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**Reshuffle In Goa Cabinet**  
**Sequeira quits; Kamat, Tawadkar likely to join**

**Panaji:** The BJP government in Goa is set for a reshuffle with minister Aleixo Sequeira resigning on Wednesday and former chief minister Digambar Kamat likely to be inducted in the cabinet along with Ramesh Tawadkar, currently assembly Speaker.

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant who is in Delhi to attend the GST council meeting is expected to return at night.

Sequeira told reporters at the government headquarters Mantralaya in Porvorim that he was resigning due to personal reasons.

Minutes later, Tawadkar said he too was going to resign as Speaker on Thursday morning, and added that two ministers would be sworn in on Thursday noon without disclosing who the second minister would be.

BJP sources confirmed that Margao MLA and former chief minister Digambar Kamat would be sworn in along with Tawadkar.

Kamat, a former Congressman, indirectly confirmed the news as he spoke to reporters from Margao. "See you at Raj Bhavan tomorrow," he said, responding to questions.

# Removal Of PM, CMs On Criminal Charges

## Opposition tears copy; three bills referred to JPC

**New Delhi:** Union Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday introduced three Bills in Lok Sabha for the removal of prime minister, chief ministers and ministers arrested on serious criminal charges for 30 days, drawing fierce protests from the opposition. The draft laws were referred to a Joint Committee of Parliament.

Amid repeated disruptions, Shah introduced the three Bills as a resolution was passed by a voice vote to refer the measures to a Joint Committee of Parliament comprising 21 members from Lok Sabha and 10 from Rajya Sabha.

The Committee has been mandated to submit its report to the House by the last day of the first week of the next session. The next session (Winter session) of the Parliament is likely to be convened in the third week of November.

As soon as the Bills were tabled, the opposition members began protesting and trooped into the well, raising slogans. Some even tore copies of the Bills in front of Shah.

Opposition MPs, including AIMIM's Asaduddin Owaisi and Congress' Man-



ish Tewari and K C Venugopal, spoke against the introduction, terming the proposed law against the Constitution and federalism, while Shah rejected criticism that the Bills were brought in haste.

The home minister also said that the Bills will be sent to the Joint Committee of Parliament where members of both Houses, including those from the

opposition, would get an opportunity to give their suggestions.

When Venugopal raised the issue of Shah's arrest while he was the Gujarat home minister and asked about his claim of morality in politics, the senior BJP leader countered, saying he had resigned on moral grounds before his arrest and joined the government only after being discharged

by the court.

"We cannot be so shameless that we continue to occupy constitutional positions while facing serious charges," Shah said.

Amid continuous noisy protests, the House was adjourned till 5 pm as Speaker Om Birla repeatedly asked the opposition members to take their seats and maintain the dignity of the House.

Earlier in the day, as the protests escalated, there was a brief jostling between the opposition and ruling party MPs with BJP members, including Union Ministers Ravneet Singh Bittu and Kiren Rijiju, stepping in to shield Shah.

Three House marshals formed a protective ring around Shah. Even after the House was adjourned, opposition members persisted with loud sloganeering.

The three Bills are the Government of Union Territories (Amendment) Bill 2025; the Constitution (One Hundred And Thirtieth Amendment) Bill 2025; and the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill 2025.

The Bills have proposed that if the prime minister, union ministers or chief ministers, are arrested and detained in custody for 30 consecutive days for offences that attract a jail term of at least five years, they will lose their job on the 31st day.

Opposing the Bills at the introduction stage, Owaisi said the Constitution is being amended to "destabilise governments".

Tewari echoed similar

views, saying an individual is "innocent till proven guilty".

"This Bill is against the jurisprudence of criminal justice and distorts Parliamentary democracy. The Bill opens door for political misuse and throws all constitutional safeguards to the winds," he said.

RSP MP NK Premchandran alleged that the Bills are being introduced in "undue haste".

"These Bills are not being introduced as per the procedures of the House. What is the undue haste in bringing such important Bills that they have not even been circulated to the members," he said.

According to the Bill, there is no provision under the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963 (20 of 1963) for the removal of the chief minister or a minister arrested and detained in custody on account of serious criminal charges.

Hence, there is a need to amend section 45 of the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963, to provide a legal framework for the removal of a chief minister or a minister in such cases.

-PTI

**'Agni 5' ballistic missile test-fired**

**New Delhi/Balasore:** India on Wednesday successfully test-fired the 'Agni 5' intermediate range ballistic missile, in a demonstration of its strategic military capabilities.

The defence ministry said the test-firing of the missile from the Integrated Test Range in Odisha's Chandipur validated all operational and technical parameters.

"Intermediate range ballistic missile 'Agni 5' was successfully test-fired from the integrated test range, Chandipur in Odisha on August 20," it said in a brief statement.

"The launch validated all operational and technical parameters. It was carried out under the aegis of the Strategic Forces Command," it said.

In its last trial of Agni 5 from the same test range on March 11, 2024, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) had conducted a successful test using multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicle (MIRV) technology, defence sources said.

Various telemetry and radar stations tracked and monitored multiple re-entry vehicles. The mission accomplished the designed parameters, they said.

India first successfully tested the Agni 5 missile on April 19, 2012.

**Pawar perpetrated high-value fraud: ED**

**Mumbai:** Former Vasai-Virar civic chief Anil Pawar and three others, held in a money laundering case, demonstrated a "deliberate" misuse of administrative powers and financial system to perpetrate a high-value fraud, the Enforcement Directorate told a Mumbai court on Wednesday.

"Hawala and angadia" channels were used to launder the proceeds of crime, not just within Maharashtra, but across other states too, the ED told the special court, which later sent the quartet, including two real estate developers, to jail a week after their arrest.

The hawala system refers to an informal channel for transferring funds from one location to another. Hawala operations are deemed illegal cash transactions in India. Angadias are traditional couriers who offer their services to transfer cash, diamonds and jewellery for a fee.

Besides IAS officer Pawar, Vasai-Virar City Municipal Corporation (VVC-

MC) town planner Y Shiva Reddy and two builders -- Sitaram Gupta and Arun Gupta -- are the other accused in the case linked to construction of illegal buildings in Vasai-Virar, a city located on Mumbai's outskirts in adjoining Palghar district.

All four were produced before a special judge hearing cases under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), Raju Rote, who remanded them to 14-day-judicial custody.

Arrested on August 13, the accused persons were in ED custody till August 20.

While the federal probe agency did not press for their further remand, it stressed their judicial custody was "necessary to safeguard the integrity of the investigation, which remains at a crucial stage".

The probe agency contended before the court that the accused have demonstrated the capacity to orchestrate a "sophisticated fraud by a well knitted cartel of officers, architects, builders and liaisons".

**Psephologist Sanjay Kumar booked**

**Nagpur:** Nagpur district police on Wednesday registered an FIR against psephologist Sanjay Kumar on charges of "false statement in connection with an election" after he alleged a rise in voter numbers in two assembly segments in Maharashtra polls compared to the 2024 general elections. Kumar's post had claimed a significant increase in voter numbers in two assembly seats compared to the 2024 general elections, which were held nearly six months apart. He later deleted it on Tuesday and in another post, apologised for posting "erroneous data" on the microblogging platform. An FIR was registered against Kumar on a complaint lodged by the tehsildar of Ramtek, a senior police officer told PTI.

He was booked under sections 175 (False statement in connection with an election), 353 (1) B (Statements conducting to public mischief), 212 (providing false information to a public servant), and 340 of the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita.

-PTI



Members of Nomadic community during a protest over the report of Justice HN Nagamohan Das Commission on internal reservation for Scheduled Castes in Karnataka, in Bengaluru on Wednesday.

Pic: PTI

**Bus crash kills 70 Afghans**

**Kabul:** A bus crash in northwestern Afghanistan killed at least 79 people returning from Iran, including 19 children, an official said.

Two people were also injured in the crash, Ministry of Interior spokesperson Abdul Mateen Qani told The Associated Press.

Tolo News, citing the official, said the accident

happened Tuesday around 8:30 pm local time in Herat province. The bus collided with a truck and a motorbike, causing a massive fire that killed many on the spot, the outlet reported.

Traffic accidents are common in Afghanistan, mainly due to poor road conditions and driver carelessness.

Nearly 1.8 million Af-

ghans have been forcibly returned from Iran in the past few months. A further 184,459 were sent back from Pakistan and more than 5,000 were deported from Turkiye since the beginning of the year. Additionally, nearly 10,000 Afghan prisoners have been repatriated, mostly from Pakistan.

-PTI

**Exemption for insurance premium from GST likely**

**New Delhi:** The Centre has proposed exempting life and health insurance policies for individuals from GST, Bihar Deputy Chief Minister and convener of insurance GoM Samrat Choudhary said on Wednesday.

Currently, health and life insurance premium attracts 18 per cent GST.

The 13-member state Group of Ministers on insurance held a meeting on Wednesday.

Almost all states were in favour of the proposal, but they asked the GST Council to devise a mechanism by which the GST rate cut benefits are passed on to the customer, said Telangana Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, a member of the GoM.

"We made it clear that the GST reduction benefit should go to policyholders and not companies, some mechanism has to be developed.

"States wanted it (tax rate) to be brought down or exempt. At the same time

many states told the (GoM) meeting that some mechanism must be developed so that rate cut benefit reaches the people. The GST Council will decide a mechanism," Vikramarka said.

About Rs 9,700 crore annual revenue loss is estimated on account of GST exemption to individual insurance policies, he said.

The GoM will submit its report to the GST Council. The report will also include views and concerns expressed by some state finance ministers, Choudhary said.

"The Centre's proposal is clear that individual insurance policies should be exempt from GST. This has been discussed and the GoM report will be presented to the Council," Choudhary told reporters here after the meeting of the GoM.

"All members have given their approval for lowering rates. Some states have given their own views," he said.

-PTI

**Anant Jeet Naruka shoots first gold**

**Shymkent (Kazakhstan):** Indian shooter Anant Jeet Singh Naruka fired his way to his first individual gold medal in the Asian Championships after edging out Kuwait's Mansour Al Rashidi in the men's skeet final here on Wednesday.

Earlier in the day, the Indian pair of Saurabh Chaudhary and rising teenager Suruchi Inder Singh clinched the 10m air pistol mixed team bronze, beating Chinese Taipei.

Naruka finished on top of the podium after prevailing over former Asian Games champion Al Rashidi 57-56 in the final.

Al-Ishaq Ali Ahmed of Qatar settled for the bronze medal with 43.

The 27-year-old Naruka, who has won team gold and mixed team gold in the 2023 edition of the championships, qualified for the final in second position with 119 after five rounds, while Kuwait's Abdulaziz Alsaad led the pack with 120 on their way to the final.

Al Rashidi was third in the qualification with 119.

For Naruka, an Asian Games silver medallist, this was his fifth medal overall in the continental tournament.

Bronze medal



Earlier, the duo of Saurabh and Suruchi defeated Liu Heng-Yu and Hsieh Hsiang-Chen 17-9 to add to the individual bronze that double Olympic-medallist Manu Bhaker had won in the women's 10m air pistol competition on Tuesday.

The Indian pair qualified for the medal round in fifth place with Suruchi firing 292 and Saurabh scoring 286. The duo aggregated 578 in qualification as six teams made it to the medal round.

The top two teams, China and South Korea, competed for the gold medal with the former winning

16-12. The other four teams competed for two bronze medals, with India overcoming Chinese Taipei in the first bronze-medal match and Iran defeating Vietnam 16-8 in the other.

Earlier, Suruchi, who has been on song this season winning four World Cup gold medals, started the qualification round with a perfect 100 in the opening series. She faltered in the second to score 94 and ended the preliminary round with a 98.

Chaudhary had series of 95, 96 and 95.

In the fight for the bronze, where the first

team to reach 16 points wins the match, Suruchi had seven scores in the '10s', six of them 10.4 or above, which played a big role in the victory.

Juniors win gold

In the junior 10m air pistol mixed team event, the Indian pair of Vanshika Chaudhary and Gavin Anthony won the gold, defeating the Korean duo of Kim Yejin and Kim Dooyeon 16-14.

The Indians finished second in the qualification round with an aggregate score of 578, with Vanshika firing 282 and Gavin 296.

-PTI



# ‘Monsoon tourism’ rings in cash, ecological alarms

By Quaid Najmi

**Mumbai:** Rains shattered records in many parts of Maharashtra particularly the big and small hill-resorts dotting the Sahyadri range in the Western Ghats, attracting hordes of tourists not only locals but from several other states. The incessant down-pour transformed the Sahyadri ranges into a lush green haven, cascade of waterfalls, streams, rivulets, but also hit travel besides raising fresh concerns about the impact of extreme weather events in the ecologically fragile region. Tourism meccas like Matheran (Raigad), Tamhini, Lonavala, Khandala (Pune), Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani (Satara), Igatpuri (Nashik) and others witnessed massive crowds over the weekend, but the footfalls somewhat fell this week owing to the deluge around the state.



As per official data, Matheran recorded a staggering 700 mm rains on Monday-Tuesday, Lonavala-Khandala notched 425 mm, Mahabaleshwar-Panchgani 200 mm and Tamhini Ghat 575 mm (all on Tuesday), while the Sahyadris accumulated around 7,500 mm rains from June 1. Weather watchers termed these figures as ‘awesome, mind-boggling’, while worried hoteliers in Matheran, Mahabaleshwar and other hill-stations in Pune and Nashik districts monitor the rain clouds as excess rains can wash out their monsoon

business prospects. Owner of Radha Cottage – the erstwhile heritage bungalow of the legendary Sir Pherozeshah Mehta – Manoj Khedkar said last weekend was full and next weekend is almost fully booked, though this week (Sunday-Wednesday) saw a steep 50 pc fall in reservations as people were stranded at various places. “Such a deluge has washed away most of the mud roads of Matheran, several trees have crashed without and outside the hill-resort. The unchecked tourist influx could prove the death-knell and

Matheran may disappear in the next five decades. The local and state government must take steps to conserve its fragile ecosystem, lay clay paver blocks to prevent denudation that weakens the green cover plus construct small check bunds to prevent water running on the muddy roads,” urged Khedkar, speaking to ‘The Perfect Voice’. Panchgani’s Cloud Green Resort owner Vinod Shinde said that people come to ‘experience the thrill of monsoon in the mountains’, soak in the rains and the greenery, go for treks or long drives or hiking. “It is popular all 12 months, but the monsoon weekends are jammed with tourists from not only Maharashtra but many parts of India. The roads have deteriorated and the anticipated Independence Day to Janmashthami festival season was disappointing with cancellations. Many sight-seeing points are closed and the adventure activities like paragliding, ballooning, etc are also shut,” a gloomy Shinde said. Mahabaleshwar’s Brightlands Resorts owner Vijay Sevakramani said that while the hill-station has charmed tourists in all seasons, the past few days were of concern due to a spate of cancellations as Maharashtra was clobbered by heavy rains.

## Monsoon Mayhem Crops on 20.12 lakh hectares hit

**Washim:** Kharif crops on 20.12 lakh hectares have been affected due to recent episodes of heavy rains and floods, Maharashtra Agriculture Minister Datatray Bharne said on Wednesday, promising assistance to farmers staring at losses. Bharne visited the Washim and Nanded districts to review the situation there. Citing preliminary figures, the ministers told the media in Washim that standing crops on nearly 20.12 lakh hectares had been damaged due to recent heavy rains and floods. While farmers in Washim and Nanded have suffered maximum losses, crops have also been damaged in Yavatmal, Buldhana, Akola, Solapur, Hingoli, Dharashiv, Parbhani, Amravati and Jalgaon. “Soybean, corn and cotton have borne the brunt of the excess rainfall. Besides, fruit crops, bajra, sugarcane, onion, jowar and turmeric have also been hit,” Bharne said. He said the affected areas have been inspected to assess crop loss with the help of officials from the revenue and agriculture departments. “The government will definitely provide immediate aid to farmers facing losses,” he said. According to the minister, crops on 4.11 lakh hectares were affected due to the rains in Washim and Nanded districts, where 350 villages faced flood-like situations. “There were also losses of lives,” he added.



