in with the EAT-Lancet reference diet.The study found that Indian households who spend the least on food show the greatest reliance on whole grains, starches, and processed foods, with little else. This pattern is maintained across the rural-urban divide. Protein makes up only 6-8% of the caloric intake, against the 30% in the reference diet. Fruits and vegetables make up about 8% of daily calories in the reference diet.The wealthiest city dwellers get almost a third of their calories from processed foods. Even among the poorest, 8% of calories come from these foods for urban and rural residents. In South India, processed foods make up 13% of diets, vs. 8% in North-east and North India.The study pointed towards "a lack of availability, accessibility, awareness, and acceptability" as other major causes for the poor quality of Indian diets and recommended that subsidies on healthy foods should be the norm. Large-scale awareness campaigns were needed to help people understand why their dietary diversity needed to improve.

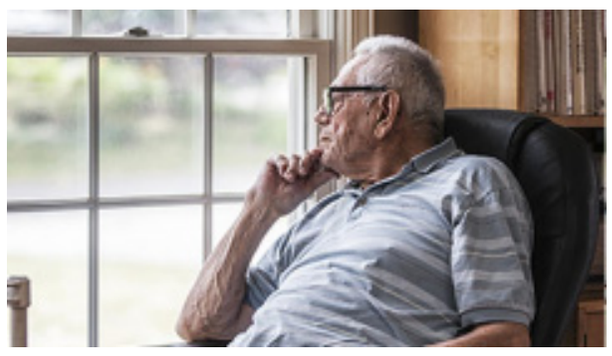
Sreejith N. Kumar, a Thiruvananthapuram-based physician who has been at the forefront of Eat Right campaigns in Kerala, says that dietary diversity or the quality of one's diet need not be a complicated affair."One just needs to follow the "MyPlate" dietary guideline (from the U.S. Department of Agriculture) which says that half of your plate be filled with fruits and vegetables, a quarter each is filled with grains and protein. This roughly falls in line with the ICMR-NIN guidelines that no more than 45% of calories come from cereals," he says.The heavy reliance on carbs in every meal and sedentary work has led to spiralling levels of abdominal obesity in both rural and urban India. This excessive carb and fructose (from sugary, processed foods) intake is the starting point of fatty liver disease, a phenomenon that has engulfed Kerala, Dr. Sreejith says.

Ensuring dietary diversity or the consumption from a wide range of food groups is key to achieving optimal nutrition and staving off micronutrient deficiencies and thus malnutrition.NFHS-5 data shows that only 28% of adults consume all five recommended food groups.Dr. Sreejith says that the first imperative to healthy eating should be awareness of the importance of dietary diversity and a change in mindset on what needs to be on one's plate.

"For healthy eating to be affordable, the accent should be on encouraging people to eat vegetables and fruits which are locally and seasonally available. You do not need broccoli, spinach, and Greek yoghurt, but can opt for the innumerable varieties of leafy vegetables (amaranthus), moringa leaves, and other local vegetables (eg: banana stem and flower). Eggs are an affordable source of protein," he says.The idea is to prioritise vegetables, include moderate amounts of protein and fat, and lower the amount of carbs.

In Kerala, local self-governments and Kudumbasree units have taken up several initiatives at the ward level to encourage household vegetable farming in grow bags so that fresh produce is available at least in a small way in every household. However, larger policy initiatives are needed to support the nutritional requirements of a huge section of the nation's population, including the subsidised supply of healthy and diverse food options as well as the imposition of a fat tax or health tax on the sale of ultra-processed and high fatty foods to limit the consumption of these items.In this context, Arun Gupta, paediatrician, public health expert, and convenor of the Nutrition Advocacy in Public Interest, points out that weak and subjective labelling and advertising laws are letting junk food giants enjoy the freedom to make profits at the expense of public health.In an article in The Hindu, 'Flawed food regulations fuel the obesity crisis', Dr. Gupta says that the Economic Survey 2025 recommendation that a health tax be imposed on ultra-processed foods to curb their consumption is being derailed by the same "industry-friendly, subjective food marketing regulations"."India should adopt a stringent front-of-pack marketing labelling system (to curb unrestricted advertisements of unhealthy processed foods); fix clear salt/sugar/fat limits for foods high in fat/salt and sugar and frame stringent advertising laws.

