

# Across State

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## Sharad Pawar rules out chief ministerial face for Maharashtra polls

### Kolhapur

Sharad Pawar has said there was no need for the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) to announce a chief ministerial candidate ahead of the Maharashtra Assembly election and the coalition would contest under a collective leadership. The remarks come at a time when the Shiv Sena (UBT) has been pitching for Uddhav Thackeray as the chief ministerial face of the opposition alliance.

Pawar said the Chief Minister of the alliance would be based on which party wins the most seats in the elections - an idea that had previously not gone down well with the Shiv Sena (UBT).

"There is no hurdle anywhere by not announcing the CM's face. No need to think about it now. Who should lead should be decided



according to the numbers. There is no need to make any arrangements before elections," Pawar said.

The NCP supreme cited the situation after the Emergency, when the Janata Party announced the name of Morarji Desai as the Prime Minister after the Lok Sabha polls.

"After the Emergency, the name of Morarji Desai was announced. His name was

not announced while asking for votes. So there is no need to demand CM face now. We will sit together, and after getting the support of the people, we will give a stable government," he said.

The tussle over the chief ministerial face has put the MVA, which also comprises the Congress, in a tricky situation. Previously, sources had told India Today that the Shiv Sena (UBT) was pushing

for Uddhav Thackeray to be declared the chief ministerial candidate. The Congress, meanwhile, had suggested making Uddhav the campaign chief of the coalition.

Last month, during a meeting of the MVA, Uddhav Thackeray expressed support for "any chief ministerial candidate" endorsed by the Congress and NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar).

"I appeal to all leaders of the alliance, whether it's Prithviraj Chavan or Sharad Pawar, to announce their choice for the Chief Minister, and I will support them unconditionally," Thackeray had said.

Thackeray had to resign as the Chief Minister of Maharashtra following a rebellion in his party in 2022, leading to the fall of the MVA-led government.

## Statewide MSRTC strike called off after state govt announces salary hike

### Mumbai

Drivers and conductors of the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) withdrew their statewide strike on Wednesday after the state government announced an increase of Rs 6,500 in basic salary from April 2020. Representatives of the striking employees held a meeting with Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Wednesday night. After the meeting, Industries Minister Uday Samant said, "The government held discussion

with the unions. They had demanded a hike of Rs 7,000. The government accepted a hike of Rs 6,500. They accepted it and withdrew the strike." A statement from the CM office said the hike of Rs 6,500 in basic salary will be effective from April 2020. Earlier, as the strike entered its second day on Wednesday, private buses in Pune increased fares, charging almost 50 per cent more from passengers. The surge in price came at a time when passengers ranging from students to

workers were traveling back to their hometowns from Pune, with the Ganesh festival on September 7. According to MSRTC officials, the second day of the strike crippled bus services in the Pune division. A passenger, a regular traveller from Pune to Pathri, who was waiting near Sancheti Hospital, said that the fare he pays for AC buses, which are usually around Rs 700, had doubled to Rs 1,600. "For non-AC buses, the fares increased from Rs 600 to Rs 1,400," he said.

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## Traffic restrictions around Mount Mary Church in Bandra during annual fair



### Mumbai

The Mumbai traffic police have issued traffic restrictions around Mount Mary Church in Bandra west ahead of the fair beginning Sunday.

These restrictions will remain in place till September 16.

The Mount Mary Fair will be celebrated in Bandra area where lakhs of devotees will visit the church, an official said.

During this period, Mount Mary Road will be closed for all types of vehicles, except vehicles of local residents who have been issued with car passes by police and emergency vehicles, from 6 am to 11 am, he said.

Kane Road shall be one way for all types of vehicles from its junction with Mount Mary Road to its junction. Pereira Road will be one way, and St John Baptista Road shall be closed for all vehicular traffic except for local residents issued with special passes.

Parking or halting of all types of vehicles except for the immediate purpose of picking up or getting down passengers shall be banned on both sides of Mount Mary Road, Pereira Road, Kane Road, Hill Road, Carmel Road, Chapel Road, John Baptista Road, St Sebastian Road, Rebello Road, Peter Dias Road and Paul Road, official added.

## With only one bidder, Rs 3,520 crore desalination plant tender cancelled in Mumbai



### Mumbai

Amid the civic body's tender for its ambitious desalination plant drawing feeble response from bidders, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has scrapped the tender for the Rs 3,520 crore project nearly eight months after it was first floated. According to senior civic officials, only one bidder applied for the tender, forcing the civic body back to its drawing board to determine the possible causes for the weak response.

After much deliberations, the BMC—in December 2023—had floated a Rs 3,520 crore tender for setting up the desalination plant, which is slated to come up over an area spanning 12 hectares earmarked in Manori. Touted as a solution for the metropolis' water scarcity, the plant is expected to treat and filter sea water to produce 200 million litres of potable water daily.

However, the tender drew weak response from bidders, prompting the BMC to extend the deadline on multiple occasions over the past eight months. Besides

establishment, the tender cost also encompassed the operation and maintenance charges for 20 years.

Despite multiple deadline extensions, only one company—Israel based IDE Technologies—had applied to the tender. With only one bidder responding, an official said that the BMC commenced the process to cancel the tender on August 29.

A senior civic official said, "We have started the process for cancellation on August 29 as we have received only one bid. We had received a response from the Israel-based company IDE, who have a background experience on this project. However, considering the huge cost and the novelty of the plant, we wanted to look at more bidders."

"With the tender cancellation in process, we will now try to find out the possible reasons for the lack of responses. There are only 4-5 companies across the world who have expertise in the desalination project. We will be evaluating the tender clauses and other factors to determine the causes for the inadequate

bid," said the official, maintaining that the project is still on cards.

First mooted in 2019, the proposal for the establishment of the desalination plant was developed on the basis of existing desalination plants in Israel. The civic body in 2021 had also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with an Israeli firm for charting a Detailed Project Report (DPR). Meanwhile, seeking to study the feasibility of the plant in Mumbai, the BMC, in 2022, had also roped in a consultant for carrying out a feasibility study for the plant and to evaluate the designs.

While Mumbai has a demand for 4,400 MLD of water daily, the civic body is able to supply around 3,800 MLD currently. The establishment of the proposed desalination plant sought to bridge this gap and curb water scarcity woes. According to the proposal, while the plant was slated to have capacity to treat 200 MLD of water daily, the civic body had chalked provisions to augment its capacity to 400 MLD in the second phase of the project.

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## Fresh Case Against Anil Deshmukh For Allegedly Framing BJP Leaders



### New Delhi

A fresh case has been registered against former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh, former Special Public Prosecutor Praveen Pandit Chavan and others. The Central Bureau of Investigation or CBI has accused them of trying to frame BJP leaders.

In 2022, then Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis had handed over a pen drive to the Maharashtra Assembly Speaker, which contained audio and video recordings that were allegedly evidence.

It was alleged that Special Public Prosecutor Pravin Pandit Chavan was seen conspiring with high-ranking police officers and hatching conspiracy to frame prominent BJP leaders.

The video recording clearly shows that Pravin Pandit was involved in filing false cases against the applicant and other BJP leaders, the BJP had alleged.

"Special Public Prosecutor

Mr. Pravin Pandit Chavan is clearly seen in the video recording plotting and drawing up conspiracies in complicity with high ranking Police Officials to frame various prominent leaders of BJP. The video recording clearly shows that Mr Pravin Pandit is involved in getting patently false cases registered against applicant and other leaders of BJP since first step of drafting FIRs, tutoring witnesses, arranging cash payments, instructing the investigating officers etc," the CBI said.

The CBI had registered a preliminary inquiry and started investigating the case. After nearly two years of investigation, a case was lodged on July 31.

Mr Deshmukh resigned as state home minister in 2021 after ex-Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh accused him of setting a target to collect ₹ 100 crore a month from bars and restaurants.

## MMRDA appoints concessionaire for pod taxi project in BKC



### Mumbai

The Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) has given the nod to the pod taxi project in Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC) by appointing Sai Green Mobility as the concessionaire for the initiative. This decision was taken during the 282nd executive committee meeting of MMRDA, chaired by state chief secretary, held on Thursday.

Sai Green Mobility will be responsible for the design, engineering, development, construction, testing, commissioning, operation and maintenance of the pod taxi system. The firm has partnered with M/s Ultra PRT, a technology provider with an established track record, including the operational pod taxi system at Heathrow Airport in London.

The pod taxi network will cover 8.80 km in Bandra Kurla Complex, with 38 stations along the route. The pods will be 3.5 metres long, 1.47 metres wide, and 1.8 metres tall, with a maximum speed of 40 kmph and a capacity of about six passengers

per pod. The project depot will be situated within Bandra-Kurla Complex.

As per MMRDA, the pod taxi project is poised to transform last-mile connectivity within BKC, catering to the needs of 4,00,000 to 6,00,000 commuters who travel daily to and from the business district. With upcoming infrastructure developments like the bullet train, and new commercial buildings expected to increase footfall, it has become crucial to establish an efficient last-mile connectivity. The fully autonomous pod taxi system, operating at frequencies of every 15 to 30 seconds, is well-suited to narrow roads linking BKC to Bandra and Kurla suburban stations.

The decision to adopt the pod taxi system follows a comprehensive techno-economic feasibility study (TEFS) commissioned by MMRDA, which examined various global technologies. Peer-reviewed by Tata Consulting Engineers, the study recommended the pod taxi system due to its suitability for the region's topography and

anticipated traffic growth.

Fares for the pod taxi service have been determined based on preference surveys conducted among current auto and bus users. Currently, commuters pay Rs 15.33 per km for metered auto rickshaws and Rs 30 to 40 per passenger for shared autos from Bandra or Kurla to BKC. Taxi fares are Rs18.67 per km, while ride-sharing services like Ola and Uber often charge between Rs 80 to 100 for the short 2-3 km trips from the stations to BKC.

Surveys indicated that about 70 per cent of auto users and 36 per cent of bus users are willing to pay Rs 21 per km for the pod taxi service. Consequently, the TEFS study has recommended a fare of Rs 21 per km, with an annual increase of 4 per cent to account for inflation and operational costs. The project, estimated at about Rs 1,016.34 crore, will be constructed over three years, with the operator managing it for a period of 30 years. The model includes provisions for a fixed concession fee and revenue sharing with MMRDA.

"This project is a significant step towards enhancing urban mobility in BKC that is one of Mumbai's busiest business districts. The pod taxi system will not only improve last-mile connectivity but also reduce congestion and offer a modern, efficient mode of transportation to daily commuters," Dr Sanjay Mukherjee, commissioner of MMRDA said.

## BMC notifies nearly 200 properties about it's underground water tunnel project

### Mumbai

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has sent out notices to more than 200 residential societies and establishments notifying them about civil works that are to be taken for constructing an underground water supply tunnel.

Civic officials said most part of the 7 km tunnel will pass under Thane City, and as per protocol, all establishments that fall in alignment to the proposed tunnel are being notified.

"Notices are being sent as a formality, and to invite suggestions and objections. Residents will not have to evict their

premises. The tunnel will pass, at least 125 mt below the surface, which is very deep, and so it's unlikely that the tunnel will cause any inconvenience to the properties above," said a senior official.

Officials said that notices are being sent to keep residents in the loop about civil works underway. The officials also maintained that before initiating the project, BMC had carried an impact assessment survey to ensure that properties would not be damaged.

BMC's notice states that boring work for the tunnel will begin October 1 onwards. "As provided under section 226

(2), of Mumbai Municipal Corporation Act, you are now called upon to show cause within 30 days, as to why such a tunnel shouldn't be constructed and such related work shouldn't be undertaken," reads the notice.

The water conveyance tunnel will extend from Thane's Kasheli to Mulund in the eastern suburbs. Once complete, BMC will begin to utilise this tunnel for water supply, while rendering the existing network of pipelines as a back-up. The proposed work on the tunnel also comes in the wake of ongoing work to widen the Mumbai-Nashik highway, and in a bid

to improve the city's water security by providing an alternative to existing surface water pipelines.

As per senior officials, while the tunnel will marginally augment water supply, the project's main objective is to secure water-supply assets of the megapolis. "As of now, pipelines are laid on the ground, which is a risk. Once this project is complete, we want to supply water through this tunnel, while we keep the pipeline as a back-up. The project is more about securing water-supply assets rather than augmentation," an official said

# SGPC takes objection to pandal replicating Golden Temple for Ganapati Utsav in Pune



## New Delhi

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) has taken objection to the construction of a 'pandal' replicating the Golden Temple for Ganapati Utsav in the camp area of Pune and termed it an act of inciting Sikh sentiments.

In a release here, SGPC president Harjinder Singh Dhani said some people knowingly replicate the historical Sikh sacred places, which hurts the religious sentiments of the community.

He said according to information received from the Sikh community in Pune, this

pavilion (pandal) has been built for Ganapati puja in the camp area of Pune and it is exactly on the pattern of Harmandir Sahib.

He said this action is against Sikh traditions, customs and principles and has hurt the religious sentiments of the Sikh community.

Dhani said Harmandir Sahib cannot be replicated.

Those who did this should have understood the Sikh traditions, beliefs and sentiments of the community, he said.

Dhani also said the SGPC is sending a team to Pune for investigation.

He appealed to the Sikh community that such matters should be immediately brought to the notice of the SGPC, the apex religious body of the Sikhs.

# Coast Guard chopper crash: Bodies of 2 crew members found

## Porbandar

Of the three crew members who went missing after an Indian Coast Guard (ICG) helicopter crashed into the Arabian Sea off Gujarat coast, the bodies of its pilot and a diver have been



on board the ICG's advanced light helicopter (ALH), diver Gautam Kumar was rescued soon after the incident while a search was on for three others - one pilot and two divers. On Tuesday night, the bodies of pilot Vipin Babu and diver Karan Singh were recovered," he said.

"Another pilot, Rakesh Rana, is still missing. We have deployed four ships and an aircraft to locate him. Wreckage of the helicopter has been found," he added.

recovered while search for the third one is still on, officials said on Wednesday.

The bodies of Commandant Vipin Babu and diver Karan Singh were recovered on Tuesday night while search is still on to trace another pilot, Rakesh Rana, said Coast Guard spokesperson Amit Uniyal.

"Of the four crew members

The incident occurred on Monday night after the ICG launched an operation around 11 to evacuate an injured crew member on board a tanker which was sailing close to Porbandar.

Meanwhile, Navi Bandar police station of Porbandar on Tuesday night filed an accidental death report after the recovery of two bodies from the sea.

# 9 Maoists, Killed In Dantewada Encounter, Carried ₹ 59 Lakh Bounty: Cops

## Dantewada

The nine Maoists killed in an encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district on Tuesday were high-value cadres carrying a cumulative bounty of ₹ 59 lakh, a senior police official said on Wednesday.

Of them, Randhir from the Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee, the strongest Maoist formation, carried a reward of ₹ 25 lakh. He is the second DKSZC member killed in an encounter with security personnel this year, the official said.

Police on Tuesday said that nine "uniform-clad" Maoists, including six women, were gunned down in an encounter with security personnel during an anti-maoist operation along the Dantewada-Bijapur inter-district border.

The operation has caused a huge blow to the west Bastar and Darbha divisions of Maoists, considered influential

formations of Maoist's in the area, Inspector General of Police, Bastar Range Sundarraaj P told PTI.

Despite facing challenging geographical conditions during the monsoon, security forces successfully executed the operation and inflicted damage to Maoists in their stronghold, he said. Personnel belonging to the District Reserve Guard, Bastar Fighters and 111th and 230th battalions of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) were involved in the operation, he said. Randhir was a member of DKSZC of Maoists and carried a reward of ₹ 25 lakh on his head, Sundarraaj said.

In April, DKSZC member Joganna was killed in an encounter with security forces in the Narayanpur district of Bastar division. DKSZC handles Maoists' activities in the Bastar region in Chhattisgarh besides parts of adjoining Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Telangana and Maharashtra.

# 'My Honour In Your Hands': Omar Abdullah's Appeal To Voters In Ganderbal

## Srinagar

Omar Abdullah, former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, and the chief of National Conference, filed his nomination from Ganderbal today with a fervent plea to the people -- "My honour, my turban are in your hands".

"After 16 years, I am again placing myself before the people of Ganderbal with a hope that you will again let me serve as your MLA and servant," Mr Abdullah told the people today.

"The people of Ganderbal have suffered a lot after 2016, no one healed their wounds, no one addressed their difficulties. We will talk about all these issues in the coming two-three weeks," he added.

National Conference's ally Rahul Gandhi, was in the Union Territory too today, supporting the Congress candidate from Anantnag. And in sync with the message of the National Conference, Mr Gandhi spoke kept his focus on the restoration of statehood, which is the main election promise of Mr Abdullah's



party.