**Lt Gen DS Kushwah, AVSM, SM took over command of HQ MG & G Area, succeeding Lt Gen Pawan Chadha, SM, VSM. He emphasised harnessing technology in line with the Decade of Transformation and Year of Reforms, and pursuing mission-oriented training to meet future challenges with professionalism and resolve.**

## Political-bureaucratic nexus siphoning public funds

By Rajendra Joshi

**Kolhapur:** Kolhapur’s crumbling road infrastructure has once again pushed citizens to the edge. Despite repeated allocations running into crores from the state government, the civic body, and the funds of local MLAs and MPs, the city’s roads remain a nightmare — riddled with potholes, prone to collapse after every spell of rain, and exacting a daily toll on vehicles and human health. Just weeks ago, the state sanctioned Rs.100 crore for road repairs. Yet, for residents, the journey remains unchanged — pothole-ridden stretches, back-breaking commutes, and repeated accidents. Young people in their twenties now complain of chronic back pain and spinal problems, triggered by daily rides on battered roads. The malaise, citizens allege, lies not just in engineering lapses but in the entrenched nexus between politicians, contractors and civic officials. A recent drainage scam exposed how contractors were paid for works never executed.

Insiders described how “settlements” with officials, often conducted in private residences, decide which contractor bags a project. Once political patrons extend their blessing, oversight collapses. Contractors dictate measurements, prepare bills, and officials, after pocketing their share, sign off on sub-standard work. The result: roads that don’t last even one monsoon. Yet, the cycle of tenders continues, with each new round becoming an opportunity for fresh rent-seeking. Small-time players, too, scramble for leftovers from the gravy train. Over time, public outrage dies down, only to resurface after the next collapse. The contrast with other parts of Maharashtra is telling. In Konkan, which bears the brunt of the heaviest rainfall, most roads survive longer — barring exceptions like the Mumbai-Goa highway. In Kolhapur, however, whether city arteries, state highways like Kagal-Balinga or Anuskura ghat roads, or national highways linking Malkapur, stretches rarely

survive beyond a season. Inside the city, the situation is chaotic. This is the same Kolhapur where the Bombay High Court circuit bench was inaugurated with fanfare, yet its roads remain in tatters. Being a pilgrimage and commercial hub, the city witnesses heavy vehicle influx, but commuting half a kilometre on arterial roads can take 30 minutes. Traffic signals frequently malfunction, lane discipline has collapsed, and congestion worsens with every passing day. For senior citizens, the problem is even starker. Walking on broken roads is hazardous, crossing streets nearly impossible, and accidents routine. Many families now worry whether the elderly should venture outdoors at all. Citizens are left asking: if basic safety cannot be ensured, should Kolhapur’s elders be told simply to stay home? Until the political-administrative chain that thrives on public funds is dismantled link by link, residents fear Kolhapur’s roads will continue to crumble — along with the public’s trust.

### India 'embraces' Maharashtra's hill-stations

According to hoteliers, thanks to social media, Matheran – the sole automobile-free hill-station in Asia discovered in 1850 – reputation has spread, with many tourists coming here from Kerala, Karnataka, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, etc., and stressed the need to keep its lure always alive, with some restrictions or discipline. Ditto is the case with Mahabaleshwar-Panchgani, Lonavala-Khandala, Bhimashankar, Igatpuri, a few sea resorts,

the state’s historic coastal and hill-forts, and other attractions. Amateur weather watcher and traveller Naveen Reddy said that the sheer volume of rains in the Western Ghats is “breaking many records” and Agro-Scientist Athreya Shetty termed the rains as “absolutely thrashing the Ghats”, but all these have made the lush green region even more enchanting, with the clouds gently descending on the hills and covering the tiny villages.

## Monorail Passenger Safety MMRDA announces immediate measures

**Mumbai:** Following yesterday’s incident, the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) and Maha Mumbai Metro (MMMOCL) have swiftly initiated short-term measures to ensure passenger safety and to prevent any recurrence of such events. “We want to reassure all commuters that MMRDA is fully committed to providing a safe and reliable travel experience. Clear instructions have been issued to MMOCL to strengthen safety systems and operational vigilance,” a statement issued by them stated. **Immediate measures Load regulation:** Monorail coaches are designed for a maximum load of 104 tonnes. To avoid exceeding this capacity, station staff have been instructed to strictly regulate passenger entry. If overcrowding is observed, trains will be halted and passengers safely deboarded before resuming operations. **Additional staff** Each train will now carry a dedicated security per-



sonnel to monitor in-coach crowding. Alongside the Monorail Pilot, a trained technician will also travel to handle any technical issues promptly.

### Emergency checks

Every Monorail has 8 ventilation windows (2 in each of the 4 coaches). These are being immediately inspected and clearly labelled for easy identification so that passengers remain calm and guided in case of emergencies.

### Enhanced signage:

Clear, visible signboards have been installed inside trains, instructing passengers on safety protocols and emergency exits. More signage will be added to make instructions even more prominent and accessible.

### Safety inspections:

The Director (Maintenance) has been tasked with conducting thorough inspections of all Monorail trains to ensure all safety measures are being strictly implemented.

## GST Reforms Biz community appeals for action

**Mumbai:** In light of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s recent Independence Day assurance that GST reforms will be implemented by Diwali 2025, the Indian business community wrote to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. It highlighted the challenges the community faces. Multiple Registrations: Separate state-wise GST registrations increase compliance burden and cost. Blocked Working Capital: Surplus ITC in one state cannot be used to pay liabilities in another, forcing unnecessary cash outflows. Idle Taxpayer Funds: Credit balances remain locked, without flexibility to offset other Government dues. What it wants is the following: One Nation, One GST: Introduce a unified, pan-India GST registration and return system. Seamless ITC Utilisation: Allow cross-utilisation of ITC across states, similar to a unified digital wallet. Recognition as Deposits: Treat GST ledger balances as taxpayer deposits with the “Bank of Government of India,” usable against GST, Income Tax, Customs, and even State dues.



**Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis addresses a gathering during the inauguration of 'Symbiosis Artificial Intelligence Institute (SAII)' in Pune on Wednesday.**

Pic: PTI

## MSSA Inter-School Football Harshita Keni scores hat-trick

By Correspondent

**Mumbai:** Carmel of St. Joseph (Malad) impressed with a 4-0 triumph over Greenlawns (B.P. Road), powered by a hat-trick from Harshita Keni in the Girls U16 Division II of the Dream Sports MSSA Inter-School Football Tournament played at the Wings Sports Centre, Bandra. In another girls match, Jamnabai Narsee Interna-

tional (Juhu) and Cathedral & John Connon (Fort) played out a goalless draw. The Boys U16 Division II witnessed thrilling quarterfinal encounters with three of the four matches decided via tie-breakers. Thakur Public School (Kandivali) showcased nerves of steel, edging out Campion School (Cooperage) after a 1-1 stalemate in regulation time, before clinching a 4-1 win in penalties.

Jamnabai Narsee (Juhu) sealed a more straightforward passage, overcoming St. Anne’s (Malad) with a comfortable 2-0 win. St. Lawrence (Borivali) battled past St. Anthony’s (Malwani) after a goalless contest, winning 3-1 in the shootout. Aditya Birla (Tardeo) too held their ground in a tense 1-1 draw against R.N. Podar (Santacruz), prevailing 4-3 in penalties.

## ‘No GST On Tea’ TFI requests for 100 pc GST exemption

**Mumbai:** In a letter to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, the Tea Forum of India has requested a 100 per cent exemption of GST on tea. “We respectfully submit this representation on behalf of the millions of Indians whose lives are intertwined with tea—whether as consumers, growers, traders, or workers,” it read. “Tea is the most popular and widely consumed beverage in our nation, second only to water. More than 100 crore of our 142 crore citizens drink it every day. For the common man, tea is not a luxury, it is a necessity, almost like food. For many households, particularly in rural and working-class families, it serves as the first meal of the day and a source of daily sustenance,” it stated. “The tea industry is also one of the largest sources of rural and plantation employment in India, directly providing livelihood to millions of families, especially women engaged in plucking leaves in the gardens. Beyond plantations, tea sustains a vast network of small growers, auctioneers, traders, blenders,

packers, and retailers. At every stage, it is a people centric, labour intensive industry,” it added. “It is important to note that the process of making tea involves only withering, rolling, heating, and sorting—without any addition of chemicals or artificial ingredients. Its agricultural character remains intact, and it deserves recognition as a pure agricultural produce,” it said. “On August 15, during his inspiring address from the Red Fort, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the Government’s intent to rationalise and reduce GST reforms in the days to come. In this spirit, we earnestly appeal to the Government of India to take the historic step of 100 per cent exempting tea from GST, just as other essential agricultural and food products are exempted. Such a decision will not only reduce the burden on the common man’s household budget but also provide a significant boost to rural employment, women workers, and small farmers who form the backbone of the Tea industry,” it concluded.

## 'Concerts drive more domestic travel to Mumbai'

**Mumbai:** Global music concerts are fuelling a spike in domestic travel, with Mumbai emerging as a key destination as the city is seeing increased bookings tied to major music shows, a report said on Wednesday. Between February and July 2025, domestic accommodation searches for stays in Mumbai during concert dates rose noticeably compared to two weeks earlier, according to a report by digital travel platform Agoda. The report is based on

the data references accommodation searches made on the Agoda platform by travellers from India between October and November 2024 and January-July 2025 for check-ins for the duration of the concert dates, compared to two weeks prior. US singer songwriter Travis Scott’s Circus Maximus Tour scheduled for November 19, 2024, drove a 110 per cent increase in accommodation searches, Spanish singer songwriter Enrique Iglesias’ shows on October 29 and 30 2024,



recorded a 160 per cent rise, while US singer songwriter Akon’s November 16, 2024, perfor-

mance registered 20 per cent growth, said the report. This momentum builds on the landmark Coldplay concerts in January 2025, which generated 3,300 times more domestic accommodation searches on Agoda compared to the week before the announcement, it revealed. With more and more major names across a variety of musical genres scheduled to perform in the city, Mumbai is emerging as a key player on the global live music

circuit, it added. “Mumbai’s live music calendar is more diverse than ever, attracting fans from across the country to experience global artists in world-class venues. The data shows a clear link between major concert announcements and travel interest, pointing to a healthy future for music-led tourism in the city,” said Gaurav Malik, Country Director for the Indian Subcontinent and Indian Ocean Islands at Agoda.

-PTI

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

**“We are scrutinising 12,000 accounts to verify their authenticity and to check whether the monthly assistance meant for women is being credited to a male member of the household. Some people want to prove that the Ladki Bahin scheme is bad.”**



**Aditi Tatkar, Minister, Women and Child Development**



# ‘Some commuters mulled jumping off stranded Monorail’

**Mumbai:** Panic-stricken commuters were even ready to put their life at risk by jumping off two overcrowded Monorail trains, which got stuck on elevated tracks after heavy rains in Mumbai, but were safely rescued later.

As a precautionary step, the fire brigade spread sheets on the ground in case any passenger jumped to escape the ordeal, but that situation did not arise, an official involved in the rescue operation said late Tuesday night.

Rescue teams broke open windows and forced the train doors open to evacuate passengers, he said.

As many as 782 passengers were rescued on Tuesday evening after the two overcrowded Monorail trains on elevated tracks got stuck on a day of torrential rains, leading to panic and frantic rescue efforts.

More than a dozen passengers complained of suffocation with a couple of them reportedly fainting as electricity and air-conditioning shut down, though only one passenger had to be hospitalised and her condition was said to be stable.

While 582 passengers were rescued from the Monorail train stuck between Mysore Colony and Bhakti Park by deploying snorkel ladders, 200 others

were evacuated from another Monorail train which was successfully towed back to the nearby Wadala station, according to officials.

Mumbai Fire Brigade Chief Ravindra Ambulgekar rushed to the Monorail station in eastern Mumbai after learning about the incident around 6.30 pm on Tuesday.

He said the fire brigade team carried out a daring and meticulously coordinated operation, saving more than 780 persons from the Monorail trains.

"People (passengers) were scared. Some of them were even ready to jump. We immediately placed

jumping sheets on the ground under the tracks to prevent anyone from getting hurt in case any of them jumped off, and deployed officers into the coach to calm them. Our priority was to prevent panic from turning into a tragedy," he said.

As torrential rains disrupted suburban train services on the harbour line on Tuesday, many commuters turned to Monorail as an alternative. But during the evening rush hours after 6 pm, a Monorail train came to an abrupt halt near Mysore Colony, seen tilting to one side, and another one near Wadala Bridge.

As the fire brigade had previous experience of rescuing Monorail passengers, it immediately sent fire engines and ambulances with aerial ladders to the site.

"We kept in mind the fire incident during the last monorail rescue and ensured all precautions were in place this time," Ambulgekar said, referring to a 2021 incident when questions were raised about the emergency response of the force.

"Rescue teams broke open windows and forced the doors open to evacuate passengers, starting with

women and senior citizens. Last preference was given to young men. Medical assistance was also mobilised on site," he said.

Ambulgekar lauded his team's coordination and courage.

"The crowd panicked, but our presence and a clear plan made all the difference," he said, adding they received full moral support from the senior civic authorities.

By late night, a total of 782 passengers were safely evacuated from the two Monorail trains. Several among the rescued were found to be in distress, and some required immediate medical attention, he said.



According to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), of the 582 rescued passengers from the Mysore Colony Monorail, 23 showed signs

of suffocation and were treated immediately by the onboard doctor in 108 ambulances and were later discharged. However, two others were shifted to Sion

Hospital for further care.

The two, identified as Kismat Kumar (20) and Vivek Sonavane (28), received treatment and were stable now, it said. -PTI

## Heavy rains in Thane, Palghar: One killed, several shifted to safer locations

**Thane/Palghar:** A man died after falling into a water-filled quarry while an inundated bridge in Kalyan area was closed after heavy rains lashed Thane district, officials said on Wednesday.

The neighbouring Palghar district also witnessed heavy overnight showers, flooding low-lying areas and disrupting movement at several locations, they said.

On Tuesday, authorities rescued 194 persons trapped in inundated areas of Vasai taluka in Palghar using boats and ropes on Tuesday, they said.

At Naniwali in Ambede area of Palghar, nearly 5,000 chickens perished after flooding at a farmer's poultry farm, district disaster management CEO and resident deputy collector Subhash Badge said.

A man, identified as Aditya Singh, died after falling into a water-filled quarry around midnight at Rabale in Navi Mumbai township of Thane district, an official from the disaster control room said.

Flood waters rose over the Runde bridge in Kalyan, forcing its closure, tehsildar Sachin

Shejal said.

"The movement on the bridge has been stopped and vehicles are being diverted via Khadavli-Utarne route," he said.

A tree collapsed at a housing society in Wagle Estate area at 3.40 am on Wednesday, leaving the adjoining security wall dangerously unstable, Thane Municipal Corporation's disaster management cell chief Yasin Tadvai said.

In neighbouring Palghar, low-lying areas were inundated, and rescue teams, including the NDRF, relocated several residents to safer places and temporary camps, disaster management cell chief Vivekanand Kadam said.

The Thane Municipal Corporation (TMC) recorded 186.91 mm rainfall in the past 24 hours. "The cumulative rainfall for the season has reached 2,327.14 mm, compared to 2,517.89 mm during the same period last year," Tadvai said.