Dementia — the urgent need for India to invest in elder care



India's population is rapidly ageing. The share of individuals aged 60 or older is expected to touch 20 crore by 2031. Estimates indicate it is then projected to increase to nearly 20% of the total Indian population by 2050. With age being a major risk factor for dementia - an umbrella term for several diseases affecting memory, other cognitive abilities and behaviour that interfere significantly with a person's ability to maintain their activities of daily living - India faces an alarming potential increase in the number of people with age-related cognitive decline. In 2023, the Longitudinal Aging Study in India (LASI) and LASI-Diagnostic Assessment for Dementia reported that the prevalence of dementia in India among individuals aged 60 and older was 7.4%, with higher rates in women and rural regions. The study estimated that by 2036, the number of cases would quadruple, touching 1.7 crore.

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared dementia a public health priority in 2012 and launched a Global Action Plan on the public health response to dementia (2017 – 2025) which emphasises critical areas such as dementia awareness, risk reduction, diagnosis, treatment, caregiver support, and research. As India grapples with the challenges of a rapidly growing elderly demographic, the need for specialised elder care has never been more urgent, experts say. Currently, India has a severe shortage of resources, trained caregivers, and comprehensive healthcare systems to adequately address the needs of those suffering from dementia. Despite advances in drug development, risk reduction remains the only proven prevention tool, Alzheimer's Disease International (ADI), the global federation of over 100 Alzheimer's and dementia associations, has warned. Calling on governments around the world to urgently fund dementia risk-reduction research, education, and support services, ADI has said that nearly 40% of projected dementia cases can be delayed or potentially even avoided by addressing risk factors. While 40 governments worldwide have so far developed national dementia plans, the proposal is yet to gain momentum in India.

Asserting the importance of early detection, awareness and effective care systems, Thomas Gregor Issac, associate professor at the Centre for Brain Research (CBR) at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bengaluru, said there is a need for expanded healthcare infrastructure, professional training, and a national dementia policy. This will help address India's growing dementia challenge, which includes early diagnosis and treatment gaps, he said. Pointing out that dementia is often misunderstood in India, he said this was due to a lack of awareness and cultural misconceptions, which led to delayed evaluations and diagnosis. This in turn considerably impairs the quality of care. "A large chunk of pre-dementia syndromes like mild cognitive impairment and subjective cognitive decline is often misdiagnosed, underdiagnosed and undiagnosed. While the thrust should be on better screening strategies at the community level, a national portal or dementia registry that is fully functional, ensuring patient and caregiver anonymity, but with proper medical data, blood test reports and neuroimaging data can be a wonderful resource for all researchers in the country working on different angles of this problem," he said.

A previous global survey by ADI revealed that a shocking 80% of the public still incorrectly believes that dementia is a normal part of ageing rather than a medical condition. "In a value-driven society such as India, where intergenerational support and family ties are strongly embedded in cultural norms, help-seeking behaviour for dementia remains low. The idea of using care facilities or depending on care homes is often perceived as a failure to fulfil familial responsibilities and is associated with stigma. The absence of proper support networks for caregivers greatly increases the financial, emotional, and physical strain, which frequently results in stress, burnout, and weakened health, all of which influence the standard of care given to people with disabilities or chronic illnesses," Dr. Issac explained. P. T. Sivakumar, professor of psychiatry, and head of the Geriatric Psychiatry Unit at the Department of Psychiatry, NIMHANS, Bengaluru, said dementia care requires a holistic, public health approach with a focus on prevention, early diagnosis, comprehensive post-diagnostic support, daycare, long-term care and caregiver support. Promoting public awareness to facilitate timely diagnosis, and a dementia-friendly community with adequate resources to support care were essential, he said. Dementia care should be community-based through the development of a cadre of community-based health workers, with a primary focus on integrated health and social care for the elderly population, he said. "Increasing the investment to promote community-based healthcare of the elderly and long-term care systems is essential to prepare for the rapid growth of the elderly population in the next two decades. The development of the cadre of ASHA workers at the community level two decades ago was one of the biggest healthcare reforms for maternal and child healthcare. It is time to develop a similar cadre of health workers with a dedicated focus on the elderly population, including for dementia care," he said. Asserting that training and capacity-building of health workers at all levels of the health system to promote dementia care was also essential, Dr. Sivakumar said there was an urgent need to develop programmes and services for dementia care under the existing policies and schemes relevant to the elderly. "The National Mental Health Programme and the National Programme for Health Care of Elderly should be strengthened adequately to support dementia care. States with high proportions of elderly population like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, etc. need to focus on this area," he said. NIMHANS has launched a pilot study for Amyloid PET imaging to diagnose Alzheimer's disease, the most common form of dementia which can impair memory and significantly lower quality of life.