Mr Abdullah, who contested the 2024 Lok Sabha polls from the Baramulla constituency, had lost to independent candidate Engineer Rashid. But he had won in the last polls held in the erstwhile state -- from Beerwah assembly seat in 2014.

The 54-year-old who said he would not contest in the assembly polls, had a last minute change of heart. He had explained it to NDTV in an exclusive interview, saying, "Ultimately, if I believe I am a leader of the National Conference, then I must lead".

From the point of view of the assembly, he said it would be "hypocritical" or "seen as hypocritical" if he were to tell people that "I don't believe in this assembly, but you must vote".

"Whatever the flaws of this assembly, it is still better than what we have now. This assembly may not be the assembly that it was in 2018, but it is still an assembly that will speak for them that will fight for their rights. And also this is an assembly that will bring back the statehood of Jammu and Kashmir. We'll make a start from there," he added.

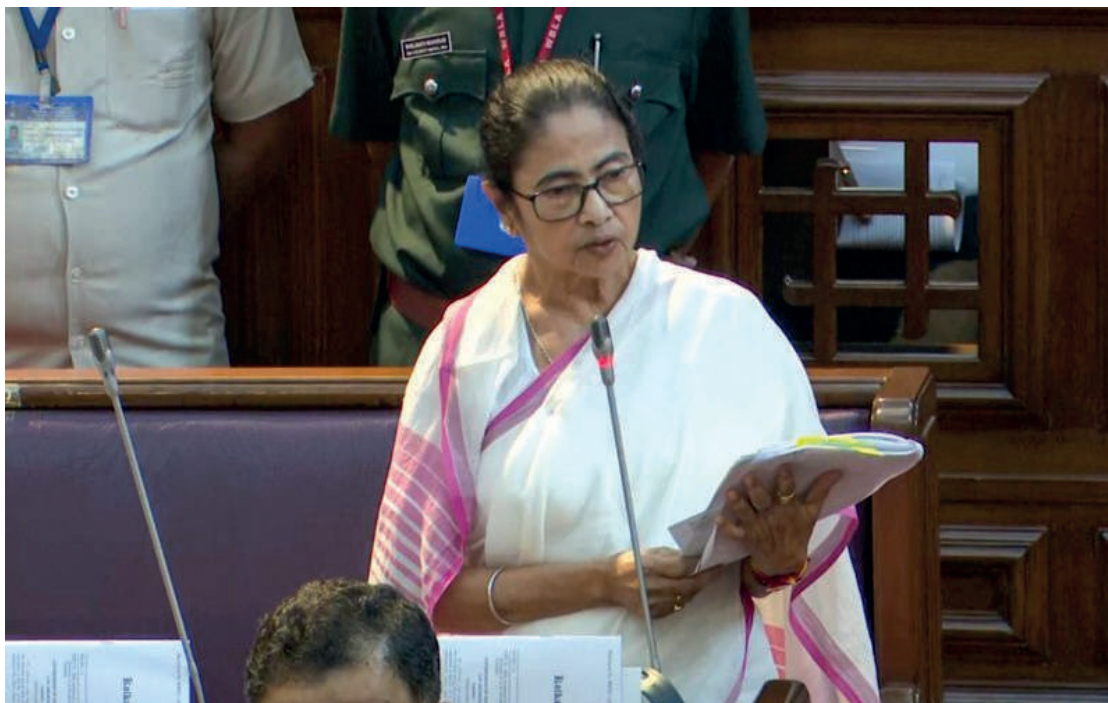
# Bengal passes Bill for death to rape convicts

**Kolkata**

The West Bengal Assembly on Tuesday unanimously passed the state's new anti-rape Bill prescribing capital punishment for convicts if their actions result in the victim's death or leave her in a vegetative state. It also stipulates life sentence without parole for other perpetrators.

The Assembly saw noisy scenes when the government tabled the Aparajita Woman and Child (West Bengal Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill, 2024, which proposed to amend certain portions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the POCSO Act "in their application to the state". The Bill was moved in the wake of widespread protests following the alleged rape and murder of a trainee doctor at Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College and Hospital on August 9.

The proposed law, which requires assent from the Bengal Governor and then the President, when enacted, would mark a significant development in the state's legal framework against sexual crimes. The Bill was cleared after Opposition BJP MLAs supported it despite Leader of the Opposition Suwendu Adhikari's allegation that Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had moved it to "divert attention from public anger and protests" over the RG Kar incident. He demanded the CM's resignation



for failing to prevent crimes against women in the state.

Responding to the charges, Mamata instead demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and the chief ministers of all states that had "not been able to implement effective legislations to safeguard women". She maintained that the Bill was aimed at "quick investigation, fast justice delivery and enhanced punishment".

Besides capital punishment for convicts, the Bill seeks to bar the reporting of court proceedings. The Trinamool government faced

flak from Calcutta High Court and Supreme Court judges over the handling of the case. As the court proceedings were live-streamed, the clips went viral on social media, adding to the Bengal government's problems.

Adhikari, who spoke before Mamata in the Assembly, said the rape-murder happened with an on-duty doctor inside a government-run hospital. "Even a doctors' association in Pakistan came out with a statement condemning the RG Kar incident," he said, accusing the Bengal government of "bringing shame to the country".

Accusing Mamata of trying to divert the issue, Adhikari alleged the CM had made controversial statements earlier too during rape cases. He cited media reports of Mamata's comments made during the Kamduni and Park Street rape cases.

Adhikari also asked for amendments in the Bill such as strict punishment for officers if allegations of evidence tampering were found to be true and if investigating officers changed their statements. He also suggested stipulating a 30-day deadline for punishment.

On the other hand, Mamata

referred to Unnao and Hathras cases to put the spotlight on crimes against women in BJP-ruled states. "What if I raise slogans against the Prime Minister and the Home Minister for the same reasons you (Adhikari) are raising slogans against me?... Abnormally high crime rates against women in states like UP and Gujarat," the CM said.

Hailing the Bill as "historic", Mamata said through the legislation her government tried to "plug the loopholes that existed in the central legislations" in terms of speedy and effective disposal of justice to victims and their families.

The Bill amends Sections 64, 66, 70(1), 71, 72(1), 73, 124(1) and 124 (2) of the BNS, 2023, which broadly pertains to punishment for rape, rape and murder, gang-rape, repeat offenders, disclosure of victim identity and even causing hurt by use of acid, etc. by incorporating death penalties to perpetrators and imprisonment for victim's identity disclosers. It also proposes omission of Sections 65(1), 65 (2) and 70 (2) of the Act pertaining to punishments for convictions of rape perpetrators under 16 years, 12 years and 18 years, respectively, and universalises punishment to guilty irrespective of age and status.

## Will Mamata hang Sheikh Shahjahan under new law, asks Shivraj Chouhan

**New Delhi**

Senior BJP leader and union agriculture minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday slammed the new anti-rape bill of Bengal as an attempt to deflect attention from the RG Kar hospital crime and asked if the West Bengal government would move to prosecute and hang Sheikh Shahjahan under the new law.

"I have only one question to ask of Mamata Banerjee. Will she hang her party leader Sheikh Shahjahan under this new law? Countless women of



Sandeshkhali have levelled serious charges of sexual crimes against him. Will he be hanged?" asked Shivraj.

Former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Chouhan said why Mamata was waiting to enact the bill.

"MP was the first state to enact the law prescribing death penalty for grave sexual assault and 42 people have been convicted under the law. Mamata Banerjee simply wants to divert people's attention from the

RG Kar horror. Why didn't she bring the bill earlier," Chouhan said.

## 'Shocks Given To Private Parts': Chargesheet Against Actor Darshan In Murder Case

**Bengaluru**

Karnataka Police submitted the chargesheet in the sensational kidnap and murder case of Renukaswamy which has established the role of jailed Kannada superstar Darshan and also detailed the brutal and inhumane torture before his death.

"After being assaulted by Darshan and his gang, Renukaswamy's chest bones were broken. There are a total of 39 injury marks all over his body. There is also a deep cut on the victim's

head," reads the chargesheet.

It added that the gang reportedly used a megger machine, an electrical device used to measure insulation resistance, to deliver electric shocks to Renukaswamy's private parts.

"Darshan and his gang used the megger device to damage Renukaswamy's testicle," the chargesheet says.

Another source said that Renukaswamy endured unheard-of and inhuman torture before being hacked to death.

# India committed to cooperate with Brunei: PM Modi

## New Delhi

India is committed to strengthening cooperation with Brunei in economic, scientific and strategic sectors, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi while speaking at a luncheon banquet hosted for him by Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah in his capital Bandar Seri Begawan.

"We have decided to strengthen our cooperation in fin-tech and cyber security along with agri-industry, space, pharmaceutical and health sectors," PM Modi said after a bilateral meeting with Sultan.

Under the energy sector, the discussion focussed on potential for long term cooperation in liquefied natural gas. India wants long term gas supply agreements.

PM Modi added, "To strengthen our defence cooperation, we held constructive dialogue on possibilities of cooperation in the defence industry, training and capacity building."

The two sides have also

decided to strengthen cooperation in space sector, including satellite development, remote sensing and training. The existing MoU on Brunei hosting Indian Space Research Organisation's telemetry tracking and telecommand station, has been renewed. The station was set up in 2000 and tracks all satellite launches India makes in an easterly direction.

Brunei is an important partner in India's 'act east' policy and Indo-Pacific vision. To this, India struck the 'right notes' with PM Modi saying, "We support freedom of navigation and overflight under international laws like United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)".

Brunei is one of the five countries locked in a maritime dispute with China over claims in South China Sea. A code of conduct on operating in the South China Sea is being negotiated, after China lost its case on maritime territorial claims in a UN Court.

On Wednesday PM Modi

said, "We agree that a code of conduct should be finalised in this region. We support the policy of development, and not expansionism."

A joint statement cemented the opinion saying, "Both leaders reiterated their commitment to respect freedom of navigation and overflight and unimpeded lawful commerce, consistent with international law, notably the UNCLOS, 1982".

All parties – to the South China Sea dispute – need to resolve disputes through peaceful means in accordance with international law, particularly UNCLOS 1982, the joint statement added.

PM Modi had arrived at Bandar Seri Begawan to a warm welcome by Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah.

The two leaders welcomed the elevation of bilateral ties to 'Enhanced Partnership'. The bilateral talks covered a range of topics including defence, trade and investment, food



security, education, energy, space technology, health, capacity building, culture as well as people-to-people exchanges.

Both leaders agreed to continue convening regular meetings, exchanges and dialogue on bilateral and multilateral issues

of mutual interest, including regular convening of the 'foreign office consultations' and various 'joint working group' meetings.

A planned direct flight connectivity between Bandar Seri Begawan and Chennai has been welcomed by the two leaders.

# One Of Puja Khedkar's Disability Certificates May Be Forged: Cops To Court

## New Delhi

The Delhi Police has told the high court that former IAS probationer Puja Khedkar submitted two disability certificates to show multiple disabilities and its probe has revealed that one of the documents may be "forged" and "fabricated".

The Delhi Police made the submission in response to the anticipatory bail plea of Puja Khedkar, who has been accused of cheating and wrongly availing Other Backward Classes (OBC) and disability quota benefits.

The agency said Puja Khedkar submitted the two disability certificates for the civil services examinations-2022 and civil services examinations-2023 respectively.

After verification, the "Issuing Medical Authority, Ahmednagar, Maharashtra", has however claimed that the certificate that showed locomotor disability, hearing impairment and low vision was not issued in accordance with the "Civil Surgeon Office Records" and "the possibility of the disability certificate being forged and fabricated is more likely", the status report informed.



The matter is scheduled for hearing on September 5.

Puja Khedkar allegedly misrepresented information in her application for the UPSC Civil Services Examination, 2022 to get reservation benefits.

On July 31, the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) cancelled her candidature and debarred her from

future exams.

She has denied all allegations.

On August 29, the court had extended the interim protection from arrest granted to Puja Khedkar till September 5.

Both the UPSC and the Delhi Police have sought dismissal of her plea for pre-arrest bail.

The UPSC had earlier said Puja Khedkar committed a fraud against the commission and the public, and her custodial interrogation was necessary to unearth the "magnitude of the fraud" that could not have been done without the help of other individuals.

The Delhi Police has claimed that any relief to her would hinder its probe into the "deep-rooted conspiracy" and that the case has wider implications on public trust as well as the integrity of the civil services examination.

The UPSC initiated a series of actions against Puja Khedkar last month, including lodging a criminal case against her for availing attempts in the civil services exam by faking identity.

The Delhi Police has registered an FIR under provisions of the Indian Penal Code, Information Technology Act and Right of Persons with Disabilities Act.

On August 1, a sessions court here had denied anticipatory bail to Puja Khedkar and said there are serious allegations against her, which "require a thorough investigation".

## Two-wheeler makers should provide helmets to vehicle buyers at a discount: Nitin Gadkari

New Delhi

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Wednesday said two-wheeler manufacturers should provide helmet to the purchaser of the vehicle at a discount or reasonable rate as many people

arrangement for school buses.

Noting that the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019 has enforced hefty penalties on traffic offences, he said, "But actually, effective enforcement is also a big challenge."

Gadkari said his ambition is to start driving school in every taluka of the country.

According to a new report titled "National Strategy for Prevention of Unintentional Injury", compiled by the Ministry of Health, road crashes

cause the most deaths due to unintentional injuries in India, accounting for more than 43 per cent of such fatalities, with overspeeding being the leading reason.

"There were 4,30,504 deaths from unintentional injuries and 1,70,924 deaths due to intentional injuries in India in 2022. From 2016 to 2022, there has been a marginal increase in deaths due to unintentional and intentional injuries. Road traffic crashes are the highest cause of unintentional injuries (43.7 per cent)," the report had said.



die in road accidents just for not wearing helmets.

Addressing an event here, Gadkari said 50,029 people lost their lives in accidents in the country in 2022 when they were not wearing helmets.

"I am thinking of requesting two-wheeler manufacturers... if they can give some reasonable discount on helmets to the purchaser of the vehicle then we can save the life of the people," he said.

The road transport and highways minister also stressed on the need to plan the parking

## 'Takes heart to handle bulldozer': Adityanath slams Akhilesh

Lucknow

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday retorted sharply to Akhilesh Yadav's "all bulldozers will head towards Gorakhpur after 2027" remark, saying not everyone has the heart to handle a bulldozer.

Adityanath made this comment responding to the Samajwadi Party chief's Tuesday remark on bulldozer, the machine which has become emblematic of his style of governance.

"As soon as the Samajwadi government is formed in 2027, the bulldozers of the entire state will head towards Gorakhpur (Adityanath's home district)," Yadav had said.

Adityanath said only those with a "bulldozer-like capability" can operate it.

He made these remarks while distributing appointment letters to 1,334 junior engineers, computer operators, and foremen in Lucknow.

"Today these people have come back in a new form to mislead the public. Not everyone's hands can fit on a bulldozer. It requires both 'dil and dimaag'. Only someone who has a bulldozer-like capability and determination can operate it. Those who grovel before the rioters will not be able to stand in front of a bulldozer," he said while addressing the event.

Adityanath also made a pun on Yadav's nickname saying, "Now 'Tipu' is also trying to become a 'Sultan'."

He said Yadav's ambition of returning to power in Uttar Pradesh is nothing more than a daydream, and accused the former chief minister and his uncle Shivpal Yadav of indulging in extortion during his rule.

"There used to be a competition between 'chacha-bhatija' in extorting money. Areas between

them were divided. I can see that at this time some man-eating wolves are creating havoc in different districts.

"More or less the same situation was in the state before the year 2017," Adityanath said.

Later in the day, Adityanath continued his attack on the Samajwadi Party during a programme in Prayagraj while attending a job fair at the IFFCO campus in Phulpur area.

"These people who are making big announcements are the same people who used to rub their noses in front of the mafias and rioters. Hey, courage is needed to run the bulldozer. Will those who rub their noses in front of the rioters and mafias run the bulldozers," Adityanath said.

"These are the same people who are fighting in the name of caste and are dreaming of becoming Tipu and Sultan again. This was the same Tipu who created a crisis of identity of UP by rubbing his nose in front of the mafia," he said.

Referring to the murder of BSP MLA Raju Pal in Prayagraj, Adityanath alleged that by embracing mafias "they" created an identity crisis for the people of the state and Prayagraj and these same mafias had killed Pal.

"At the time of Raju Pal's murder, they did not remember the PDA because they were worried about their chair. But we had said that if the mafia dares to raise its head, we will crush it to dust," he added.

Adityanath also appealed to the public "not to make such a mistake" which may again create an identity crisis for Uttar Pradesh.

Prayagraj's Phulpur seat is among the 10 assembly seats of Uttar Pradesh where by-elections are to be held. This seat has fallen vacant after BJP MLA Praveen Patel became an MP.