Authorities in both the districts were on high alert as heavy rainfall was expected to continue.

## BEST Credit Society Election Loss

# Question mark over existence of ‘Brand Thackeray’

By Abhijit Mulye

**Mumbai:** The devastating defeat in the much-hyped BEST Credit Society election has underlined the question mark on existence of 'Brand Thackeray' all the while sending out a loud and clear message that only sincere hard work at the ground level would enable an electoral victory in Mumbai.

The Shiv Sena (UBT) and Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) alliance, that was sending out messages of complete sweep on the day of counting, failed miserably and their 'Utkarsh Panel' couldn't even secure a single seat in the credit society that the Shiv Sena (UBT) had almost single handedly controlled for almost a decade. On the other side, out of 21 seats, the panel led by labour leader Shashank Rao won 14 seats, and the Sahakar Samrud-dhi panel led by BJP legislators Prasad Lad and Nitesh Rane along with Shiv Sena's Kiran Pawaskar could secure only seven. Since Rao had joined



the BJP last year, technically the ruling Mahayuti alliance of the state has established complete control over an institution that the Shiv Sena had been controlling for decades.

Shiv Sena (UBT)'s Suhas Samant, under whose leadership Utkarsh Panel contested the election, accused the play of money-power for the defeat of his panel. However, Rao stated that the issue of gratuity for retired workers had become a key issue in this election and it was due to the quick action taken by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, his panel could win the elections. Rao also accused the Shiv Sena (UBT) leader-

## It seems people rejected Thackeray brand: Fadnavis

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said Wednesday that the defeat of Shiv Sena (UBT) and MNS in the BEST Employees Cooperative Credit Society election suggests public rejection of the Thackeray brand. He revealed that the two panels led by Shashank Rao and Prasad Lad that swept the election belonged to the BJP, and took potshots at the two parties led by the Thackeray cousins for politicising the contest. "I think there was no need to politicise this kind of election, as it was just a credit society poll. But they politicised it by making tall claims that the Thackeray brand will win. But it seems people did not like it. The poll outcome reflected rejection by the people," Fadnavis said. He stressed that the Mahayuti didn't politicise the elections.

ship of indecision while controlling the credit society and rampant corruption while controlling the BEST society for over 25 years before that. "People had been seeing all these things helplessly for all these years. They vented out their anger," Rao said.

The MNS was contesting these elections for the first time. They were solely dependent on Shiv Sena (UBT), who was confident of the magic of 'Brand Thackeray'. Raj Thackeray is a great crowd puller. But, he fails in converting the

crowds to votes. This has been established numerous times in various elections from local body to assembly. Today it was repeated even in a credit society election.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut tried to underplay the results stating that he doesn't keep count of such small elections like that of a credit society.

Around 14,000 BEST employees voted in this election. The panel that had their distinct stamp could perform only to a certain extent.



People select the statue of Gauri (Mother of Lord Ganesha) for the upcoming Gauri Ganapati festival at Laibaug Market in Mumbai on Wednesday.

Pic: Bhushan Koyande

## Thief nabbed

**Thane:** Police have arrested a 24-year-old man and recovered from him two gold chains worth Rs 2.40 lakh that he snatched from women in Navi Mumbai in separate incidents, an official said on Wednesday. The accused, Rohit Shivaji Gaikwad, is a driver by profession and resides in Koparkhairane area of Navi Mumbai, the official from Rabale police station said. His involvement came to light after police launched a probe based on a complaint by a 38-year-old woman.

## Ganesh Mandals Permission Single-window system rolled out

**Thane:** The Kalyan Dombivli Municipal Corporation (KDMC) in Maharashtra's Thane district will issue all permissions related to Ganeshotsav to 'mandals' (organising bodies) through a single-window online system, officials said on Wednesday.

"Ganesh mandals will not need to visit multiple offices this year. Permissions from the civic body, police and electricity distributor MSEDCCL will be granted online. A one-win-

dow facility has also been created at the ward level for those who face difficulties with the online process," said KDMC Commissioner Abhinav Goyal.

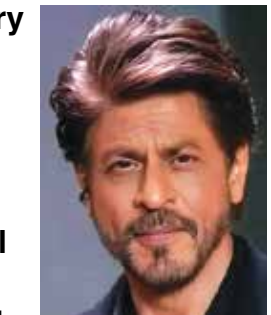
While Goyal appealed to citizens to use eco-friendly 'shadu' clay idols wherever possible and immerse idols below six feet in artificial ponds, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Zone 3) Atul Zende urged mandals to ensure a DJ-free (to reduce noise) Ganeshotsav.

-PTI

-PTI

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

"I suffered an injury on my shoulder. I went through a small surgery, actually not small but it was quite big, and now it will take one or two months to recover. 'National award uthane ke liye mera ek hi haath kaafi hai'."



Shah Rukh Khan, Actor

# If we speak truth, it's called propaganda: Mithun

By Komal Panchamatia

**Mumbai:** "The Bengal Files" is a film that speaks about what happened in Bengal in 1946, says veteran actor Mithun Chakraborty, upset that the truth depicted by filmmakers is dismissed as "propaganda".

Third in Vivek Ranjan Agnihotri's "Files" trilogy, the movie revolves around the Calcutta riots of August 16, 1946, which were triggered after the All-India Muslim League called for 'Direct Action Day' to

demand a separate homeland. Chakraborty, who has been a regular in most of Agnihotri's films including "The Tashkent Files", "The Kashmir Files" and the new one, said there is a segment that's always trying to target such movies.

"If we speak the truth, it is called propaganda. Shouldn't our generation know what happened to Noakhali, and what was the Calcutta killing? They

should not know about it? It's very surprising. It's a film about the truth, the history, what happened to Bengal and Noakhali, and the Calcutta killing. We made 'The Kashmir Files' as well, we have shown the truth in it," he told PTI in an interview.

"These people are always there to target things, no matter what you do. With 'The Tashkent Files' do you not want to know what happened to our



great Lal Bahadur Shastri ji, or what happened to the Kashmiri Pandits? You had only heard that they had been thrown out but how did this happen? Now, you know it."

The former Rajya Sabha MP and the BJP politician

said he plays the role of a madman, who is a riot victim, in the movie who acts as the conscience of the story.

Chakraborty, 75, criticised people for targeting the movie without even seeing the trailer of the film. Agnihotri has alleged the trailer launch event of "The Bengal Files" in Kolkata faced sabotage and they had to change the venue at the last moment.

The Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress has described the film as politically motivated, lead-

ing to calls for a boycott and ban.

"People had not seen the trailer and said, 'It should be banned'. What is it there in the trailer to be banned? Like, nudity is passed in the name of cinematic liberty, but in this film, there's no such thing. Violence is part of life and if you've done it you must accept it," the actor said.

Chakraborty praised Agnihotri, saying the director somehow always creates a character for him in his films.

-PTI



# MPs jostle, bills torn, papers thrown at Shah

**New Delhi:** Tempers flared, copies of bills were torn and flung and members of the ruling and opposition alliances came face-to-face and jostled in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday with TMC MPs charging towards Home Minister Amit Shah when he introduced the three draft laws with provisions for the removal of prime minister, chief ministers and ministers arrested on serious criminal charges.

The battlelines were drawn in the Lower House with opposition members already on their feet when the House re-convened at 2 PM, raising slogans against the three bills the government was keen to introduce.

The three Bills are the Government of Union Territories (Amendment) Bill 2025; the Constitution (One Hundred And Thirtieth Amendment) Bill 2025; and the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill 2025.

Trouble broke out when Trinamool Congress members tore copies of the bill and threw the bits of paper towards the Home Minister, who was moving a motion to refer the bills to a joint committee of Parliament. In the melee, Trinamool leader Kalyan Banerjee was seen trying to tug at the microphone in front of Shah and shout slogans



into it.

Angry BJP members charged towards the opposition MPs who were in the Well with Union Minister Ravneet Singh Bittu rushing to the aisle and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju moving to stand next to the Home Minister and gesturing to the opposition members to step back.

BJP member Nishikant Dubey was also seen urging some BJP members who had entered the Well to get back in the aisle as opposition members continued to raise slogans and tear copies of the bills.

Earlier, Banerjee entered the Well of the House, raising slogans against the government's move.

AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi, Congress member Manish Tewari, RSP



leader N K Premachandran, Congress member K C Venugopal and SP member Dharmendra Yadav spoke against the introduction of the three bills.

Banerjee and some Trinamool members were seen marching in the U-shaped Well of the House, raising slogans against the government and tearing copies of the bills and throwing bits of paper all

around as other opposition members spoke against the introduction of the three bills.

Banerjee was seen rushing next to Premachandran and Venugopal, who were raising objections, and shouting slogans next to the active microphones. Trinamool member Mahua Moitra was also in the Well of the House, raising slogans.

Congress members Jothimani and Praniti Shinde were seen distributing copies of the bills among opposition members, who tore them and flung the fragments of paper.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla adjourned the proceedings till 3 PM, but the sloganeering by opposition and treasury members continued in the charged

atmosphere, prompting three marshals to stand in the Well in front of the Home Minister's seat to prevent opposition members from approaching further.

## Loud protests

Just before the Lok Sabha re-convened at 3 PM, as many as 12 members of the Parliament Security Service, including three women, were seen standing in the aisle next to the treasury benches, drawing loud protests from the opposition.

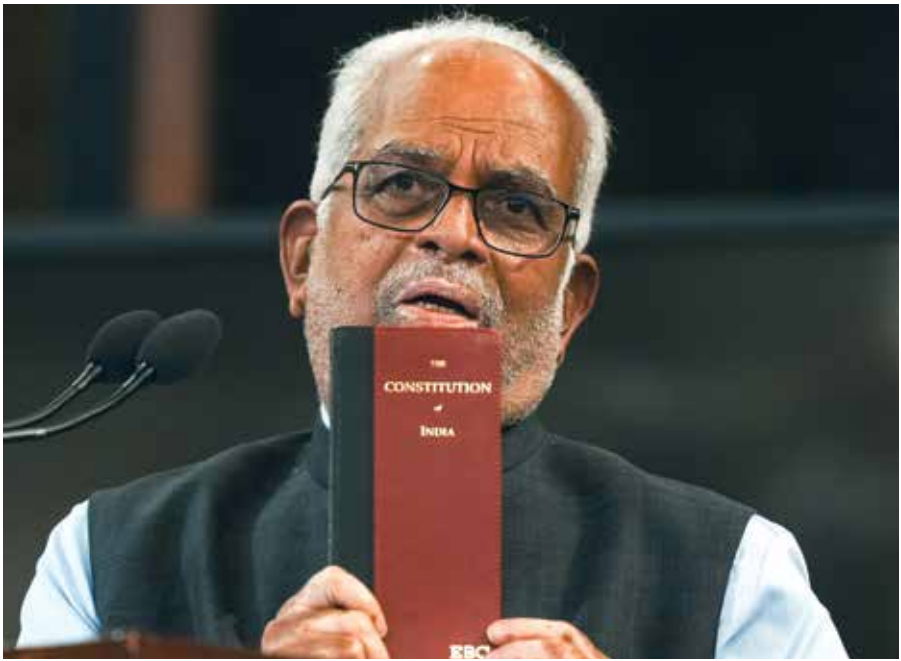
As soon as the House re-convened, the marshals trooped into the Well to prevent opposition members from coming near the treasury benches, but were soon called back.

The Speaker strongly disapproved of the conduct of the opposition and said their actions had lowered the dignity of the Lok Sabha.

Shah, who walked in soon after the House had re-convened, took a seat in one of the rear rows, instead of his usual front row seat, and completed the formalities of referring the three bills to a joint committee of parliament for closer examination.

As the uproar continued, the Lok Sabha Speaker adjourned the proceedings till 5:00 pm.

-PTI



Joint Opposition's vice presidential candidate B Sudershan Reddy during an event to introduce him to leaders of various parties supporting his candidature, at the central hall of Samvidhan Sadan in New Delhi on Wednesday. Pic: PTI

# ‘Towering figure in Indian jurisprudence’

## KHARGE INTRODUCES VP CANDIDATE REDDY TO OPPOSITION LEADERS

**New Delhi:** Leaders of several opposition parties on Wednesday felicitated their joint vice presidential candidate B Sudershan Reddy in the central hall of Samvidhan Sadan (old Parliament).

Introducing Reddy, a retired Supreme Court judge, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the opposition parties decided to field someone who has been dedicated to constitutional principles and Reddy is one such person.

The leader of opposition in the Rajya Sabha described Reddy as a “towering figure” in Indian jurisprudence and said he is renowned for his unwavering commitment to justice.

Kharge said the former judge has been a fearless

champion of social, economic, and political equality, delivering landmark judgments that have strengthened the fabric of India's democracy.

He said at a time when the integrity of our democratic institutions is facing unprecedented challenges, Reddy's nomination stands as a firm commitment to restoring fairness, impartiality, and dignity to the functioning of the Rajya Sabha, which, he alleged, has been in steady decline.

The Congress chief said in the last 11 years, the BJP government has discriminated against the Opposition.

“This vice presidential election is not merely a contest for an office; it is an ideological battle for the soul of our nation. While

the ruling party has chosen the ideology of RSS, we uphold the Constitution and its values as our guiding light.

“B Sudershan Reddy embodies the timeless values of justice, equality, and inclusivity that fuelled India's freedom movement and form the bedrock of our Constitution,” he said.

Kharge accused the government of passing bills in Parliament in haste and even amid walkout by opposition parties. He alleged that the Speaker has also played a role in this by not allowing MPs to speak.

Welcoming Reddy, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said there is a war going on between those who are attacking the Constitution and those who are defending it. -PTI

# Pak, China, Afghan hold meeting in Kabul



By Sajjad Hussain

**Islamabad:** The foreign ministers of Pakistan, China and Afghanistan are holding a trilateral meeting on Wednesday in Kabul to enhance cooperation between the three countries and discuss the security situation in the region.

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar was received by Deputy Foreign Minister of Afghanistan Mohammad Naeem, Pakistan's Ambassador to Afghanistan Ubaid Ur Rehman Nizamani and senior Afghan officials on his arrival.

According to the Pakistan Foreign Office, the trilateral meeting will discuss “enhancing cooperation between Pakistan, China and Afghanistan especially in trade, regional connectivity and counter terrorism domain”.

Dar, who is accompa-

nied by Special Representative for Afghanistan, Ambassador Mohammad Sadiq, and senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, will also hold a bilateral meeting with the acting foreign minister of Afghanistan to discuss bilateral matters between both countries.

The last round of the dialogue took place in May in Beijing when Pakistan and Afghanistan agreed to upgrade their diplomatic relationship at the ambassadors' level.

In the last trilateral meeting, the foreign ministers of the three countries agreed to expand the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to Afghanistan to boost “trilateral” cooperation.

India has been severely critical of the CPEC as it passes through Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir. New Delhi is also opposed to China's Belt and Road ini-

tiative as the project includes the CPEC.

This is the first visit by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi to Afghanistan since the Taliban stormed to power in 2021 while the third by Dar to the Afghan capital since April.

According to sources, China has played a role in easing tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

In Wednesday's meeting, the security situation, particularly the presence of terrorist outfits inside Afghanistan, would be one of the major topics of discussions, sources said.

Pakistan has been showing concern at the presence of the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other groups in Afghanistan.

According to Afghanistan's Deputy Foreign Ministry Spokesman Hafiz Zia Ahmad Takal, the conference will include detailed discussions on various aspects such as strengthening political ties, creating new opportunities for economic co-operation and taking joint measures on regional security. -PTI



Commuters wait for bus in the backdrop of an illustration of King Mahabali amid preparations for the Onam festival in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday. Pic: PTI

# UIDAI, Starlink partnership

**New Delhi:** Billionaire Elon Musk-led Starlink will use Aadhaar authentication for customer verification in the country before onboarding them, an official statement said.