Ramani Sundaram, executive director of Dementia India Alliance (DIA), said despite its impact, a majority of dementia cases are identified only in the advanced stages when intervention options are limited, care costs are high, and the quality of life for individuals and their families is severely compromised.

Pointing out that dementia is a public health and economic emergency, she said without early detection and intervention, India's already stretched healthcare infrastructure will bear the brunt of rising hospitalisations, emergency admissions, and long-term institutional care. Late-stage dementia care is significantly more expensive than early interventions. DIA president Radha S. Murthy said public health systems would soon be overburdened due to a lack of community-based support. "Families suffer financially and emotionally with unplanned expenses and the demands of full-time care," she added.

According to a study published in the Indian Journal of Public Health in 2013, the cost of dementia care in India in 2010 for 37 lakh people was ?23,300 crore annually. It was estimated that at present, families of 88 lakh people with dementia would be spending about ?1,18,902 crore annually to take care of their kin. Based on current projections, the economic burden on households to take care of 1.7 crore people with dementia by 2036, would be a staggering ?3, 08,395 crore annually, experts pointed out. Despite this growing crisis, India continues to lack adequate infrastructure, resources, and policies to support dementia patients and their families. A recent paper by researchers from CBR highlighted the need for a comprehensive dementia policy in India to address the needs of the older population and their caregivers on a national scale. This policy should prioritise effective dementia prevention strategies and equitable allocation of resources, incorporating evidence-based approaches. The policy should also integrate dementia care into both geriatric and mental health plans, stated the paper published in The Lancet Psychiatry in January this year.

The wait for judicial finality

In 2019, the Waqf Board in Kerala staked claim over more than 400 acres of land in Munambam, a coastal village in Ernakulam district. The inhabitants of Munambam are mostly Christian families numbering around 600. When several residents of the village began demanding restoration of the revenue rights of their holdings, the State BJP saw an opportunity. The party unleashed a campaign arguing that enactment of the new law would resolve the issue. It also hoped that this pitch would help it make some inroads into the Christian votes of the State. However, its hopes were dashed when it later emerged that the law would be of little help in solving the issue as there are no specific provisions in the 2025 amendment that will directly address the issue. BJP leaders have themselves clarified that they will have to wage a legal battle to get the issue solved.

The ruling LDF and the Opposition UDF are united in their opposition to the Waqf (Amendment) Act and wasted no time in campaigning against what they termed as "deceitful acts" of the BJP to communally polarise Kerala. Immediately, BJP leaders, including Union Ministers, went on a damage-control exercise. They tried to save the party from political embarrassment and from the possibility of losing the trust of the residents of Munambam residents and Christian voters by requesting them to wait for just three weeks. They contended that the Rules of the amended Act would be notified in this period. However, the Union government is yet to publish the Rules, even as the constitutional validity of the Act is being challenged in the Supreme Court. The intense legal battle may take time to conclude and could further delay the notification of the Rules.