## Rahul Gandhi more intellectual, strategist when compared to father Rajiv Gandhi: Sam Pitroda

New Delhi

Rahul Gandhi is more intellectual and more of a strategist as compared with his father Rajiv Gandhi, says long-time Gandhi family confidant Sam Pitroda, describing both leaders as "custodians of the idea of India".

Pitroda also asserted that Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi has all the qualities of a future prime minister.

Pitroda, the chairman of Indian Overseas Congress, dismissed as "bogus" BJP's attack on Rahul Gandhi in the past over his remarks critical of the government during his visits abroad.

Speaking about Gandhi's upcoming visit to the US next week, Pitroda said he is not coming to the US in his official capacity but will have a chance to interact with a variety of people on Capitol Hill at an "individual level".

"He (Gandhi) will definitely have interactions with the press at the national press club, he will meet with the think tank people and will also have interaction at Georgetown University which is equally important in Washington DC," the Indian Overseas Congress chief said of Gandhi's first visit to the US since assuming the mantle of the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha.

Rahul Gandhi will visit the US from September 8 to 10 during which he will hold numerous interactions in Washington



DC and Dallas, including at University of Georgetown and University of Texas.

Asked about similarities and divergences between former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, Pitroda said

he had worked with a number of prime ministers closely such as Rajiv Gandhi, PV Narasimha Rao, Manmohan Singh, VP Singh, Chandra Sekhar and HD Deve Gowda.

"I had an opportunity to see many prime ministers from very close quarters but the difference between Rahul and Rajiv maybe is that Rahul is much more intellectual, thinker, Rajiv was a little more doer. They have the same DNA,

they have the same concerns and feelings for the people, they genuinely believe in building a better India for everybody, they are genuinely simple people. They don't have big personal needs," the Congress leader said.

"Rahul is a strategist more so than Rajiv was. They are products of different times, different tools, different experiences. Poor Rahul has gone through two big shocks in life, (death of) his grandmother and his father. So they have had different paths to travel," he said.

Their fundamentals are clear, both are "custodians of the idea of India" that the Congress party had laid out and every leader of the party believed in, he said.

"Narasimha Rao believed in it, (Maillkarjun) Kharge ji believes in it and collectively it is our job to build the India our founding fathers had envisaged," Pitroda said.

## Insurgent groups NLFT, ATTF sign peace pact with Centre, Tripura Government



New Delhi

A peace agreement was signed between the Central and Tripura governments and two insurgent groups of the state here on Wednesday in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah to end violence and bring peace in the Northeastern state.

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha and senior officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the state government were also present during the signing of the Memorandum of Settlement with the representatives of National Liberation Front of

Tripura (NLFT) and All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF).

Addressing those present on the occasion, Home Minister Shah said the Modi Government has given highest priority to peace and development in the Northeastern region.

"All peace agreements signed in the Northeast has been implemented by the government," he said. The Home Minister said a Rs 2,500 crore development package announced by the Central Government has been implemented in the Northeast.

The Memorandum of

Settlement has been signed among the Government of India, the Government of Tripura and the representatives of NLFT and ATTF.

The MHA has been working tirelessly to fulfil Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a developed Northeast, free from extremism, violence and conflict, Shah said. The Home Minister said under the leadership of PM Modi, the government has signed 12 important agreements to bring peace and prosperity in the Northeast region, of which, three relate to Tripura.

## 67 Candidates In BJP's 1st List For Haryana Polls, Including Chief Minister

New Delhi

Looking to get the first-mover advantage in the Haryana Assembly polls, the BJP has released its first list of candidates, declaring names for 67 out of the state's 90 constituencies. The list includes the names of Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, who will be contesting from the Ladwa constituency and former minister Anil Vij.

Mr Vij will be the BJP's candidate from the Ambala Cantonment constituency, a seat he has won three successive times since 2009.

Mr Saini, who was an MP from Kurukshetra until he replaced Manohar Lal Khattar as the Haryana chief minister in March this year, currently represents the Karnal Assembly seat, which he won in a bypoll in June.

The other candidates include Ambala Mayor and former Union Minister Vinod Sharma's wife Shakti Rani Sharma, who will be contesting from the Kalka assembly constituency. Ms Sharma is the mother of Manu Sharma, a convict in the Jessica Lal murder case.

Shruti Choudhry who left the Congress and joined the BJP with her mother - Rajya Sabha MP Kiran Choudhry - in June has been given a ticket from Tosham. Three former legislators from the Jannayak Janata Party, which was the BJP's ally until this year, have also been fielded. These are Devender Singh Babli from Tohana, Ram Kumar Gautam from Safidon and Anoop Dhanak from Uklana.

Some of the other inclusions are Deepak Hooda from Meham, who has been the captain of the Indian Kabaddi team, and Union Minister Om Prakash Dhankar, who will be contesting from Badli.

The party has decided to drop some MLAs, including some ministers, and the list includes eight women.

MP Naveen Jindal's mother, Savitri Jindal, who was widely expected to get a ticket from Hisar, has not made the cut and the party has decided to stick with the incumbent, Kamal Gupta, who is also a state minister.

## "Can We Be So Rigid?" Supreme Court Grills Central Agency In Documents Case

New Delhi

The Supreme Court today asked tough questions to the Enforcement Directorate, questioning if the agency's refusal to provide the accused with documents seized during a money laundering probe does not violate the fundamental right to life and personal liberty.

The bench of Justice AS Oka, Justice A Amanullah and Justice AG Masih was hearing an appeal related to the supply of documents in a money laundering case. The 2022 Sarla Gupta vs ED case pertains to the question on whether the investigating agency can deprive the accused of crucial documents it is relying on in a PMLA case in the pre-trial stage.

The Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) has come under the spotlight in several high-profile cases after top politicians, including Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, his Jharkhand counterpart Hemant Soren,

AAP leader Manish Sisodia and BRS leader K Kavitha, were arrested under this law.

Hearing the matter, the court asked if the accused can be denied the document solely on a technical ground. "Why can't everything be transparent?" Justice Amanullah asked.

Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, appearing for the ED, replied, "If the accused knows that there are documents, he can ask, but if he does not know and just has assumption, he cannot seek a roving enquiry on this."

The court then asked if this won't violate Article 21 of the Constitution, which guarantees right to life and liberty. "Also, in a PMLA case, you may retrieve thousands of documents but you only rely on 50 of them. Accused may not remember every document. He may then ask that whatever document has been recovered from my place," Justice

Oka said.

The government lawyer said the accused has a list of documents and cannot ask for them unless it is "necessary" and "desirable".

"In modern times, suppose he applies for documents running into thousands of pages. This is a matter of minutes, can easily be scanned," the bench said.

Justice Oka noted that "times are changing". "Both us and advocates on the other side, we have objective to do justice. Are we going to be so rigid that the person is facing prosecution but we go and say that the documents are protected? Will this be justice? There are cases so heinous where bail is given, but nowadays people are not getting bail in Magistrate cases. Times are changing. Can we as this bench be so rigid?"

The court said an accused has the right to seek documents if he/

she relies on them to seek bail or dismissal of the case. Mr Raju contested this. "No there is no right as such... He can request the court to look into this. Suppose there is no document as such and is a clear case of conviction and he only wants to delay the trial, it cannot be a right."

The court has reserved the judgment in the matter.

The PMLA has repeatedly come under the lens after several high-profile Opposition leaders were arrested by central agencies under the anti-corruption law. While granting bail to Prem Prakash, allegedly an aide of Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren, in a money laundering case last month, the court noted, "Relying on the judgment in Manish Sisodia, we have said that even in PMLA (Prevention of Money Laundering Act), bail is a rule and jail the exception."



# Kim Jong-Un orders execution of 30 officials for 'failing' to prevent deaths in floods: Report

## Uiju County

North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un has ordered the execution of 30 officials for their alleged failure to prevent flooding and landslides that claimed 1,000 lives, local media reported.

Around 20 to 30 leaders, charged with corruption and dereliction of duty, have been sentenced to capital punishment, TV Chosun reported, quoting a North Korean official.

Similarly, around 20 to 30 cadres in the flood-stricken area were executed at the same time late last month, the official told the television network.

Earlier, Kim had ordered authorities to "strictly punish" the officials after the floods and landslides caused high mortality and displaced over 15,000, as per the North Korean Central News Agency.

Heavy rain pummelled the North border city of Sinuiju and Uiju County in North Phyongan Province flooding 4,100 houses, 7,410 acres of agricultural land, and many public buildings, structures, roads, and railways, Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported.

South Korean media outlets have reported that the number of those who died or went missing could exceed about 1,000.

Recently, Kim visited Uiju County to meet flood victims and offered support, the KCNA said.

During the visit, he denounced South Korean media's reports on North Korea's severe flood damage as "fabrications" and "politically motivated



false propaganda".

Though North Korea was offered assistance from China, Russia and even South Korea, Kim refused assistance.

Kim, while expressing gratitude to Russian President Vladimir Putin for offering assistance for rain damage recovery, said he will seek help when necessary.

He said North Korea plans to pursue rehabilitation work according to the already-established plan as state measures have been taken.

North Korea's public executions have surged since the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the pandemic, there were 10 public executions per year which mounted to 100 annual public executions, according to the Korea Times.

## Trump says he had 'every right' to interfere in '20 poll

### Washington

Former US President Donald Trump, who faces federal and state charges for allegedly trying to overturn his 2020 election loss to President Joe Biden, insists he had "every right" to interfere in the election.



"Whoever heard you get indicted for interfering with a presidential election where you have every right to do it?" Trump said in a Fox News interview that aired on Sunday.

A federal indictment accuses Trump of defrauding the US by preventing Congress from certifying Biden's victory and depriving voters of their right to a fair election.

He faced a revised federal indictment last month accusing him of illegally trying to overturn his 2020 election loss.

Trump faces similar charges in Fulton County, Georgia, where he was also charged with racketeering, which is used to target members of organised crime groups and carries a penalty of up to 20 years in prison.

# Ukraine's Foreign Minister Kuleba resigns ahead of government reshuffle

## Kyiv

Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, one of Ukraine's most recognisable faces on the international stage, submitted his resignation on Wednesday, ahead of an expected major government reshuffle. Meanwhile, Russian strikes killed seven people in a western Ukraine city, a day after one of the deadliest missile attacks since the war began.

Kuleba (43) didn't give a reason for stepping down. His resignation will be discussed by lawmakers at their next session, parliamentary Speaker Ruslan Stefanchuk said on his Facebook page. Four other Cabinet ministers tendered their resignations on Tuesday, making the Cabinet reshuffle likely the biggest since Russia's February 2022 invasion.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy indicated last week that a reshuffle was imminent with the war poised to enter a critical stage and as its 1,000-day mark looms in November.

Zelenskyy needs to keep up Ukraine's morale amid the grinding war of attrition with its bigger neighbour and steel the country's resolve for what will be another hard winter. Russia has been smashing Ukraine's power grid, knocking out some 70 per cent of generation capacity and rupturing heat and water supplies. The deadly attack on Wednesday on Lviv — a city near the border with NATO member Poland and far from the front lines — underscored how all of Ukraine is at the mercy of Moscow's long-range capabilities.

The Ukrainian army's risky incursion almost a month ago into Russia's Kursk border region raised spirits and countered months of grim news from the front line in eastern Ukraine. The incursion's ultimate goals are unclear, though Zelenskyy says Ukraine wants to create a buffer zone there, which would prevent cross-border Russian attacks.

Russian President Vladimir Putin remains bent on pushing his

army deeper into eastern Ukraine. Russia's onslaught in Donetsk — where Ukraine is short of troops and air defences, and long-range missile strikes that repeatedly hit civilian areas — signal that Putin will remain uncompromising and unrelenting in his efforts to crush Ukrainian resistance.

The Institute for the Study of War, a Washington think tank, said: "Putin believes Russia can slowly and indefinitely subsume Ukraine through grinding advances; and that Russia can achieve its goals through a war of attrition against Ukrainian forces by outlasting Western support for Kyiv."

Zelenskyy is also keeping in mind the US presidential election in November, which could bring a shift in key US military support for his country.

During the war, Kuleba has been second only to Zelenskyy in carrying Ukraine's message and needs an international audience, whether through social media posts or meetings with foreign dignitaries. In July, Kuleba became the highest-ranking Ukrainian official to visit China since Russia's invasion. He has been foreign minister since March 2020. Kuleba's successor is not yet known but is expected to be announced on Thursday. Several Ukrainian media outlets, citing unnamed sources, said Kuleba's deputy, Andrii Sybiha, would become the country's chief diplomat. The new foreign minister will likely accompany Zelenskyy to the UN General Assembly in New York next week, which is an opportunity to lobby global leaders for their support. More than half the current Cabinet will undergo changes, said Davyd Arakhamia, a leader of Zelenskyy's party in the Ukrainian Parliament. Ministers will be resigning on Wednesday and new appointments will be made on Thursday, he added.

Zelenskyy's five-year mandate expired in May. He remains in power under the provisions of martial law.

## Ex-Bangladesh PM Khaleda Zia acquitted in five cases



## Dhaka

Bangladesh's former prime minister Khaleda Zia has been acquitted in five separate cases, including one filed over allegations of celebrating a "fake birthday" and another for supporting war criminals, a media report said on Tuesday. - File photo

Bangladesh's former prime minister Khaleda Zia has been acquitted in five separate cases, including one filed over allegations of celebrating a "fake birthday" and another for supporting war criminals, a media report said on Tuesday.

Dhaka Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Mahbulul Haque's court issued acquittal orders in four cases whereas Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Tofazzal Hossain's court acquitted her in one case on Tuesday. She was acquitted of all charges against her following the fall of the government led by her arch-rival Sheikh Hasina.

# The PMLA paradox

OVER the past decade, India has witnessed a staggering rise in cases registered under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), with nearly 5,300 cases reported between 2014 and 2024. However, this surge in cases contrasts sharply with the dismal conviction rate — only in 40 cases in 10 years. This troubling disparity calls into question the effectiveness of the enforcement mechanism, raising concerns about the quality of investigations and the use of this powerful legal tool. The 2019 amendment to the PMLA, which significantly expanded the scope of what constitutes a 'proceeds of crime', has been a turning point. While intended to strengthen the fight against money-laundering, the amendment has led to an exponential increase in cases, often involving high-profile political figures. This has sparked allegations that the PMLA is being weaponised for political purposes rather than serving its intended

aim of curbing financial crimes. The others charged under the PMLA include business leaders, bureaucrats and even farmers,



highlighting the law's expansive reach and controversial application.

The Supreme Court has also weighed in, urging the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to focus on quality prosecution and scientific investigation. The low conviction

rate suggests that cases may be pursued without sufficient evidence, leading to prolonged detentions and trials that yield little in terms of justice. The court's recent emphasis on safeguarding the rights of the accused underlines the need for a more balanced approach — one that ensures the guilty are punished, while protecting individuals from unjust persecution.

As the ED continues to expand its reach, it must heed these judicial admonitions and prioritise fair and rigorous investigations. A failure to do so risks undermining public confidence in the legal system and turning the PMLA into a tool of political vendetta rather than a robust framework for fighting financial crime.

// satyasya paramam nidhanam //

We would like to hear from you. Please share your comments on editor.acrossstate@gmail.com

*Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma - which is living with the results of other people's thinking.*

-Steve Jobs

## Haryana poll twist

### Battling anti-incumbency, BJP buys time

THE Election Commission of India's (ECI) decision to change the polling date for the Haryana Assembly elections from October 1 to October 5 has been predictably welcomed by the ruling BJP and slammed by the main Opposition party, the Congress. Apparently fearing a lower voter turnout due to holidays before and after the original voting day, the BJP and the Indian National Lok Dal — an Opposition party whose very survival is at stake — had sought postponement; the Bishnoi community joined the chorus, citing the annual festival in Rajasthan in memory of its founder, Guru Jambheshwar. It's no surprise that the Congress and the BJP are at odds



on the issue, but that was not the case when they demanded the deferment of the 2022 Punjab Assembly elections in view of Guru Ravidas Jayanti. The ECI had done the needful, but both parties were blown away by the AAP storm.

The BJP, which has ruled Haryana for the past

decade, is desperately looking to blunt the impact of anti-incumbency. Seeking the postponement of the polls can be seen as a ploy to buy time and possibly upset the calculations of its rivals, particularly a resurgent Congress. The grand old party won five Lok Sabha

seats in the state in the recent polls after having drawn a blank in 2019, when the rampaging BJP swept all 10 seats. The saffron party's decision to replace Manohar Lal Khattar with Nayab Singh Saini as the CM earlier this year was seemingly a last-ditch attempt to stem the tide of falling popularity.

Four extra days of campaigning could prove crucial, especially if the poll battle goes down to the wire. A potentially higher turnout, no matter which party gains from it, is undoubtedly good for democracy. The ECI, however, owes the voter an explanation for not having done adequate groundwork before finalising the poll date in the first place.