The government has given approval to Starlink to start providing satellite-based broadband services in the country.

"The Unique Identifica-

tion Authority of India (UIDAI) has onboarded satellite-based internet provider Starlink Satellite Communication Pvt Ltd. Starlink will use Aadhaar Authentication for customer verification, which will make the entire process smooth, secure and very easy," the statement said.

Starlink can onboard around 20 lakh customers

in India at present capacity, according to an official estimate.

"Starlink's onboarding with Aadhaar authentication signifies a powerful synergy: India's trusted digital identity joining hands with global satellite technology. Aadhaar e-KYC will facilitate the onboarding of users seamlessly.

# Four new drugs for rare diseases on anvil

**New Delhi:** Four new drugs for rare diseases are in the pipeline expected to be launched soon while five medications for seven illnesses have already been introduced in the market alleviating suffering of patients, Niti Aayog member (health) Dr VK Paul said on Wednesday.

Speaking at an event here, he noted that generic medications launched by the local companies have led to immense savings for the people suffering from rare diseases.

Currently, 63 rare dis-

eases are included under National Policy for Rare Diseases on recommendation of Central Technical Committee for Rare Diseases (CTCRD).

“For seven diseases, we have made significant progress. These seven diseases include Thalassemia, Wilson's disease and Cystic Fibrosis... there are five drugs which are now available in the market,” Paul stated.

Four other drugs are on the anvil, he added.

He noted that NITI Aayog had shortlisted 13 disor-



ders as a priority in 2023.

Paul stated that rare diseases are estimated to collectively affect close to nine crore Indians, making them both a health and societal challenge. He emphasised that with only a fraction of the 7,000 rare diseases having approved therapies, indigenous manufacturing, stronger

registries, and multi-ministerial coordination must be prioritised.

He underlined that collective resolve must ensure faster diagnosis, equitable treatment, and an improved quality of life.

Paul also highlighted the importance of collaboration across academia, industry, and government so that quality and affordable treatments can be developed and research can be translated into lasting cures.

Department of Pharmaceuticals Secretary Amit

Agrawal said the government under the PLI scheme for pharmaceuticals has been able to support production of drugs to treat eight rare diseases.

He noted that the government aims to treat rare diseases and orphan drugs as a strategic priority area among the priority areas with higher policy support.

Novartis MD & Country President Amitabh Dube said rare diseases affect over 300 million globally, with 70-90 million in India.

Acknowledging the progress made, he stressed the need for continued efforts to address the challenges faced by patients in the rare disease management.

“We have to create an ecosystem that encourages and enables R&D, reduces regulatory delays and values innovation so treatments can reach Indian patients faster,” he added.

He also advocated sustainable financing solutions to ensure access to emerging, advanced therapies that exceed Rs 50 lakh.

-PTI

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

“He (Trump) has taken actions, as you’ve seen, sanctions on India and other actions as well. He has made himself very clear that he wants to see this war end. The president wants to move and bring this war to an end as quickly as possible.”



Karoline Leavitt, Press Secretary, White House



Building Collapse

Three workers dead

New Delhi: Three workers were killed after a three-storey building collapsed near Sadbhavna Park in central Delhi's Daryaganj on Wednesday, officials said.

The deceased were identified as Zubair, Gulsagar and Taufiq, who were working at the site when the structure caved in, police said. All three were trapped under the debris and were declared dead after being taken to hospital. "Information about the incident was received at 12.14 pm, following which a police team, four fire tenders and rescue officials rushed to the spot. The injured were moved to Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan (LNJP) Hospital. Civic authorities, including the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), have been informed. Legal action will be taken after verification of facts," the officer said.

A Delhi Fire Services (DFS) official said the building collapsed suddenly while construction activity was underway. "Three persons were rescued from the debris and immediately shifted to hospital. Rescue operations are still on," the officer added.

Teams from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) also joined the operation soon after the incident, working alongside Delhi Police, fire brigade personnel and the DDMA staff. Heavy machinery was pressed into service to clear the rubble as rescuers combed through the debris.

Further investigation is in progress, police added.

Bhiwani Teacher Death Case

Haryana govt will hand over probe to CBI

Chandigarh: The Haryana government is going to hand over the probe into the death of a 19-year-old teacher last week in Bhiwani to the CBI following public outrage.

"The state government and police administration are working with full seriousness and transparency to ensure justice for our daughter Manisha from Bhiwani and her family," Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said on Wednesday, while adding that he has been continuously seeking updates about the case.

"Based on the family's demand, the Haryana government is going to hand over this case to the CBI for an impartial investigation. Full justice will be ensured in this matter," Saini posted on X in Hindi.

Earlier, the Haryana government on Tuesday ordered the suspension of mobile internet, bulk SMS and dogle services in Bhiwani and Charkhi Dadri districts for 48 hours (from 11 am on Tuesday) amid public outrage over the death of the teacher.

Manisha's body was found in a field in Bhiwani on August 13. She had gone missing on August 11, after leaving the school, purportedly to enquire about admission at a nursing college.

On Monday, police claimed that the investigations pointed to the teenager dying by suicide by ingesting poison. However, her father, Sanjay, on Tuesday rejected the finding and refused to cremate the body, demanding "justice." He said, "The administration is saying that my daughter committed suicide. But I can say that she can never commit suicide. I want justice."

While protests over the teacher's death raged on, and politicians waded into the matter, alleging breakdown of law and order, the emergence of a "suicide note" in the death case on Monday turned the investigation on its head.

Bhiwani Superintendent of Police Sumit Kumar said the purported note was found near Manisha's body in a bag, which also had her Aadhaar card and other docu-



ments. He also said that there was proof of Manisha buying insecticide.

"In the viscera sample, the presence of insecticide has been confirmed in the body. So, there is self-purchase, there is a suicide note, there is poison in the body," he said.

Police also said that the post-mortem reports have ruled out the possibility of any sexual assault.

The villagers had also questioned the latest findings and continued to block a key road in Bhiwani in protest. They had said Manisha's cremation would not take place till "justice" is done.

The death caused massive outrage, with people blocking key roads in the district and the opposition parties, including the Congress, demanding a CBI probe.

The opposition parties flayed the BJP-led state government, claiming that the alleged murder was proof of a "breakdown of law and order" under the saffron party.

Congress leader Bhupinder Singh Hooda said the role of the state government and the police had been "negligent and irresponsible", and an "unfortunate attempt is being made to prove the whole case as a suicide."

-PTI

Lawyer fakes disappearance

Bhopal: Madhya Pradesh-based woman lawyer Archana Tiwari, who was traced in Uttar Pradesh after being reported missing nearly two weeks ago, faked her own disappearance in order to evade her marriage that her parents had fixed, police have found.

In order to remain untraceable, she also threw her mobile phone in a jungle area near Itarsi in the state, and was assisted by her two male friends, they said.

Tiwari, a resident of Katni in Madhya Pradesh, was traced in Uttar Pradesh's Lakhimpur Khiri town on Nepal border on Tuesday.

What began as a suspected accident on the Narmada Express train has now been revealed as a meticulously designed escape.

According to Railway Superintendent of Police Rahul Kumar Lodha, Archana had been "under intense pressure from her family to abandon her studies and marry a Patwari".

Facing mounting proposals and emotional strain, she confided in Saransh, a friend from Indore, and together they devised a plan to vanish.

"Archana's legal acumen played a central role in the execution. She deliberately left her bag on the train to simulate a fall, switched coaches at Narmadapuram -- where CCTV coverage was absent -- and instructed Tejinder, another accomplice, to dispose of her mobile phone," the officer said.

However, Tejinder was picked up by Delhi Police in a separate fraud case during the period, making it difficult for the police to advance the investigation.



A woman stands amid mud and debris washed along flash floods triggered by cloudburst at Shastri Nagar area in Kullu district in Himachal Pradesh. Pic: PTI

‘Dog lover’ attacks Delhi CM Rekha Gupta

New Delhi: Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta was attacked during a 'Jan Sunwai' programme at her camp office in Civil Lines on Wednesday morning, her office said.

According to a senior police officer, the accused has been detained, and he is being interrogated. North Delhi DCP and other senior police officers are at the spot.

Sources in Delhi Police said the accused has been identified as Rajesh Bhaiji, a resident of Rajkot in Gujarat.

"A person attacked Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta during 'Jan Sunwai' today. Delhi Police has detained the accused and is questioning him," The Chief Minister's Office said in a statement. Sources in Delhi BJP said that Gupta was "attacked" by a person aged around 35. He first gave the chief minister some papers during the public hearing and then allegedly attacked her.

Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva said that CM Gupta is "shaken", but she is doing fine.

My son not affiliated to any political party: Mother of accused

Rajkot: The mother of a Gujarat man, accused of attacking Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, on Wednesday claimed her son was not affiliated to any political party and had gone to the national capital to protest against the Supreme Court's order on stray dogs. After he was taken into custody, the Rajkot police reached his residence and questioned his mother Bhanuben Sakaria.

Later talking to reporters, Bhanuben claimed her son, who is an auto-rickshaw driver, was not affiliated to any political party.

"He loves dogs, cows and birds. That is why he was upset after the SC said all the stray dogs in Delhi should be captured. He went to Haridwar a few days back and then told us over phone that he will go to Delhi to participate in protests in support of dogs," she said.

"During the 'Jan Sunwai' this morning, the CM was interacting with the public as usual when a man approached her, handed over some papers and suddenly caught her hand, attempting to pull her towards him.

"In the scuffle that followed, people overpowered him... His identity and other details are being investigated by the police," he added.

The Delhi BJP chief denied reports that the CM

was slapped or a stone was pelted at her. Such incidents in politics are unacceptable, he said, adding that 'Jan Sunwai' will continue.

She is taking a rest right now and has made it clear that she will not cancel her scheduled programmes, he added.

The security at the camp office has been beefed up and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has been informed about the incident.

SC asks if harmony between Guv, state govt exists

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked if the country has lived up to the expectations of the Constitution framers that there will be harmony between the governor and the state government, besides the consultation on various issues between the two power centres.

The observation of a five-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice BR Gavai came when Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, referring to the Constituent Assembly debates on appointment and powers of the governor.

The bench, also comprising Justices Surya Kant, Vikram Nath, PS Narasimha and AS Chandurkar, was told by Mehta that unlike criticism made in different quarters, the post of governor is not for political asylum seekers but has certain powers and responsibility under the Constitution.

The solicitor general, who continued his submissions on the Presidential Reference which raised constitutional questions on whether the court can impose timelines for governors and the president to

deal with Bills passed by state assemblies, said that elaborate debates on the role and appointment of governors has taken place in the Constituent Assembly keeping in view the federal scheme of the Constitution.

On Tuesday, the top court questioned the Centre and the attorney general over the long pendency of Bills passed by assemblies with governors, underscoring the limitations of Constitutional courts in situations where legislation has been pending since 2020.

The top court has said it would be expressing its views only on the law and not on the April 8 decision in the Tamil Nadu case, fixing a timeline for governors and the president for acting on Bills passed by state legislatures. The top court, while responding to the preliminary objections raised by Tamil Nadu and Kerala governments on maintainability of the Presidential Reference, said it would exercise its advisory jurisdiction as it was not sitting in the appellate jurisdiction.

In May, President Drou-

padi Murmu exercised powers under Article 143(1) to know from the top court whether judicial orders could impose timelines for the exercise of discretion by the president while dealing with Bills passed by state assemblies. The Centre said in its written submission that imposing fixed timelines on governors and the president to act on Bills passed by a state assembly would amount to one organ of the government assuming powers not vested in it by the Constitution, and lead to "constitutional disorder".

On April 8, the apex court while dealing with the powers of the governor with respect to Bills passed by the Tamil Nadu Assembly, for the first time, prescribed that the president should decide on the Bills reserved for her consideration by the governor within three months from the date on which such a reference is received.

In a five-page reference, President Murmu posed 14 questions to the Supreme Court and sought to know its opinion on the powers of the governor and president.

-PTI



PM Modi flanked by Maharashtra Guv and NDA's VP candidate CP Radhakrishnan, hands over 4 sets of nomination papers to returning officer. Pic: PTI

Vice Presidential Election

Radhakrishnan files nomination

New Delhi: NDA candidate C P Radhakrishnan on Wednesday filed his nomination papers for the vice presidential election in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Home Minister Amit Shah and other senior leaders.

Modi, flanked by Radhakrishnan and senior NDA leaders, handed over four sets of nomination papers to Rajya Sabha Secretary General P C Mody, who is the returning officer for the vice presidential election.

The four sets of nomination papers have Modi, Singh, Shah and JD(U) leader Rajiv Ranjan Singh as lead proposers. The returning officer examined the nomination papers following which Radhakrishnan signed a register. The returning officer then handed over an acknowledgement slip of the nomination papers to the prime minister. Modi, Shah, senior ministers Pralhad Joshi, Dharmendra Pradhan and other NDA leaders, including TDP leader and Union Minister K Ram Mohan

Naidu, Shiv Sena leader Shrikant Shinde, LJP (RV) leader Chirag Paswan escorted Radhakrishnan to the office of the returning officer in Parliament.

Earlier, Radhakrishnan paid tributes to Mahatma Gandhi and other national leaders at Prerna Sthal, which houses statues of iconic personalities, in Parliament complex. Radhakrishnan, whose election as Vice President is a certainty, was accompanied by Union ministers and other leaders from the BJP-led alliance.

-PTI

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“We are friends, family, colleagues - we built this party together. When Arvind Kejriwal ji was arrested, I remember reaching home that night and thinking - whatever may happen now, we will fight against the BJP till our last breath.”

Atishi, Leader, AAP



Women battle crocodiles to save child, husband

Bahraich (UP): Two women in the Bahraich district of Uttar Pradesh emerged as local heroes after they risked their lives to fight off crocodiles in separate incidents -- one saving her five-year-old son and the other rescuing her husband.

The first incident occurred in Dhakiya village in the Khairighat area on Sunday, when a seven-foot-long crocodile dragged a boy, Veeru, into a drain linked to the swollen Ghaghra river.

His mother, Maya,

rushed to the spot, hearing his cries.

"My child was trapped in the crocodile's jaws. I jumped in without thinking of my life. The crocodile was pulling him, but I held on to him with all my strength. I had an iron rod and I struck it again and again until it let go," she told reporters.

Divisional Forest Officer of Bahraich, Ram Singh Yadav, confirmed that the child sustained injuries but is now stable.

"Nets have been placed at three points in the drain



to capture the crocodile, but it has not been caught yet. People are being made aware not to go near water

bodies as crocodiles tend to move into canals and streams during the monsoon," the officer said.

In the second incident in Madhavapur village in the Motipur area, 45-year-old Saifu was crossing the Ramtaliya canal with his wife Surjana and sister-in-law when a crocodile lunged at him, biting his leg.

As Saifu cried for help, Surjana flung her sari into the water, which he grabbed onto. Villagers rushed in and beat the crocodile with sticks until it released him. Saifu was first treated at a local hospital and later shifted to Bahraich Medi-

cal College, where doctors are monitoring his condition.

Forest officials in the Katarniaghat wildlife division said heavy rains have increased water levels in rivers and canals, pushing crocodiles closer to inhabited areas.

Teams have been deployed, and rescue operations for crocodiles are on. People have been strictly advised to avoid going near canals and rivers, an official said.

Both Maya and Veeru were injured in the fight.