To add to the BJP's woes, legal experts have been cautioning the residents of Munambam against being too optimistic about the changes that the Rules could bring in to support their cause. They say no Rule can prescribe anything which has not already been mentioned in the parent law. Rules, they argue, are the enabling provisions of the parent law; they are nothing but specific instructions for the implementation of a law.Meanwhile, the new chairperson of the Waqf Tribunal, T.K. Minimol, who



was a district and sessions judge serving in Thrissur, will have to consider afresh the litigation regarding Munambam, initiated two years ago.The constitutional challenges raised regarding the 2025 Act have left the Kerala Waqf Board, which is on an extended term, in a confused position. The term of the present Board, which is headed by a nominee of the CPI (M), ended on December 19, 2024. The Kerala High Court had asked the Board to continue in office for two more months or until the election for picking up members, whichever is earlier, was completed. Its order came before the legislation was enacted. The 2025 legislation, which has done away with the election process, has proposed that members be nominated to the Board. Also, it has made provisions for nominating non-Muslims to the Board, which has come under legal challenge before the Supreme Court. The Board has to put on hold the process of reconstitution even after the expiry of its term.The State government, which had earlier thought of reconstituting the Board as prescribed in the Waqf (Amendment) Act, appears to have decided not to act in haste and wait for the Court's verdict as it had raised objections to several provisions of the Act. After hesitating for some time, the Kerala government decided to implead in the litigation before the top court challenging the constitutional validity of the 2025 legislation. The Board had acted in this direction much before the government took a call on challenging the new legislation.

Why does Delhi's local train system lie in ruins? | Explained

The story so far: While the Delhi metro has recently announced a facility to buy QR tickets on 11 different apps, the Delhi suburban Railway, often referred to as the Delhi local, lies derelict.

When did the system start?

Delhi got its local train service in the first decade after Independence. On January 2, 1955, Delhi's first local train ran from New Delhi station to Sarojini Nagar, then known as Vinay Nagar. The network then gradually expanded to connect Delhi with its neighbouring cities. Today, the suburban system links seven key hubs across the National Capital Region (NCR) — from Sonipat, Bhiwani, Rewari and Palwal in Haryana to Meerut, Ghaziabad, and Aligarh in Uttar Pradesh — with Delhi at its centre.

What is its current state?

Built to serve suburban commuters, this network was meant to ease traffic and support daily travel. But in reality, it's overcrowded, unreliable, and neglected. According to Dr. Velmurugan Senathipati of the Central Road Research Institute, despite its wide reach — especially in NCR's rural areas — the Delhi local carries just 0.5% to 3% of commuter traffic, far below the ideal 6-7%. Passengers report waiting over an hour, 15 times longer than the metro, only to board jam-packed coaches. Sarita Sethi, a government employee commuting from New Town, Faridabad to Okhla, states, "My commute should ideally be 25 minutes but it's always nearly an hour long due to unscheduled halts as express trains are prioritised." Nikhil, a railway employee, says, "There are too many passengers and too few trains. Forget about sitting, during evenings, you can't even stand in the train." Unlike the Metro, enforcement of women-only coaches is lax in the local. Mrs. Sethi says, "Men often enter the ladies coach brazenly. Safety and theft are constant concerns. When the train's late in the evenings, the journey from the station to home can easily become a nightmare." Dr. Velmurugan's study confirms this insecurity, as women make up just 14.6% of local train passengers.Is the metro a better alternative?The local train service in Delhi is much more affordable than the metro. Dr. Velmurugan's research shows that nearly 40% of suburban rail passengers earn less than ?5,000 a month. For them, the local train is not just a choice, it's the only option they can afford.A local train ride from Greater Noida to Delhi costs just ?15, compared to ?90 by metro or ?69 through a bus-metro combo, excluding last mile connection fares. Over a month, that's ?750 by the local versus a staggering ?4,500 by metro. Moreover, a Monthly Season Ticket (MST) brings costs down to just ?270 a month or ?9 a day.

Printed at SMILYS ONLINE 6-7-48,VANASTHALIPURAM SHOPPING COMPLEX RANGAREDDY , RANGAREDDY, TELANGANA - 500070
Publisher,Editor: Kasoju Shankara Chary, PRGI NO: TGENG/26/A3169, Ph No: 9949791999, Email Id: eyesecretdaily@gmail.com