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# India's nuclear push

## INS Arighaat gives impetus to deterrence

THE commissioning of INS Arighaat, India's second nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine, marks an important step towards boosting the country's naval prowess and nuclear deterrence capabilities. India is keen to bolster its N-triad, comprising weapons on land, in the air and at sea. This is understandable as China has modernised its nuclear

Ocean Region has been keeping Delhi on its toes. According to the Swedish think-tank SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute), India is strengthening the undersea leg of its nuclear triad as well as developing long-range missiles. The presence of INS Arighaat is expected to send out a strong message to China that India is not to be trifled with in the seas.

It is commendable that the submarine has indigenous systems and equipment which were conceptualised, designed, manufactured and integrated by Indian scientists, industry and naval personnel. This underscores the significance of *aatmanirbharta* (self-reliance) in the defence sector for a country which remains the biggest arms importer in the world. At the same time, the stakeholders should guard against the temptation of resting on their laurels and becoming complacent. China's nuclear one-upmanship knows no bounds; so does the secrecy of its operations. No wonder the US, concerned about Beijing's rapid N-weapon build-up, has made a renewed push for holding talks on nuclear arms with the fellow superpower. While keeping a close eye on these developments, India should ensure that its ballistic submarine programme continues to uphold the policy of having 'credible minimum deterrence' in sync with its 'no first use' commitment.



programme in recent years, starting the production of its next-generation ballistic missile submarine and holding nuclear-armed sea patrols on a regular basis. In terms of operational nuclear warheads, China (500) is way ahead of India (172). However, India has close ties with both the US and Russia, which have over 1,700 such warheads each.

Beijing's muscle-flexing in the Indian

THE Centre's nod to set up an industrial smart city in Rajpura presents a now-or-never opportunity to Punjab to establish itself as a major destination for investors. Fiscal mismanagement by successive state governments has led to the double whammy of high indebtedness and low investment, stifling the state's potential for economic growth. The fact that Rajpura has been chosen as one of the 12 sites for projects on the Golden Quadrilateral, which connects the country's major industrial, agricultural and cultural hubs, shows that the border state is very much part of the Centre's scheme of things.

Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's recent visit to Mumbai, where he met several industry leaders, was an attempt to showcase Punjab as an investor-friendly state. In 2022, the state was listed among the 'top achievers' in ease of doing business, rubbing shoulders with Haryana,

Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Telangana and Tamil Nadu, according to the Business Reforms Action Plan report of the Union Ministry of

# NDA rift in J&K

## JD(U)'s stone-pelter amnesty puts BJP in a spot

AS the 2024 Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections approach, the Janata Dal (United) has sparked a controversy with its promise to facilitate the release of political prisoners and stone-pelters. This promise, aimed at promoting peace and reconciliation, contrasts starkly with the stringent policies of the BJP, its ally, on the issues of separatism and militancy in the Valley. The JD(U) has submitted a list of over 800 stone-pelters to the Union Home Ministry, urging for their release, despite Home Minister Amit Shah's stance against separatists and earlier warnings against any leniency towards such elements.

The other key objectives in the JD(U)'s election manifesto include the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood and the protection of local jobs and land through special legislation. Additionally, the party has been actively engaging with separatist leaders and Islamic scholars in the region, positioning itself as a bridge between these groups and the Central Government. The JD(U)'s manifesto highlights a significant rift within the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA). While the JD(U) hopes to attract votes by



addressing the grievances of many in the Valley, the BJP faces the challenge of maintaining its hardline stance that has resonated with its core electorate.

This glaring difference in approach could pose risks to both parties. For the JD(U), it could either translate into voter support in a region craving reconciliation, or backfire if perceived as appeasement. For the BJP, the promise could alienate its supporters, who view strong security measures as crucial to restoring stability in Kashmir. As the NDA navigates this complex terrain, the electoral outcomes in J&K may not only reshape the region's political landscape but also test the resilience of the country's ruling alliance.

# Industrial fillip



Commerce & Industry. The vastly improved performance on this count indicates that Punjab can provide a conducive environment to attract

big-ticket investments. For that, it is vital to cut red tape and minimise disruptions. Domestic as well as foreign investors prefer to pump their money into states where hassle-free, uninterrupted industrial activity can be conducted.

Around 1,100 acres have been acquired and fenced for the Rajpura project. This is a welcome development, in stark contrast to the land acquisition hitches that have led to the termination of some national highway projects in the state. With India-Pakistan relations remaining in deep freeze, Punjab continues to suffer on the trade front, besides battling the drug menace, unemployment and the exodus of its youth to foreign lands. Hopefully, the industrial smart city, where world-class infrastructure will be created, will help the state make an economic turnaround and incentivise its young people to stay on and work here.

# A national crisis

## Job creation key to stemming student suicides

INDIA is grappling with a harrowing surge in student suicides, with recent data indicating that these tragic deaths have now surpassed those of farmers. While comparing the loss of lives is inherently odious and difficult, the urgency to address this crisis is undeniable. The IC3 Institute's report titled 'Student Suicides: An Epidemic Sweeping India' highlights that 13,089 students took their lives in 2021, reflecting a disturbing 57 per cent increase over the previous decade. Factors such as relentless academic pressure, forced career choices, mental health struggles and financial burden are pushing young lives to the edge. The crisis is further underscored by the grim statistics from prestigious institutions like IITs, where 69 students ended their lives between 2019 and 2023, as also Kota, the educational hub in Rajasthan that has witnessed a rising graph of young students ending their lives.

A significant contributor to this crisis is the acute lack of job opportunities in



the country, creating a suffocating do-or-die scenario for students. The intense competition for limited positions and the fear of unemployment are driving many to despair. The government's role in creating more jobs is not just essential—it is urgent. Without this, the pressure on students will only escalate, leading to more tragic outcomes.

Families also bear a crucial responsibility in guiding their children toward careers that align with their interests rather than imposing choices that may prove unbearable. Schools must step up by implementing programmes that can identify and support vulnerable students, with educators acting as both academic guides and emotional mentors. Yet, the most critical intervention lies in job creation. In a nation where young lives are at a grave risk, systemic reform, mental health support and job creation must be prioritised to prevent further tragedies and ensure a brighter future for the youth.

## Tytler in the dock

### Hope for justice in 1984 riots case

PRESIDENT Droupadi Murmu has rightly flagged longstanding pendency of cases as a major challenge for the judiciary. Her clarion call for a change in the 'culture of adjournments' is also significant, as is her observation that people with resources continue to roam fearlessly even after committing crimes. These ills afflicting the justice delivery system are starkly visible in many cases pertaining to the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. The carnage is going to complete 40 years in a couple of months, but there is still no closure for countless families. Some victims have died in despair without seeing the offenders getting retribution.

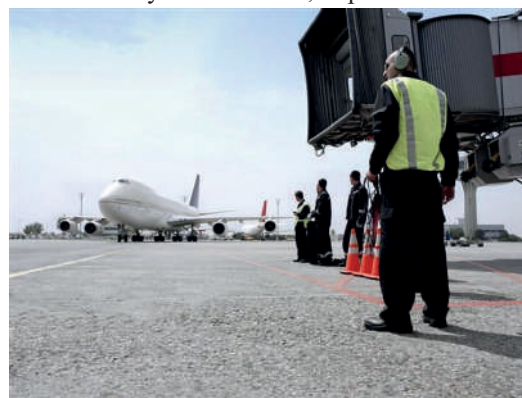
Offering a ray of hope, a Delhi court has ordered the framing of charges against Congress leader Jagdish Tytler in connection with the Gurdwara Pul Bangash killings. The court has said that there are sufficient grounds to presume that he abetted the murder of three Sikhs by instigating rioters to attack the

place of worship. However, this is only half the battle won. It had taken litigants no less than 34 years to secure the conviction of another Congress leader, Sajjan Kumar, in another riots case. Sentencing him to imprisonment 'for the remainder of his natural life', the Delhi High Court had observed that the violence was a 'crime against humanity', plotted by politicians in league with the police. However, such cases being taken to their logical conclusion has been a rarity.

No less appalling is the fact that the Congress has been reluctant to take stern action against riot-tainted leaders. The party persisted with Kamal Nath as the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister despite the reopening of a case against him. And Sajjan saved the Congress the trouble of expelling him by resigning from the party's primary membership. Amid the political rot, the onus is yet again on the judiciary to provide justice, albeit long delayed, and give people the hope that all is not lost.

## 'Donkey route' again International crackdown a must to curb menace

FOUR Samana-based youths have made a fervent appeal to every Punjabi: Never take the illegal route to the West. It's a bitter case of once bitten, twice shy. They are lucky to have survived the notorious and perilous 'donkey route' — they were robbed, deprived of



food for days and made to trek barefoot. An unscrupulous travel agent who had assured them of a work visa to the US is to blame for their ordeal. Their families sold land and mortgaged jewellery to raise around Rs 35 lakh each. But they were stranded in Spain for weeks and had to pay Rs 25 lakh to another agent to finally make it to the US.

It's a familiar story that keeps

playing itself out again and again despite all the news reports about desperate migrants pushing their luck too far. There are two key questions: Is such a passage to America worth risking one's life and savings? And what are India and other countries doing to bust the thriving racket? This international ring cannot be wiped out without a well-coordinated transcontinental operation. The ring of human smugglers has operators everywhere — from Asia to Europe and Central America — and each of them extracts his or her pound of flesh on the way.

The routine arrests after every such incident are just not enough to tackle the menace. Wily agents will lie low for a while and then reappear to ply their nefarious trade. Those who try to go abroad illegally are also at fault. A vigorous public awareness campaign is a must to warn aspiring migrants about the perils of bypassing official channels. Movies like Aaja Mexico Challiye and Dunki have done their bit; the onus is on various stakeholders to fight this battle together.

# Defence ministry approves 10 proposals worth Rs 1.45 lakh crore

New Delhi

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), chaired by defence minister Rajnath Singh, has approved 10 capital acquisition proposals worth Rs 1.45 lakh crore to enhance defence preparedness.

Of the total cost, 99 per cent is from indigenous sources under Buy (Indian) and Buy (Indian-Indigenously Designed Developed and Manufactured) categories, said an official statement.

It added, "For modernisation of the tank fleet of the Indian Army, the proposal for procurement of Future Ready Combat Vehicles (FRCVs) has been cleared."

The FRCV will be a futuristic main battle tank with superior mobility, all terrain ability, multilayered protections, precision and lethal fires over and real-time situational awareness.

Approval was also accorded for procurement of Air Defence Fire Control Radars, which will detect and track aerial target and



provide firing solution.

The proposal has also been approved for Forward Repair Team (Tracked) which has suitable cross country mobility for carrying out in-situ repair during mechanised operations. This equipment is designed and developed by Armoured Vehicles Nigam Limited, and is authorised for both mechanised Infantry Battalion and Armoured Regiment.

Three proposals were also approved to enhance the capabilities of the Indian Coast

Guard (ICG).

The procurement of Dornier-228 aircraft, Next Generation Fast Patrol Vessels having high operational features in rough weather conditions and Next Generation Offshore Patrol Vessels with advanced technology and enhanced long-range operations, will enhance the capability of ICG to carry out surveillance, patrolling of maritime zone, search and rescue and disaster relief operations, the official statement read.

## Mahindra launches new Jawa motorcycle, to navigate any challenge in rebuilding 'resurrected' brands

Mumbai

Mahindra Group-owned premium motorcycle firm Classic Legends, which has three premium motorcycle brands under it, is running a marathon and will navigate any challenge in rebuilding the resurrected brands like Jawa, Group Chairman Anand Mahindra said on September 3.

Speaking at the launch of all-new Jawa 42 FJ motorcycle in Mumbai, Mahindra also said that stories build brands and brands are nothing but aggregation of stories.

The latest offering from the Classic Legends is priced at Rs 1.99-lakh onwards.

In October 2016, Mahindra & Mahindra, through its subsidiary Classic Legends Private Limited (CLPL), signed a licensing deal to launch motorcycles under the Jawa brand name in India and other East Asian countries.

The same year, the company

acquired British motorcycle brand BSA as well. "Stories build brands. Brands are nothing but aggregations of stories. Why they were formed, how they were formed. How they were built. How they grow. New brands tell new stories. And often all resurrected brands also tell new stories," Mahindra said at the launch. "We are privileged at Classic Legends to have the opportunity to both resurrect an old brand and to build new stories, a new history. However, contradictory that might sound," he said. All of us have challenges, all of us are looking forward to the excitement that this brand will bring, he said, adding, "we are running a marathon, we may fall, we may sweat (but) we will rise up," Mahindra stated.

Noting that Classic Legends is one of the growth Gems at the Group, Mahindra Group CEO and Managing Director Anish

Shah said the company is well positioned at the second spot in the premium motorcycle segment in the country and is looking forward to acquiring the top slot.

"The 2024 Jawa 42 embodies our design-led approach to motorcycle engineering. We've taken our time with this bike, pushing the boundaries of the 'price-performance' matrix. As pioneers of neo-classics in India, the 42 FJ is a testament to our challenger spirit and disruptive approach," said Anupam Thareja, Co-founder of Jawa Yezdi Motorcycles.

"We are trying to make an Indian Global two-wheeler company," he added.

With the expansion of the '42 Life' series, Jawa has extended the ideal balance of design, price, and performance across motorcycle formats, to appeal to a wide swathe of discerning riders, the company said.

## Oil falls as Chinese demand concerns overshadow Libyan export halt



New Delhi

Brent oil prices declined 2% on Tuesday as sluggish economic growth in China, the world's biggest crude importer, increased demand concerns that overshadowed the impact of halted production and exports from Libya.

Brent crude futures fell by \$1.65, or 2.1%, to \$75.87 a barrel by 1004 GMT.

West Texas Intermediate crude futures, which did not settle on Monday because of the U.S. Labour Day holiday, were down \$1.06, or 1.4%, at \$72.49.

"The weaker than expected Chinese manufacturing PMI over the weekend likely exacerbated concerns about the Chinese economy's performance," said Charalampos Pissouros, senior investment analyst at brokerage XM

"The Libya and Middle East stories are keeping a floor below prices, leaving the door open to a further recovery in the foreseeable future."

On Monday China reported new export orders fell for first time in eight months in July and that prices of new homes rose in August at their weakest pace this year.

In Libya, oil exports at major ports were halted on Monday and production curtailed across the country, six engineers told Reuters, continuing a standoff between rival political factions

over control of the central bank and oil revenue.

So far there is limited upside support from large production disruptions in Libya, owing to the uncertainty over how long those outages might last, said UBS analyst Giovanni Staunovo.

Libya's National Oil Corp (NOC) declared force majeure on its El Feel oilfield from Sept. 2.

Total production had plunged to little more than 591,000 barrels per day (bpd) as of Aug. 28 from nearly 959,000 bpd on Aug. 26, NOC said. Production was at about 1.28 million bpd on July 20, the company said.

Some supply is set to return to the market as eight members of OPEC and affiliates, together known as OPEC+, are scheduled to boost output by 180,000 bpd in October. The plan is likely to go ahead regardless of demand worries, industry sources said.

"It remains to be seen how low prices can go before OPEC+ reacts, as most cartel members need prices above current levels to come close to balancing budgets," said Panmure Liberum analyst Ashley Kelty.

Continuing disruptions to supply flows from the Middle East are also supporting the market. Two oil tankers were attacked on Monday in the Red Sea off Yemen but did not sustain major damage.

# Avocado, dragon fruit imports on the rise as Indians' appetite for 'luxury foods' grow

## New Delhi

Indians have worked up quite an appetite for the so-called luxury foods — they consumed 4 million kilos of avocados in the first six months of 2024.

Five years ago, India imported 140,600 kilo of the buttery fruit native to the western hemisphere in the first six months. Further down, during January-June 2015, only 15,170 kg of the fruit, which is being grown in India and many other parts of the world, was imported.

But Indians taste for luxury is going beyond avocado toast and guacamole. A Moneycontrol analysis shows that imports of foods such as dragon fruits and extra virgin olive oil have



jumped manifold over the last decade, which has coincided with a growing middle class with more disposable income.

“Rising income, social media and health consciousness are driving consumption. Also, the

snob effect for the affluent,” said Madan Sabnavis, chief economist, Bank of Baroda.

“Snob effect” is people buying more of a commodity when its value jumps.

Import of fresh fruits such as

cranberries and dragon fruit were almost unheard of until 2015. In the first half of 2018, 4.2 million kilos of such fruits were shipped into India and have since risen six times to 25.9 million kilos. Grapefruits, pomelos and mandarin imports are up six times since 2015.

## Taste for truffles

Truffle imports have increased seven times by volumes in the last decade, preserved olive trade has doubled.