China's Rare-Earth Minerals Export

# Easing positive sign; India must cut reliance: GTRI

**New Delhi:** China's decision to ease restrictions on exports of rare-earth minerals and fertilisers to India is a positive signal, but India must work to reduce its dependence on the neighbouring country, with which it runs an alarming USD 100 billion trade deficit, economic think tank GTRI said on Wednesday.

It said that between 2014 and 2024, China's dominance over India's import landscape only widened.

Its share in India's telecom and electronics imports reached 57.2 per cent, while machinery and hardware accounted for 44 per cent. Chemicals and pharmaceuticals followed closely at 28.3 per cent, it said.

For India, the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said, the only real safeguard is to build strength at home by cutting dependence, investing in deep manufacturing, and becoming a true product nation.

"A stronger, more self-reliant India will be better placed to engage China on equal terms, while keeping relations steady and pragmatic rather than hostage to sudden shifts," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said.

India's trade deficit with China, which hit a record USD 100 billion in FY2025, is not just alarming in scale but also in structure, it said.



"What makes it more serious is that China now dominates India's import baskets across virtually every industrial category -- from pharmaceuticals and electronics to construction materials, renewable energy, and consumer goods," it added.

Citing examples, the think tank said in antibiotics like erythromycin, China supplies 97.7 per cent of India's needs; in electronics, it controls 96.8 per cent of silicon wafers and 86 per cent of flat panel displays; in renewable energy, 82.7 per cent of solar cells and 75.2 per cent of lithium-ion batteries come from China.

Everyday products such as laptops (80.5 per cent share), embroidery machinery (91.4 per cent), and viscose yarn (98.9 per cent) are sourced from China.

Srivastava said this overwhelming dominance gives Beijing potential leverage against India, turning supply chains into a tool of pressure in times of political tension.

"The imbalance is deepening as India's exports to China continue to decline, reducing India's share in

bilateral trade to just 11.2 per cent today from 42.3 per cent two decades ago. Such structural dependence exposes India to serious geopolitical risks and highlights the urgent need for domestic production capacity and resilient supply chains," he added.

### Chinese dominance

According to the GTRI, China now dominates Indian import baskets across virtually every industrial category - from pharmaceuticals and electronics to construction materials and consumer goods.

In the pharmaceutical sector, India imported USD 166.3 million worth of erythromycin from China, accounting for 97.7 per cent of its global imports of that antibiotic, it said, adding China supplied 88.1 per cent of India's total antibiotic imports, forming the backbone of India's pharmaceutical ingredient supply.

In electronics and semiconductors, India imported USD 151.6 million worth of silicon wafers from China (96.8 per cent share), and USD 1.06 billion in flat panel display modules (86

per cent).

Similarly, it said, computer monitors (USD 376.5 million) also saw a 66.8 per cent Chinese share. Imports of printed circuit boards (USD 612.2 million), memory chips (USD 1.75 billion), and microprocessors (USD 1.65 billion) were also heavily reliant on China, with shares between 37 per cent and 40.5 per cent.

In consumer electronics, laptops and tablets topped the list with USD 4.45 billion in imports, 80.5 per cent of which came from China.

"Smartphones accounted for USD 259.7 million (58.8 per cent), while smartphone components and parts stood at USD 763.8 million (55.4 per cent) and USD 7.15 billion (51.7 per cent) respectively," it said, adding imports from China in low-tech consumer goods -- ceramic tiles, plastic furniture, lighting products, even headgear -- rose over 150 per cent in the same period.

These goods not only undermine Indian MSMEs but also reflect a widespread erosion of domestic industrial depth, Srivastava said.

"The data signals a clear imbalance. India is structurally dependent on China, while gaining little market access in return. Without urgent policy intervention, this economic asymmetry will only worsen," he added. **-PTI**



Kerala State Road Transport Corporation employees and their family members, under the BMS union, stage a protest over salary delays in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday. Pic: PTI

## Real Money Gaming 45 cr people lose about Rs 20,000 cr

**New Delhi:** The government estimates that around 45 crore people lose close to Rs 20,000 crore every year in online real money gaming, an official source said on Wednesday.

According to the source, the government has realised that online real money gaming is a major problem for society and chose to forego revenue loss in preference to people's welfare.

"There is a rough estimate that 45 crore people lose money every year. The total impact of the loss is estimated to be tentatively around Rs 20,000 crore," the source added.

The government has tabled "Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill 2025" in the Lok Sabha, which proposes to promote eSports and online social gaming while banning money gaming in any form.

"Online gaming involving money has become a major problem for society. Every Parliamentarian has raised concerns about its ill effects. Between revenue from one-third of the

### Lok Sabha passes bill

The Lok Sabha on Wednesday passed a bill to ban the operating, facilitating and advertising of online games played with money, as the government looks to check rising instances of addiction, money laundering and financial fraud through such

applications. The Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill, 2025, introduced this noon, was passed without a debate as opposition members raised slogans demanding a discussion on the special intensive revision

of electoral rolls in Bihar by the Election Commission. Once the legislation is passed by both Houses of Parliament, offering or facilitating online money gaming will be punishable by imprisonment of up to 3 years and/or a fine of up to Rs 1 crore.

industry segment and society welfare, the government has chosen society welfare," the source said.

According to the source, actions against entities involved in money gaming under the bill will be mainly taken by state governments.

The bill proposes that any person offering an online money gaming service in violation of the stipulated provisions will face imprisonment of up to three years or a fine that may extend to Rs 1 crore or both. The provisions also stipulate imprisonment of up to two years and or a fine of up to Rs 50 lakh, or both, for those indulging in advertisements in contravention of rules.

Several online real money gaming platforms masquerade themselves as a "game of skills" to differentiate themselves from gambling or betting, the source said.

"Those who play the games are victims. They will not be punished as per the bill, but there will be action on those who provide real money gaming platforms, facilitate transaction services, etc," the source said.

On the other hand, the bill seeks to promote eSports and online social games, which are a part of the creative economy.

### Body appeals Shah

Meanwhile, industry bodies representing real mon-

ey game players -- India Gaming Federation (AIGF), E-Gaming Federation (EGF), and Federation of Indian Fantasy Sports (FIFS) -- in a letter to Home Minister Amit Shah raised concerns over the bill, saying it would kill the job-creating industry.

The letter stated that the online skill gaming industry is a "sunrise sector" with an enterprise valuation of over Rs 2 lakh crore and annual revenue exceeding Rs 31,000 crore. It contributes over Rs 20,000 crore in direct and indirect taxes annually and is projected to grow at a 20 per cent compound annual growth rate (CAGR), doubling by 2028.

**-PTI**

## Pakistan PM In China CPEC phase II to be launched during visit

By Sajjad Hussain

**Islamabad:** Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to China later this month will mark the formal launch of the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC-II), as well as the prime minister's scheduled visit to Beijing.

Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal made the official announcement during a high-level meeting on Tuesday to review preparations for the forthcoming session of the Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) of the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC-II), as well as the prime minister's scheduled visit to Beijing.

"Prime minister's upcoming visit will mark the formal launch of CPEC-II, with both sides expected to set clear priorities and agree on tangible, measurable outcomes," minister Iqbal was quoted by Dawn as saying on Wednesday.

While the JCC is expected to meet in October, official sources said the prime

minister will travel to Beijing at the end of this month to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit from August 31 to September 1.

On the sidelines, Sharif is also expected to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

The planning minister stressed that the future of CPEC "must be anchored in quality rather than quantity," emphasising that only carefully selected, high-impact projects should be advanced to ensure sustainability and institutional strengthening.

The CPEC, which connects Gwadar Port in Pakistan's Balochistan with China's Xinjiang province, is the flagship project under Beijing's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

China has invested in various power projects and road networks in Pakistan under the USD 60 billion CPEC plan. However, the implementation of various projects had slowed last year following terror attacks on Chinese person-

nel working on the ventures.

Iqbal also disclosed that during his recent visit to China, he had conveyed PM Sharif's invitation to President Xi to visit Islamabad in 2026 to commemorate the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China. Underscoring the need to expand Pakistan's trade and export footprint in China, the minister directed the authorities concerned to resolve visa processing delays on priority to facilitate genuine businesspersons.

He also instructed the preparation of an outcome-focused plan to diversify exports, enhance industrial linkages, and maximise benefits from market access under CPEC.

The minister also noted that with China importing goods worth over USD 2 trillion annually, Pakistan should strategically aim to capture at least USD 30-50 billion of this trade by building competitiveness and sectoral readiness, according to Dawn. **-PTI**



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman with Union Minister of State for Education and Development of North Eastern Region Sukanta Majumdar at Parliament House in New Delhi. Pic: PTI

## Gold drops Rs 400, silver plunges

**New Delhi:** Gold prices dropped Rs 400 to Rs 1,00,020 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday due to continuous selling by stockists, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had settled at Rs 1,00,420 per 10 grams in the previous market close.

In the local market, gold of 99.5 per cent purity slipped Rs 350 to Rs 99,700 per 10 grams (inclusive of

all taxes) on Wednesday. It had closed at Rs 1,00,050 per 10 grams on Tuesday.

"Gold prices extended losses on Wednesday as the US dollar continued to trade with minimal gains, surging to a one-week high. A decline in the geopolitical risk premium followed a positive outcome from President Donald Trump's meetings with Vladimir Putin, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and European leaders.

"This development

raised hopes for a potential resolution to the ongoing conflict, which appears to be the leading factor in the decline in gold prices in recent times," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst, Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

Additionally, silver prices plunged Rs 1,500 to Rs 1,12,500 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes) on Wednesday. The white metal had ended at Rs 1,14,000 per kg on Tuesday.

## US Tariff On India MSMEs in textiles, diamonds, chemicals likely to hit most

**Kolkata:** The imposition of higher tariffs by the US will significantly impact the micro, small and medium enterprise sector, which accounts for around 45 per cent of India's exports, while MSMEs in textiles, diamonds and chemicals are likely to be the most hit, a report by CRISIL Intelligence said.

The US levies ad valorem duty of 25 per cent on Indian goods. However, it has imposed an additional 25 per cent tariff which will be effective from August 27 this year. This brings the total tariffs to 50 per cent, which will have a meaningful impact on several sectors in India, the report said.

Textiles, gems and jewellery, which account for 25 per cent of India's exports to the US, are likely to be most affected. The MSMEs have more than 70 per cent share in these sectors and will be hit hard, the report said.

Another sector which is likely to face the heat is chemicals, where MSMEs have a 40 per cent share.

The gems and jewellery



sector at Surat in Gujarat, which dominates diamond exports, will feel the tariff shock, the report said. Diamonds account for over 50 per cent of the country's gems and jewellery exports, and the US is a major consumer, according to the report.

In chemicals too, India faces competition from Japan and South Korea which are subject to lower tariffs.

In steel, the US tariffs are expected to have a negligible impact on the MSMEs as the units are mostly engaged in re-rolling and long products. The US primarily imports flat products from India.

In the textiles sector, the ready-made garments are expected to lose ground in the US compared with peers like Bangladesh and Vietnam which face lower tariffs.

**-PTI**

# Stock markets log gains for fifth day

**Mumbai:** Benchmark BSE Sensex closed higher by 213 points on Wednesday, extending its rally to the fifth consecutive day on heavy buying in IT and FMCG shares.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 213.45 points or 0.26 per cent to settle at 81,857.84 with 15 of its constituents ending higher and the rest with losses. During the day, it jumped 341.23 points or 0.41 per cent to 81,985.62.

The 50-share NSE Nifty edged higher by 69.90

points or 0.28 per cent to 25,050.55.

Among Sensex firms, Infosys surged the most by 3.88 per cent, followed by Tata Consultancy Services, which climbed 2.69 per cent. Hindustan Unilever, NTPC, Tata Steel, Tech Mahindra, Eternal and HCL Tech were also among the gainers.

However, Bharat Electronics, Bajaj Finance, Tata Motors and Trent were among the laggards.

Reliance Industries dropped over half a per



cent, capping gains in the key index.

"The Indian market sustained its positive momentum, supported by strong

domestic inflows and favourable macro tailwinds. However, rich valuations and external risks, particularly the US tariffs and

sanctions on purchase of Russian crude, continue to pose challenges. Hence, greater visibility on US trade policy and the path of earnings recovery will be critical.

"Meanwhile, global sentiment is cautious ahead of the release of the FOMC minutes later today, with investor attention gradually shifting to the US Fed Chair's speech at Jackson Hole this weekend, which is expected to provide clearer guidance on future policy direction," Vinod

Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said. The BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.39 per cent and smallcap index went up by 0.30 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices, BSE Focused IT jumped 2.70 per cent, IT (2.61 per cent), tech (2.22 per cent), FMCG (1.36 per cent), realty (1.04 per cent) and telecommunication (0.68 per cent).

Bankex, oil & gas, financial services and energy were the laggards.

**-PTI**

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

**"The US pressure on India for its procurement of Russian crude oil is unjustified. We are confident that India-Russia energy cooperation will continue notwithstanding the external pressure. It is a challenging situation for India."**



**Roman Babushkin,**  
Deputy Chief of Mission, Russia



# Israel’s settlement project could divide West Bank

Tel Aviv: Israel gave final approval for a controversial settlement project in the occupied West Bank that would effectively cut the territory in two, and that Palestinians and rights groups say could destroy plans for a future Palestinian state.

Settlement development in E1, an open tract of land east of Jerusalem, has been under consideration for more than two decades, but was frozen due to US pressure during previous administrations.

On Wednesday, the project received final approval from the Planning and Building Committee after the last petitions against it were rejected on August 6.

If the process moves quickly, infrastructure work could begin in the next few months and construction of homes could start in around a year.

The plan includes around 3,500 apartments to expand the settlement of MaaleAdumim, far-right



Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said during a press conference at the site last Thursday.

Smotrich cast the approval as a riposte to western countries that announced their plans to recognise a Palestinian state in recent weeks.

“This reality finally buries the idea of a Palestinian state, because there is nothing to recognise and no one to recognise,” Smotrich told reporters. “Anyone in the world who tries today to recognise a Palestinian state will receive an answer from us on the ground.”

The location of E1 is significant because it is one of

the last geographical links between Ramallah, in the northern West Bank, and Bethlehem in the southern West Bank.

The two cities are 22 kilometres apart by air, but Palestinians travelling between them must take a wide detour and pass through multiple Israeli checkpoints, adding hours to the journey. The hope for final status negotiations for a Palestinian state was to have the region eventually serve as a direct link between the cities.

Peace Now, an organisation that tracks settlement expansion in the West Bank, called the E1 project

“deadly for the future of Israel and for any chance of achieving a peaceful two-state solution” which is “guaranteeing many more years of bloodshed.”

## Israeli settlement

More than 700,000 Israelis now live in the occupied West Bank and east Jerusalem, territories captured by Israel in 1967 and sought by the Palestinians for a future state. The international community overwhelmingly considers Israeli settlement construction in these areas to be illegal and an obstacle to peace.

Israel's government is dominated by religious and ultranationalist politicians with close ties to the settlement movement. Smotrich, previously a firebrand settler leader and now finance minister, has been granted Cabinet-level authority over settlement policies and vowed to double the settler population in the West Bank.

-AP

## Colombian court frees ex-President

Bogota: A Colombian appeals court has ruled that the country's former president, Álvaro Uribe, must be released from house arrest while he challenges his conviction for bribery and witness tampering.

The conservative leader was sentenced on Aug 1 to 12 years of house arrest for threatening and trying to flip witnesses who had spoken to investigators about his alleged role in the formation of a right-wing paramilitary group in the 1990s.

Uribe denies the charges and has appealed the conviction to the Superior Tribunal in Bogota, the country's capital. The court has until mid-October to issue a definitive ruling on the case, which has gripped



Colombia and also provoked reactions from Uribe's allies in the United States.