“These are high-end food items, which are consumed by the upper income households whose income growth is better much better than the lower-end ones,” said Paras Jasrai, senior analyst, India Ratings

and Research. Indians love for Italian and eastern delicacies is also reflected in the growing list of imported foods. Pasta imports have jumped five times over the last decade, while soy sauce is up 19 times. India imported over 1.5 million litres of soy sauce in the first six months of 2024.

Experts indicate that quick commerce may also be some effect, making availability of these items easy.

Food imports have increased 1.8 times over the last decade, fruits 1.5 times and while vegetable volumes increased 1.8 times.

Prepared food products have witnessed a 2.3-times jump during this period.

## Rs 250 SIP going to be reality soon: Sebi chief



## Mumbai

Capital markets regulator Sebi Chief Madhabi Puri Buch on Monday said soon investors will be able to start SIP (Systematic Investment Plan) with as low as Rs 250 per month. Currently investors ideally invest in multiple of 100.

“We are on the way of Rs 250 SIP becoming a reality,” she said while speaking at the Special Plenary Session with Sebi on “Regulatory Landscape: What is needed for Viksit

Bharat?” at the Financing 3.0 Summit organised by Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in Mumbai.

She added a single disclosure by listed companies on one stock exchange will soon be automatically uploaded on the other bourse.

Buch said, “A single filing with the exchange will be a reality very soon”. As part of the proposed changes, a filing made on one exchange will automatically collate on the other exchange, she said.

## Slowing of GDP growth due to lower govt spending, MCC: RBI Governor

## Bhubaneswar

The slowing of India’s economic growth to a 15-month low of 6.7 per cent in the April-June quarter was due to “lower” government spending in the wake of the enforcement of the model code of conduct for the recent Lok Sabha polls, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said here on Saturday.

The RBI had projected a growth rate of 7.1 per cent for the April-June quarter of this fiscal.

“The Reserve Bank projected a growth rate of 7.1 per cent for the first quarter. However, the first advance estimation data released by the National Statistical Office showed the growth rate at 6.7 per cent,” Das said.

The components and main drivers responsible for the GDP growth like consumption, investment, manufacturing, services and construction have registered a growth of more than 7 per cent, he said.

Only two aspects have pulled the growth rate slightly down. Those are—government (both central and state) expenditure and agriculture, the RBI governor pointed out.

He said the government expenditure was low during the first quarter perhaps due to elections (April to June) and operation of model code of conduct by the Election Commission.

“We would expect the government expenditure to pick up in coming quarters and provide the required support to growth,” Das said.

Similarly, the agriculture sector has recorded a minimal growth rate of around 2 per cent in the April to June quarter. However, the monsoon was very good and spread all over India except a few areas. So, everyone is optimistic and positive about the agriculture sector, he noted.

“Under these circumstances, we have reasonably



confident expectations that the annual growth rate of 7.2 per cent projected by the RBI will be materialized in coming quarters,” the governor asserted.

Das said that GST, inflation targeting framework and Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code (IBC) are the three major reforms made during the past 10 years.

Addressing a national conference of chartered accountants (CAs) here, he said, “The primary functioning of the RBI, as defined in its preamble, is to maintain price stability, while keeping in mind the objective of growth. This was a major structural reform made by the government in 2016 by amending the RBI Act.”

With this amendment, the RBI is mandated by the law to maintain the price stability with keeping the inflation at 4 per cent, with a leeway of 2 percentage points on either side, he said.

When Covid hit, the RBI reduced the repo rate by 250 basis points. Similarly, after the Ukraine war started, due to various international factors and some domestic weather events, the inflation rose to 7.8 per cent. So, at that time, the central bank had quickly increased the interest rate, he pointed out.

Stating that quality of audit in any organisation is very important Das advised the CAs to do a true diagnosis of the health of a company like doctors.

# Rate cuts may be round the corner as economic growth drivers are losing momentum

## New Delhi

Is India's growth picking up or slowing down? Simple question but complicated answer. On the one hand, GDP growth fell to 6.7 percent year-on-year (y-o-y) in the first quarter, Q1 FY25, from 7.8 percent in Q4 FY24. It was below expectations of 6.8 percent. On the other hand, gross value added (GVA) growth rose to 6.8 percent from 6.3 percent, above market expectations (6.4 percent). Riddle me this!

The past three quarters have witnessed this play out in reverse. GDP growth soared, while GVA growth wilted, making for a messy growth outlook. GDP is equal to GVA + (indirect taxes - subsidies).

So, GVA growth exceeding GDP suggests lower indirect taxes and/or higher subsidies outgo. We also note that GDP growth tends to undershoot GVA growth during economic slowdowns, due to lower net indirect taxes. In our view, GVA growth exceeding that of GDP cannot be ruled out in coming quarters.

## GDP's drivers

So what has driven growth in Q1 FY25? On the GDP side, the growth moderation was primarily owing to a contraction in government consumption by -0.2 percent y-o-y, despite a favourable base, underlining the election-led dip in government spending.

The sharp rise in private consumption growth to 7.4 percent y-o-y from 4 percent in Q4 FY24 and a near two-year high is surprising, considering the heatwave should have had a negative impact.

Fixed investment also maintained robust growth of 7.5 percent from 6.5 percent in the prior quarter, despite monthly fiscal data suggesting a fall in public capex growth. This suggests private investment picked up, likely led by housing. Strong export growth and weak import growth led to net exports' contribution rising.

## GVA drivers

On the supply side, agricultural GVA growth remained weak at 2 percent y-o-y in Q1 FY25 from 0.6 percent in Q4 FY24, reflecting weaker rabi crop production.

Industrial GVA growth moderated to a still-elevated 7.4 percent from 8.3 percent in the previous quarter, reflecting strong growth in utilities and mining, and some moderation in manufacturing growth. That said, we had expected a bigger drop in growth, owing to muted corporate profits.

Services GVA growth rose to 7.7 percent from 7 percent, with solid



performance across construction, public administration (despite lower government spending), and the financial, real estate & professional services sectors. By contrast, growth in the labour-intensive "trade, hotels, transport and communication" sector remained weak at 5.7 percent y-o-y versus 5.1 percent, possibly reflecting tepid domestic demand.

## What lies ahead

That said, where is growth headed hereon? Early data for Q2 FY25 suggest a mixed start. Among the consumption indicators, passenger vehicles and MHCV sales have underwhelmed and the trends are likely to broadly continue into August. Meanwhile, two-wheeler and tractor sales are performing comparatively better, reflecting a gradually recovering rural economy amid robust rainfall. Air travel and cargo traffic growth have been healthy. As India enters the festive months from September onwards, we will monitor whether sales this year improve from last year's levels.

Of the investment/industrial indicators available thus far in the current quarter, steel, cement, and electricity production have eased on a sequential basis, although y-o-y growth rates have picked up. July trade statistics also point towards falling industrial import growth. Meanwhile, merchandise export growth continued to contract in July, even as services exports have been healthy.

Fiscal data for July suggest that following a sharp slump in public capex growth in the past two months,

it has picked up in July. However, revenue expenditure growth has fallen, underlining the government's struggle to revive government spending.

With sub-7 percent GDP growth in the first quarter of the fiscal year, and a mixed start to the second, we lower our GDP growth forecast to 6.7 percent y-o-y in FY25 from 6.9 percent previously. The slump in government spending should reverse and the mix of good monsoons, and lower inflation bodes well for the rural economy. This, along with stable public and household investment, stable global growth and ebullience in parts of the services sector continue to propel growth in India.

## Weakness in sources of aggregate demand

On the flip side, cracks are emerging in urban demand, and despite its revival, rural terms of trade remains low by historical standards and real rural wage growth continues to contract.

The continued weakness in the labour-intensive trade, hotels, transportation and communication component of the GVA is concerning.

In addition, while corporate investment improved in FY24, it has been a sober recovery and a strong upswing is still pending, despite cleaner balance sheets. As the benefits of sharp input cost disinflation fades, so will likely terms-of-trade tailwinds for corporates, resulting in lower corporate profits.

We also expect the RBI's tighter macroprudential measures to result in a slowdown in credit growth. That said,

India's strong medium-term growth drivers, robust fundamentals and continued reforms should ensure GDP growth of ~7 percent (FY25: 6.7 percent; FY26: 7.2 percent), although we see rising downside risks for FY26 as well.

## RBI may ease monetary stance

How will the RBI react? GDP growth of 6.7 percent is 0.4 percentage point lower than the RBI's forecast of 7.1 percent, so this is a dovish outturn. We expect the RBI to lower its FY25 GDP growth projection of 7.2 percent by at least 0.1 percent at the October meeting.

Thus far the RBI has downplayed softer GVA trends, and focused on GDP growth numbers to flag growth resilience. Consequently, the faster rise in GVA growth should not be of much consequence. We continue to expect a policy pivot coming up. The RBI has thus far maintained a hawkish drumbeat, emphasizing the potential generalization of higher food inflation and the policy space awarded by the robust growth outlook. This has effectively ruled out consensus expectations of any easing in policy rates in the near term. However, we differ in our assessment.

Underlying inflationary pressures are muted, growth is softening, the global rates cycle is pivoting, and the RBI doesn't provide any forward guidance. We expect the RBI to deliver the first cut in October, ahead of consensus expectations of December or later, with 100 basis points of cumulative easing in FY25.

# Biden, Trump, and India-US Technology Partnership



The bilateral relations between India and the United States (US) are marked by engagements in areas ranging from security and counterterrorism to agriculture, health, and space. The India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership—which also includes cooperation at multilateral and regional platforms—is anchored by the stability of its ‘form and function’. While this stability is primarily informed by its ‘function’—rapidly converging interests in the Indo-Pacific region, strengthening of defence relations, and deepening trade and investment linkages—the value of ‘form’ cannot be understated. This has led to an emphasis on institutional frameworks that help preserve the partnership’s function from short-term or unresolved divergences (such as market access).

In the current period of conflict and renewed inter-state rivalries, this emphasis is reflected in the results of consultative platforms such as the India-US 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue. The two sides have also revived a number of platforms in recent years, including the India-US Trade Policy Forum (TPF), the India-US Commercial Dialogue, and the India-US CEO Forum. These platforms serve as dedicated channels for cooperation, ensuring that divergences in one area do not impede progress in another; they have also helped expand the scope (i.e., ‘function’) of the partnership.

One such area is technology partnership. In 2022, India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Joe Biden announced the India-US Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET).

Although India-US space technology cooperation dates to the 1960s and the India-US Science & Technology (S&T) agreement was finalised in 2005, it could be argued that the domain of technology cooperation has remained underserved, especially due to the absence of an overarching roadmap to realise the potential of India-US tech cooperation. Moreover, this is an area that promises to be of mutual benefit. For the US, India can offer crucial lessons on scale, including the following:

India’s success with Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for transparent and secure e-governance and financial inclusion

India’s homegrown success in space exploration that is known for its cost effectiveness

India’s fast-growing,

vibrant tech start-up ecosystem, enabled by the JAM Trinity (i.e., Jan Dhan bank accounts, Aadhaar unique identification, and mobile ownership with access to affordable and high-quality data)

India’s long-standing record of nurturing high-skilled talent

For India, the US holds the potential for becoming its primary partner on tech transfers and innovation. The US tech ecosystem has outsized global influence, being home to 58 of the world’s top 100 tech companies. Moreover, despite China making strides in displacing the US as the world’s top tech manufacturer (chiefly of computers and smartphones), the US maintains an edge in the tech domain. US tech companies account for a sizeable majority (112 out of 187) of tech firms listed in the MSCI World Index, together accounting for 85 percent of the market value of the global tech ecosystem.

Nevertheless, the belated attention to the India-US tech cooperation appears to have bipartisan underpinnings in the US. This is apparent in US presidents Donald J. Trump’s (2017-21) and Joe Biden’s (2021-present) respective records on the India-US technology partnership.

**Trump’s Record: New Precedents**

During the Trump years, India-US bilateral relations faced challenges under President Trump’s call for “fair and reciprocal” trade. This included the imposition of tariffs (i.e., on steel and aluminium in March 2018); offhanded comments on India’s tariffs against specific US exports (e.g., Harley Davidson motorcycles); and the suspension of India’s benefits under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), which led to India imposing retaliatory tariffs on 28 US products.

At the same time, the Trump years also furthered India-US strategic ties through convergence-based institutionalisation, which insulated strategic ties from trade-related divergences (e.g., the India-US 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue

and the India-US Strategic Energy Partnership). The Trump administration also oversaw the alignment of the US conception of the Indo-Pacific with India’s emphasis on the north-west Indian Ocean region. In defence relations, the Trump administration oversaw the timely completion of defence deals finalised under his predecessor, Barack Obama (such as the 2015 sale of AH-64E Apache helicopters) and finalised additional force interoperability agreements (i.e., COMCASA and BECA).

The Trump years also witnessed new precedents in the technology partnership, which were primarily concentrated in the defence tech domain. This included India becoming eligible for sensitive defence technologies. For instance, the Trump administration overturned the Obama administration’s freeze on India’s eligibility to acquire US-made unmanned systems and made India “the first non-treaty partner to be offered a MTCR Category-1 Unmanned Aerial System, the Sea Guardian UAS.”

This was followed by the Trump administration overseeing the Indian Navy’s induction of two Sea Guardian MQ-9B Predator drones on lease from General Atomics in 2020. This was the first defence system acquired on lease under India’s Defence Acquisition Procedure 2020.

In addition, amid recommendations to “front-load” licenses for India—i.e., the US government clearing procurement licences in advance of India’s request for proposal (RFP)—the Trump administration focused on Direct Commercial Sales (DCS) track for arms sales. During 2015-21, the US authorised over US\$3 billion in defence articles via the DCS track for India, which included critical components like military electronics and fire control, laser, imaging, and guidance equipment.

Beyond Congressional purview of arms export designations, the Trump administration wielded its

executive authority to designate India with the Strategic Trade Authorisation-1 (STA-1) status via a federal notification, making India the third Asian country after Japan and South Korea to get STA-1 status and paving the way for critical tech transfers in civil space and defence sectors. Further, the STA-1 status signalled US confidence in India’s record of adhering to global export control regimes.

The Trump administration’s federal notification rationalised India’s STA-1 status, as being intended to bolster bilateral tech cooperation. The notification deemed it to be “realised in the two countries’ mutually agreed upon steps to expand cooperation in civil space, defence, and other high-technology sectors.” Historically, the US has conferred the STA-1 status to only those countries that are members of all four export control regimes, i.e., the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), the Wassenaar Arrangement, the Australia Group, and the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). In the federal notification, the Trump administration noted that India is a member of three of the four export controls regimes (except NSG).

Another formal elevation in the India-US technology partnership included the Industrial Security Annex (ISA). The ISA was signed at the India-US 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue in 2019 to facilitate the exchange of sensitive information between the defence industries of both countries.

Similarly, fresh impetus was accorded to the Obama-era Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI). At the 9th DTTI Group Meeting, the two sides signed a Statement of Intent (SoI) to pursue “detailed planning” and “measurable progress” on specific projects like Lightweight Small Arms Technologies (LSAT) and Air-Launched Small UAS. At the 10th DTTI Group Meeting, the two sides finalised a DTTI Standard Operating Procedure (SoP) for the identification and development of projects. The two sides also established the DTTI Industry Collaboration Forum (DICF) and published the “DTTI Initial Guidance for Industry”, which was distributed across Indian and American industry associations.

While these formal, executive, and bilateral efforts were crucial for deepening the confidence between India and the US on sensitive technologies, there was unfortunately little action on expanding bilateral

tech cooperation beyond the realm of the defence sector. This was apparent in the February 2020 elevation of the bilateral relationship to a Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership. The statement on this elevation’s “vision and principles” indicated little beyond usual factors such as the US push for India’s adoption of American nuclear reactor technology and progress in ISRO-NASA institutional cooperation on space technology.

**Biden’s Record: Greater Institutionalisation**

India-US bilateral relations in the Biden years have experienced sustained continuity on the Trump-era precedents on defence tech. During PM Modi’s state visit to the US in June 2023, the Biden administration reiterated US support for India’s prospective acquisition of American MQ-9B drones. In addition, building on Trump’s push for deepening bilateral confidence on sensitive technologies, President Biden and PM Modi hailed a landmark development on co-production and technology transfer. During the same visit, GE Aerospace and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to produce 99 F-414 jet engines in India for the HAL Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Mk2. The deal could result in 80 percent of prospective technology transfer; HAL officials have noted that, when conversations began a decade ago, the US had agreed to only 58 percent technology transfer.

The Biden administration also maintained continuity on the Industrial Security Agreement (ISA) finalised during the Trump administration. In late 2021, in New Delhi, India and the US held the ISA summit to “develop protocol for the exchange of classified information between the defence industries of both the nations.” The summit included both sides agreeing in principle to establish the Indo-US Industrial Security Joint Working Group to align policies and procedures “expeditiously that will allow the defence industries to collaborate on cutting edge defence technologies.” Similarly, at the 11th DTTI meeting in 2021, the two sides revised the SoI and announced the first project agreement for Air-Launched Unmanned Aerial Vehicle under the DTTI’s Joint Working Group Air Systems.