The Superior Tribunal said Tuesday it approved an injunction filed by Uribe's defense team seeking his release from house arrest. Uribe's lawyers argued his right to due process was violated by the arrest order against him, as well as his right to a presumption of innocence.

The former president, who governed from 2002 to 2010 with strong support from the US, is a polarising figure in Colombia, where many credit him for saving the country from becoming a failed state, while others associate him with human rights violations and the rise of paramilitary groups in the 1990s.

-AP



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar interacts with prominent scholars and think tank representatives of Russia in Moscow on Wednesday. Pic: AP/ PTI

## Palestinian State Recognition

# Netanyahu brands Albanese 'weak'

Melbourne: Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Wednesday brushed off accusations from his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu that the Australian leader is a “weak politician who had betrayed Israel” by recognising a Palestinian state.

Netanyahu's extraordinary public rebuke came after an August 11 announcement by Albanese that his government's recognition of a Palestinian state will be formalised at the United Nations General Assembly in September. The announcement was followed by tit-for-tat cancellations of Australian and Israeli visas.

“History will remember Albanese for what he is: A weak politician who betrayed Israel and abandoned Australia's Jews,” Netanyahu posted on social media Tuesday.

Albanese responded pointedly Wednesday: “I treat leaders of other coun-

tries with respect. I engage with them in a diplomatic way.”

“I don't take these things personally,” Albanese said. “Increasingly there is global concern and global concern because people want to see an end to the cycle of violence that we have seen for far too long. That is what Australians want to see as well.”

Australian Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke further inflamed Israel's anger Monday by cancelling the visa of far-right Israeli lawmaker Simcha Rothman, a member of Netanyahu's coalition, who planned an Australian speaking tour.

Rothman is a member of the Religious Zionism party, which supports continuation of the war, the mass relocation of Palestinians through what it describes as voluntary migration and the reestablishment of Jewish settlements in Gaza.

Burke on Wednesday accused Netanyahu of “lashing out” against Australia as he had done against Britain, Canada, France, Ireland, Norway and Spain over recognition of a Palestinian state. Burke denied Albanese was weak.

“Strength is not measured by how many people you can blow up or how many children you can leave hungry,” Burke told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar retaliated Monday for Rothman's treatment by revoking visas of Australian representatives to the Palestinian Authority. Saar also told the Israeli Embassy in Australia to “carefully examine” any official visa applications from Australia to Israel.

Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong responded by accusing the Netanyahu government of isolating Israel.

-AP

# India slams Pakistan on gross sexual violence

United Nations: India has slammed Pakistan at a UN debate by drawing attention to the “heinous crimes of gross sexual violence” against women in erstwhile East Pakistan in 1971, adding the pattern continues “with impunity to this day.”

Briefly addressing what he called as the “baseless allegation” raised by the Pakistan delegate during the debate on Tuesday, El-dos Mathew Punnoose, India's Counsellor and Charge d'Affaires said that the 1971's instances of sexual violence against women is “a matter of shameful record.”

Punnoose was delivering his statement at the open debate on 'Innovative Strategies to Ensure Access to Life-Saving Services and Protection for Survivors of Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones.'

“The utter impunity with which the Pakistan army perpetrated heinous crimes of gross sexual violence against women in erstwhile East Pakistan in 1971 is a matter of shameful record,” he said.

He was apparently referring to a series of massacres and rapes in 1971 in East Pakistan, in what is



today's Bangladesh.

“This deplorable pattern continues unabated and with impunity to this day,” the Indian diplomat said.

“Rampant abduction, trafficking, child early and forced marriages and domestic servitude, sexual violence and forced religious conversions of thousands of vulnerable women and girls as weapons of persecution towards religious and ethnic minority communities are reported and chronicled, including in the recent OHCHR reports,” Punnoose said.

He also alleged that it is “ironical” that those who perpetrate these crimes are now “masquerading as champions of justice.”

“The duplicity and hypocrisy is self-evident,” he added.

Punnoose was responding to Pakistan's allegation that “sexual violence has long been deployed to punish and humiliate communities” in Kashmir.

Punnoose in his state-

ment said, “Perpetrators of heinous acts of conflict-related sexual violence must be condemned in the strongest possible terms and brought to justice.”

“Sexual violence in conflict zones not only destroys individual lives but tears apart the very fabric of societies, leaving lasting scars on communities for generations,” he added.

He also referred to the UNSC Resolution 2467 of 2019, which he said has been instrumental in highlighting the need to provide victims access to national relief and reparations programmes, healthcare, psychosocial care, safe shelter, legal aid and facilitate rehabilitation and reintegration efforts to bring a semblance of normalcy to their lives.

He listed India's contribution at the global level when it came to commitment to eliminate sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping, humanitarian and development work; and how Prime Minister Narendra Modi joined the Circle of Leadership on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations.

-PTI



U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres smiles with former Japanese PM Fumio Kishida at the Tokyo International Conference on African Development in Yokohama on Wednesday. Pic: AP/ PTI

## Ranger fired for hanging pride flag

New York: A Yosemite National Park ranger was fired after hanging a pride flag from El Capitan while some park visitors could face prosecution under protest restrictions that have been tightened under President Donald Trump.

Shannon “SJ” Joslin, a ranger and biologist who studies bats, said they hung a 66-foot wide transgender pride flag on the famous climbing wall that looms over the California park's main thoroughfare for about two hours on May 20 before

taking it down voluntarily.

A termination letter they received last week accused Joslin of “failing to demonstrate acceptable conduct” in their capacity as a biologist and cited the May incident.

“I was really hurting because there were a lot of policies coming from the current administration that target trans people, and I'm nonbinary,” Joslin, 35, told The Associated Press, adding that hanging the flag was their way of saying, “We're all safe in

national parks.”

Joslin said their firing sends the opposite message: “If you're a federal worker and you have any kind of identity that doesn't agree with this current administration, then you must be silent, or you will be eliminated.”

Park officials on Tuesday said they were working with the US Justice Department to pursue visitors and workers who violated restrictions on demonstrations at the park that had more than 4 million visitors last year.

## Ukraine Security Guarantees NATO defence chiefs hold virtual meeting

Kyiv: NATO defence chiefs were due to hold a virtual meeting Wednesday, a senior alliance official said, as countries pushing for an end to Russia's war on Ukraine devise possible future security guarantees for Kyiv that could help forge a peace agreement.

Italian Admiral Giuseppe Cavo Dragone, chair of NATO's Military Committee, said that 32 defence chiefs from across the alliance would hold a video conference as a US-led diplomatic push seeks to end the fighting.

US Gen. Alexis Grynke-wich, NATO's supreme allied commander Europe, will take part in the talks, Dragone said on social platform X.

US President Donald Trump met last Friday with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska and on Monday hosted Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and prominent European leaders at the White House.

Neither meeting delivered concrete progress.

Trump is trying to steer Putin and Zelenskyy toward a settlement more

than three years after Russia invaded its neighbour, but there are major obstacles. They include Ukraine's demands for Western-backed military assurances to ensure Russia won't mount another invasion in coming years.

“We need strong security guarantees to ensure a truly secure and lasting peace,” Zelenskyy said in a Telegram post Wednesday after Russian missile and drone strikes hit six regions of Ukraine overnight.

Kyiv's European allies are looking to set up a force that could backstop any peace agreement, and a coalition of 30 countries, including European nations, Japan and Australia, have signed up to support the initiative.

Military chiefs are figuring out how that security force might work. The role that the US might play in is unclear. Trump on Tuesday ruled out sending US troops to help defend Ukraine against Russia.

Russia has repeatedly said that it would not accept NATO troops in Ukraine.

-AP

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"The government is moving forward with all preparations for the election. The polls will be held in February, and the government's stance on this remains unwavering. There has not been any major qualitative change."

Asif Nazrul,  
Law Adviser, Bangladesh

# New malaria drug offers hope to health workers

Kampala (Uganda): Alice Nekesa did not know she was infected with malaria-causing parasites until it was too late. She was in the fourth month of pregnancy last year when she started bleeding, a miscarriage later attributed to untreated malaria in her.

The Ugandan farmer said recently that she regretted the loss of what would have been her second child “because I didn't discover malaria and treat it early.”

Variations of such cases are commonly reported by

Ugandan health workers who witness stillbirths or feverish babies that die within days from undiagnosed malaria.

The deaths are part of a wider death toll tied to the mosquito-borne disease, the deadliest across Africa, but one easily treated in adults who seek timely medical care.

Until recently, a major gap in malaria treatment was how to care for newborns and infants infected with malaria who weren't strong enough to receive regular medication.



That changed last month when Swiss medical regulators approved medicine from the Basel-based pharmaceutical company Novartis for babies weighing between 2 and 5

kilograms.

Swissmedic said the treatment, a sweet-tasting tablet that disperses into a syrup when dropped into water, was approved in coordination with the World Health Organisation under a fast-track authorisation process to help developing countries access much-needed treatment.

Africa's 1.5 billion people accounted for 95 per cent of an estimated 597,000 malaria deaths worldwide in 2023, according to the WHO. More than three-quarters of those

deaths were among children.

In Uganda, an east African country of 45 million people, there were 12.6 million malaria cases and nearly 16,000 deaths in 2023. Many were children younger than 5 and pregnant women, according to WHO.

Nigeria, Congo and Uganda — in that order — are the African countries most burdened by malaria, a parasitic disease transmitted to humans through the bites of infected mosquitoes that thrive and

breed in stagnant water.

The drug approved by Swiss authorities, known as Coartem Baby in some countries and Riamet Baby in others, is a combination of two antimalarials. It is a lower dose version of a tablet previously approved for other age groups, including for older children.

Before Coartem Baby, antimalarial drugs designed for older children were administered to small infants with careful adjustments to avoid overdose or toxicity.

-AP



EDITORIAL

Data Deception

The Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) has long basked in a halo of scholarly prestige. Its Lokniti surveys, dutifully published in ‘serious’ English dailies are treated by India’s commentariat as if they were gospel truth. SuhasPalshikar, its senior theorist, has spent years cultivating the air of a detached academic sage. Sanjay Kumar, its psephologist-in-chief, is endlessly quoted on television panels as a neutral custodian of data. But beneath the varnish of ‘objectivity,’ one finds an institution addicted not to rigour but to narrative-building often with the help of foreign funds and partisan sympathisers at home.

The latest fiasco was a gift-wrapped case study in how not to do research. On August 17, Kumar alleged, in a series of posts on X, that Maharashtra’s electoral rolls had mysteriously swollen or shrunk at implausible rates between the Lok Sabha elections and the state Assembly polls. His implication was that the Election Commission was complicit in shenanigans that robbed the Opposition of victory. Predictably, Congress leaders such as Pawan Khera pounced on the numbers, weaving them into a broader tale of ‘vote theft.’

Within 48 hours the story collapsed. Fact-checkers quickly demonstrated that the alleged official rolls ‘mystery’ were the result of sloppy spreadsheet handling and not any suspicious activity on part of the ECI. Confronted with ridicule, Kumar deleted his posts, confessed to errors by his data team and apologized.

Any first-year research assistant knows that electoral rolls are revised on different schedules, and that comparing Lok Sabha and Assembly registers requires careful alignment of constituency data. To cite figures without basic verification is malpractice. That it was done by a man held up as India’s foremost pollster should alarm anyone who still mistakes CSDS for a serious academic outfit.

For years CSDS has been accused of being less a research centre than a narrative factory, financed generously by Western donors such as the Ford Foundation, Canada’s IDRC, Britain’s DFID, Norway’s NORAD, and the Hewlett Foundation. The global record of these patrons shows a taste for funding projects that emphasise social divisions and undermine majority cultures, often under the benign-sounding rubric of ‘pluralism’ or strengthening democracy. In India, the suspicion has lingered that CSDS has tilted its surveys, framing Hindu society as a fractured polity in need of external tutelage.

Palshikar and his colleagues will scoff at such charges, citing academic freedom and methodological rigour. Yet the Maharashtra episode has revealed a culture of carelessness, where politically convenient claims are rushed into public view without the most basic due diligence. The larger scandal is how India’s ‘prestige press’ has colluded in laundering CSDS’s reputation. Readers have been encouraged to see these as windows into the ‘real’ India while the reality is otherwise.

In politics, numbers are weapons. To deploy them carelessly is a dereliction of responsibility. CSDS and its luminaries have mistaken condescension for competence. India deserves better than this cartel of snooty academics peddling foreign-funded illusions as fact.



By  
Amey Chitale

After the Pahalgam attack, India took a bold step by suspending the Indus Water Treaty—its first attempt to wield transboundary rivers as strategic leverage against Pakistan. As the upper riparian in the Indus basin, India enjoys a geographic edge. On the Brahmaputra, however, it is the lower riparian, exposed to China’s upstream manoeuvres. That vulnerability has deepened with reports of new Chinese water infrastructure near the border, fuelling fears of deliberate flow manipulation.

The Brahmaputra rises from the Chemayungdung Glacier near Mount Kailash in Tibet, flowing east for 1,700km as the YarlungTsangpo. South of the Namcha Barwa canyon it plunges into one of the world’s deepest gorges before entering India at Gelling in Arunachal Pradesh, where it becomes the Siang, and later the Brahmaputra in Assam. Fed by tributaries like the Lohit, Dibang, Subansiri and Teesta, it becomes the Jamuna in Bangladesh, merging with the Ganges and Meghna before reaching the Bay of Bengal.

The basin spans 580,000 sq km: China holds 50.5 percent, India 33.6 percent, Bangladesh 8.1 percent and Bhutan 7.8 percent. Yet China contributes only 22–30 percent of annual discharge, while India accounts for 65–80 percent. Sparse rainfall on the Tibetan plateau (about 300mm a year) contrasts with the 2,371mm that drenches India’s portion. During the monsoon, India’s share rises to 75–80 percent, swelling the river from 2,000–3,000 cubic metres per second at the border to as much as 20,000 downstream. In the dry season, China’s contribution climbs to 35–40 percent, thanks to snowmelt.

India and China have experimented with cooperation, though none of their arrangements constitute a binding water-sharing pact. A 2002 MoU initiated data-sharing during floods; in 2006 the Expert Level Mechanism was set up; and a broader agreement followed in 2013, renewed in 2018. Yet geopolitics has repeatedly disrupted them. China withheld data during the 2017 Doklam stand-off and has shared none since 2022. The Brahmaputra MoU expired in June 2023.

Now looms China’s most ambitious project yet: the Medog Hydropower Station, only 30km from the Indian border. Approved in December 2024 and under construction since July 2025, the \$167bn scheme aims to generate 60,000MW—triple the Three Gorges Dam’s annual output by 2033. China already operates smaller dams at Zangmu, Dagu, Jiexu and Jiacha. Medog’s design includes five cascade stations exploiting a 2,000m drop over 50km and four 20km tunnels through Namcha Barwa to divert the river, granting Beijing enormous control.

Most Chinese projects on the Brahmaputra are ‘run-of-river,’ storing little water and depending on natural flow. Counterintuitively, reduced upstream flow might even help Assam, where monsoon floods displace millions and ravage farmland. A more predictable, moderated flow could ease flood severity and siltation. But dams still allow short-

China’s dams on the Brahmaputra threaten India’s water security, but they also open the door to fragile cooperation.

BEYOND NUMBERS

The Brahmaputra in balance: Between promise and peril



term regulation. In extremis, China could weaponize water, triggering flash floods through sudden releases or worsening dry-season shortages by retaining flows.