# Undersea geopolitics and international law: Deep-sea mining in the Indo-Pacific



as smartphones, electric car magnets, and intricate machinery like F35 stealth aircraft. A F35 aircraft, for example, needs 920 pounds of rare earth elements, demonstrating the significance of these minerals for any nation.

The search for critical minerals in the deep sea has now entered a new phase of competition, where countries are no longer waiting but are actively engaged in the process of deep-sea mining.

Although deep-sea mining is not an exclusively Indo-Pacific phenomenon, competition is most felt in this region due to the high stakes involved. The major actors involved in this race are China, India, South Korea, and even non-state actors, such as private companies such as the Metals Company (TMC, a Canada-based company, which have considerable stakes in the space.

### International Seabed Authority: China and influence politics

Under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the International Seabed Authority (ISA) was constituted with the mandate to 'organise and control all mineral resources-related activities' and guarantee 'effective protection of the marine environment' on the seabed of international waters, which are a global commons.

ISA is constituted by the Assembly, Council, and Secretariat. ISA's key advisory body, the Legal and Technical Commission (LTC), should help the authority frame the rules, regulations and procedures (RRPs) to govern mining activities on the international seabed. While the conversation

on setting a legal framework for undersea mining has been in process since 2016, ISA has garnered increasing international attention due to the triggering of the 'two-year rule' by the island nation of Nauru back in 2021.

As per UNCLOS, if the Council of ISA fails to adopt the relevant RRPs within two years of receiving the application for approval of a plan of work for exploitation, the council will have to consider and approve such plan 'based on the provisions of the Convention and any rules, regulations and procedures that the Council may have adopted provisionally, or based on the norms contained in the Convention and the terms and principles contained in this Annex as well as the principle of non-discrimination among contractors.'

Since this incident, negotiations have naturally picked up, with China playing the leading role in shaping the deep sea mining code, as it wants to influence and is eager to push forward the negotiations in its infancy phase. In the 2023 ISA Council's July meeting, China blocked the motion introduced by France, Chile, and Costa Rica to discuss a moratorium on deep sea mining. The absence of the United States (US) from the ISA elevates Beijing's role to a prominent position. This discussion will likely have severe implications for the future of the high seas, which cover 60 percent of the world's oceans.

Even the European Union has adopted a resolution to support a moratorium in response to Norway's decision to initiate deep-sea mining in the Arctic.

At the ISA's Council meeting in July 2023, China and other states like Nauru, Japan, Australia, India, Norway, and Russia supported deep-sea mining against a group of 20 countries that opposed it due to lack of scientific evidence and are pushing to put a moratorium in place. France was the exception, calling for a total ban on deep-sea mining. Apart from nation states, many international Multinational Corporations (MNCs) like Google, Samsung, BMW, Volvo Group, and Tesla have also joined the call for a moratorium on deep-sea mining. This call includes 804 marine science and policy experts from 44 countries recommending a 'pause until sufficient and robust scientific information' is obtained. The call for a moratorium has increased since the discovery of "dark oxygen" on the seafloor. Even the European Union has adopted a resolution to support a moratorium in response to Norway's decision to initiate deep-sea mining in the Arctic.

### Stuck in a limbo

As commercial deep-sea mining comes closer than ever to being a reality, it is critical to analyse and take stock of the complex interplay of geopolitical, environmental, and legal challenges that will define the future of international relations and environmental stewardship. As nations such as China, Norway, South Korea, and even India accelerate their efforts to exploit these untapped resources, the world faces a crucial decision: To prioritise immediate economic and technological gains or the fragile ecosystems of the deep ocean.

China's geopolitical and strategic goals and its growing influence on international organisations, including the ISA, must be kept in mind while taking a call when the stakes are undeniably high, not just for the Indo-Pacific but for the entire planet.

The moratorium is also being proposed as per the established precautionary approach. This approach is a broad legal and philosophical principle that suggests a pause and reassessment in case of a human innovation/activity that could potentially result in harm given the lack of scientific knowledge. In light of the pressing concerns raised by scientists, environmentalists, and several nations, a global moratorium on deep-sea mining should be the natural course of action. While some have argued that such a precautionary pause would not be in accordance with UNCLOS, including the current Secretary General of ISA, it would be an obligation under the constitution of the oceans. In an advisory opinion, the International Tribunal on Law of Sea (ITLOS) has confirmed a trend of precautionary approach becoming a part of customary international law and stated that it is a 'binding obligation' on both states and the ISA. This approach is enshrined in Principle 15 of the Rio Declaration. An example of such a moratorium under international law is the International Whaling Convention, which was adopted based on the precautionary approach and has been largely followed for the past 35 years.

As the global community navigates this uncharted territory, it must ensure that the pursuit of critical minerals does not come at the expense of the environment that sustains us all. The choices made today will have far-reaching consequences, shaping the geopolitical landscape and determining whether the international community can unite in the face of shared challenges or whether the race for resources will lead to further fragmentation and conflict.

The world is looking at a potential geopolitical and environmental point of conflict, which will affect every country in more ways than one. This dispute stems from a search for critical minerals in the deep sea. Critical minerals are considered the building blocks of contemporary technology. To say that they are crucial to the economic and national security of every country would be an understatement.

Due to the inherited complexities of mining and attaining critical minerals from challenging geographies, the hunt for them has intensified. Beyond land, many countries are now looking at space as an alternative.

Finding and commercially harnessing minerals from celestial bodies like the Moon and asteroids, however, is still a challenge. Therefore, the search for critical minerals in the deep sea has now entered a new phase of competition, where countries are no longer waiting but are actively engaged in the process of deep-sea mining. In this race, while some countries such as China, India, and South Korea (see Table 1) are preparing to grab the opportunity and are trying to build capacities and capabilities, others have raised the environmental and ecological impacts of deep-sea mining. Against this background, it is crucial to identify the key players in this race and understand the accompanying international legal nuances.

What's the rush?

The urgency of the critical mineral problem is exacerbated by two factors: Fast-depleting reserves of critical minerals for human use and their rising demand. Behind this sudden rush are two important reasons: Firstly, the focus on clean and renewable energy, which is crucial in driving the green energy transition, and secondly, the increasing consumption of high-technology products, which depends on the heavy use of critical minerals. As an illustration, consider its application in high-tech items of various sizes, such

# Transitioning to E-trucks for sustainable transport

India's 6.7 million kilometre-long road network supports 64.5 percent of goods and accommodates 90 percent of total passenger traffic. With 2.8 million trucks in operation, they have a significant modal share of 65 percent in the country's total annual freight of 4.6 billion tonnes. By 2050, India's road freight sector is expected to grow fourfold, increasing from the current fleet of 4 million to 17 million freight vehicles.

Despite comprising only 3 percent of the motor vehicle fleet, diesel-powered trucks contributed 120 metric tonnes (34 percent) to the country's total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and 53 percent of total particulate matter (PM) emissions in 2020. In 2021, heavy-duty vehicles emitted around 1.6 million tonnes of NO<sub>x</sub>, amounting to 70 percent of the total NO<sub>x</sub> emissions and 53,000 tonnes of particulate matter (PM) emissions. Road freight accounts for over 25 percent of India's annual oil imports.

Thus, an energy transition is necessary to achieve sustainability in India's road sector. Unless India transitions to sustainable freight transport, trucks will be responsible for annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of 800 million tonnes by 2050.

Despite comprising only 3 percent of the motor vehicle fleet, diesel-powered trucks contributed 120 metric tonnes (34 percent) to the country's total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and 53 percent of total particulate matter (PM) emissions in 2020.

## Energy transition imperative

A shift towards renewable energy and cleaner technologies will be pivotal to meeting the net-zero target to mitigate the impacts of climate change. The adoption of Zero-Emission Transportation (ZET) technologies presents significant benefits. It could lead to a 17 percent reduction in logistic costs, offering substantial savings for businesses.

Moreover, the widespread adoption of ZET could cumulatively reduce oil consumption by 838 billion litres of diesel by 2050, resulting in over INR116 lakh crore (US\$1.5 trillion) savings on oil import expenditures. This transition would also have a significant positive impact on the environment, potentially saving up to 3.8 gigatons of cumulative CO<sub>2</sub> emissions through 2050. Moreover, the total cost of ownership (TCO) parity between electric and internal combustion engine (ICE) trucks could be reached by 2027, indicating that transitioning to zero-emission technologies is not only environmentally beneficial but also economically viable in the near future. Cleaner technologies and better infrastructure can lead to healthier and safer working environments, enhancing their quality of life.

## Need for an E-truck policy

Electric trucks offer significant advantages over traditional diesel



trucks. They improve air quality as they produce zero tailpipe emissions and have lower operating costs, making them an attractive option for fleet operators.

Despite the Government of India's efforts to promote electric vehicles (EVs) through various policies, ranging from two-wheelers to electric buses since 2015, there has been a notable absence of specific policies targeting electric trucks. This gap in policy overlooks a crucial sector of the transportation industry and hinders the transition to cleaner and more sustainable freight transport options. Implementing policies tailored to electric trucks could encourage their adoption, spur innovation in the sector, and contribute to India's efforts to reduce emissions and combat climate change.

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## Existing policy initiatives

So far, only two states have attempted to address the adoption of electric heavy-duty vehicles. For instance, the Maharashtra Electric Vehicle Policy aims to equip four major highways and expressways with public charging stations by 2025, ensuring they are fully prepared for long-haul passenger and freight vehicles, such as electric buses and trucks.

On the other hand, the Telangana government has partnered with the University of California, Davis, to promote research and knowledge exchange on zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs)—vehicles that produce no tailpipe emissions. This collaboration also supports the Global Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on zero emission medium- and heavy-duty vehicles.

## Challenges to faster adoption of E-trucks

The mass adoption of e-trucks faces several challenges.

**Higher upfront cost:** The upfront cost for heavy-duty trucks (HDTs) and medium-duty trucks (MDTs) can be as much as six times and two times higher, respectively, than that of their conventional counterparts, prohibiting their large-scale manufacture and availability in India.

**Charging infrastructure:** MDTs and HDTs usually ply interstate, logging more than 100 km daily. Limited availability of enroute charging stations causes range anxiety, as drivers worry that the EV won't have sufficient charge to complete its trip. Even planned charging stations at depots may not help, as unforeseen circumstances (force majeure scenarios such as accidents or unforeseen weather conditions and natural disasters) may invoke a change of route or time delay. This underscores the importance of having assured enroute charging stations at a reasonable distance from each other.

**Limited availability of enroute charging stations:** causes range anxiety, as drivers worry that the EV won't have sufficient charge to complete its trip.

**Grid capacity:** During 2021–22, the total electricity consumption of the domestic sector in the country was 339,780 gigawatt-hours (GWh). According to NITI Aayog, with 86 percent penetration of zero-emission vehicles by 2050, the energy required for charging MDTs and HDTs could reach as high as 531,000 (GWh). This level of energy demand requires rigorous planning and development of charging infrastructure.

**Operational challenges:** Almost one-third of India's MDT and HDT

fleet is prone to 50-70 percent cargo overloading. Additionally, low truck utilisation and high empty running of trucks contribute to high logistic costs in India.

## Way forward

A holistic policy approach is essential to encompass demand-side incentives (subsidies, tax breaks), and supply-side initiatives (local manufacturing incentives, PLI schemes). Designating zero-emission zones, electrifying freight corridors, and supporting small truck operators are critical to optimising India's road freight sector.

**Demand-side incentives:** Demand-side incentives create consumer demand, enabling the penetration into the nascent market, and accelerating the adoption of electric trucks. Therefore, purchasers should be provided with a variety of fiscal and non-fiscal incentives, including subsidies to reduce upfront costs, interest subventions, exemptions from registration fees, and tax breaks.

**Supply-side incentives:** The government can send market signals through supply-side incentives, implemented with the broader strategic objective of creating a localised supply chain. India has a Phased Manufacturing Programme that aims to provide a manufacturing base in India for various EV components, such as battery packs, lithium-ion cells, AC/DC chargers, motors and motor controllers, power control units, etc.

**A Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme** was launched for the manufacturing of Advanced Chemistry Cells (ACC) to reduce import dependence on these batteries. The government must expand these schemes, focusing on e-trucks and with specific adoption targets and timelines.

**Demarcation of zero-emission zones:** Designating certain urban areas as zero-emission zones, where only vehicles with zero tailpipe emissions are allowed to ply, can disincentivise the use of ICE vehicles. This strategy is particularly effective for reducing the presence of low-duty vehicles and other passenger vehicles. Cities worldwide are using this approach to improve air quality and promote pedestrian and cycling activities.

**Focusing on freight corridors:** Currently, 50 percent of India's vehicle freight traffic travels along seven major corridors. Electrifying these corridors with strategic investments in charging infrastructure and ancillary systems will facilitate the faster adoption of electric trucks. Starting with one corridor as a proof of concept and then incrementally electrifying additional corridors will help limit risks and demonstrate the viability of this approach.

# SEBI's reform agenda: Advancing investor protection and market integrity

On 30 July, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) unveiled measures aimed at reigning in the burgeoning speculative trading in futures and options (F&O) index derivatives. In the consultation paper, SEBI detailed changes designed to shield investors and traders from substantial losses. The proposals include the upfront collection of margins, the rationalisation of index options, and a substantial increase in the minimum contract size. These initiatives are designed not only to enhance market stability but also to strengthen investor protection in a financial landscape that is becoming increasingly volatile.

The effectiveness of SEBI's proposals will hinge on the market's response and the broader economic environment. As participants adjust to the new regulations, there is potential for a more mature and stable derivatives market to develop, which could benefit both investors and the overall financial ecosystem in India.

## Proposed interventions

The consultation paper meticulously outlines seven steps designed to curtail speculative trading in index derivatives. One such measure entails rationalising index options by expanding the intervals of strike price movements relative to the prevailing price. This approach aims to consolidate liquidity, thereby mitigating its dispersion across many strike prices. SEBI has also mooted the upfront collection of premiums, a move intended to curb excessive intraday leverage among participants. Notably, while there is currently no explicit mandate to collect margins from option buyers, this contrasts starkly with the established practice of upfront margin collection for long and short futures positions and those selling options.

SEBI has proposed the elimination of the calendar margin benefit spread on the expiry day. Presently, this benefit serves to reduce the required margin for a futures and options (F&O) position by offsetting it against a position set to expire in the future. In a bid to ensure more robust oversight, SEBI has also recommended the implementation of stricter monitoring of intraday position limits for index derivative contracts.

A key proposal from SEBI is the increase in the minimum contract size. This plan is designed to unfold in two phases: Phase 1 will elevate the minimum contract size to a range of INR 15 lakh to INR 20 lakh, and following a six-month period, Phase 2 will further escalate this minimum to a range of INR 20 lakh to



INR 30 lakh.

This increase is likely to widen the bid-ask spread, thereby raising overall transaction costs for all investors. With fewer participants, market liquidity could decrease, leading to increased volatility and potentially higher costs for executing trades. Critics argue that these measures, while aimed at enhancing market stability and protecting investors, may inadvertently drive retail traders towards unregulated markets. Consequently, the proposed measures, while intended to enhance market stability and protect investors, may inadvertently create a less accessible trading environment, particularly for smaller players and algorithmic traders focused on rapid transactions.

Furthermore, SEBI has recommended that exchanges limit weekly expiries to a single benchmark index, aiming to enhance market stability and safeguard investor interests. In addition, SEBI has proposed raising the extreme loss margin (ELM) to 3 percent, with an incremental increase of 5 percent as the expiry date nears. These measures collectively aspire to create a more secure and balanced trading environment.

## Potential outcomes

The proposal by SEBI to increase the minimum contract size for index derivatives from the current INR 5-10 lakh to INR 20-30 lakh is likely to have significant impacts on market liquidity. The higher minimum contract size will make index derivatives less accessible to retail traders, as the capital required to participate will increase substantially. Many small traders may be priced out of the market, leading to a decline in retail participation. This could result in lower trading volumes, especially in the short term, as the market adjusts to the new requirements.

The reduction in retail participation may lead to a shift in trading activity from index futures to index options, as

options typically require lower capital commitments. However, SEBI has also proposed measures to curb speculative trading in options, such as the upfront collection of premiums and rationalising strike prices. These changes may limit the ability of traders to shift their activity to the options segment.

While there is no universally accepted standard for measuring excessive speculation, various regulatory frameworks provide guidelines. In the United States, the Commodity Exchange Act (CEA) allows the establishment of speculative position limits to curb excessive speculation. These limits are determined by market conditions and are intended to prevent market manipulation and ensure price stability. In the Indian context, the equity market is notably speculative, with participants frequently trading based on price fluctuations rather than the intrinsic value of assets. The derivatives market, particularly the F&O segment, is primarily used for hedging against unfavourable price movements. However, the F&O market often draws the attention of regulators due to concerns about excessive speculation, which can contribute to increased volatility in the underlying equity markets.

Market makers play a crucial role in providing liquidity to the market. The higher minimum contract size may make it more challenging for market makers to maintain tight bid-ask spreads, as the capital required to provide liquidity will increase. This could lead to wider spreads and reduced liquidity, particularly in the initial stages of implementation.

With fewer participants in the market due to the higher minimum contract size, trading activity may become more concentrated among larger institutional investors and professional traders. This could lead to increased volatility, as the market becomes more susceptible to the actions of a smaller number of participants.

In the long run, the higher minimum contract size may contribute to a more stable and mature derivatives market. By reducing speculative trading and encouraging participation from more sophisticated investors, the market may become less prone to excessive volatility and manipulation. However, this transition may take time, and regulators should closely monitor the impact on liquidity to ensure a smooth transition.

It is important to note that the impact on liquidity will depend on various factors, including the pace of implementation, the reaction of market participants, and the overall economic conditions. Regulators should closely monitor the effects and be prepared to adjust the measures, if necessary, to maintain a well-functioning and liquid derivatives market.

## Going forward

The initial impacts are likely to include a reduction in retail participation, as smaller traders may find themselves priced out of the derivatives market. This shift could lead to lower trading volumes in the short term, potentially affecting liquidity. However, the consolidation of trading activity among more sophisticated investors might foster a more stable trading environment over time, as these participants are generally better equipped to manage risks associated with derivatives trading.

The consolidation of trading activity among more sophisticated investors might foster a more stable trading environment over time, as these participants are generally better equipped to manage risks associated with derivatives trading.

Shares of Angel One and the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) have surged up by 7 percent following SEBI's announcement of proposed changes to F&O trading. The proposed measures could encourage a more disciplined approach to trading, promoting longer-term investment strategies rather than short-term speculation. As the market adjusts, it will be crucial for regulators to monitor these developments closely and remain flexible in their approach to ensure that the derivatives market evolves in a way that protects investors while maintaining robust liquidity and stability.

Ultimately, while it is still early days, the effectiveness of SEBI's proposals will depend on the market's response and the broader economic context. As participants adapt to the new regulations, the potential for a more mature and stable derivatives market could emerge, benefiting both investors and the overall financial ecosystem in India.

## Neetu Kapoor remembers Rishi Kapoor on his 72nd birth anniversary

Veteran actor Neetu Kapoor on Wednesday paid tribute to her late husband and frequent co-star Rishi Kapoor on what would have been his 72nd birthday.

Rishi Kapoor, star of several Hindi films including 'Bobby', 'Karz', 'Agneepath', 'Kapoor & Sons' and 'Mulk', was born on September 4, 1952. He was the middle child among iconic filmmaker Raj Kapoor and Krishna Kapoor's five children.

He died at the age of 67 on April 30, 2020 after a two-year battle with cancer.

Neetu Kapoor wished her late husband, who worked with her on 'Rafoo Chakkar', 'Amar Akbar Anthony' and 'Do Dooni Chaar', on his birth anniversary



in an Instagram post. 'In remembrance. Would have

throwback picture of her father and daughter Samara Sahni with a birthday cake.

'Happy Birthday Papa. How I wish u were here celebrating your special day with both your granddaughters (sic)' she wrote, referring to Samara and her niece Raha Kapoor.

'Your bandari Sam is all grown up and baby Raha is the cutest,' she said, adding that the 22-month-old daughter of actor couple Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt is 'mini you'.

'Papa, I will always cherish the memories we got to share. We miss you so much and our love for you

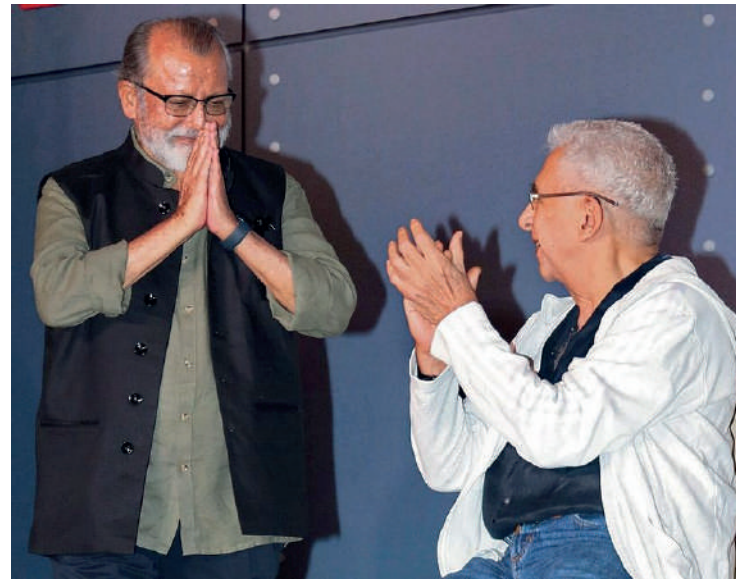
only deepens with each passing day,' she wrote on her Instagram stories.

Raha was born on November 6, 2022, over two years after Rishi Kapoor's death.

been 72 today,' she captioned an old picture of Rishi Kapoor blowing out candles on his birthday cake.

Riddhima Kapoor Sahni, the daughter of Rishi Kapoor and Neetu Kapoor, shared a

## Netflix updates disclaimer for IC814 series, to have real names of hijackers



After the Information and Broadcasting Ministry summoned Netflix India content head over the use of pseudo names of hijackers in its latest series 'IC814: The Kandahar Hijack', the OTT platform today updated the show's opening disclaimer.

Monika Shergill, vice-president, content, Netflix India, said: "For the benefit of audiences unfamiliar with the 1999 hijacking of Indian Airlines Flight 814, the opening disclaimer has been updated to include the real and code names of the hijackers."

Netflix India today assured Centre that it would ensure that the content of its future projects would take into account the sentiments of Indian public. The development came during a meeting between Netflix India content head Monika Shergill and Information and Broadcasting Secretary Sanjay Jaju in New Delhi.

At the 40-minute meeting, Shergill was apprised of the sensitivity of handling such topics. The controversy arose after several users on X alleged that the real names of the hijackers should have been used in the conversation depicted aboard the plane.

A press release by the Ministry of Home Ministry

on January 6, 2000, names the hijackers as Ibrahim Athar from Bahawalpur, Shahid Akhtar Sayed, Sunny Ahmed Qazi and Mistri Zahoor Ibrahim — all from Karachi, and Shakir from Sukkur City.

The MHA had said: "To the passengers of the hijacked plane, these five hijackers came to be known as Chief, Doctor, Burger, Bhola and Shankar, respectively, the names by which the hijackers invariably addressed one another."

The IC814 from Kathmandu to New Delhi was hijacked on December 24, 1999. The plane first landed at Amritsar, where the hijackers demanded refuelling but then turned back the fuel truck on their own. It then landed at Lahore where it was refuelled and taken to Kandahar, Afghanistan, then under the control of the Taliban. The plane, passengers and the crew were taken hostage for almost eight days.

India had to release Masood Azhar, Omar Sheikh and Mushtaq Ahmad Zargar, with the then External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh escorting them on board a special plane to Kandahar as part of swap deal to release hostages.

## Salman Khan firing case takes a twist: Accused fear for their lives, blame Dawood Ibrahim

The family members of two accused in the firing outside Bollywood actor Salman Khan's house in Mumbai have written to the Maharashtra and Bihar governments, requesting their protection and claiming that a conspiracy was being orchestrated by underworld don Dawood Ibrahim's henchmen to get them killed.

This comes after Lawrence Bishnoi gang members Vicky Gupta and Sagar Pal were arrested on April 14 this year from Gujarat for firing at Bollywood actor Salman Khan's house.

The letters were written by Sonu Gupta, brother of accused Vicky Gupta, resident of Majharia in the West Champaran district of Bihar and the second letter was sent by Rahul Pal, brother of accused Sagar Pal, who also lives in the same area.

Both the accused are currently lodged in Taloja jail. It is said that both the brothers had met the accused, where they were allegedly told that some conspiracies were being hatched to kill them by Dawood Ibrahim's henchmen.



The letters allege that they would meet the same fate as their co-accused Anuj Thapan, who died in police custody in May.

Jailed accused Vicky Gupta's lawyer also spoke on the matter and said, "Vicky Gupta and Sagar Pal have given an application to the authorities for protection of their lives. They say that they are being threatened by D Company. The accused have informed their families about this."

"The victim (Salman Khan) has known relations with a gangster, perhaps he wants to get the accused killed, this is the allegation of the accused (Vicky Gupta and Sagar Pal). We've written to the Central

government, Maharashtra and Bihar governments for their protection." On April 14, two bike-borne men opened fire outside Salman Khan's residence in the suburban Bandra area.

The duo Vicky Gupta and Sagar Pal were later arrested from Gujarat.

Anuj Thapan (32) was arrested on April 26 from Punjab along with one other person in the case. Thapan was found dead on May 1 inside the washroom of the crime branch's police lock-up.

Earlier, the Mumbai Police invoked the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) against all the accused arrested in connection with the firing incident.

Mumbai Crime Branch officials said that gangster Lawrence Bishnoi and his brother Anmol Bishnoi have been declared wanted accused in connection with the case. Anmol Bishnoi claimed responsibility for the firing outside Salman's residence in a Facebook post following the attack.

# Kangana announces next film amid 'Emergency' release delay

Actor Kangana Ranaut on Tuesday announced her new movie "Bharat Bhagya Viddhata" as she awaits certification for her directorial venture "Emergency" from the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC).

According to the makers, the film aims to spotlight the invaluable contributions of the working-class heroes who work tirelessly behind the scenes.

Manoj Tapadia will direct and write "Bharat Bhagya Viddhata", produced by Eunoia Films and Floating Rocks Entertainment.

Ranaut shared the announcement in an X post.

"Experience the magic of real-life heroism on the big screen! Ecstatic to announce Bharat Bhagya Viddhata, a cinematic tribute to the unsung heroes, with talented producer duo Babita Ashiwal & Adi Sharma, and visionary director-writer Manoj Tapadia.

"Eunoia films and Floating rocks Entertainment sets out on their maiden venture with Bharat Bhagya viddhata. #BharatBhagyaViddhata promises to resonate deeply with audiences, inspiring a sense of hope, courage, and resilience.



@sharmaa\_adi @Babitaashiwal @MANOJTAPADIA @KanganaTeam #eunoiafilms #floatingrocksEntertainment," she wrote.

Working on "Bharat Bhagya Viddhata" has been incredibly rewarding, said Babita Ashiwal of Eunoia Films.

"Our goal is to create content that captivates our audience. With Kangana on board, we are confident the movie will strike the right chord," Ashiwal said in a statement.

"Our collaboration on this movie with Kangana is focused on creating content that transcends borders and connects with audiences on a deeply

emotional level. High-content films are indeed the future of blockbuster successes," added Floating Rocks Entertainment's Adi Sharma.

Meanwhile, "Emergency" directed, written, and co-written by Ranaut - the BJP Lok Sabha member from Mandi in Himachal Pradesh - is yet to get a clearance from the CBFC. After multiple delays, the film was scheduled for release on September 6.

The movie, starring Ranaut in the role of former prime minister Indira Gandhi, has courted criticism from several Sikh religious bodies who claim it may "incite communal tensions" and "spread misinformation".

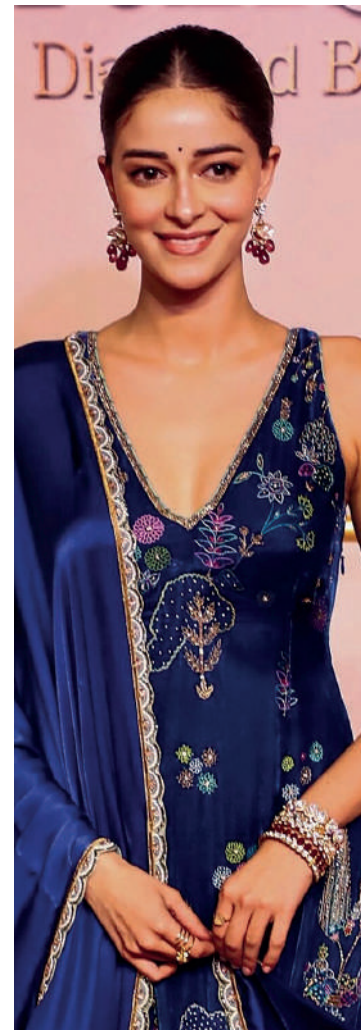
# I'm fighting the perception of what the audience thinks of me, says Ananya Panday

Ananya Panday, set to make her web series debut with Call Me Bae, says she wants to break out of her perceived image in the audience and industry, and that will happen when she is in a position to say no to offers that feed into a certain stereotype.

Call Me Bae, directed by Collin D'Cunha and created by Ishita Moitra, sees her character lead a privileged life in New Delhi, before she is disowned by her family. The eight-episode series will debut on Prime Video on September 6.

The actress, who made her debut with 2019's rom-com Student of the Year 2, said 'fighting perception' was a challenge that she continued to deal with as an individual.

"When you start up with a certain kind of film, people put you in a box and they would expect the same thing from you. So, I'm fighting the perception of what the audience thinks of me and the kind of work you get within the industry. When something does well, you get the same offers, and it is up to us as actors if we have that position where we can say no," Ananya told.



"Call Me Bae" marks the web series debut for the 25-year-old.

# 'Sholay' special screening takes fans on nostalgic journey

From singing 'Yeh Dosti Hum Nahi Todenge' to cheering at every iconic dialogue and each actor's entry, fans relived the magic of 'Sholay' during a special screening that served as a reminder of why this Hindi cult classic has stood the test of time for nearly 50 years.

Organised by the not-for-profit organisation Film Heritage Foundation, the special, one-time-only screening of the vintage 70 mm cinemascope print of the 1975 iconic blockbuster witnessed many ardent fans queuing up to watch the 6.00 pm show at Colaba's Regal Cinema here.

'Sholay', written by Salim Khan and Javed Akhtar, better known as Salim-Javed during their heyday, and directed by Ramesh Sippy, remains one of the most celebrated films in Bollywood history.

The film is considered an inalienable part of Indian pop culture due to its popular characters like Jai, Veeru and Thakur as well as Gabbar Singh, one of



the iconic villains of Hindi cinema, and plenty of dialogues and action sequences.

The atmosphere inside the 1,000-plus seater theatre was electric, with fans expressing their enthusiasm at experiencing the classic film in its original format.

"I'm feeling as if I have time travelled. The vintage print truly gives an

old-school experience. The viewers are enthusiastic and cheering excitedly. Truly an unforgettable experience," a fan said.

'Sholay' featured an ensemble cast including Amitabh Bachchan, Dharmendra, Hema Malini, Jaya Bhaduri, Sanjeev Kumar, Amjad Khan, A K Hangal, Asrani, Iftekhar, Jagdeep, Keshto Mukherjee, Leela Mishra, Mac

Mohan and Viju Khote, among others.

Prior to the screening, legendary writer duo Salim-Javed addressed the eager fans, who welcomed them with applause and whistles.

"This usually doesn't happen with writers," Akhtar said.

The 79-year-old lyricist and screenwriter expressed his gratitude towards the audience and recalled how the unexpected multi-starrer aspect of the movie added to its beauty.

"When Salim sahab and I wrote this script, we had no idea that it was going to be a big film. When we started the film, we didn't know it would have a big cast.

"As the screenplay developed, it slowly turned upon us that we can have many stars in the picture because the roles are such. It was not planned to be a multi-starrer film; perhaps that's the beauty of it. It had an organic growth," Akhtar added.

He credited the audience for their continued appreciation and love for the film and its characters.

# Weight of expectations



Carrying a back injury for more than a year, history-making Indian javelin thrower Sumit Antil's path to Paralympics glory was paved with a 'sweet sacrifice' and several sleepless nights.

The 26-year-old faced a tough choice in the build-up to the Paralympics — give up his favourite sweets or put his career at risk due to rapid weight gain and a back injury that troubled him before the Asian Para Games in Hangzhou last year where he won a gold.

On the advice of his physio, Antil grudgingly gave up sweets, followed a strict training regimen and shed around 12 kilograms in just two months. His sacrifice paid off on Monday when the Sonipatlad became the first Indian man and only the second Indian athlete to defend a Paralympics title, clinching gold in the F64 category with a record throw of 70.59m.

This new mark bettered his previous Paralympics best of 68.55m set in Tokyo Paralympics three years ago. "I've reduced around 10-12 kilos. My physio told me that the weight was putting pressure on my spine. So, I cut out sweets, which are my favourite, and focused on eating right," he said.