The Medog project thus embodies both promise and peril. It will boost China’s energy supply and geopolitical leverage while raising alarm in India over water security, agriculture and ecology. The Brahmaputra carries heavy sediment vital to Assam’s fertile plains and the Bengal delta. With the canyon contributing an estimated 45 percent of downstream silt, tunnels diverting the river could sharply reduce sediment loads, undermining soil fertility and hastening coastal erosion, especially in the fragile Sundarbans.

Geopolitically, Beijing’s capacity to alter flows during periods of tension heightens India’s vulnerability. Ecologically, the Medog site lies in a biodiversity hotspot, within a seismic zone, where construction risks destabilising fragile ecosystems. The long-term effects are unknowable and potentially irreversible.

India’s counter lies in its own megaproject: the Upper Siang Multipurpose Project in Arunachal Pradesh. Estimated at Rs. 1.5trn, it aims to generate 11,000MW and store 9.2bn cubic metres of water behind a 267-metre dam—an answer to China’s hydro-hegemony. Proponents tout its value for energy security, flood control and strategic leverage. But local resistance is fierce. Indigenous Adi communities fear displacement and ecological harm; protests have disrupted sur-

veys and damaged equipment.

The dispute reflects broader Sino-Indian rivalry over borders, trade and influence. China embeds water infrastructure in its Belt and Road Initiative; India, meanwhile, must balance strategic autonomy with cooperation. Greater transparency with Bangladesh and Bhutan, plus resilient infrastructure at home, could strengthen its hand.

Climate change makes matters worse. Himalayan glaciers are melting 65 percent faster than in 2010, and may lose 80 percent of their mass by century’s end. The Brahmaputra depends less on glaciers than on monsoon rains, but those rains are becoming erratic. Agriculture, hydropower and disaster planning are all at risk, raising the spectre of migration and instability.

India needs a multi-pronged response: reviving data-sharing with China, accelerating projects like the Upper Siang through genuine consultation, and building independent hydrological monitoring to reduce reliance on external data. Trilateral cooperation with Bangladesh and Bhutan should be strengthened.

China’s mega-projects pose real risks, but they also offer opportunities for cooperation if framed within shared hydrological realities. India should use international platforms such as BRICS+ to keep dialogue alive. With U.S.–India ties strained by Donald Trump’s hostile posture, BRICS+ could offer a pragmatic channel to temper Sino-Indian tensions.

The Brahmaputra, once seen mainly as a life-giving river, is now becoming an arena of geopolitical rivalry. Whether it turns into a source of cooperation or conflict depends on whether India and China can resist the temptation to turn water into a weapon.

(The author is a Chartered Accountant with a leading company in Mumbai. Views personal)

BACKROOM DEMOCRACY

Why India’s Committees Fail Where America’s Succeed



By  
Smitha Balachandran

In the grand theatre of democracy, the floor of a legislature is often where the spotlight shines brightest. Cameras linger on raucous debates in the U.S. House of Representatives or the Lok Sabha, on fiery exchanges, last-minute walkouts or carefully crafted soundbites that feed the evening news cycle. But the real business of legislating rarely happens there. It takes place in the shadows within the intricate world of committees.

In Washington, committees are the machinery that makes the vast and unwieldy American Congress function. Without them, its 535 lawmakers could scarcely cope with the sheer volume of legislative proposals, oversight obligations, and budgetary scrutiny that confront them. These committees, often called ‘little legislatures’ are the places where the meticulous business of lawmaking - questioning, revising, amending and killing bills - happens.

India, too, has committees. Its parliamentary system borrows heavily from Westminster, where the committee tradition is centuries old. But in New Delhi, committees often lack bite, their influence diluted by political indifference, procedural fragility, and

The committee system is the unsung engine of American lawmaking. India’s version, by contrast, sputters.

executive dominance. While America’s committees shape laws and constrain presidents, India’s risk becoming rubber stamps that, whilst being useful, are rarely decisive. The contrast says much about the health of the two democracies.

**America’s little legislatures**

The committee system in the United States is an elaborate architecture designed for efficiency and expertise. Both the House and Senate maintain standing committees, which are permanent panels that endure from one Congress to the next. The House has 20; the Senate, 16. Each specialises in a policy area: agriculture, finance, armed services, foreign relations. Jurisdictions are defined with care. When a bill is introduced, its subject matter determines which committee will take first crack at it.

Once referred, a bill enters a process far more rigorous than most floor debates ever allow. Committees may summon hearings, where government officials, academics, industry leaders, advocacy groups, or ordinary citizens testify. These proceedings establish a public record, give shape to the arguments, and test the strength of claims. A bill then undergoes “markup,” which is the painstaking process where members propose, debate and vote on amendments. The committee chair’s version (the ‘chair’s mark’) often steers the conversation.

If a majority approves, the committee “reports” the bill, accompanied by a written document explaining its purpose, legal effects, costs, and sometimes dissenting opinions. Such reports can sway debates on the chamber floor. If, on the other hand, the committee refuses to act, the bill simply dies - an outcome so common that Washington wags quip that “committees are where good ideas go to perish.”

The American system also enables deep specialisation. Subcommittees allow lawmakers to burrow into niches—cybersecurity within armed ser-



vices, for example, or clean energy within commerce. This fosters expertise among members, turning generalist politicians into quasi-specialists who can interrogate bureaucrats and lobbyists with some confidence.

Just as important, committees wield formidable oversight powers. They monitor executive agencies, scrutinise spending, and haul officials before them to account for mistakes. From the McCarthy hearings in the 1950s to the Benghazi inquiries of the 2010s, congressional oversight has been both feared and controversial. In the Senate, certain committees perform an additional constitutional function: vetting presidential nominees and treaties. A Supreme Court justice or ambassador cannot be confirmed without running the gauntlet of Senate committees.

Perhaps most impressive, all this is visible. Hearings are increasingly streamed online; reports are accessible on Congress.gov. Citizens, journalists, and scholars can peer into this vital, if unglamorous, corner of American governance.

**Muted Machinery**

India’s Parliament also relies on committees, though their powers and prestige are less robust. There are standing committees which are permanent and reconstituted annually and ad hoc committees created for

specific tasks before dissolving. Department-related standing committees (DRSCs), modelled after similar bodies in Britain, examine legislation, scrutinise ministries and provide reports. Financial committees like the Public Accounts Committee or Estimates Committee play critical roles in budgetary oversight.

On paper, the system is sound. Committees enable MPs, especially backbenchers, to engage deeply with policy areas. Recommendations are frequently insightful. Some major laws, including the Consumer Protection Act (2019) and the National Medical Commission Act (2019), bore the imprint of committee work. Committees can summon experts, call for data, and nudge the executive to clarify positions. Departments must formally respond to recommendations, lending at least a semblance of accountability. In practice, however, India’s committees labour under severe constraints. Terms are short: DRSCs last only one year, after which they must be reconstituted. Such churn prevents MPs from gaining expertise comparable to their American counterparts. Delays in forming committees disrupt continuity.

**Weakened Systems**

More damaging still is politics. Committees are meant to be free from the tyranny of the party whip. Yet in in-

quiry committees, partisan allegiances often resurface, distorting deliberations. High absenteeism is another bane. Many MPs, focused on constituency obligations or political manoeuvring, treat committee meetings as optional.

The result is diminished clout. Increasingly, bills are passed without ever seeing the inside of a committee room. During the 16th and 17th Lok Sabhas, the share of bills referred to committees plummeted. Momentous decisions like the abrogation of Article 370, the farm bills of 2020 and the Chief Election Commissioner Bill of 2023 were rammed through without committee scrutiny. What should have been a forum for sober deliberation became an afterthought.

Worse, some committees themselves seem reluctant to exercise their powers. Instances abound where witnesses were not summoned or expert advice not sought. At times, reports read less like rigorous investigations than hurried paperwork.

**Yawning Gaps**

The gulf between the two systems reflects differences in political culture. America’s separation of powers gives Congress incentives to guard its prerogatives jealously against an assertive executive. Committees are weapons in that struggle. In India’s parliamentary system, by contrast, the executive and legislature are fused; the majority that controls the government also controls Parliament. That diminishes committees’ autonomy. Why would MPs of the ruling party challenge their own ministers?

This divergence matters. Committees are not just procedural tools. They embody the idea of deliberative democracy. In Washington, they have grown into powerful engines of accountability and agenda-setting. But in New Delhi, their risk becoming merely decorative.

A weakened committee system deprives India of vital checks and bal-

ances. It leaves Parliament more prone to hasty lawmaking, less informed by expert evidence, and more vulnerable to the will of the executive. When laws like the farm bills are bulldozed without adequate consultation, the results can be catastrophic - public anger, policy reversals and institutional erosion.

While reform is possible, India’s committees need longer tenures. Allowing MPs to serve continuously on specific committees would help them develop expertise, as in America. Second, a mandatory referral of bills, particularly those with major constitutional, economic or social consequences, would prevent the bypassing of scrutiny. Third, committees must embrace transparency by publishing schedules, witness lists and reports promptly. Civil society and the media could then hold MPs accountable for participation.

Finally, parties must resist the temptation to reduce committees to partisan arenas. That may be the hardest reform of all, given the increasingly polarised nature of Indian politics. Yet without it, committees will never escape irrelevance.

The committee is a paradoxical institution: invisible yet powerful, tedious yet indispensable. In the United States, committees have become the backbone of legislative governance, blending expertise with oversight, and often proving more consequential than floor debates. In India, committees are too often treated as sideshows, despite their potential to enrich democracy. For all the glamour of parliamentary theatrics, democracy’s strength lies not in drama but in diligence. India’s Parliament would do well to learn from America’s ‘little legislatures’ where real accountability is forged not in noisy chambers but in the quiet, persistent grind of scrutiny.

(The writer is a Mumbai-based research scholar. Views personal.)





KALEIDOSCOPE

1. An artisan gives finishing touches to an idol of Lord Ganesh ahead of 'Ganesh Chaturthi' festival in Agartala on Wednesday.
2. A spiritual path devotee locally called 'Malang' performs traditional Sufi trance dance called 'Dhamaal' during celebrations of 'Urs' in Lahore in Pakistan.
3. Women worship a cow amid 'Bach Baras' festivities in Bikaner in Rajasthan on Wednesday.
4. Women belonging to the Dogra community swing a child as part of a ritual as they pray for the long life of their sons during Baccha Dua festival in Jammu on Tuesday.
5. Students during an awareness campaign on World Mosquito Day in Agartala on Wednesday.

All Pictures: PTI, AP

STUDENT'S VOICE



By  
Prithvi Asthana

# The Enchanting Fest

One of Asia's biggest festivals, conducted annually by St Xavier's College, the Malhar Fest, concluded on a high note on 16th August. Musician ChaarDiwari's concert was the perfect finale act to conclude the power-packed fest. This was the 46th edition of the fest and was held on 14, 15, and 16 of August, 2025. It was a perfect three-day fest, with rain pouring down heavily almost every day, but it did not hold the crowd back from attending the fest. The crowd's energy was in tandem with the rain, making the fest more zestful.

The Malhar Fest is the flagship fest of St Xavier's College and is the much-awaited fest of the year. This year, the theme was 'The World Within'. When people focus on the outside world, the Malhar Fest, through its theme, reminds us that the world within is what makes the world outside us. With a workforce of around 700-800 students from various courses across the college, they came together to execute the Malhar Fest, setting yet another benchmark in the inter-collegiate festivals. The fest consisted of engaging events, inspiring conclave sessions, interactive workshops, and a high-powered concert. Performing arts and literary arts were the two main domains under which various events were conducted.

The Conclave Session

The theme, 'Leher: Ripple Today, A

From commandos to judges and actors to athletes—voices united to spark a revolution in the youth



Revolution Tomorrow', of the Conclave session invites us to focus on one of the main aspects of youth's personality, which is to innovate and create a ripple, empowering a change in society. The conclave session was held on the 15th and 16th of August. The speakers' list was a perfect blend of personalities, from backgrounds like acting, law, sports, business, and authorship.

On the first day, the keynote address was delivered by Dr. Seema Rao, a revolutionary, the first and only woman commando trainer, "The Wonder Woman of India". While sharing her life experiences, she instilled the traits of fearlessness, discipline, endurance, etc., into the youth present there. She focused on the hardships of life and delivered a thoughtfully curated speech aligning with the theme.

This session was followed by the session of the glamorous star cast of 'Saare Jahan se Accha', Pratik Gandhi, Anup Soni, Kritika Kamra, and Sunny Hinduja; their presence elated the atmosphere of the session.

The actors discussed college life and the struggles faced while pursuing their careers. Next to this session was SaiyamiKher's session. Known for her extravagant roles in films, the St. Xavier's College alumna talked about her journey and how college life at St. Xavier's helped her navigate her work life.

Then came the entrepreneurial session with the founders of Benne Dosa, Akhil Iyer and Shriya Narayan. They conversed about taking risks in life and failure being a part of everyone's life.

The concluding session of Day 1 was ironically the first sports session in Malhar's history, with the panel consisting of Anmol Mazumdar (Head Coach of the Indian Women's Cricket Team), Bhagyashree

Jadhav (a para-athlete and Paralympian), and Suma Shirur, a shooter (2004 Olympic finalist). They exchanged views on the woman's role in the sports field. They mentioned the role of sports in their lives and how it taught them the hardest lessons of life.

Adding more energy to the atmosphere, the fest also witnessed the stellar performance of the star cast of the upcoming film, 'Param Sundari', Janhvi Kapoor and Siddharth Malhotra. The stars were present there to promote their film.

Day 2 started with the keynote address by Honourable Justice Revati Mohite Dere. Her words of wisdom left an everlasting impact on the youth. Speaking under the theme, she explicitly talked about the role of the judiciary in shaping society. Furthermore, she added that 'impact' is a critical part of revolution.

The main session of the day was with the politician, SupriyaSule, who spoke extensively on the topic of policy-making and also interacted with the youth in the audience. She highlighted that "policy making is an opportunity to change people's lives". She encouraged the young leaders to consider politics as a career field and lead a revolution themselves if needed. The last two sessions were with the author Ashwin Sanghi and Aditya Roy Kapur, a Bollywood actor. Author Ashwin Sanghi, also an alumnus, spoke about the power of writing and storytelling. Aditya Roy Kapur, while offering insights into the world of cinema, also interacted with the audience by answering their questions.

The conclave team did an excellent job in curating and selecting the perfect speakers for the session that not only influenced the youth but also deeply resonated with this year's theme. The fest was orchestrated and presented beautifully by the Malhar team. The exuberant crowd made this fest more engaging and youthful, raising the expectations for next year.

(The writer is a student in a college in Mumbai.)

EXPLAINER

# Why Paris Suffers Crisis of OverTourism

When Olivier Baroin moved into an apartment in Montmartre about 15 years ago, it felt like he was living in a village in the heart of Paris. Not anymore.

Stores for residents are disappearing, along with the friendly atmosphere, he says. In their place are hordes of people shooting selfies, shops selling tourist trinkets and cafes whose seating spills into the narrow cobbled streets as overtourism takes its toll.

Baroin has had enough. He put his apartment up for sale after local streets were designated pedestrian-only while accommodating the growing number of visitors.

"I told myself that I had no other choice but to leave since, as I have a disability, it's even more complicated when you can no longer take your car, when you have to call a taxi from morning to night," he told The Associated Press.

Overtourism in European cities

From Venice to Barcelona to Amsterdam, European cities are struggling to absorb surging numbers of tourists.

Some residents in one of Paris' most popular neighbourhoods for tourists are now pushing back. A black banner strung between two balconies in Montmartre reads, in English: "Behind the postcard: locals mistreated by the Mayor." Another, in French, says: "Montmartre residents resisting."

Atop the hill where the Basilica of Sacre-Cœur crowns the city's skyline, residents lament what they call the "Disneyfication" of the once-bohemian slice of Paris.