Fixing his back by taking adequate rest is the first thing Antil will do after his return to India. "I was not at 100 per cent. I had to take a painkiller before my throw, and even during training, I haven't been at my best. The first priority is to fix my back after we return to India because rest is crucial with the type of injury I have. With competitions so close, I haven't been able to rest properly and have constantly taken precautions to protect my back. I've been careful with every

movement to avoid aggravating it further," he added.

He also thanked his coach (Arun Kumar) for always knowing what he needed, staying up nights to plan his schedule, and putting in a tremendous effort. He said his coach had worked even harder than him. "I also started doing cross-fit workouts, sprints, and trained hard. It's been two years with my coach, and he's like an elder brother to me. He knows exactly what I need and when I need it. I've seen him stay up nights to plan my schedule. My team has put in a tremendous effort for me, and I feel truly blessed to have them," he said. "Once you reach a certain level, the responsibility on you increases, and all eyes are on you. Hopefully, after this, I'll finally get some rest. I've been continuously on the field for the past two to three years."

A message from Neeraj Chopra worked wonders for Antil. "I did not speak personally with Neeraj bhai before the Paris Games. I got a message from Neeraj bhai through somebody (athlete manager of Antil). He said it's very good atmosphere (in Paris) and it will be a good experience but don't try anything new," Antil said.

## Deepthi wins bronze in 400m



India's world champion Deepthi Jeevanji came up short of her best timing as she won the bronze medal in the women's 400m T20 category. Deepthi, who turns 21 later this month, clocked 55.82 seconds to finish behind Yuliia Shuliar (55.16 seconds) of Ukraine and world record holder Aysel Onder (55.23) of Turkey. Deepthi had come into the Paralympics as a strong contender for the gold after a top-place finish at the World Para-Athletics Championships in May in Japan where she had clocked the-then world record of 55.07 seconds.

## Avani misses out in 50m rifle 3P

Ace Indian shooter Avani Lekhara missed out on a second medal at the Games and finished fifth after putting up a strong fight in the final of the women's 50m rifle 3 positions SH1 competition. The 22-year-old Avani shot a total of 420.6. Germany's Natascha Hiltrop won gold with a total of 456.5, Slovakian Veronika Vadovicova claimed silver with 456.1 and China's Zhang shot 446.0 to bag bronze.

## Bhagyashri finishes fifth in F34 shot put

Bhagyashri Jadhav finished fifth in the women's shot put F34 event. Jadhav, making her second appearance at the Paralympics, produced a throw of 7.28m. China's Lijuan Zou won gold with a season's best of 9.14m while Poland's Lucyna Kornobys secured silver with an effort of 8.33m.

## Archer Pooja misses semis berth

Archer Pooja Jatyan slipped from a two-set lead to go down to heavyweight Wu Chunyan of China 4-6 in the women's recurve open quarterfinals. Earlier, Pooja showed promise, beating Yagmur Sengul of Turkey in straight sets to storm into the quarterfinals.

## Transgender runner fails to reach final

Italian transgender athlete Valentina Petrillo failed to reach the final of the women's T12 400m for visually impaired runners after finishing third in her semifinal. The 50-year-old ran a personal best 57.58 seconds in the second semifinal. agencies

# US OPEN: No alarm for Sinner, Swiatek as top seeds ease into quarters



Top seeds Jannik Sinner and Iga Swiatek continued to blaze a trail through the US Open draws, easing into the quarterfinals of a tournament marked by almost daily upsets with a minimum of fuss.

Sinner disappointed a partisan crowd with a 7-6(3) 7-6(5) 6-1 win over Tommy Paul in an entertaining fourth-round tie after Swiatek had beaten Liudmila Samsonova 6-4 6-1 in a more muted atmosphere on the main Arthur Ashe Stadium showcourt.

Italian Sinner barely got a look at Paul's serve until the third set but produced his best tennis when it mattered to subdue the effervescent American and move on to a mouth-watering last-eight meeting with 2021 champion Daniil Medvedev. "I can be very proud, it was a tough opponent, so I'm very happy to be in the next round," said Sinner, who beat Medvedev in Melbourne in January to win his only Grand Slam title.

Russian Medvedev had earlier brushed aside a delay caused by a

fire alarm in the building where the Hawkeye line-calling system is housed to pummel Portugal's Nuno Borges 6-0 6-1 6-3.

Like Medvedev, Swiatek is the only former singles champion left in her draw and the Pole hit her impressive stride in a comfortable win over Samsonova. "At the beginning, it wasn't easy to get the rhythm," the 2022 champion said. "So I'm happy that I got some matches here and for sure, I'm feeling better every day."

American fans on Arthur Ashe earlier did have a success to cheer on their Labour Day holiday as Jessica Pegula efficiently disposed of Diana Shnaider 6-4 6-2 to reach the last-eight without dropping a set.

The only minor surprise on the eighth day of the championships came when Karolina Muchova, a semifinalist here last year, ousted Italian fifth seed Jasmine Paolini 6-3 6-3. Muchova will next face Beatriz Haddad Maia after the Brazilian produced 40 winners to send former world No. 1 Caroline Wozniacki packing 6-2 3-6 6-3.

## Former India wicket-keeper Ajay Ratra appointed BCCI selector

The BCCI on Tuesday appointed former India wicket-keeper Ajay Ratra as a selector of the men's cricket team, replacing Salil Ankola in the five-man panel.

As per convention, all five selectors represent different zones and Ratra will represent the North Zone in the committee headed by Ajit Agarkar. After Agarkar was appointed chief selector last year, the selection panel ended up having two selectors from West Zone with Ankola already a part of the committee.

"The Cricket Advisory Committee of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on Tuesday named Ajay Ratra as the newest member of the Men's Selection Committee headed by Ajit Agarkar. Ratra will replace Salil Ankola in the Committee," read a BCCI statement.

## Bangladesh make history, sweep Test series in Pakistan



Bangladesh cruised to a six-wicket victory in the second Test against Pakistan to complete a 2-0 series sweep and provide a healing touch to a nation recovering from a political upheaval.

Chasing 185 for victory, Bangladesh rode a string of cameos to seal their third Test series victory away from home with more than one session left. Opener Zakir Hasan (40), skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto

(38) and Mominul Haq (34) chipped in with useful cameos.

Veterans Mushfiqur Rahim (22) and Shakib Al Hasan (21) combined to guide the visitors to a memorable victory.

"It means a lot, I can't express it in words," an emotional Shanto said. "We were looking to win here and I'm very happy with the way everyone has done their job."

All-rounder Mehedy Hasan Miraz dedicated his Player of the

Series award to a victim of the recent anti-government protests in Bangladesh, which culminated with ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina fleeing to India last month. The country's interim leader Muhammad Yunus called Shanto to congratulate the team on their series victory.

Bangladesh arrived last month having failed to beat Pakistan in a Test match in their previous 13 attempts and then went on to win two in a row.

## Spat between Preity, Burman ends for now

The spat between Preity Zinta, Bollywood actress and one of the directors of KPH Dream Cricket Private Limited, and Mohit Burman, co-director, has ended for now after the latter today made an additional statement before a local court that he will abide by the Article of Association (AoA) of the company in case he intends to sell his stake in future.

After the statement, the court disposed of the petition filed by Preity under Section 9 of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act 1996. In the petition, Preity prayed the court to issue injunction orders to restrain Burman from selling, disposing of and creating any third party rights upon his 11.5 per cent shareholding in the company. Preity holds 23 per cent shareholding in KPH Dream Cricket Private Limited, while Burman holds approximately 48 per cent shareholding in the company incorporated under the Companies Act,

1956. The company holds a franchise of the Indian Premier League (IPL).

Preity approached the court after Burman expressed his intention to sell part of his share to Tomales Bay Capital LP and was allegedly denying her pre-emption right as per the Articles of the company.

Preity claimed that she was ready to complete the transaction to purchase 11.5 per cent stake on mutually agreed terms and conditions, which were reasonable.

In the last hearing of the case, Burman said Tomales Bay Capital LP had backed out from the deal and he was also not selling stake at this juncture. In an additional statement made today through the lawyer before the court, Burman said he was not selling his stake at this juncture, but would send notices to other shareholders as per the AoA in case he intends to sell his stake in future.



## Indian athletes win 5 more medals in Paris Paralympics

Indians won silver and bronze in both men's high jump T63 and javelin throw F46 after Deepthi Jeevanji's bronze in the women's 400m T20 category as the country's track and field athletes clinched five medals at the Paralympic Games here on Tuesday.

Sharad Kumar and Mariyappan Thangavelu won silver and bronze respectively in the men's high jump T63 while Ajeet Singh and Sundar Singh Gurjar took the second and third sports in the javelin throw F46 final.

The 32-year-old Kumar cleared 1.88m while the 29-year-old Thangavelu's best effort was 1.85m. World record holder Frech Ezra of the USA won the gold.

T63 classification is for athletes with single through knee or above knee limb deficiency.

Both Kumar and Thangavelu were T42 athletes who have single above-the-knee amputations or a disability that is comparable. T63 classification is for athletes with single through knee or above knee limb deficiency competing with a prosthesis.

T63 and T42 athletes can be combined in a single event and that was what happened on Tuesday.

Gold winner Ezra is a T63 athlete and he competed with a prosthesis.

In fact, Kumar's 1.88m effort is a Paralympic record in T42, bettering the earlier 1.86m set by Thangavelu.

In the Tokyo Paralympics three years ago, Kumar had won bronze while reigning world champion Thangavelu had clinched a silver. It was a sort of reversal here on Tuesday.

Ajeet upstaged world record holder Gurjar (64.96m) with a fifth-round throw of 65.62m. Guillermo Gonzalez Varona of Cuba won gold with 66.16m. It was Gurjar's second consecutive bronze in the Paralympics as he had bagged the medal of same colour in Tokyo also three years ago.

F46 classification is for athletes with arm deficiency,

impaired muscle power or impaired passive range of movement in arms, with athletes competing in a standing position.

Earlier in the day, India's world champion Deepthi came up short of her best timing as she won a bronze medal in the women's 400m T20 category final race.

Deepthi, who turns 21 later this month, clocked 55.82 seconds to finish behind Yuliia Shuliar (55.16 seconds) of Ukraine and world record holder Aysel Onder (55.23) of Turkey.

T20 category is meant for athletes with intellectual impairment.

Deepthi had come into Paris Paralympics as a strong contender for the gold after a top-place finish at the World Para-Athletics Championships in May in Japan where she had clocked the-then world record of 55.07 seconds.

Turkish runner Onder smashed Deepthi's world record during the heats on Monday with a time of 54.96 seconds. Onder had finished second behind Deepthi in the 2024 World Para-Athletics Championships in May.

Born in Muzaffarpur in Bihar, Kumar suffered paralysis of his left leg after being administered a spurious polio drug during a local eradication campaign at the age of two.

He is a Masters degree holder in International Relations from Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University. He is a product of Delhi's Modern School and Kirorimal College.

Kumar took up high jump when he was in class 7 at the St Paul's School in Darjeeling. He said some of his teachers were against him taking up the sport. He had trained for three years in Ukraine from 2017 to prepare for the Paralympics.

Hailing from Salem district in Tamil Nadu, Thangavelu was raised by his daily-wage labourer mother who also sells vegetables after his father abandoned the family.

## Suryakumar Yadav to miss first round of Duleep Trophy



### Mumbai

India batter Suryakumar Yadav will miss the opening round of the Duleep Trophy starting on September 5 due to an injury to his hand which he sustained last week.

The right-handed Suryakumar, who played in the final outing

for Mumbai in the Buchi Babu Invitational Tournament in Coimbatore against TNCA XI, had missed the last day's play of the contest due to the injury as he did not come out to bat.

Suryakumar, whose unavailability for Duleep Trophy contest was confirmed by BCCI sources, was set to play for India C against India D at Ananthapur in the first-round clash from September 5-8. He has reported at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bengaluru.

Simultaneously, India A and India B will clash at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru in the other match of the competition.

The competition will serve as an opportunity for India players in contention for selection in the two-Test series at home against Bangladesh, starting on September 19 in Chennai.

## Saina Nehwal reveals struggles with arthritis, to decide on retirement by end of year

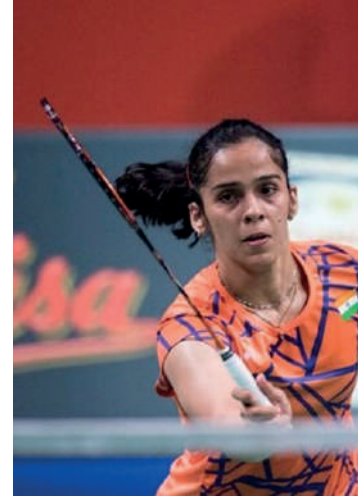
### New Delhi

Ace Indian shuttler and former Olympic bronze-medallist Saina Nehwal said she was battling arthritis and would have to decide on her future in badminton by the end of the year as the ailment had made it impossible for her to train the usual hours.

The 34-year-old former world No 1, who was the first Indian shuttler to win an Olympic medal with her bronze in London 2012, participated in three editions of the Games before being hit by injuries.

The 2010 and 2018 Commonwealth Games gold-medallist said she could no longer overlook the fact that her career was in its final leg.

"The knee is not in a good shape. I have arthritis. It is very difficult to push for eight-nine hours," Nehwal said on the 'House of Glory' podcast hosted by Gagan Narang, India's chef-de-



mission in the recent Paris Olympics.

"How will you challenge the best in the world in such a state? Two hours of training is not enough to get the desired results," she added.

The trailblazing star, who is also a BJP member, was last seen in action more than a year ago in the Singapore Open where she lost in the opening round.

"I am also thinking about retirement. It will be sad. Obviously, a sportsperson's career is always a short one. I started at 9, I will be 35 next year. I have had a long career and I am very proud of that. I have given it my all. I will assess how I feel by the end of the year," she added.

The Padma Shri awardee said competing at the Olympics was her childhood dream and missing two consecutive editions had been hurtful.

"You prepare to reach that level for years. And when you realise you will not be able to make it, it hurts a lot," she expressed.

However, Nehwal said she would look back at her run in the Games with pride. Nehwal also talked about the pressure of expectations and said as a top athlete, she had faced it not just from the observers of the game but also from the near and dear.

# Across State अक्रॉस मुंबई

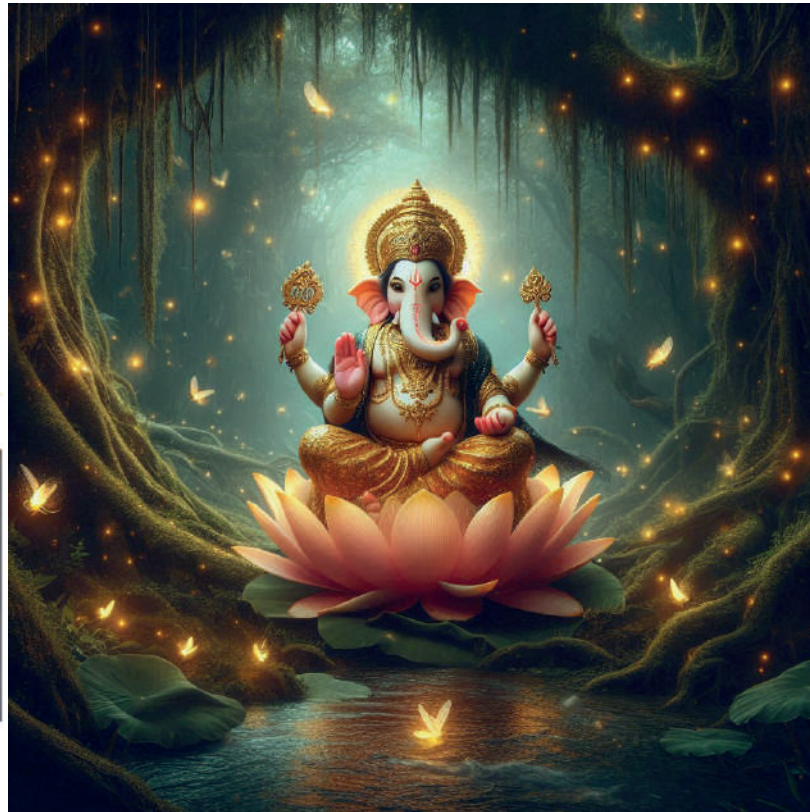


युनायटेड महाराष्ट्रीय  
साऊथ इंडियन फाऊंडेशन



संजय मंगेश भैरे  
संपादक

मुंबई अध्यक्ष  
डिजिटल मिडीया संपादक संघटना



May the divine blessings of Lord Ganesha bring you eternal bliss and peace, protect you from evil and wrongdoings, and fulfill all your wishes and desires.

Happy Ganesh Chaturthi!