The basilica says it now attracts up to 11 million people a year — even more than the Eiffel Tower — while daily life in the neighbourhood has been overtaken by tuk-tuks, tour groups, photo queues and short-term rentals.

"Now, there are no more shops at all, there are no more food shops, so everything must be delivered," said 56-year-old Baroin, a member of a



residents' protest group called Vivre a Montmartre, or Living in Montmartre.

The unrest echoes tensions across town at the Louvre Museum, where staff in June staged a brief wildcat strike over chronic overcrowding, understaffing and deteriorating conditions. The Louvre logged 8.7 million visitors in 2024, more than double what its infrastructure was designed to handle.

A postcard under pressure

Paris, a city of just over 2 million residents if you count its sprawling suburbs, welcomed 48.7 million tourists in 2024, a 2 per cent increase from the previous year.

Sacre-Cœur, the most visited monument in France in 2024, and the surrounding Montmartre neighbourhood have turned into what some locals call an open-air theme park.

Local staples like butchers, bakeries and grocers are vanishing, replaced by ice-cream stalls, bubble-tea vendors and souvenir T-shirt stands.

Paris authorities did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Visitors seemed largely to be enjoying the packed streets on a sunny Tuesday this week.

"For the most part, all of Paris has been pretty busy, but full of life, for sure," said American tourist Adam Davidson. "Coming from

Washington, D.C., which is a lively city as well, I would say this is definitely full of life to a different degree for sure."

Europe's breaking point

In Barcelona, thousands have taken to the streets this year, some wielding water pistols, demanding limits on cruise ships and short-term tourist rentals. Venice now charges an entry fee for day-trippers and caps visitor numbers. And in Athens, authorities are imposing a daily limit on visitors to the Acropolis, to protect the ancient monument from record-breaking tourist crowds.

Urban planners warn that historic neighbourhoods risk becoming what some critics call "zombie cities" — picturesque but lifeless, their residents displaced by short-term visitors.

Paris is trying to mitigate the problems by cracking down on short term rentals and unlicensed properties.

But tourism pressures are growing. By 2050, the world's population is projected to reach nearly 10 billion, according to United Nations estimates. With the global middle class expanding, low-cost flights booming and digital platforms guiding travellers to the same viral landmarks, many more visitors are expected in iconic cities like Paris.

The question now, residents say, is whether any space is left for those who call it home.



# Gukesh bounces back with crushing win over Abdusattorov

**St. Louis (USA):** World champion D Gukesh put his opening-round blues behind him and scored an excellent victory over former world rapid champion Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan in the second round of theSinquefield Cup here.

On a day when R Praggnanandhaa played a quiet game to draw with Fabiano Caruana of the United States, Alireza Firouzja of France gave a perfect end-game lesson as he crashed through the defense of Duda Jan-Krzysztof of Poland in the other decisive game of the day.

Levon Aronian of the United States played out a draw with compatriot Samuel Sevian to remain in joint lead while another American Wesley So drew with Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France in the 10-player USD 3,75,000 prize-money tournament.

Gukesh faced the open Sicilian, popularised by the legendary Viktor Korchnoi in the last century. There have been many takers of the variation at the top level, including Caruana, but these days the opening is not a favourite among elite players.

Gukesh played one of the testing variations and did not shy away from mainstream theory. Abdusattorov got a passed pawn in the middle of the board supported by another pawn but his king was always un-



**SINQUEFIELD CUP**

der the hammer as Gukesh's imaginative manoeuvres proved.

The Indian ace won a rook for a knight endgame, and even though the counter-play remained for the Uzbek, it was hard to find the exact moves with the clock ticking. Gukesh wrapped the issue with some timely exchanges leading to a won endgame.

Praggnanandhaa decided to give Caruana a taste of his own medicine by going for the Rossolimo Variation that the American had used extensively in his World Championship match against Magnus Carlsen.

However, the American proved his understanding of the resulting pawn

**Clutch Chess Exhibition Games: Anand vs Kasparov; Gukesh vs Carlsen locked**

New Delhi: Indian great Viswanathan Anand will revive his iconic rivalry with Russian stalwart Garry Kasparov, while world champion D Gukesh will go up against familiar foe Magnus Carlsen in Clutch Chess exhibition matches come October in St Louis, USA.

Kasparov and Anand last squared off in 2021 in the Croatia Rapid and Blitz competition at Zagreb where the Russian had emerged victorious. The two have clashed 82 times across formats in their illustrious careers with Kasparov leading in all of them and 30 games ending in draws.

"Two former world champions, Garry Kasparov and Viswanathan Anand, go head-to-head in a special Clutch Chess (Legends) exhibition match from (October 7 to 11). This once-in-a-generation clash celebrates the legacy of two chess greats and officially launches the month of reopening festivities," the St Louis Chess Club stated in a press release.

"The exhibition match will be the first event held in the Club's enhanced facility, reaffirming the city's role as the chess capital of the United States and a global leader in the game."

The event will feature a USD 144,000 prize fund to be awarded across a 12-game Chess960 (Fischer Random) match between the two icons.

The games will be played at rapid and blitz time controls and "with an innovative scoring system designed to captivate both players and fans."

Days after this, there will be a Clutch Chess: Champions Showdown from October 27 to 29 at the same venue. The lineup features World No.1 Carlsen, World No.2 Hikaru Nakamura, World No.3 Fabiano Caruana, and Gukesh in what will be the highest-rated chess tournament of the year.

"With USD 412,000 in prize money, including daily win bonuses and a Champion's Jackpot, the stakes have never been higher," the club stated.

"The event's 18-game rapid double round-robin format (10 minutes plus a 5-second increment) will feature escalating point values each day. Wins are worth one point on Day 1, two points on Day 2, and three points on Day 3," it added.



Budding football players celebrate on the occasion of the 129th birth anniversary of legendary footballer Gostha Pal near his statue in Kolkata. Pic: PTI

## Asia Cup's India Squad Lakra, Dilpreet retained

**New Delhi:** There were no major surprises in the 18-member Indian men's hockey team picked for the upcoming Asia Cup in Rajgir, Bihar with mid-fielder Rajinder Singh, and forwards Shilanand Lakra and Dilpreet Singh retaining their places in the squad, announced on Wednesday.

The tournament is scheduled to be held from August 29 to September 7 and the winner will earn direct qualification to next year's FIH men's World Cup to be co-hosted by Belgium and Netherlands from August 14 to 30. Ace drag-flicker Harmanpreet Singh will continue to serve as captain of the team.

The trio of Rajinder, Lakra and Dilpreet was also part of the jumbo squad for the preceding tour of Australia. Rajinder came in for Shamsheer Singh, Lakra is filling in for the recently-retired Lalit Upadhyay, and Dilpreet was preferred over Gurjant Singh who was ignored for the matches against Australia.

Striker Lalit Upadhyay had retired from international hockey after the European leg of the FIH Pro League in June.

The selection largely reflected the established core of players, with focus on the forthcoming World Cup.

The squad overall features a strong group of experienced campaigners, with depth and balance across all departments. The World Cup qualifying tournament places India in Pool A with Japan, China, and Kazakhstan. Hosts India will begin their campaign against China on August 29, before facing Japan on August 31 and Kazakhstan on September 1.

The goalkeeping duties will be shared by Krishan B Pathak and Suraj Karkera.

In defence, Harmanpreet and Amit Rohidas will be joined by Jarmanpreet Singh, Sumit, Sanjay, and Jugraj Singh. The midfield engine room comprises Manpreet Singh, Vivek Sagar Prasad, Rajinder, Raj Kumar Pal, and Hardik Singh. The forward line will be spearheaded by Mandeep Singh, Abhishek, Sukhjeet Singh, Lakra, and Dilpreet, offering plenty of firepower to trouble opposition defences.

**Indian squad:**  
**GOALKEEPERS:** Krishan B Pathak, Suraj Karkera  
**DEFENDERS:** Sumit, Jarmanpreet Singh, Sanjay, Harmanpreet Singh, Amit Rohidas, Jugraj Singh  
**MIDFIELDERS:** Rajinder Singh, Raj Kumar Pal, Hardik Singh, Manpreet Singh, Vivek Sagar Prasad  
**FORWARDS:** Mandeep Singh, Shilanand Lakra, Abhishek, Sukhjeet Singh, Dilpreet Singh.

## Diamond League Finals Neeraj to skip last meeting

**New Delhi:** Through to the high-profile, star Indian javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra will skip the last leg of the prestigious series in Brussels, Belgium on Friday.

Out of the 14 DL meetings, four have men's javelin throw on their roster. Chopra competed in only two, but qualified for the DL Final to be held in Zurich, Switzerland on August 28. He had also skipped the Silesia leg on August 16.

The 27-year-old reigning world champion went past the coveted 90m mark at the Doha DL in May with a throw of 90.23m but finished second behind German Julian Weber. He then won the Paris DL with a throw of 88.16m in June.

The top six after the Brussels leg will make it to the DL Finals in Zurich. Chopra's last competitive outing was at the NC Classic on July 5 in Bengaluru where he threw 86.18m to win the title at the event he hosted. In all, he has competed in six

events so far this season, winning four times and finishing second twice.

Chopra will defend the title at the World Championships to be held in Tokyo from September 13-21. Diamond League is an elite one-day meeting series in global athletics.

Athletes compete for points at the 14 series meetings in a bid to qualify for the two-day Diamond League Final, which will be held in Zurich on August 27 and 28. The DL Final is a winner-takes-all competition and the champion in each of the 32 events is crowned

Diamond League champion.

Each champion is awarded the iconic Diamond Trophy and a wild card for the World Athletics Championships.

The men's javelin event will be held on August 28. The winner of each event will get a trophy and USD 30,000 as prize money. The second place finisher will pocket USD 12,000 and third place-finisher USD 7,000.

But this year, winners of eight events out of the 32 will get enhanced prize money.

The eight events are 100m men, 1500m men, 400m hurdles men, pole vault men, 100m women, 100m hurdles women, 3000m women and long jump women.

In these eight events, the winner will pocket USD 50,000, while the second and third-place finishers will get USD 20,000 and USD 10,000 respectively. -PTI



New York Yankees Jose Caballero (right) celebrates his home run with Aaron Judge during a baseball game. Pic: PTI

## Tata Mumbai Marathon 2026 Registration for participation opens

**By Correspondent**

**Mumbai:** Promoters Procam International on Wednesday today announced that registrations for the 21st edition of Tata Mumbai Marathon have commenced on <https://tatamumbaimarathon.procam.in/>.

A World Athletics Gold Label race with a prize fund of USD 389,524, the event will flag off from Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus on Sunday, January 18, 2026.

For the full marathon (42.195 km), the registrations will remain open till November 28 or until all spots are filled – whichever comes first.

The half marathon (21.097 km) registrations will begin on August 25 and will remain open till September 10. A limited number of slots in the Marathon & Half Marathon have been reserved for women and Persons with Disabilities (PwD).

The Open 10K category registration will begin from August 28, while the Dream Run registrations will be open between November 4-10. The registration for Senior Citizen Run (4.2 km) and Champions with Disability (1.3 km) can be done from August 28 to November 28. The Virtual Run registrations will remain open from August 20 to January 12.

In a bid to encourage first-time runners and family participation, new initiatives like TMM Debutants and Home Run Squad have been added to the event. Runners attempting the Full Marathon for the very first time will be recognised as TMM Debutants. These participants will receive a specially designed bib marked 'My First 42.195 KM.' Families running together across any of the race categories will be honoured as part of the Home Run Squad.

## SAFF U17 Women's Championship India thrash Nepal in opening match

**Thimphu:** A clinical India thrashed Nepal 7-0 in their opening match of the SAFF U17 Women's Championship, with three players scoring a brace each, here on Wednesday.

Nira Chanu Longjam (25th, 56th), Abhista Basnett (16th, 41st), and Anushka Kumari (37th, 62nd) scored twice, while captain Julian Nongmaithem (45+1) struck once to ensure a flawless start to India's campaign.

The Young Tigresses raced to a commanding 5-0 lead by half-time, leaving Nepal no room for recovery in what was a one-sided affair from the outset.

With the tournament adopting a double round-robin format this year, it was imperative for India to begin on the front foot, and they did so in sensational style.

From the first whistle, India asserted their dominance. Their cohesive structure, the result of months of joint training since January, was evident in every phase of play.

The midfielders dictated tempo, finding incisive passes and carving through Nepal's defence with sharp distribution, while the forwards constantly found pockets of space to create havoc.

The backline, though tested early, remained compact and resilient. Goalkeeper Munni produced a solid display, securing a clean sheet and marshalling her defence with confidence.

Set-pieces proved to be a significant weapon for India. The breakthrough came in the 16th minute after a poor backpass resulted in a corner.

Shveta Rani swung in a dangerous delivery from the left, and Nepal custodian Jharna Dumrakoti fumbled under pressure. Basnett was quickest to react, slotting home from close range.

India doubled their advantage in the 25th minute. Kumari slipped a beautifully weighted pass behind the defence for Nira Chanu, who still had work to do. The striker powered home a low drive, beating the stretching Dumrakoti.

-PTI

# Stuart Broad keen to take up coaching role

**London:** His illustrious career now a part of England's cricketing folklore, legendary pace bowler Stuart Broad is planning to move towards a coaching role where he can some day produce the likes of Jofra Archer and Jimmy Andersons.

Broad, the second-highest wicket-taking pace bowler in Test cricket after country-mate Anderson, says he has spoken to Rob Key, managing director of the England cricket team, and expressed his desire to groom the U-17 and U-19 players.

"It's certainly something I want to stay connected to, the coaching," Broad, who has taken 604 Test wickets," he told The Telegraph.

"I've chatted to Rob Key a little bit

about doing some stuff with the younger bowlers in the England setups when the schedule suits," added the tall former pacer, who has donned the role of a broadcaster after hanging up his spikes.

Broad, who figures in seventh place in the list of all-time highest wicket-takers across formats, added that though he had not set a timeline on taking the plunge into coaching, he was optimistic it could happen as early as next year.

"I haven't set any sort of targets or dates of coaching or what's to come, but probably next year I'd start looking at dipping my toe into it a little bit more," he stated.

Broad was a consultant to the South African cricket team ahead

of their World Test Championship final against Australia at Lord's, which the Proteas won to clinch their maiden ICC world title.

He believes he can play a role in accelerating the development of younger bowlers in the England set-up.

"The U19s or even U17s - you really know what you're developing, and you've got your base of technique, but the growth you can make between 15 and 20 is huge. What excites me the most is, where's the next Jofra Archer? Where's the next Jimmy Anderson? I watched on Instagram, Harry Moore, who's been out with a stress fracture. I look at him and go, 'huge talent, 6ft 6in, swings it both ways, hits good

areas'," he said.

He added, "Where could he be in four years' time? Maybe even less than that? Where can you spot these players whose ceiling is very high?"

Broad agrees with Rob Key's plan of engaging stalwarts like Andrew Flintoff and Graeme Swann, among others, to strengthen England cricket.

"I'm completely on Rob Key's side. You want your best cricket brains still sharing information to the best players, and you don't want them to be put off by having to jump through loads and loads of hoops that might be a bit unnecessary with the knowledge they've got."

Broad's other desire is to become

a "really good broadcaster" and believes Indian cricketer-turned-commentator Ravi Shastri has a captivating voice.

"The level of analysis that Ricky Ponting gives, the detail that he's going into. The tone of voice with Ravi Shastri – how he can go up and down and pick moments to really go. I'm always looking and learning," he said.

"I'm definitely all in on the broadcasting at this moment in time, because I'm certainly not at a level that I'm comfortable with. I want to get better and better and be in those moments where I'm calling great cricket," he concluded.

-PTI

